THE MELBOURNE YOUTH LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES PROJECT

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An exegesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
CERTIFICATION

a. Except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the candidate alone
b. The work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award
c. The content of the exegesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program

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Glenn Bond
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</th>
<th>IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>VI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 About this Exegesis 2
1.2 Creation of the MYLO Project 3
1.3 MYLO as Research by Project 7
1.4 Exploration and Narrative 8

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction 10
2.2 Youth Marginalisation and Homelessness 10
2.3 Resilience and Connectedness among Young People 14
2.4 Education and Learning Pathways 15
2.5 Engagement, Participation and Empowerment 18
2.6 Implications of the Literature 20

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Action Research 21
3.2 Positioning MYLO within the Action Research Model 23
3.3 Data Collection 27
3.4 Data Analysis 29
3.5 Ethical Safeguards 31
3.5 MYLO in Practice: The Project Plan 33

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE PROJECT EXPERIENCE

4.1 Introduction 36
4.2 Project Development 36
4.3 Consultation Strategy 40
4.4 Consultation Results 45
4.5 Model Creation 52
4.6 The MYLO Model Trial 56
4.7 Seventeen Weeks of MYLO 59
4.8 Outcomes and Evaluation 66
4.9 Reporting and Dissemination 82
4.10 The MYLO Pilot 84

## CHAPTER FIVE: BEYOND THE TRIAL, REPORT AND PILOT

5.1 Developments in Literature and the Contribution of MYLO 91
5.2 Long Term Outcomes: Youth Learning Models 94
5.3 Long Term Outcomes: Personal and Professional Development 96

## REFERENCES 97
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure One:</th>
<th>The MYLO Project Methodology Graphic</th>
<th>24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure Two:</td>
<td>The MYLO Model Graphic</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Three:</td>
<td>Platform Attendance Figures</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Four:</td>
<td>Substantive Outcomes for MYLO Platform Participants</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Five:</td>
<td>Substantive Outcomes for MYLO Pathways Participants</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Six:</td>
<td>Living Arrangements Table</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

This exegesis follows the development and application of an informal learning model for marginalised young people frequenting the inner city area of Melbourne, Australia. The research was tied to a project funded and managed by RMIT University. The Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities (MYLO) project emerged in response to an increasingly visible community of young people frequenting the city campuses and a simultaneous wave of public concern about young people’s options in Melbourne around the turn of the millennium. The University held a search conference with community representatives in June 2000 to explore options for this cohort. The conference led to the creation of a network of interested parties and, in turn, to the allocation of University funds for a dedicated research project. I was employed as the project researcher and this paper reflects my decision to link the project with a postgraduate degree.

Due consideration is given to relevant literature with particular attention paid to the grouped themes of youth marginalisation and homelessness, resilience and connectedness, education and learning pathways and, finally, engagement, participation and empowerment. These themes reflect the understanding that engaging and retaining marginalised young people in learning programs requires not only a keen understanding of their circumstances and the principles of positive intervention, but also a marriage between contemporary pedagogical and youth work practices. The initial literature review considers perspectives on each of these themes up to the time of the project’s creation. The concluding chapter offers a further reflection on the literature emerging against each of these themes in the time since.

The application of an action research model was central to the research and is reflected throughout this exegesis. The recurring steps of reflection, planning, analysis and action
are witnessed throughout the life of the MYLO project on both micro and macro scales. The research methodology reflects action research principles of consultation and continual improvement whilst simultaneously catering for traditional academic principles of rigour and validity. Combined qualitative and quantitative data collection was supported by careful data reduction and display before the determination of findings and according actions. Collegiate and transparent decision making processes were applied to each of the key methodological stages, including planning, consultation, model development, model trial, evaluation, reporting, model pilot and forward planning.

This exegesis follows each of these steps in great detail, summarising the growth of the model through this process and the substantial outcomes emerging for participants. In turn, the exegesis traces the evaluation of the trial, the dissemination of project results, efforts at forward planning and the eventual piloting of the model. Throughout this analysis the reflections of the project team and, more particularly, myself as the primary researcher are closely considered. The exegesis concludes with an analysis of developments in literature since the time of MYLO’s creation, the contribution of the project to this body of knowledge, the long term outcomes for the MYLO model and the long term outcomes in terms of my own personal and professional development.

Those elements of good practice central to the development of the MYLO Model were borne out in their practical application through trial and pilot. By rigorously maintaining a focus on respectful, flexible and individualised engagement the model reached and retained those most marginalised of young people. Self-determination and ownership of the group by the group was consistent and was well justified by the eventual outcomes. The opportunity for calm and enjoyable social interaction was seen as conspicuously rare in the lives of the target group and was particularly popular as a result. Moreover the participation rates, evaluation responses and substantive outcomes for platform and
pathways participants demonstrate that the initiative met or surpassed all expectations of success. It is the contention of this exegesis that MYLO has made a significant contribution to my own development as a practitioner, to the methods and tools of the University and local community sector and, finally, to the global understanding of good practice when engaging marginalised young people in informal learning.
THE MELBOURNE YOUTH LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES PROJECT
Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1 About this Exegesis
This exegesis follows the creation, development, results and implications of the Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities (MYLO) research project. The bulk of the story takes place between 2001 and 2002. The years since have seen a further piloting of the MYLO model and the later incorporation of key MYLO themes into the practice of both the researcher and other stakeholders from the original research. In addition to tracking the progress of the project itself, this exegesis tells the story and lessons of MYLO with the added value of hindsight. The work maps the knowledge contributions made to literature, youth pedagogy and to RMIT University, the creators and owners of the project. Simultaneously, the exegesis follows my own development as a practitioner and professional.

Preparation of this paper was originally intended to be completed in 2004 however opportunities to write up and reflect upon the experience of the MYLO initiative were particularly scarce during the years 2004-2005. My professional career blossomed during this time, in no small part due to the confidence and maturity I developed as a result of MYLO, leaving me little time to take stock and do justice to all that had passed. Moving from community youth work and research into national and international consultancies resulted in a range of concurrent, overlapping and demanding professional obligations. Fulfilling several interstate and overseas postings during this time simply did not allow adequate opportunity to revisit MYLO. In 2006, although still
very busy and following an exhaustive travel schedule across the Asia-Pacific region, I have been able to negotiate the time necessary to reflect and write.

The result of this extended candidature is a possibly unique model of exegesis, where the story offers both historical and contemporary perspectives. The literature review and methodological analysis in the body of the paper reflects the setting and knowledge base at the time of MYLO’s emergence, just as the narrative reporting and analysis of the project itself is set firmly in that time (2001-2002). When drawing reflections on the learning and implications of MYLO, however, it has made sense to consider the progression of relevant literature, methodology and programmatic responses to young people in the time since. Chapter Five of this exegesis follows the implications and reflections of MYLO in the context of more contemporary literature, research modeling and youth program development. The resulting product takes the form of a replicable process where participants are successfully engaged and, as a result, learning opportunities are realised for marginalised young people. As an action research initiative, this exegesis also follows my own professional journey in the years from the creation of MYLO to the present day.

1.2 Creation of the MYLO Project

In the year 2000, well prior to my involvement with the project, RMIT University held a search conference to explore the issue of marginalised young people frequenting the city area. Conference papers developed within the University (RMIT CIECAP, 2000: 3) explained that particular attention was generated by an increasingly visible community of young people using public spaces on and near the city campuses at varying times of the day and night. The concern generated was in part a response to increased levels of criminal activity and in part to the lack of apparent options for this group. The conference
brought willing people and partners from various departments within the University together with interested parties from the city’s community at large. Community representatives included those from government departments, the Victoria Police, the business community and community organisations.

Given the significant physical and cultural presence of the University in the city area, it was envisaged that existing and emerging partnerships between RMIT and these community representatives might be harnessed to respond to the identified target group. This notion included the use of existing services, skills and resources in better reaching marginalised young people within the city area. The conference raised issues of access to learning, education and employment for the group that could not be adequately dealt with on the day. As a result, the most significant outcome of the conference was the creation of a networking forum that RMIT would host regularly to further explore issues raised at the conference (RMIT CIECAP 2000 [2]: 2).

The networking forums took the form of community lunches where members could voice and explore related issues. Records from these discussions repeatedly touched upon issues of access to learning options for the target group. It was consistently felt that, for a host of reasons, such young people lacked new opportunities to learn. It was commonly perceived (without substantive evidence) that these young people often had negative experiences of formal education that may further limit their willingness to learn.

Other thoughts generated by the forums included a sense that learning needs of this group were particularly complex, extending beyond a simple focus on employment, education and training. Broader learning needs such as social skills and self-confidence might be considered more pressing than traditional technical or academic aspirations.
The network determined that this issue required greater focus and attention than the forum could provide and key participants formed a Project Team (RMIT CIECAP 2001). The forum, through the project team, sought and received seeding funding from the University to establish, develop and implement a learning project for marginalised young people in the city area.

When introduced to this short history of project origins I felt keenly the uncertainty and nebulous premises associated with the idea. A sense existed of many people wishing ‘to do something’ whilst being uncertain of who their audience might be and what they might seek to offer. This even extended to the terminology in use early in the project’s development where after some debate the term ‘disaffected youth’ was brought into play, a concept not particularly common to the youth policy arena and not entirely accurate for the young people in question.

There was a distinct lack of youth work experience and expertise represented in these initial steps, and an according lack of familiarity with the life experience of young unemployed people frequenting the city area. There was also an unsettling sense that social control was among the motivations, whether directly or indirectly understood by participants in the process. A potential clash with the participatory empowerment approach of youth work was apparent. The project also had an unreasonable breadth of focus. As this is often the case during early stages of a new initiative this was not of itself a pressing concern, however my notes from the time identify the need for greater clarity.

Development of a specific project brief fell to the then Director of Community and Regional Partnerships (CandRP), Professor Graham Mulroney. Within CandRP, the City Interactive Education Co-ordinated Area Program (CIECAP) was deemed the most
appropriate location from which a research project of this nature might be based. A project scope document was created to outline a general plan for researching and developing a learning program for the target group, and a position description drawn up for a researcher to oversee the project (Durable Record: Appendix One). At this stage it was anticipated that the researcher might be someone with skills across the three key areas of action research, marginalised young people and education.

As the successful candidate I was able to offer recent experience overseeing a substantial action research project (Bond 2000), combined with a qualification and extensive experience in youth work with homeless and other marginalised young people. I had also been involved in a variety of education programs associated with young people and as such was well positioned to take on the role. I began work on the project some five months after the University's search conference on the topic. The project was initially funded for twelve months.

Meetings of the networking forum and project team were held immediately following my commencement with the project. At this juncture I was able to gather a sense of participant individuals and organisations, and promote participation by key players in a reference group to steer the investigation. It was anticipated this group would provide monthly opportunities for reflection and discourse on the project actions. Given the central role this group was expected to play in the chosen project paths, the project team sought a variety of expertise and awareness across the fields of youth and education. This approach mirrored the partnership model favoured by funding bodies and simultaneously supported the chosen action research methodology.
At the time of my recruitment into the project I was particularly confident and enthusiastic about what I may offer the idea. Having just completed a highly successful youth research project based on a very similar action-research methodology, I was well positioned to tackle the dual roles of researcher and practitioner. I was also encouraged, given the loose status of the project origins, that I was the selected applicant. Given my background in youth work and practical solutions for young people with complex needs, it felt affirming that the project team was seeking out a youth work professional rather than an educator or research specialist. Whilst this brought with it the weight of ‘expert’ status, it also allowed me confidence that those associated with the project would like to move the idea forward in an appropriately youth-focused, youth-driven manner.

### 1.3 MYLO as Research by Project

Bridging the MYLO project with a Research Masters degree by Project offered an excellent opportunity to recognise and enhance the academic standing of the existing study. This was particularly true given the action research orientation of the MYLO idea and its location within the University. The dedication of additional time and consideration to proposing and analysing this work was seen by those attached to the project as a substantial gain, or as a ‘value-adding’ mechanism. The first six months of 2001 became both the time of project development and establishment and the time of Masters Proposal preparation.

The expectation of participation in a research methods subject associated with the degree allowed for a deeper mode of reflection than might otherwise have been afforded the position. The simultaneous attention to developing the project itself and developing a Masters Proposal brought with it rich perspectives and a rare clarity in project tasks. Preparation of situational analysis data, ethical procedures and methodology
considerations was substantially more creative as a result. An unexpected reward of the combination was the particularly timely research history analysis associated with the research methods subject.

I felt it appropriate, if not necessary, to seek the respect of my peers within the University through the linking of the project with an academic qualification. This suited my own personal desires and I felt it would also contribute to the regard with which MYLO would be held in the academic circles surrounding me. With this step there also came a bridging of my personal and professional lives in a manner beyond the expectations of self-awareness in action research. The application of my time and intellectual investment to the research methods subject and masters proposal offered me a valuable introspective and historical grounding for my work. The Research Proposal was defended and accepted in June 2001 (Durable Record: Appendix Two).

1.4 Exploration and Narrative

Chapters Two and Three explore the literature base and methodological grounding for undertaking MYLO in the chosen manner in 2001-2002. Chapter Two (Review of Relevant Literature) locates MYLO within national and international discourses on youth marginalization, resilience, learning and engagement. Chapter Three (Methodology) details the data collection and analysis undertaken in developing and evaluating the MYLO Model, the positioning of this work within an action research framework and the use of narrative tools in analysing and displaying findings. Together, these chapters set the scene for the reflections, developments and learnings considered in Chapters Four and Five.
Chapter Four, ‘The Project Experience’, is a narrative exploration of the entire MYLO Project Experience, from the earliest idea to the eventual community funding and piloting of the program. The exploration is broken down into the clear developmental stages of Project Development, Consultation and Model Development, Model Trial, Reporting and Dissemination, Funding and the MYLO Pilot. Within each developmental step, sub-sections are explored in some detail. Each sub-section is accompanied by an italicised series of comments on my personal experiences, concerns and reflections as the solo researcher, taken from my journaling and notes throughout the life of the project. Particular attention is paid to my ‘insider’ status and to the strengths and constraints of my position in the research cycle.

Chapter Five maps those findings that emerged from the project experience against the literature and program development witnessed in the time since. The chapter considers what has been learnt as a result of the project, both for myself as researcher and for the broader community of stakeholders. Moreover, Chapter Five, explores the direct and indirect contributions made by MYLO to marginalised young people and those that seek to work with them.
Chapter Two

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The MYLO project was grounded in a contextual awareness of the literature base underpinning issues of learning and engagement for marginalized and homeless young people. It is from this base that project methods were devised and against which project findings, at least in part, are determined. Of key consideration for MYLO were contemporary views on youth marginalisation and homelessness, notions of resilience and connectedness among young people, pedagogical practice associated with youth learning and, finally, perspectives on engaging excluded youth.

This literature review explores texts and articles across each of these four concerns, with a partial bias towards the local context (Australian and Victorian sources and opinions). Particular attention is given to the situation for young people at the turn of millennium and references published prior to the creation of the MYLO Project. Against each aspect of the inquiry the review seeks to explore prevailing wisdom and commonalities before reflecting on the public policy context at the time. The tone was thus set for the management, delivery and review of the project.

2.2 Youth Marginalisation and Homelessness

The 1990s witnessed an increased focus on the marginalisation and economic exclusion of young people by researchers and policy makers in Australia, with particular attention to the transition from education to work (Sweet 1998: 19). In 1998 a large, cooperative research exercise detailed a disturbing picture of marginalisation ‘engulfing’ 15-19 year
olds on a scale that was both larger than generally understood and growing (Dusseldorp Skills Forum 1998:5). Furthermore, this research suggested that the focus and reliance on figures for youth unemployment was inadequate, with the marginalisation of young people necessarily extending well beyond official employment rates. It was argued that marginalisation figures must include those young people not involved in full time work or study (at least as many again) and pay attention to the educational attainment and employment stability of people in this cohort (Dusseldorp Skills Forum 1998:19).

Around the turn of the millennium voices from the right of the political spectrum suggested Australian welfare and intervention practices were more likely to promote fragmentation than cohesion and that the American model of promoting individual success was the obvious way forward (Saunders 1999: 6, Saunders 2003: 9). Further, such voices suggested poverty measures were too generous and that disharmony was being encouraged by distorted and misleading facts about income distribution (Hughes 2001: 13). However, despite the economic growth and failing unemployment rates typifying the Australian economy of the 1990s, the marginalisation of 15-19 year olds was seen to rise sharply. The number of teenagers ‘at risk’ of not making a successful transition from education to stable employment (either unemployed, working part time but not improving educational or skills qualifications, or not involved in the labour market at all) grew by almost 50% during the 1990s (Spierings 1999: 2). Transition to stable employment was similarly worsening for young adults aged 20-24 years, with delayed progress to stabilization in the workplace and longer financial dependence on parents (Curtain 1999:31).

Within this broad understanding of economic marginalisation for young people at the end of the millennium, additional attention was drawn to the compounded risks and threat of
greater social exclusion experienced by people in this bracket. Youth unemployment and economic marginalisation have been linked with criminal behaviour (Wearing 1997, Chapman 2002), mental health concerns (Morell, Taylor and Kerr 1998) and suicidal behaviour (Victorian Suicide Prevention Taskforce 1997, McMillan and Marks, 1999). Whilst the relationship between (and interdependence of) various risk factors is complex, it was clear that engaging the most marginalised young Australians required an awareness of social factors and determinants beyond education and employment.

Of particular interest to the MYLO project were young people whose marginalisation included an experience of homelessness. Increasing Government attention to youth homelessness, beginning with the prominent Burdekin inquiry of the late 1980s (HREOC 1989) and further entrenched with the mid 1990s Report on Aspects of Youth Homelessness (House of Representatives 1995) brought the severity and complexity of the issue into sharp relief. This attention was mirrored by a broadening research base and consensus on how youth homelessness might be understood in an Australian context (Neil and Fopp 1992, Burke 1993, Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992). Central to this discourse was the need to define homelessness, and to remedy the divide between ‘bureaucratic definitions’ (generally narrow) and ‘advocacy definitions’ (generally broad). Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1998: 21) suggest some resolution to this debate with their three tiers of:

- **Primary Homelessness**: People without conventional accommodation,
- **Secondary Homelessness**: People moving frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another, and
- **Tertiary Homelessness**: People living in single rooms (generally boarding houses) who lack tenure and facilities equivalent to community standards
Working within these definitions, it becomes important to recognise youth homelessness as a process (described by Chamberlain and MacKenzie as the ‘homeless career’ 1998: 71). Young people may move between tentative breaks in and out of home, or in and out of accommodation types before making a permanent break typified by involvement in the homeless subculture. In some instances, should this involvement continue, people may progress to chronic homelessness and acceptance of this as their way of life. The implication of this model is that the earlier the intervention along the path of a homeless career, the better the chance of redress and positive outcomes for the individual (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1997:76).

In addition to recognising the dynamic and often progressive nature of homelessness, it was important for MYLO to appreciate the particular circumstances and lifestyle choices of homeless youth in the project locale. A report on disadvantage and homelessness in the City of Melbourne in 1998 identified poor health, high levels of drug use and high levels of transience among survey participants. Transience was a particular concern with more than 75% of participants sleeping at their current location for less than two months, more than 60% for less than one month. Among participants of under 21 years these figures were even more concerning: against the percentage summary for all ages almost twice as many young people reported their health as ‘poor’ and an ongoing pattern of transience was significantly higher (Driscoll and Wood 1998). Recommendations from this report regarding the interdependence of health, transience, income patterns and drug use among homeless people in Melbourne are similarly reflected in texts on effective service provision for homeless people (NYCH 1997, Mallet, Rosenthal and Myers 2001, National Youth Affairs Research Scheme 1996).
Around the turn of the millennium both Australian and Victorian Governments built homelessness response platforms addressing the interconnectedness of homeless experiences and the critical need for early intervention practice. The National Youth Homelessness Taskforce Report (Prime Ministerial Youth Homelessness Taskforce 1998), the Victorian Homelessness Strategy (Department of Human Services 2001) and the more recent Youth Homelessness Action Plan (Department of Human Services 2004) are reflective of this increased awareness and describe the public policy setting in which MYLO would operate.

### 2.3 Resilience and Connectedness among Young People

Literature regarding youth service provision commonly considers the notions of risk and protective factors. Specifically, the 1990s witnessed a growing evidence base that successful interventions for young people should focus on reducing known risk factors and increasing known protective factors (Catalano and Hawkins 1996, Catalano 1997, Dekovi 1999). Within this discourse increasing attention was drawn to the notions of ‘resilience and connectedness’ as protective factors among young people. Building resilience can be seen as identifying and promoting those factors that buffer against stresses linked to adverse physical, social or psychological outcomes for youth (Resnick Harris and Blum 1993: 3). Central to resilience, connectedness involves an understanding of young people’s social relationships and feelings of connection to others as they develop and change (Resnick, et al 1993:4).

There are a range of commonly agreed risk factors and predispositions for youth marginalisation and homelessness. They are commonly grouped into family, community, school and individual risk factors (Fuller, McGraw and Goodyear 1998, Bond Thomas, Toumoubourou, and Patton 2000) and research strongly supports inter-relationship and
co-morbidity among risks (Beautrais 2000, Fuller 1998). Although risk awareness and reduction had been central to youth intervention theory for an extended period, many researchers and practitioners were looking beyond this to protective factor promotion (effective resilience and connectedness models) at the time of the MYLO Project’s creation. Just as research supports co-morbidity among risks, the evidence similarly supports the notion of ‘contagion’ among protective factors: that is, given one protective factor, a young person is more likely to accumulate a second (Department of Human Services 2000).

In 1999 and 2000 the Victorian Government committed substantial resources to investigations around risk and protective factors through two major reports. The *Communities That Care* report explored an international review prevention approaches to build resilience among young people (Department of Human Services 1999). The *Improving the Lives of Young Victorians in our Community* report reflected a comprehensive survey of risk and protective factors among young Victorians (Bond et al 2000) and was supported by a summary report outlining findings and motivations for this approach (Department of Human Services 2000). As such, the public policy setting was very familiar with the language of resilience and connectedness when research for MYLO began.

### 2.4 Education and Learning Pathways

Dwyer and Wyn point to an ‘ambition paradox’ for young people assessing future options and choosing steps for transition. In particular, the paradox reflects a divide between the way young people interpret their choices and risks and they way these choices are perceived and interpreted in literature and policy. Further, an expanding gap is apparent between educational and/or labour market ambitions and actual opportunities for young
people (2001: 13). The impact of global and domestic changes in the economy and labour market are reflected in challenges for all young people in transition to adulthood and economic independence, but none more so than the marginalised and disadvantaged (Smyth, Hattam, Cannon, Edwards, Wilson and Wurst 1999: 54). The lack of appropriate options and the competitive nature of learning opportunities are compounded for young people who have left school early and greatly magnified where transience, ill health or risk taking are also characteristic of the young person (Crane and Brannock 1996:106). For homeless young people, particularly those in primary and secondary tiers of homelessness, preparation for and participation in traditional educational systems and structures is severely constrained by lifestyle (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1998).

Youth service providers commonly report that marginalised young people seeking help have left school early and experience difficulty making the transition to post secondary education and learning pathways (Crane and Brannock 1996:35). Analysis of service user records demonstrating the overrepresentation of early school leavers, unemployed youth and educationally excluded young people accessing support provides a broad statistical evidence base to defend this position (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2001, AIHW 2001). Given what we know about the difficulties of transition in the modern economic setting and the critical nature of transition in terms of the social, economic and psychological outcomes for young people (see above), the evidence suggests that post compulsory education models and systems require redress. This change has been described as an “approach to post compulsory education that is inclusive of all traditional sectors of community education and extended to include other agencies involved in education and training” (Kirby 2000:27).
Assuming access by marginalised young people, significant pedagogical questions must be asked of the teaching content and methods. Where their experience of formal education has been negative, either due to shortfalls in delivery or to circumstances outside of school, learners must be supported to separate experience from expectations (Te Riele 2000: 4). Similarly, where confidence is low based on previous experience or recent personal experiences, confidence building becomes the first step on a necessarily longer path to engagement and positive learning outcomes (Reid and Klee 1999, Connor, Ling, Tuttle and Brown-Tezera 1999). Whilst the availability of work, training or education opportunities is critical, the methods used and expectations set down for participation are equally important for those most marginalised of learners (Milne-Home 2000:103).

It is recognised that on the path to establishing their own self-image, young learners display egocentric behaviours in academic settings often at odds with their experience or knowledge base (Milne-Home 2000:107). For young people out of home, particularly those having joined prematurely ‘adult’ communities common to the youth service system, such behaviour is combined with genuine independence and self reliance generally assumed to be beyond their years (Jeffs and Smith 1999: 10). Academic expectations for marginalised and disconnected learners, therefore, need to respect the unique combination of independence, egocentrism, underlying self doubt and fundamental inexperience common to this cohort. This may in part be achieved by carefully tailored teaching techniques but also implies the contextualising of a learning opportunity in the context of a young person broader life path. This approach is tied to the notions of ‘informal education’ emerging from the United Kingdom since the 1970s, where informal learning is a lifelong experience linked to daily experiences and exposure (Coombes and Ahmed 1974: 8). The effectiveness of informal education has been
closely linked with its location and leadership (Smith 1999: 1) as well as how flexible, relevant and ‘learner-centred’ the experience is for participants (Fordham 1979).

The notion of ‘pathways’ development looks beyond a single educational or employment outcome to a more holistic support model considering pre-conditions as well as short, medium and long term goals for individuals (Raffe 2001:4). Around the turn of the millennium, state and Federal governments both invested heavily in pathways planning for young people paying particular attention to marginalised and excluded young people as a priority group for pathways programs and support. The federal government’s *Footprints to the Future* report comprehensively outlined good practice in pathways support and specifically recommended improving the capacity of institutions and services to understand and manage pathways programs. More specifically, the report identifies those young people “in difficulty or at risk of disconnection” as well as those who are “disconnected and see no way forward” as pathways priorities (Eldridge 2001: vii). Similarly, among the sweeping pathways reforms recommended by the Victorian Governments’ ‘Kirby Report’ was an impetus for improved participation and outcomes for those young people currently experiencing poor outcomes (Kirby 2000:14).

### 2.5 Engagement, Participation and Empowerment

Exploring models of learning for marginalised and homeless young people implies a bridging of education and youth work, in both theoretical and practical senses. Key social and political perspectives directly influence youth work models. In the public policy arena youth are commonly described as passive victims of social structures or as a community ‘problem’ that requires social control (Bessant, Sercombe and Watts1998: 77, White 1990: 193). Sociologists and social theorists instead tend more towards exploring youth in terms of oppression, class, race and gender (Jensen and Thompson
Youth development is underpinned by an awareness of youth as a social construct (Wyn and White 1997:10, Bessant and Watts 2002: 172) and through cognisance of societal misconceptions regarding commonality among young people (White 1990: 10). Youth work practitioners operate within and between socio-political stances depending on the expectations of their funding sources, the political positioning of their employers and their own professional grounding.

Notions of youth work as a profession in Australia have been discussed and debated since the Second World War, often reflecting the emerging policy priorities related to young people (Irving, Maunders and Sherington, 1995: 15). The 1960s and 70s witnessed an increased youth ‘consciousness’ and the creation of dedicated bureaucratic structures for Youth Affairs, and since that time a ‘diverse body of practitioners who identify as youth workers’ has emerged in Australia (Bessant et al 1998: 230, Irving et al 1995: xv). Whilst debate and discussion over youth work professionalism and definitive understandings of what constitutes youth work have typified this period (Bessant et al 1998: 230), certain commonalities have emerged from the literature. The themes of engagement, participation and empowerment appear regularly.

Engagement, described by Slattery as a young person’s connection to what is occurring, their feeling that it has meaning, that it is relevant and that it fits their personal style (Slattery 2001: 35-6). Participation, more than young people simply taking part, has come to require clarity over the intentions of an interaction, participation in an exploration of the deeper meanings of that interaction and the conscious consent to engage (Young 1999: 85). The notion of empowerment offers both a philosophical and practical foundation for contemporary youth work, where young people are liberated from social
and structural constraints whilst simultaneously moving towards autonomy and personal goals (Young 1999: 87, AusYouth 2001: 7). The three themes have commonly merged with learning pathways through models of *informal education* that emphasise links between education and communities (Brookfield 1983), personality and curriculum (Jeffs and Smith, 1990) and between democracy and learning (Jeffs and Smith, 1996).

### 2.6 Implications of the Literature

In summary, advice from the literature was most helpful in setting the tone and priorities for MYLO consultations and model development. Firstly, it became clear that MYLO would need to respond simultaneously to uniform understandings of youth marginalization and the warnings apparent in literature regarding the importance of the individual. Due attention was be paid to the diversity and complexity of lifestyles for homeless and other marginalised young people, acknowledging the socio-political constraints common to the group whilst simultaneously recognising the unique nature of each individual’s past and potential.

A commitment to enhancing protective factors underpinned efforts at learning engagement, taking into account the well documented limitations of the formal education system in adequately supporting this cohort. On the advice of the literature, MYLO would seek to address risks factors through the promotion of resilience and a particular focus on connectedness for participants. Moreover, a merging of the principles of youth work with contemporary informal education and lifelong learning pedagogies formed the base from which MYLO would grow. Bridging the gap between youth specific engagement processes and relevant informal learning methods had become the critical MYLO function.
Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Action Research

The MYLO project employed an action research model in achieving its outcomes and objectives. McCutcheon and Jung combine various definitions to describe this approach as a systemic inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical and undertaken by participants in the inquiry (1990: 148). More specifically, action research involves a continuous cycle of planning, action and review (Cherry, 1999). The review process includes carefully considering the detail and implications of previous activities when planning future actions. This process is commonly described in the two further stages of observation and reflection (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1990; Zuber-Skerritt, 1991) or reflection and analysis (Cherry, 1999).

This approach to research provides a necessary objectivity when considering significant project steps, yet need not be confined to the core stages of a research project. Cycling can occur on a weekly, daily or even hourly basis throughout the life of a project to the point where “reflection has become integrated into every aspect of the action research cycle” (Cherry, 1999: 2). The MYLO Project applied the four steps of planning, action, reflection and analysis at all levels of project activity.

Kemmis recognises that in reality the spirals of research cycling are likely to be fluid and responsive, not necessarily neat and self-contained throughout the life of a project. Stages overlap and plans may quickly alter in the light of new learning (Kemmis, 1995: 35). This researcher also identifies a separation in action research activities between
those grounded in ‘functional reason’ (where rational-purposive actions are taken in order to ‘get on with the job’) and those grounded in ‘critical reason’ (where communicative actions are employed to allow greater reflection on ‘what the job is and what it might otherwise be’). Kemmis argues that in the process of research cycling functional reasoning and critical reasoning may alternate with (and complement) each other (1995: 41-2). The MYLO project sought to co-ordinate these two approaches by focussing on substantial practical outcomes whilst undertaking broad communicative reflection.

Action research is generally grounded within a ‘thematic concern’, something typically generated and described by a group of interested parties. Unlike other methods, action research must include an explicit investigation of the relationships between participating individuals and this broader group (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1990). In addition to the collaborative development and review of findings, action research simultaneously recognises local circumstances and the role of individuals in determining or applying such findings. Thus, action research generates local knowledge grounded in local realities that is likely to be of use to local participants (Herr and Anderson 2005: 98).

Action research combines diagnosis and reflection, and seeks to bridge the gap between research and practice (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000: 227). Furthermore, the approach seeks to remedy the perceived historical failure of research to impact upon or improve practice (Rapoport, 1970: 499). The MYLO Project sought to link research findings with practice improvements for both participants and the broader community.
3.2 Positioning MYLO within the Action Research Model

The spiralling, cyclical approach central to the action research model was demonstrable alongside the project plan throughout the life of the study. Whilst core tasks for each week, month and stage of the project were described in tasks and outcomes, a parallel process of research cycling was also apparent. For each core task or action and for each smaller step within such stages the cycle of reflection, analysis, planning and action was applied. In the first instance, this was undertaken by the researcher when interpreting results and choosing the next step. On a more substantial level, the project team (approximately once a fortnight) and the project reference group (once a month) provided a mechanism for considering the steps most recently undertaken and employing these reflections in planning the next action. These critical reflections are described in detail throughout Chapter Four (The Project Experience).

Figure One (page 25) displays the action-research spiral that operated alongside the more clinical project plan. Based on the cycling model of a similar action research project (Bond, 2000), this figure demonstrates eight ‘core actions’ and the reflective processes that accompany each of these. It is important to recognise that the creation of models and development of the strategy may also be seen as one full cycle (i.e. reflection, planning, analysis and action on the largest scale). Kemmis (in Reason and Bradbury, 2000: 5) identifies three categories by which action research processes may be defined. Among these are:

- **technical**, where research targets functional improvement measured by changes in particular practice outcomes;
- **practical**, where technical aspirations are included yet a broader goal exists to inform the decision making of practitioners;
- **emancipatory**, where research seeks to achieve functional improvements and inform practitioners, whilst also providing a critique of practitioners work.

The MYLO project is most appropriately placed in the ‘practical’ category. The proposed outcomes include the evaluation and measuring of specific functional models, yet the broader project aim is to inform the practice of the university and its partners over time. The development of a strategy document and forward plan was central to the MYLO vision. Whilst this categorisation may be seen as the most fitting, it is also worthy of note that the MYLO project was always expected to demonstrate ‘emancipatory’ elements. Emancipatory approaches seek to investigate ideology and power and to release human potential from structural constraints (Herr and Anderson 2005: 27), and although more firmly prioritising practice change MYLO also sought to contribute to such progress.

Within the action research framework and central to the MYLO project was a process of narrative inquiry. The reflective cycle accommodates both technical observations and the narrative reflections of key participants (the researcher, the reference group, young people themselves). Goodfellow argues that narrative inquiry provides opportunities for an individuals ‘self’ to be actively or thoughtfully involved when gaining insight into phenomena, and that the richness or resonance of narrative data enhances a study’s credibility (Higgs, 1997: 82). Connelly and Clandinin (1988) also suggest that narrative inquiry allows us to explore our personal histories in an effort to understand how who we are impacts on what we value and what we do. The ‘evidence’ consists of narrative accounts which help researchers look inwardly as a legitimate part of decision-making (Green 2002: 4). In addition to reflecting narrative contributions, this exegesis employs narrative inquiry to explore developments from the perspective of the researcher over the life of the study.
Figure One: MYLO Project Methodology Graphic

**CORE ACTIONS**

1. Review Lit & Scope
   - Establishment of Reference Group and Project Officer Position
   - Beginning of informal consultations with stakeholders

2. Audit RMIT facilities
   - Establishment of key (internal) RMIT partners
   - Reflection, analysis and planning by worker, reference group and MYLO networking forum

3. Contact partners/funders
   - Consideration of possible external partners
   - Consideration of project funding options & strategy
   - Reflection, analysis and planning by worker & reference group

4. Consultation Strategy
   - Consideration of models ideas (ongoing)
   - Consideration of partner advice
   - Reflection, analysis & planning by worker & reference group

5. Consultations
   - Consideration of models ideas (ongoing)
   - Reflection, analysis and planning by worker, reference group and MYLO networking forum

6. Models: creation/trial
   - Review of funding status
   - Reflection, analysis and planning by worker and reference group

7. Model Evaluations
   - Consider progress, plan post-trial evaluations
   - Reflection, analysis and planning by worker & reference group

8. Strategy and Report
   - Consider project evaluations
   - Reflection, analysis and planning by worker, RG & Network
   - Final consultation with participants

   - Submission of draft report
   - Reflection, analysis and planning by worker, RG and MYLO networking forum regarding launch and forward plan.

**Reflection, Analysis, Planning and Action**
In positioning MYLO and its participants within the action research paradigm, of particular importance is the role of the primary researcher. As the Project Officer employed to manage the MYLO project and as the writer of this exegesis, my own role requires attention and exploration. Herr and Anderson (2005:31) offer a continuum of ‘positionality’ in action research, with a spectrum of six positions a researcher and team may take in action research, each with varying expectations and validity criteria. These include:

1. Insider (*studies own self/practice*)
2. Insider in collaborations with other insiders
3. Insider(s) in collaboration with outsiders
4. Reciprocal collaboration (*insider-outsider teams*)
5. Outsider(s) in collaboration
6. Outsiders study insiders

As the primary researcher my own role in MYLO was that of an insider collaborating with outsiders (stage three on the continuum) with elements of the study dedicated more exclusively to my own practice (stage one) or that of the project team and young people themselves (stage two). The project team added rigour to decision making through consistent collaboration and reflection. Young people became participants in the process as well as the model, contributing to the management, journaling and reflective aspects of the research whilst participating as individuals in the learning opportunities themselves.
3.3 Data Collection

During the development of the MYLO project a number of preliminary questions were identified, including:

- What factors constitute learning opportunities that will be attractive for marginalised young people in Melbourne?
- What nature of partnerships between RMIT and the youth service community are necessary to facilitate learning model provision?
- What aspects of organisational change will promote the development and implementation of MYLO project outcomes within RMIT?
- What understanding of marginalised young people is necessary to facilitate project success?
- What evidence base exists for the relevance of various learning models for marginalised young people?

Emerging from these two overarching research questions were agreed upon, namely:

- What learning models should the MYLO project seek to trial with young people in Melbourne?
- What lessons on creating learning opportunities for marginalized young people should the MYLO project seek to promote at the project’s end?

All of these questions inform the collection and analysis of data. The following passages describe the data collection methods agreed upon during the development of the MYLO Project. This is an expression of the methodological planning rather than data collection results. Details of the actual data collected, including specific numbers, findings and actions are described in Chapter Four, Sections 4.3 (Consultation and Model Development) and 4.7 (Trial Outcomes and Evaluations). This text is supported by tables and summaries provided as appendices in the Durable Record, as referenced throughout Chapter Four.
As identified in the project plan there were three primary processes of data collection. Firstly, a process of record keeping and reflection occurred during the exploration of relevant literature and the development of key partnerships. Next, the consultation stage of the project involved a three-tiered strategy of information collection across the three sections of the community seen as most valuable to the project outcomes. The three data collection methods for consultations included surveys, interviews (using the survey model as a guide) and focus groups. The three community groups approached included marginalised young people, youth service providers and interest groups from the community at large.

There was a target of five youth focus groups and five service provider focus groups. Based on apparent demand or enthusiasm within the broader communities of interest, anywhere from two to four focus groups were expected with these ‘other’ parties. The project sought a target of 100 surveys and/or interviews with young people and a similar number with service providers. Smaller numbers of surveys and interviews were expected from other interest groups in the community.

Mechanisms were put in place early in the life of the project to secure pathways for effective consultation with each of the specified groups. Young people were contacted through existing links with project partners (service providers, police, community facilities). Youth service providers were reached through established partnerships and through the network operations already in place for services in the city area. The community at large had the opportunity to contribute through three avenues, namely the MYLO networking forum, the Police Community Consultative Committee (PCCO) and the ‘Business Precinct’ bodies already established in key city areas.
Finally, when trailing the model for learning opportunities developed out of MYLO’s early investigations, data collection was undertaken in a number of ways. Records were kept of attendances, return rates, enthusiasm and apparent strengths or weaknesses of the model. Young people were consulted pre and post participation and asked a series of unobtrusive questions regarding their experience within the models (refer to Chapter Four, section 4.3: The MYLO Model Trial). Similar consultations were undertaken with any project partners participating in or witnessing the models trials. At project’s end, interested participants (partners, reference group, networking forum, community at large, young people themselves) were invited to reflect on the project as a whole and comment on direct or incidental implication of the study. The researcher sought evaluative contributions from all people involved in the study, from consultation to closure.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

In the MYLO Project quantitative data was collected and analysed using consistent tools and simple mathematical methods, as explained wherever such details are drawn upon. Given the action-research approach central to the project, however, quantitative data alone was seen as an inadequate mechanism with which to judge results. Whilst a quantitative analysis of statistics arising from consultations and research records was necessary and applied, the qualitative data was also critical. In anticipation of this, MYLO approached collection and analysis of such data very carefully to ensure credibility when determining and acting upon findings. Smith (cited in Higgs, 1997: 97) offers five key criteria which are necessary for quality in qualitative research. They include:

- **Rigour** (consistent, systematic research and reporting)
- **Consistency** (research consistent with canons/assumptions identified in methodology)
Validity (ensuring the readers/audience are able to understand/connect with research)

Evidence (a clear/visible basis for any claims made in the research)

Interest (the research reported is interesting to the readers/audience)

Miles and Huberman (1994) point to three linked sub-processes within their definition of data analysis that should be applied before, during and after data collection. These three aspects include:

- **Data Reduction** (where potential data is reduced through choices of questions and instruments, and collected data is reduced through coding, clustering summarising or other means);
- **Data Display** (where reduced data is organised and assembled to facilitate conclusion drawing or action taking);
- **Conclusion Drawing and Verification** (where displayed data is interpreted through transparent means in order to draw meaning)

The reduction and display of quantitative data was achieved through the use of SPSS software with the assistance of the Centre for Youth Affairs Research and Development (YARD). Qualitative data was reduced and displayed through clustering and coding according to deductive and, in turn, inductive themes (refer to section 4.4 for greater detail and links to relevant appendices). The quality criteria were primarily met through the use of the project team and YARD who were explicitly charged with reflecting upon and ratifying the rigour, consistency, validity, evidence and interest of collection and analysis methods throughout the project.
3.5 Ethical Safeguards

Among the ethical concerns associated with qualitative social research is the issue of informed consent. Allan Kimmel explains that informed consent is considered by many the central norm governing the relationship between investigator and research participant. Originally designed for biomedical research, the procedure can be less readily applicable in social research as it is often difficult to assess the degree of risk involved (Kimmel, 1988: 68). The nature of inquiry proposed in the MYLO project offered virtually no risk to participants, however steps were taken to ensure subjects were more than adequately informed. Specifically, three criteria identified as critical to informed consent by (Kimmel, 1988: 69) were maintained. These included:

- **A Statement** offered to subjects indicating that participation is voluntary
- **A Description** offered to subjects of what can be expected (in terms of purposes, methods, risks, benefits and alternative procedures)
- **A Statement** offered to subjects inviting questions and explaining the freedom to withdraw at any time (refer to Durable Record: Appendix Ten)

Of similar ethical concern in social research is the process of participant selection. Kimmel identifies that a danger exist of ‘coercing individuals from among the most powerless groups in society into programs researchers consider to be beneficial to them.’ He suggests the possibility that researchers, influenced by their own confidence in the potential strength of a particular technique or program, may make promises whilst recruiting that cannot be guaranteed (Kimmel, 1988: 77). Conscious of this concern, the MYLO project ensured that all young subjects were advised that although the project has a reasonable chance of creating positive change (and little or no chance of producing
negative effects), no guarantees could be made about the benefits for any given individual. It was the MYLO premise, furthermore, that the relative strength or weakness of project interventions is central to the investigation itself and participants should be encouraged to be as honest as possible in their appraisals.

The project team sought to further reduce the risk of negative effects on participants through a number of important steps. Firstly, targeting marginalized young people implied certain vulnerabilities in terms of potential attachment to staff and the danger of building unrealistic expectations. The extensive professional experience of the project officer as a practitioner with the target group (marginalised young people) ensured the project was sensitively prepared and undertaken. Moreover, the project team ensured that those project partners likely to come into direct contact with young participants (either during the consultation or trailing stages) were also those most skilled in boundary setting and a clinical expression of the project limitations.

Recognising the legitimate fear for many young people in the target group that personal information may be shared between agencies, all contributions to the research (consultation, model trial or evaluation) were strictly confidential, and no personal details were kept with the data collected. Participants were informed of this commitment and no information was shared without prior written consent specific to that individual and the intended recipient of information. As an additional safeguard, mechanisms were set in place to provide timely referrals should any issues arise (outside of the project scope) that require support.

Recognising the ‘insider’ status of myself as the primary researcher, and the potential for confidence in my own expertise to overly influence my methods, all actions affecting
young people directly were discussed consultatively with the Reference Group and, where appropriate, the broader MYLO Networking Forum. The narrative voice described in section 1.4 and employed throughout Chapters Four and Five, whilst generally a tool for tracking MYLO’s contributions to knowledge, also pays particular attention to this conscious study of my influence as the primary researcher.

3.5 MYLO in Practice: The Project Plan

The MYLO project sought to work flexibly within a clearly structured and strategic plan. The project plan, as with most other key elements of the project, was determined through reflective processes within the project team, the reference group and the MYLO Network. It was anticipated that components of the project plan would alter somewhat when responding to reflections and research findings and this proved to be the case.

For clarity, the MYLO project plan was broken down into sections beginning with Project Preparation and progressing through Stages One to Eight (refer to Figure One). Action research modelling was consistently applied. For each stage the tasks, timelines, responsibilities and record keeping mechanisms were established and then held under cyclic review by the project reference group. The plan was carefully prepared to achieve the project outcomes within the 52-week (12 month) timeline, with flexibility for extension to 78 weeks should this be required and allocated.

3.5.1 Project Preparation:

Preparation for the project involved five basic steps to set up the framework from which the project may develop. These five steps were determined in consultation with the MYLO Network, and included developing a project officer position description, preparing a draft project scope document and vision statement, recruiting and finally appointing the
Project Officer/Researcher. It was also during this period that secretariat and reference group responsibilities were mapped.

3.5.2 Stages One, Two and Three: Building a Base

Stage One saw the first discussions and reflective processes regarding possible project models as informed by the initial review of relevant literature and refreshing of the project scope and vision. Stage Two included an audit of existing RMIT curriculum and facilities of relevance to the MYLO project. This was also the appropriate window to initiate contact with key internal and external partners and explore potential opportunities for complementary funding (an ongoing function). Stage Three involved the consolidation of key project partnerships and planning for all tasks outlined in the project objectives.

3.5.3 Stages Four and Five: Designing and Undertaking Consultations

Stage Four saw the creation of the MYLO consultation strategy, building on the partnerships and ideas generated in previous stages. After reviewing and agreeing on the strategy, Stage Five was the actual application of the consultation process, gathering data on key areas of inquiry and ensuring data was collected and analysed in a consistent and transparent manner.

3.5.4 Stage Six: Model Development and Trial

Stage Six was the application of triangulated data and consultation findings in the creation of the MYLO model. Stage Seven saw the application of the newly formed model in a trial and was perhaps the most critical stage in terms of the final outcomes and potential value of the MYLO project. A key component was ensuring rigorous trial
data collection and the ongoing analysis of this information. This was the major ‘action’
window where the reflection, analysis and planning of the previous stages was applied
and measured.

3.5.5 Stages Seven and Eight: Evaluation, Reporting and Forward Planning
Stage Seven involved development of evaluation mechanisms before collecting and
analyzing this data in conjunction with trial data. Finally, Stage Eight was primarily one of
summarising the project activity and meeting key project outcomes. Actions included
exploring final reflections by the project team, reference group, networking forum and
other interested project participants before preparing and distributing the draft project
report and strategy document. Following amendments according to comments on the
draft a final version was produced for dissemination. Stage Eight also included a public
launching of the Project Report. Recognising the potential for the project to move
immediately on to a new stage (should funding bodies and the project owner seek
implementation of the forward plan) efforts were made to simultaneously prepare for a
next stage of MYLO.
4.1 Introduction

What follows is a narrative exploration of the entire MYLO Project Experience, from the earliest idea to the eventual community funding and piloting of the program. The exploration is broken down into the clear developmental stages of Project Development, Consultation and Model Development, Model Trial, Reporting and Dissemination, Funding and the MYLO Pilot. Where the evidence drawn upon for describing each stage is not apparent in the text itself, a reference to the appropriate appendix within the durable record is explicitly cited. Within each developmental step, sub-sections are explored in some detail. Each sub-section is accompanied by an italicised series of comments on my personal experiences, concerns and reflections as the solo researcher, taken from my journaling and notes throughout the life of the project. Particular attention is paid to my ‘insider’ status and to the strengths and constraints of my position in the research cycling process.

4.2 Project Development

Among the most pressing initial tasks was to clarify the project scope in line with the sharpened picture of what was to be achieved and how it may be done. The original scope document was broad and somewhat loose, perhaps as a result of the uncertainty associated with likely project content.

The newly developed Project Scope (Durable Record: Appendix One) provided a succinct summary of proposed project outcomes. After a participatory reflective exercise
in broadening, reviewing and narrowing the focus of the project, the researcher, team and reference group agreed to six fundamental outcomes (refer to Durable Record: Appendix One) that would be sought over the life of the project. These outcomes included steps or 'landmarks' that would be achieved on the way to the final and perhaps most significant of outcomes, a strategy document that would reflect the project's results and a forward plan for project findings. This strategy document took the form of the MYLO Project Report (Durable Record: Appendix Three) and offered a lasting record of the attempts made at researching and creating a new model of learning opportunities for marginalised young people. Regardless of the relative success of the model, application of reflective practice and action-learning principles to the creation of this eventual product provided a valuable resource for the University, the Youth Work sector and community at large.

In reaching this primary outcome, a number of other achievements were proposed. The first, a relatively minor component of the project, was a summary of resources within the University that might be of relevance to the project, the model and the young people targeted. A complementary funding strategy was also flagged as a necessary outcome, and the reference group deemed this to be an ongoing process rather than a finite task, which would be regularly up for review and consideration. Similarly, a fourth proposed outcome was for formalised partnerships with both internal and external stakeholders. This, as with the funding strategy, would be up for review as the project developed and needs changed.

The remaining two outcomes proposed were for a series of results from consultations and a series of results and evaluations from the piloting of the MYLO Project model. These formed the base of the eventual strategy document and the findings of the MYLO
project as a whole, however it was also anticipated that these elements would stand alone as valuable records of the project's findings.

The internal research outcome was to be the first and perhaps simplest of these outcomes to be achieved. An extensive series of meetings across the University offered the opportunity to familiarise various sections of the institution with the aims and motivations of the MYLO project whilst also providing MYLO with a sense of what resources may be available. Records from these internal meetings were reduced and developed into an audit of both curriculum and facilities relevant or attractive to the project or the project's target group. Areas of particular practical relevance (such as the Department of Access and Preparatory Studies, a potential educator of MYLO participants) were drawn together in a list for the reference group and MYLO Network (Durable Record: Appendix Four).

Partnership Development was, unsurprisingly, a far more substantial outcome to be addressed, and as suggested above did not have a clear beginning or end. Those same meetings employed in generating a summary of internal resources formed the beginnings of the internal partnerships. During the same period, early in the life of the study, similar meetings occurred with potential partners met through the MYLO Network or sought out elsewhere in the community.

As the project path became clearer, the researcher set about extending relationships that were important in the impending consultation process. It was determined that youth service providers in the city area were best placed to act as conduits between the MYLO project and young people. This was necessary for the purposes of consultation and, later, the model trial. Much time was spent meeting with such service providers to
encourage their ownership of the consultation process and to secure commitments for their active participation throughout. Additional project activity during this time was spent on formalising the methodology and mechanisms for data collection. A partnership was also formed with the Centre for Youth Affairs Research and Development, a section of the university dedicated to youth research issues, for support when determining and analysing data collected during the study.

**Project Development Personal Reflections**

*It is the nature of research questions and action research projects that there is a tendency for ideas and expectations to balloon unreasonably on a regular basis, only to be tied down again as clarity develops. Minutes and notes from this time demonstrate this was particularly true of this period in the project. In exploring the thematic concern participants were seen to consider the breadth of related issues and to attempt, seemingly, to do justice to all of them. I did not regard this as a problem so much as something all concerned would have to keep track of and manage well. The process of internal investigation was particularly valuable for me as in meeting the needs of the project I was also able to familiarise myself with the complex and (at that time) somewhat foreign world of the University. RMIT is particularly varied in this regard given its dual sector (TAFE and Higher Education) role.*

*It was during these early developments that I first became aware of the power and influence I alone would play over the eventual outcomes of the project, by nature of my expert status and the insider position as solo researcher. This awareness was valuable from an action-research framework and something that would continually appear and be considered over the project lifespan. A particular reward of this period in MYLO was my growing cognition of the extraordinary need and support expressed across the relevant*
communities for what we were doing and what we hoped to achieve. My confidence, in both the project and my own capacity, lifted substantially as I moved the project forward.

4.3 Consultation Strategy

Creating a strategy for consultation raised fundamental questions of what to include and, implicitly, what to leave out of the investigation. This difficult balance steered the project and limited the scope of the study. The project team consciously sought to restrict and target consultation in a manner that might offer rich and appropriate data without reaching into areas outside the parameters of the research. This process required awareness on the part of the team that the project would be directly affected by judgments made at this early stage, and that the role and opinions of the researcher would hold great sway in the eventual outcomes. This was also a pragmatic and professional mechanism for ensuring that the project remained manageable and realistic within the time and resources available.

Through reflective discussions and reporting between the primary researcher, the project team and the MYLO network, issues of content were considered and re-considered. The literature on marginalization and engagement (see Chapter Two) supported the notion that the fundamental challenge facing the project was recruiting and maintaining those young people who had long ago lost touch with any form of education and/or lost confidence in their ability to participate in formal learning programs. Employing the expertise of researcher and others involved, it was determined that the MYLO should promote a particular focus on concepts of engagement, environment and educational styles. Supported by literature and the expertise of participants, these bridges between
youth work practice and educational approaches were identified as the pillars supporting a successful learning intervention for the MYLO target group.

It became necessary for the project to seek a pool of data in each of these key areas. MYLO could then seek to support the data collected with clear notions of what learning content should or could be included in the model to be developed. Once again this would be, at least in part, a suggestive process framed by the influence and opinions of the researcher and project team. It was recognised that content ideas put forward for inclusion in the consultation strategy would directly influence the outcomes, and related results would be accordingly influenced. The reference group felt, however, that with due caution this process was a legitimate tool to seek ratification on key areas for learning model content (Reference Group Minutes, August 2001). It was also determined at this point that wherever possible consultation participants would be encouraged to put forward their own, unsolicited ideas regarding appealing learning content.

Having explored issues of what information would be sought, a process for consultation was considered, debated and eventually ratified in a skeleton consultation strategy (Durable Record: Appendix Five). The strategy unsurprisingly identified the key participants as young people from the target group and professionals working with those same young people. Data generated by these individuals would also be supported by opinions from interested parties elsewhere within the MYLO and RMIT networks. The primary consultation tools decided upon were questionnaires (initially one for young people and another for youth professionals), supported by focus groups covering similar content. Anticipating that some young people may not feel confident with the expectations of a focus group, and may not possess the literacy/numeracy skills to
complete a questionnaire, it was determined that individual interviews could also be undertaken, employing the questionnaire as a guide (Durable Record: Appendix Five).

A draft youth questionnaire (Durable Record: Appendix Six) was drawn up in a relaxed and highly informal style, using a mixture open and closed questions. A preamble was drawn up explaining what the questionnaire was seeking and for what purpose, and further explaining that advice was being sought to make sure the eventual learning models were interesting and relevant to the young people MYLO sought. The questionnaire asked for open comment on ‘Making MYLO fun’ and ‘Making MYLO worth coming back to’ (Engagement and Environment). Participants were then asked to rank ideas for learning models in order of importance and relevance to themselves and a system was drawn up to gauge the importance and likely popularity of the four model suggestions. It was made clear that these model ideas were only possibilities and that participants could rule them out by weight of numbers. Finally, simple circle-answer questions were asked regarding appropriate numbers, regularity and venues for learning models (education styles).

The reference group held some discussion and debate about employing a separate and slightly more sophisticated questionnaire for youth work professionals where the language might be altered to appeal to the differing audience (Reference Group Minutes, August 2001). A separate draft ‘adults’ questionnaire was developed (Durable Record: Appendix Seven). It was determined, however, that adult participants would be asked the same series of open questions, which were refined and improved in a final, consolidated questionnaire for use with all respondents (Durable Record: Appendix Eight). The ‘about you’ section of the questionnaire enabled the project team to differentiate between adults and young respondents.
Focus Group Prompts were designed to generate individual responses and group discussion on the established themes (Durable Record: Appendix Nine). As these discussions would be steered by the researcher and offer greater flexibility than the questionnaires it was agreed caution and consistency would be critical when writing up and analyzing this data. Key themes for focus group discussion included education styles, engagement styles, environments, model ideas, and aspects of model presentation. In each of these areas participants were asked not only what they felt would work, but just as importantly what would not. What to avoid was given the same critical standing as what to include. In addition, focus group prompts included assessments of the popularity, relevance and likely barriers to success in the four examples of learning ideas.

Interview prompts mirrored those questions asked in the questionnaire and took the form of an informal discussion. This was planned in such a manner that it might be possible to record the responses in the questionnaire format and add these to the broader data collection. Consistency was seen as key to easily combining the data when it came to reduction and analysis. This consistency ensured that the researcher could approach analysis with confidence, particularly in the event that assistance should be provided in the collection of responses.

Each of the tools was drafted for consideration and reflection by the MYLO project team and the MYLO reference group. Implications of inclusion and exclusion were vigorously explored, as were issues of accessibility and relevance. Similarly, the manner in which data could and would be interpreted following the consultations was discussed and reviewed at length. This was a process of negotiation and concession, and was once
again influenced significantly by the time and resources available to the project. After several drafts and several meetings of varying sizes, the consultation strategy and consultation tools were ratified by the MYLO Reference Group (Reference Group Minutes, August 2001).

Audience was once again considered and, employing those partnerships engineered and maintained throughout the project to this point, the researcher set out to gather findings. Questionnaires and a Plain Language Statement (Durable Record: Appendix Ten) were made available in key youth services, supported by an introduction and explanation by the MYLO researcher. It was determined that questionnaires be provided widely in unlimited numbers, rather than to a strictly managed audience of respondents. Focus Groups were planned through key partners and their client groups and set up to coincide with the timelines for questionnaire completion. Youth professionals associated with the consultation were advised, and through them their clients, of the availability of the interview alternative. These steps were supported by ‘active marketing’ on the part of the researcher, physically seeking out potential respondents in the waiting areas of partner agencies.

**Consultation Strategy Personal Reflections**

*It was during the development of the consultation strategy that my personal influence over the project, first identified in the project development stage, became of critical importance. I was conscious of the delicate balance between imparting my expertise and experience on the strategy without governing it or manipulating the outcomes too greatly. The reflective role of the reference group was very useful during this time, and I took the opportunity to regularly remind that forum of this challenge and defer to their shared expertise as a counteracting balance for my own.*
As is always the case in tightly funded initiatives, another balance to be struck was pragmatism versus depth. The realities of resources and time are fundamental factors in what may be done and the parameters to be laid down. In terms of youth consultations in particular, pragmatism and a desire for the project to achieve must be balanced with rigour and genuine commitment to open findings. It is my experience and a truth of the research community that when pushed in a given direction, results can be made to meet desires. When the target group includes young people lacking confidence and skills this is ever more the case.

I sought high levels of rigour and validity throughout the consultation strategy development, and consistently sought affirmation from the reference group and peers. In particular I stepped carefully over the focus group mechanism, in the knowledge that whilst rich in quality, this device is vulnerable to over facilitation and questionable findings as a result. It proved quite difficult, at times, encouraging the reference group to analyse this process instead of deferring to my expertise.

4.4 Consultation Results

A total of 140 participants took part in the consultation process. Of these, 70 percent completed surveys (98 respondents), 25.5 percent took part in focus group discussions (36 respondents, 7 groups) and 4.5 percent were interviewed (6 respondents). The data collection resulted in a substantial body of both quantitative and qualitative information.

With the assistance of the Centre for Youth Affairs Research and Development (YARD), quantitative survey data was reduced and displayed through SPSS tables where frequency distributions were clarified and percentage responses detailed. This data was
also disaggregated according to the age, gender and entry point of respondents. The qualitative aspects of the survey were also displayed as text and coded according to theme.

Focus group and interviews records were reduced through the clustering and coding of responses under each area of inquiry, deductive themes according to key areas of inquiry and inductive themes according to emergent ideas. A summary of the reduced quantitative data (Durable Record: Appendix Eleven) and reduced qualitative data from all sources (Durable Record: Appendix Twelve) was then taken to a transparent, reflective forum with the MYLO reference group. Commonalities were discussed and interpreted before conclusions were agreed and drawn up.

The following passages reflect these consultation findings, as agreed and discussed by the MYLO Reference Group, emerging from discussions with focus group facilitators and consideration of the reduced quantitative and qualitative results (Appendices 11 and 12).

4.4.1 Consultation Results: Education Styles
Results regarding educational styles were consistent with prevailing literature (refer to Chapter Two) and the researcher’s own experience in working with highly marginalised young people. Reduced consultation data explained that facilitators or teachers required respectful, non-judgmental attitudes towards participants if the learning program was to be successful in attracting and retaining young people. Consistent advice from workers and young people themselves also suggested that workers needed to be aware of and sensitive to the skills and needs of individual young people rather than assume common characteristics across the group. It was apparent that a meaningful one-to-one
connection was necessary to maintain interest and enthusiasm, and that generic approaches to learning might quickly be dismissed.

Incentives were seen as critical for encouraging first-time and repeat participation. Focus group discussions explored this issue and it was clear that additional motivations for participation not only offered additional appeal to the program but engendered a sense of reward for stepping into an educational sphere. Recognising, once again, the negative experiences and attitudes regarding education common to much of the target group, such advice was highly valued. Suggestions for incentives uniformly included the provision of food, and often included additional ideas such as drinks, groceries, transport tickets and shelter.

Consistent responses were also received regarding the diversity of activities necessary to maintain the interest of the target group. Focus group references to short attention spans and a tendency to ‘bore easily’ were supported by ideas about combinations of activities and delivery styles that varied within learning sessions themselves and from week to week. Further, the educational expectations of the program needed to be highly flexible with regard to attendance and assessment, with many consultation participants suggesting that should strict demands be placed on learners in this initial environment they would quickly withdraw.

4.4.2 Consultation Results: Structure
Consultation participants generally agreed that some structure and/or discipline was necessary in the creation of a model. Focus group discussions pointed to this offering a necessary separation between the learning program and other programs or services that young people may be engaged with. Specifically, respondents pointed to a regular time
and place for model activity that could be regarded as specific to the learning program and, as a result, an opportunity for a different ‘headspace’. A sense was required that for a given period, at a given place, there would be a unique and consistent learning opportunity.

Within this learning opportunity, however, flexibility and self-determination was absolutely essential. Given that the lives of young people in the target group are often so complicated, and so driven by crisis management, it was a fundamental prerequisite that the learning program not apply penalties or disadvantage to young people missing sessions. Perhaps even more importantly, consistent advice was gathered regarding those concepts of self-determination and participatory decision-making. It was common across the collected data that choice must be provided in all planning and decisions, for all aspects of participation in the program. The reduced data pointed to regular opportunities for young people to own, determine and change both group and personal goals.

Additional information was similarly analysed regarding session times and practices. Specifically, the majority of consultation participants sought one weekly session (or a maximum of two). Sessions needed to take place in familiar and unthreatening environments, ideally close to other services or facilities useful to young people in the target group. Focus Group participants explained that the learning program should also start after midday, in keeping with the time clocks of those participants sought. Recognising, once again, the issues of short attention spans and the negative experiences of educational environments, regular breaks would be required and sessions should extend for no more than two to three hours on a given day.
4.4.3 Consultations Results: What to Avoid
Throughout the consultation process, particularly the focus groups, MYLO was regularly reminded of the fact that homeless and other marginalised young people had often had serious difficulties with the formal education system. For a host of varying reasons, the experience of secondary education had been particularly negative and opinions of all education and learning environments had been deeply tarnished. As such, it was felt great care should be taken to distance MYLO from the secondary school style. This 'distance' included several program characteristics that MYLO should actively avoid. Facilitators, at all costs it seemed, should "not be like school teachers". The physical environment should not resemble a secondary classroom. There should not be any formal assessment processes (at least in the first instance) and the formal relationships between teachers and students should be abandoned.

In keeping with the advice collected on structure and educational styles, it was made clear throughout the consultation that any program inflexibility, high demands or perceived formality would work against the success of the initiative. When asked what to avoid, consultation respondents generally suggested these same points time and again. Of additional interest was the advice that if the young people involved could not quickly develop a respectful and personal connection with the learning model facilitator, it was felt they would quickly lose interest. As such, MYLO should avoid waiting too long to engage with learners on a personal and individual level.

4.4.4 Consultations Results: Additional Learnings
Additional data was gathered through the open ended questions (both questionnaire and focus group) regarding key project elements and pooled for consideration during the model creation stage. Physical locations were suggested that generally included spaces young people knew and with which they felt familiarity. Characteristics of good and bad
facilitators were suggested by focus group participants, with a particular emphasis on effective facilitation being linked to traditional youth worker skills such as empathy, active listening and informality. In particular it was felt that the presentation of ‘experts’ would not work, and that ‘good’ facilitators would be willing to seek expertise and understanding from participants rather than simply deliver their own knowledge.

The notion of rewarding young people for their participation in the learning model was explored, and findings were once again quite consistent. Focus group participants felt that acknowledging the contributions and substantial steps undertaken by young people just by being part of such a program was appropriate. In particular, formal acknowledgements such as a ceremony on completion and presentation of certificates were seen as highly valuable and potentially popular amongst the target group. In addition, occasional recreational rewards (described as ‘treats’) might also acknowledge efforts and work as part of the variety that was sought in the week-to-week delivery of the learning program.

4.4.5 Consultation Results: Learning Model Content
With regard to learning needs and model content, key ideas were each analysed according to consultation results. The four primary suggestions were each met with much enthusiasm. Quantitative results from the questionnaires offered sound direction and information that was later teased out through analysis of focus group results. Two proposals were particularly popular with over 90% of questionnaire respondents supporting an Information Technology based learning model, and over 80% supporting a Peer-Support learning model. Approximately 70% of respondents supported both the recreational and email/internet based learning models.
The focus groups shed greater clarity on these individual concepts, where similar support for each idea was complemented by additional suggestions or qualifications. There was strong and consistent advice that a combination of learning models rather than a single, specific type, might best engage and maintain the interest of the target group. Results suggested a combination might also provide a platform for building confidence and gauging interest for more specific, personal learning interests. It was felt that if given a variety of content in a variety of styles, participants might have greater opportunity to discover their own strengths or preferences and through this, take steps in their own learning development. This advice was especially valuable given the overarching project theme of enhancing learning opportunities for individual young people.

MYLO was warned repeatedly throughout this component of the consultation that guest presenters or designated ‘experts’ required those same skills of communication and respectful interaction required of facilitators to win the confidence and interest of participants. A similarly valuable finding of this part of the consultation was the suggestion by several respondents that recreational opportunities would be interesting and engaging, but perhaps better as an occasional or surprise aspect of the learning program.

**Consultation Results Personal Reflections**

The consultation outcomes were a particularly rewarding achievement, particularly given the struggles in getting the process right. Consistent and legitimate findings were uncovered that, whilst generally in keeping with knowledge and expectations, also offered new and valuable insight. A new clarity was generated for the project, supported by surprisingly practical and tangible advice. Similarly, the consultation results offered a
welcome reassurance of the community need, waiting audience and willing participants for a learning model of this type.

4.5 Model Creation

Creation of the MYLO Model involved the triangulation of data generated as a result of the consultation strategy with the literature and findings of the project development stage and, finally, the resources and partnerships available to the project. The challenge within this was to create a practical, applicable learning model that would recognise the broad consistencies identified whilst remaining manageable within the time and facilities at MYLO's disposal.

Partnerships created before and during the consultation process became critical as a model was developed. Program delivery and learning outcomes were shared between MYLO and other providers, avoiding duplication of services and recognising that learning needs for the target group could not be met independently of other pressing concerns. The partnership development achieved early in the life of the project, whilst useful during the consultations themselves, was tested in the day-to-day realities of service delivery.

Through reflection, analysis, planning and action, the researcher, project team and reference group cyclically identified key model elements until a theoretically functioning product was developed. Data collected throughout the project to this point was represented in the rationale for the draft design. Those concepts identified as most critical for the target group (engagement, environment, educational styles) were given due focus and the eventual model represented a balance between identified needs and appropriate service methodologies.
The MYLO Graphic (Figure Two, below) offers a visual representation of the model as a tool for simplifying and explaining the fundamental elements and their interaction with each other at the point of engagement. Details of the content are explored below.

**Figure Two: The MYLO Model Graphic**

4.5.1 The MYLO Platform

The Platform is the core of the MYLO Model and the opportunity to represent many of the research findings. It was developed as the centre-pin of all project activity, from which all learning opportunities and outcomes were eventually derived. Based on a facilitated peer-support model, the platform took the form of a weekly meeting of young people in a space that met identified needs at a time advised through the consultations. It was envisaged that in the platform young people begin to identify and develop their own group and personal learning needs. Should the group deem it appropriate, they would be supported with a group project that might offer individual and communal learning outcomes.
The platform design sought to address those central findings of the consultation period regarding structure, flexibility, self-determination and connection to both group and individuals. Those elements of good practice identified were examined and tested in the weekly group environment. Rewards, incentives and regular breaks were offered. Assessment, formality and attendance demands were avoided. Specific learning needs of individuals were identified and hopefully met outside the platform environment after referral to specific learning streams. Referrals were designed and directed by basic learning plans, developed in negotiations between MYLO, the young person themselves and (where appropriate) the partner provider.

Recognising the platform as the critical ‘point of engagement’ with the target audience, both platform and group project (should one be established) were highly flexible and ongoing, regardless of a person’s involvement in any of the learning streams. It was anticipated that MYLO, delivered in such a manner, might encourage the development of those social skills and confidence levels that were identified as critical both prior and during the consultation stage. Such factors were regarded as necessary pre-cursors to success in broader learning goals for many of the young people experiencing crisis and detachment from education.

4.5.2 Pathways Planning Learning Stream
Members of the MYLO Platform were encouraged, if interested and when ready, to begin considering their personal pathways development. The pathways learning stream was designed to assist young people in determining goals and developing a plan to achieve these. The focus of such plans was to include, whilst not being limited to, thoughts about employment, education and training. Provision of support in this (and all) the MYLO learning streams was sensitive to the complex circumstances of those in the
target group, and may start with very simple goals about living skills and personal safety before extending to include career issues.

4.5.3 I.T. Support and Email and Web Support Learning Streams
In recognition of the consistent identification of Information Technology as a popular and appropriate learning interest for young people from the target group, two specific learning streams were proposed for young people wishing to explore this area further. Reflective discussion among project partners and the reference group identified what particular drivers encouraged interest in this field in the hope of clarifying delivery and outcomes specifications. It was felt that such enthusiasm, whilst it may include some awareness of the omnipresence of IT in education, employment and training opportunities, was more likely a reflection of the community wide interest in computer-based skills and accessing the Internet.

As a result, where young people in MYLO Platform sessions demonstrated interest in enhancing IT skills and learning new applications, an IT learning plan was developed linking MYLO, the young person and an appropriate IT provider. For those not necessarily interested in advancing their technical skills but demonstrating enthusiasm for email and web surfing, a separate learning stream in the form of an online group was available. Both options included learning goals however, as with all the learning streams and all aspects of MYLO, these goals were realistic, manageable and open to change.

4.5.4 Personal Development Learning Stream
A final, somewhat generalised learning stream was created for those young people participating in the MYLO Platforms with learning needs outside the realms of pathways planning or IT related activities. Where someone was not interested in the planning process but was able to express a different learning or personal development goal, this
stream was created as an option. If, for example, someone was seeking music training or anger management advice or a yoga teacher, they were supported to take up these learning interests through this stream. Once again a three way personal learning plan was created. This stream provided some of the flexibility and responsiveness alluded to in the consultation results.

**MYLO Model Creation Personal Reflections**

After a rigorous, if somewhat laborious process of reflection and analysis I felt great optimism for the credibility and likely success of the model. During this period I submitted an abstract for an International Youth Services Conference at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow which was accepted. I wrote and presented a paper on the MYLO Project in September 2001, immediately before the trial period began (Durable Record: Appendix Thirteen). The affirmation and consolidation I gained through this experience was reflected in my confidence moving into trial preparation.

**4.6 The MYLO Model Trial**

**4.6.1 Planning The Trial**

The MYLO Project had seventeen weeks to trial and map the newly created model in action. The most difficult aspect of this period in the project was determining what to plan and what not plan. Respecting the advice and research base demands that self-determination be sought at all times seemed in conflict with the extraordinarily tight schedule permitted for the trial. Preparations sought to allow for (and adequately prepare for) a multitude of possible directions whilst imposing too many pre-determined values or expectations.
A plan was generated that identified a number of probable paths the trial might take, and included a number of unavoidable presumptions deemed necessary to increase the likelihood of the group's success. It was certain, for example, that the group would be asked to determine their own group rules early in the trial, something that may not have arisen without prompting. Similarly, venue rules were in place and adhered to wherever MYLO was held. Participants also needed to be aware from the outset of the short-term nature of the trial and that plans made by the group needed to be practical within that period. By balancing such minimal interventions and opening as many possibilities as possible, MYLO sought to adequately prepare for the trial without disempowering the participants and process owners. When partnerships were formalised and decisions finalized, flyers were produced (Durable Record: Appendix Fourteen) and all previous partnering agencies were contacted to generate interest within the target group.

4.6.2 Preparing Model Components: Platform
Recognising the need outlined in the consultations for a youth-friendly venue, linked to other useful supports and centrally located, a partnership was forged with the Salvation Army's Urban Heart Community Centre. After negotiation with a number of possible venues, the project team settled on this option for a number of reasons. Aside from meeting all of the obvious expectations, Urban Heart also had an existing learning space on the premises that was non-threatening, non-academic and appropriately proportioned. This suitability was greatly enhanced by the availability of several Internet-enabled computers in the available space as well as on-site access to support workers, emergency relief facilities, public showers and a comfortable community lounge. A mutually suitable time was negotiated and the venue was confirmed.
4.6.3 Preparing Model Components: Pathways Planning
During the consultation stage of the project and after some promotion of the work being undertaken, MYLO secured additional resources to pilot a Managed Pathways Program in line with the style of the MYLO Model. This was accompanied by some funding (from the Department of Employment, Education and Training) that allowed for a part-time pathways worker. As a result, this fundamental learning stream was bolstered and the pathways resources became, in effect, the primary partner provider to MYLO. In the absence of such resources this role would have fallen to services (in particular JPET services) elsewhere in the community. Instead, MYLO was able to manage and support links to this learning stream internally. The MYLO Researcher and the Pathways worker were able to share facilitation of the sessions and share management of Personal Learning Plans (Durable Record: Appendix Fifteen) and a range of Pathways Support processes (Durable Record: Appendix Sixteen).

4.6.4 Preparing Model Components: IT, Email and Web Support
A powerful, existing partnership with Youthnet, an IT skills and web access service for marginalised young people, was put to good use in planning the IT streams. Representation of Youthnet on the MYLO reference group ensured familiarity with MYLO’s aims and objectives and allowed us to confidently link the two programs. MYLO participants were able to gain advice and use resources at Youthnet through co-ordinated Personal Learning Plans. Support arrangements included anything from learning how use a keyboard and mouse to more advanced PC applications.

4.6.5 Preparing Model Components: Personalised Learning
A database of varying organisations, including services, community programs and educational institutions, was set up for use in the event a MYLO Platform participant wished to take up a learning plan outside of pathways and IT.
4.7 Seventeen Weeks of MYLO

The MYLO workers (group facilitators) developed a range of basic tools to assist with data collection during the trial. Particularly important were the simple contact forms created to summarize what information could be reasonable asked of participants at their first contact (Durable Record: Durable Record: Appendix Seventeen) and the simple journal tool to record the basic outcomes of each session (Durable Record: Durable Record: Appendix Eighteen). The following reflections on each week of the trial are taken directly from these records.

Week One: Wednesday 31st October 2001

The first of the MYLO Platform sessions was held. Key activities included discussing the short-term nature of the MYLO trial and the various possibilities that the group could and should achieve for its members. ‘Welcome to MYLO’ forms were provided that explained the trial in plain language (Durable Record: Durable Record: Appendix Nineteen) A particular focus was placed on encouraging these early members to consider what they felt could be best achieved in the initial stages of the project. This was a very successful session developing the first-draft of group rules (and a theory for policing these) as well as some early thoughts on a group project. An introduction to the ‘CBD Pathways Project’ was presented. Much time was spent discussing what the members might seek to achieve through participation in the platform sessions. Four participants attended.

Week Two: Wednesday 7th November 2001

The second platform session began with a review of the basics expectations of the MYLO trial followed by a review of the first week’s activities. The members considered, discussed and ratified the self-determined group rules before discussing the external
Learning Streams and possible ideas for recreational activities. Further discussion was held regarding the possibility of guest presenters, however it was felt the group needed to decide on a topic for the communal project before this could be confirmed. The strongest idea for a group project was a single-issue magazine that all participants could contribute to if they so chose. Five participants attended (including two new members, for a total of six).

**Week Three: Wednesday 14th November 2001**

This session included another review of the key facts about MYLO (particularly for the new members) and a review of Platform activities thus far. Confirmation that the magazine idea should go ahead was followed by a general focus on ideas for content. Animated group discussions over guest presenters to assist with the group project and specific tasks for individuals. The platform facilitators used this session to strongly promote opportunities for learning support outside the MYLO sessions. Seven participants attended (including three new members, for a total of nine).

**Week Four: Wednesday 21st November 2001**

The arrival of many new members saw the Platform really gain momentum at week four. After reviewing group rules and the basic facts about the MYLO Trial, a very strong session followed focussing on content for the magazine and people’s preferences for support outside the platform sessions. An excellent opportunity for discussions, the session included a broad discourse on issues confronting group members and how these may be represented in the MYLO magazine. Platform facilitators focused on securing pathways appointments and email-support appointments outside the group sessions. Twelve participants attended (including five new members, for a total of fourteen).
Week Five: Wednesday 28\textsuperscript{th} November 2001

The arrival of many new members and a large group of previous participants made for a challenging session. This week proved to be an unexpected test of the facilitator’s skills (and also of the small space being used for the platform sessions). A mixture of loud, boisterous and overtly sexual behaviour was exhibited by the group. Where focus could be maintained, there was a general assessment of who was doing what and how everyone was progressing. Confirmation of a guest presenter to discuss the legal issues associated with printing a magazine. Eighteen participants attended (including seven new members, for a total of twenty-one).

Week Six: Wednesday 5\textsuperscript{th} December 2001

Consistent attendance by a core group of participants provided a relaxed and enthusiastic session. The group appeared to naturally determine a focus on reviewing decisions and ideas from the previous week before discussing new ideas and next steps. An enforced reflection on the group’s own rules was undertaken before the session got underway, with a particular emphasis on the previous week. The group reviewed and acknowledged the flaws in the previous week’s activities and uniformly owned the decision to redress those elements. The group also reflected well on their progress with the group project and the external learning streams. Many worked on their contributions within the platform session. Fourteen participants attended (including four new members, for a total of twenty-five).

Week Seven: Wednesday 12\textsuperscript{th} December 2001

At the request of participants, Week Seven was an ‘Expert Learning Session’ where Sarah Nicholson (from the Youthlaw Service) was a guest presenter discussing issues of
importance to the group project. There was a particular focus on defamation and racial vilification law as they apply to the media, stemming from ideas for magazine contributions that may have fallen outside such laws. Excellent interaction was demonstrated between the group and the presenter. A focus on progress with articles and other contributions after the presentation was completed. A participatory group exercise was conducted to determine the title for the magazine. Thirteen participants attended (including four new members, for a total of twenty-nine).

**Week Eight: Wednesday 19th December 2001**

The final session before a break for Christmas saw the return of a few faces that had been missing for a couple of sessions and the disappearance of some among the most regular. Once again a very relaxed and enthusiastic session was held where all parties appeared to own the MYLO process. Work on group projects contributions and a final decision on the magazine title. *Keep Walking* was seen to reflect a perception common across the group that doors were forever closed and opportunities always a few steps away. The session ended with a review of progress and tasks for the Christmas break. Fourteen participants attended (including five new members, for a total of thirty-four).

**Weeks Nine and Ten: The Christmas and New Year break.**

**Week Eleven: Wednesday 9th January 2002**

A smaller group than those previous, week eleven was a particularly focused and productive session. Conscious of the approaching deadlines for the group project, most attention was paid to specific contributions by individuals. Six participants attended (including two new members, for a total of thirty-six).
Week Twelve: Wednesday 16th January 2002

The second ‘Expert Learning Session’ with a guest presenter, on this occasion Ben Butler (a freelance writer and editor from the *Big Issue* magazine). The focus was on the editing process and the reasons behind changes to contributions before a publication goes to print. Once again great interaction occurred between the group and the presenter. A confident exchange of ideas followed the departure of our guest and the focused changed to once again preparing contributions for *Keep Walking*. Eight participants attended (including four new members, for a total of forty).

Week Thirteen: Wednesday 23rd January 2002

The session focused on planning, particularly exploring the layout, printing and launch of the MYLO Magazine. The planning process was particularly fluid, expressive and confident this day. Tasks and activities focused, once again, on completing contributions and reviewing the involvement of group members that had lost contact with MYLO. A final decision was reached on the recreational exercise for the week before the launch (Go Karting). Six participants attended (including two new members, for a total of forty-two).

Week Fourteen: Wednesday 30th January 2002

As for week thirteen, this session predominantly focussed on planning the layout, printing and launching of *Keep Walking*, with the addition of some group discussions about external MYLO Learning Streams. Typical of the sessions late in the trial, week fourteen was small, focused and highly productive. Six participants attended (including one new member, for a total of forty-three).
Week Fifteen: Wednesday 6th February 2002

The final ‘normal’ MYLO session was attended by a small group of dedicated parties. The contributions completed, much of this session time was spent discussing the launch of the magazine and finding members of MYLO who had been otherwise engaged in the last weeks but may be able to participate in the launch of the project. Five participants attended.

Week Sixteen: Wednesday 13th February 2002 (Recreational Excursion: Go Karts)

A Go-Karting expedition to Port Melbourne was held one week before the launch (as a reward for participation in MYLO). This exercise was employed by the MYLO Project Officer as the first opportunity for post-trial evaluations with participants. Sadly, after much enthusiasm, the event was poorly attended. This was perhaps related to the expectations of independent travel (away from the city area). The afternoon was great fun for the four individuals that did participate.

Figure Three: Platform Attendance Figures Weeks 1-8 and 11-15*

*Please Note: Weeks 9 and 10 covered the Christmas and New Year Break

The launch took the form of a final farewell for the young people who had participated in the MYLO Trial. Session activities included presentation of certificates from RMIT (Durable Record: Appendix Twenty) and, of course, the public launch of young people’s work in the form of the *Keep Walking* magazine (Durable Record: Appendix Twenty-One). Nine group members were able to attend and receive their rewards. Several more were unable and apologised, opting to pick up their magazines and certificates up at a later point. The young people owned and thoroughly enjoyed the experience of the launch. This opportunity was also used by the MYLO Project Officer to undertake participant evaluations of the MYLO Trial.

**MYLO Trial Personal Reflections**

The journal and cyclical reflections applied throughout the trial offered ample opportunity to consider my personal perspectives on the strengths and shortcomings of the trial period. Most apparent during this period was my growing confidence with the model as a tool to engage homeless learners and with my own skills as a facilitator and coordinator. There were peaks and troughs, most notably with the numbers attending week by week and in the cohesiveness of the group, but generally each week offered a progression in the model’s development and apparent success. The parallel process of individual support through the learning streams was particularly noteworthy and mirrored the suggestions of young people during consultations that if the hurdle of engagement (and fear) could be overcome, these most marginalized of young people would seize the opportunity to explore their own pathways. As the primary researcher I recognised my own personal investment in the model may have influenced my interpretation of the trial.
processes, so relied heavily on the reference group and my pathways support colleague (and co-facilitator of platform sessions) for objectivity in this respect.

4.8 Outcomes and Evaluation

As the close of the trial approached, and in keeping with the action-research model, the reference group sought to reflect upon and analyse the process of the project to date to plan and enact an evaluation strategy. Revisiting the thematic concern, the key research questions and the cyclical learning throughout the project, points for evaluation were considered, debated and eventually ratified (Reference Group Minutes, February 2002). We targeted ‘insiders’ to the project, namely participants from the MYLO Model Trial and members of the Reference Group. The evaluation was to contribute to demonstrating the value of our work in the report and strategic recommendations to follow.

Quantitative results were verified through various record-keeping means and displayed in clear numeric forms. Of particular interest were the numbers reflecting overall participants, returning participants (‘repeat custom’), pathways support participants and specific outcomes for individuals linked to their participation in MYLO. Numeric outcomes were combined with notes from group meetings over the course of the trial and analysed by the reference group in a one-off discussion (Durable Record: Appendix Twenty Two). Salient points and commonalities reduced from this discussion can be found under the heading Reflections on the Trial Outcomes below.

Qualitative interview prompts were developed for participants that explored the relative success of the trial against the advice in the initial consultations and our expectations of success for individuals (Durable Record: Appendix Twenty Three). These prompts explored how comfortable and inviting platform sessions were, how welcoming the
environment was, what benefits were apparent through participation in the group and how successful MYLO was at attracting their notoriously difficult target audience. Prompts then extended into personal outcomes as a result of participation, personal reflections on the model itself and ideas for progressing the model beyond the trial. Responses were reduced and coded into commonalities or themes, with due reference to exceptions to such commonalities. In reporting, quotes were used that most closely expressed identified themes (Durable Record: Appendix Three).

Focus groups prompts were also developed for the practitioners of the reference group that looked beyond the individual to the success of the project as a whole against our project goal (Durable Record: Appendix Twenty Four). Reference group respondents were encouraged to consider how well the model reflected the initial consultation findings and responded to learning along the research path. This was also an opportunity to critique the reflective practice model, including the role of the reference group and others in managing the research. As with the participant interviews, data from these evaluation exercises was reduced and presented as themes in the report (Durable Record: Appendix Three).

4.8.1 Quantitative Trial Outcomes
Employing the strictly maintained quantitative data collection methods (particularly the weekly record keeping and the pathways and referral support records) a number of numeric outcomes of the trial were available. A summary table reflecting this data is provided in the Durable Record (Durable Record: Appendix Twenty Two).

Participants in the MYLO Platform ranged in age from 14 to 25 years, with an average (mean) age of just over eighteen years. Over the period of the trial a total of 43 young
people participated, a figure far in excess of the anticipated total of 20 participants. Weekly attendance varied from 4 to 18 participants, with an average attendance of 8.4 young people in each session (again above the anticipated average of 6 participants per week over the life of the trial).

**Figure Four: Substantive Outcomes for MYLO Platform Participants**

As expressed in Figure Four (above) records show that thirty-six of the forty-three participants in platform sessions either came back to another platform session or made appointments outside the MYLO group for pathways support. This represents more than eighty percent (83.7 %) of total contacts choosing to participate further. Thirty young people, or seventy percent of total contacts, took at least the first step into pathways support. This included at the very least identifying barriers to education and employment, a process the initial research suggests is a challenge in and of itself for the MYLO target group. Twenty-six individuals joined the email support learning stream and/or developed IT learning plans, including at least eight first-time email users (some participants were not explicit about their historical use of email).
Tallies were also maintained for those more time consuming and dedicated commitments demonstrated by participants, regarded by many in the project as the greatest successes of the intervention. Some eighteen young people participated in the group project: the development and production of the *Keep Walking* Magazine. As expressed in Figure Five (above), thirteen pathways participants enrolled in formal education courses (including VCE, CAE literacy studies, Alternative Year 10 courses and others). Five pathways clients found work whilst being supported by MYLO. 11 participants were supported into alternative learning pathways (or support) programs including one who enrolled in an informal IT course and one who enrolled in a summer tutoring programming in anticipation of a return to school the following year. Six participants were supported into creative arts and/or personal development programs, including writing, dance and music classes.

4.8.2 Reflections on the Trial Outcomes
In a once-off extraordinary meeting, the MYLO Reference Group reviewed notes from the reflective sessions throughout the trial in combination with the quantitative outcomes
from the trial. It was thought that the evaluation and, in particular, the eventual project report would benefit from an informed review of this data. The results were coded and condensed before being ratified by the group and, later, included in the MYLO project report (Durable Record: Appendix Three). A summary of these reflections and learnings is provided below.

In addition to the groups and personal outcomes already explained, a number of characteristics of the MYLO target group became apparent over the course of the model trial. It was clear, for example, that the realities of daily survival for homeless participants meant that appointments, tasks and attendance at the MYLO Platform sessions could not always be made a priority. Moving from one crisis accommodation option to another, often at very short notice, consistently arose to impact on learning opportunities (Reference Group Minutes, December 2001). Similarly, legal issues (contact with police, court appearances and incarceration) were regularly seen to restrict the capacity for even the most dedicated participants to maintain their involvement. A number of MYLO members also lived either full-time or occasionally in ‘squat’ housing and displayed the inconsistencies in availability so common to this difficult lifestyle.

The MYLO Model was prepared with these conditions in mind and, as a result, was careful not to exert any negative consequences on those individuals that failed to meet agreed arrangements. All parties were consistently reminded that no penalties applied in MYLO, that every contribution was voluntary and that every attempt to participate could only lead to positive outcomes. In this way, those most marginalised young people were engaged and re-engaged in MYLO activities in the full knowledge that they would not lose face or importance if they were not able to follow through on every occasion. Whilst perhaps obvious to practitioners of youth work, this approach is not common in
educational settings and was seen by the Platform members and facilitators as a great strength. The minutes and trial records also suggested the need for a longer operational period, as in many instances the MYLO project was over before participants were able to return.

The vast majority of advice provided to the project during consultation and strategy development was to prove accurate and effective. Respectful communication techniques, non-judgemental attitudes, appreciation for the broad variety of learning needs and capabilities and personalised communication with individuals was seen to improve both participation levels and outcomes. It was also apparent that the productivity of the learning sessions was greatly enhanced when the ratio of workers to participants was lower than the initial guideline of a 1:10 maximum. It is a learning of the MYLO trial that generous space must be provided (the venue for MYLO became troublesome when more than 12 or 13 attended) and that a worker/student ratio of 1:6 or 1:7 is most appropriate for the MYLO cohort.

Further reflection on the week-to-week experience of the MYLO Trial suggests that success in reaching so many young people was greatly supported by the young people’s enthusiasm for the model. The advertisements were well placed and well received, however the real basis for the trial’s logistical success was the word-of-mouth advertising that occurred within the community of marginalised young people. MYLO was able to generate significant goodwill and when participants were successfully engaged they, in turn, encouraged others to attend. Recognising this, the facilitators consistently promoted this form of advertising throughout the trial. The trial process demonstrates that this mechanism should not be underestimated in the event of any future MYLO activities.
Finally, the reference group felt that a review of the MYLO trial would not be complete without recognition of the clear and evident need that exists for informal learning amongst the MYLO target group. For all of the apparent challenges associated with encouraging, engaging and maintaining interest in learning by this group, MYLO demonstrates that it is not only possible, it is popular. During the peak of MYLO interest (approximately seven weeks into the trial) the reference group was forced to consider denying new members access to the project. This was avoided, fortunately, however it remains a lesson of the MYLO Trial that space and resources are more pressing limitations than the numbers of willing participants.

4.8.3 Evaluation Outcomes: Participants
A summative evaluation exercise was undertaken with available participants at the end of the MYLO trial. The evaluation targeted 15 such participants for their reflections and impressions of the MYLO Model and Trial, endeavouring to secure these interviews from a sample list of 20 young people. The sample included those involved right up until the final moments of the trial (the magazine launch) and those who had left the platform sessions earlier. In the end, fourteen such interviews were held including eight active participants and six who had ceased their involvement in the MYLO sessions before the trial was complete. An anonymous list of participant evaluation respondents is available in the Durable Record (Durable Record: Appendix Twenty Five).

Of the fourteen evaluation participants, all but one had been involved in the group project, the ‘Keep Walking’ magazine, and all but two had been involved in MYLO Learning Streams outside the MYLO Platform. All respondents claim to have found this broader participation both enjoyable and satisfying. The only additional comment regarding learning activities outside the MYLO Platform came from one respondent who
wished that more contact with the group had been possible. All respondents would have chosen to be involved in MYLO over a longer period if that were possible.

Responses were transcribed and reduced into themes or commonalities. Exceptions to commonalities were duly noted and reported, without exception. A more complete range of quotes and findings from the participant evaluations is available in the MYLO report in the Durable Record (Durable Record: Appendix Three). Key points and representative quotes are provided below under themes.

**Engaging Atmosphere**

Respondents uniformly felt that the weekly sessions were both comfortable and inviting. Additional comments included praise for the friendly, conversational nature of the Platform sessions and the fact that there was ‘something to do’ each Wednesday afternoon. When asked the broader question of what they most liked about MYLO, the themes of a pleasing atmosphere and a good opportunity for meeting other people were the most consistent.

“It was a great atmosphere with good people. Everything was great. It kept me off the streets, anyway!”

*Participant Evaluation Respondent 11*

“Yes, because everyone was always talking and getting to know each other”

*Participant Evaluation Respondent 3*

Similarly, respondents uniformly felt personally welcome in the weekly sessions. The responses to this question were consistently strong and additional comments included
suggestions that the group facilitation and the calm environment added to the welcoming atmosphere.

“Yes, most definitely. I’m a very quiet person and was a bit nervous, but the way the group was run was good. There was respect and this made all the difference. It wouldn’t have worked otherwise.”

Participant Evaluation Respondent 1

Engaging Marginalised Young People

All respondents felt that MYLO had done well in attracting the target group. When prompted, several also offered suggestions for broadening this attraction to reach more people. One respondent felt that the short-term nature of the trial restricted our ability to get people back who, for one reason or another, had drifted away.

“Yes, it definitely did. Especially when people came through the door and found out that it was actually quite good!”

Participant Evaluation Respondent 6

Personal Benefits and Outcomes

Respondents uniformly felt a personal benefit from their participation in MYLO. The answers were very confident and covered a variety of reasons for this pleasing result. A palpable sense of accomplishment was apparent in many of the answers.

“Definitely. It helped me focus so I didn’t get further off track.”

Participant Evaluation Respondent 12
The respondents were naturally varied when describing the most significant outcomes for themselves individually. Answers generally fell into three categories: the accomplishment of goals, the social benefits of participation and the education or employment outcomes they experienced. Several also mentioned getting their name and/or contribution printed in the Keep Walking magazine.

“I guess for me it was the social experience …and improving my email skills”

Participant Evaluation Respondent 9

Many evaluation respondents spoke of the goals they had achieved and linked these responses to their best personal outcomes. The goals most commonly achieved included getting into courses, writing the magazine article, getting a job and/or meeting new people. In most cases respondents demonstrated a clear sense of ownership over their achievements.

“I widened my social group, improved my email skills and got my name in print. I think the newspaper (magazine) was really good for self-esteem.”

Participant Evaluation Respondent 3

Other answers referred to learning outcomes, the chance to have one’s work recognised and a sense of achievement

“The chance to have something constructive to do. It’s what everybody is looking for… something that interests them.”

Participant Evaluation Respondent 10

“It was a good experience. Something I can look back on and say I’ve done.”
Reflections on the MYLO Model and Project

When asked what they would most like to change about MYLO, five respondents offered suggestions of positive changes for the MYLO model. Of these, four were suggesting an increase in the size and number of MYLO activities. The fifth comment asked for a stronger task-orientation in order to achieve greater outcomes.

“If it was a bit stricter more things would get done.”

Respondents uniformly felt that MYLO worked, should keep going and/or start again as an ongoing program for young people in Melbourne. Some added that the scale should be enlarged or that new activities should be planned.

“It should keep on going, with new activities and a new issue of the magazine.”

Respondents appeared very confident and quite persuasive in their explanations for MYLO expanding. Uniformly they were able to provide reasons for a continuation.

“…because MYLO is a manageable learning course for us.”

4.8.4 Evaluation Outcomes: Reference Group

The reference group consisted of ten members (Durable Record: Appendix Three). Of these, eight were active participants throughout the MYLO project and two stepped in
with specific expertise early in the project. Employing the focus group prompts developed for the evaluation strategy, the group was consulted in an extensive evaluation session (taking the form of a focus group). Only five of the eight active members were able to participate, so interviews (using the prompts as a guide) were held with the other three active members to ensure a complete range of perspectives.

As with the participants’ evaluations, responses were transcribed and reduced into themes or commonalities. Exceptions to commonalities were duly noted and reported, without exception. A more complete range of quotes from the reference group evaluations is available in the MYLO report however key points and representative quotes are provided below:

**Achieving Project Goals and Outcomes**

There was a clear consensus that MYLO had not only achieved the core goal but that the engagement had led to exceptional outcomes for many of its cohort. Key reflections focused on the quality of individual results. It was clear that reference group members felt the model trial had exceeded expectations in terms of learning outcomes, enhanced confidence and personal development for individual participants. The group was wary of the engagement of marginalised young people being somewhat tokenistic, however as the participants had ‘owned’ the trial from the outset and there had been a marked boost in confidence as a result of participation, this was not felt to be the case in the MYLO project. The fact that a number of young people had stayed involved right until the closure of the trial was seen as further evidence of success. The ability of the model to attract and maintain individuals in a group that was never the same from week to week was also highly regarded.
“Absolutely. We not only engaged young people, but we reached those truly marginalised individuals we sought.”

Reference Group Evaluation Respondent 3

Community Attitudes and Ownership

Reference Group members felt that MYLO had greatly contributed to a sense of community among the target group, particularly by enhancing social skills and opportunities for interaction. MYLO was seen to offer great ownership and strength to participants. The results and learnings from the trial were regarded as very substantial outcomes as they demonstrate need and enthusiasm, whilst also offering a practical model that actually works. The high percentage of young people successfully supported in pathways planning was further evidence of project success and was therefore also among the best outcomes. Discussion led to the negative notions of education and learning often held by the MYLO target group. The reference group felt that perhaps the best outcome of all was MYLO’s success in changing these long-standing notions by presenting education and learning in an attractive and self-determined light.

“It (The MYLO Trial) shows not only the need and the desire for participation in informal learning, but it shows something that works!”

Reference Group Evaluation Respondent 5

Applying Research Findings

The reference group clearly believed that the consultation results that led to the development of the MYLO model were accordingly represented in the actual provision of the model for trial. The advice and research findings remained critical factors throughout
the development process and there was consensus within the group that all key elements were included and maintained throughout the sixteen weeks of trial.

“Yes. What young people wanted was clearly represented. All the vital ingredients were included”

Reference Group Evaluation Respondent 1

**Reflective Project Management**

Reference group members appeared very positive about the appropriateness and relative success of the group itself and reflective practice model they employed. Reflection offered opportunity for debate and a ‘hands on packing and unpacking of ideas’. The group was able to regularly return to the key principles of the project and review the status of the work accordingly. Group members felt ownership and recognition for their contributions.

“The reference group was good for floating ideas and consistent peer review.”

Reference Group Evaluation Respondent 3

“It was a sound example of the practice. Effective use of the (reference) group as a sounding board.”

Reference Group Evaluation Respondent 1

The strengths identified mirrored the reasons for satisfying involvement in the reference group. Put simply, the group felt the process was engaging and practical for the workers and the members themselves. An additional strength was identified in the effective balance found between written and oral reporting by the MYLO and Pathways workers.
Improving the MYLO Model

The only suggested change to the reference group and/or the reflective practice model was to consider including someone from the target group on the reference group itself. This brought about some discussion over tokenism and other perils associated with this model of practice, however the sense was that if it could be managed effectively (to the benefit of the project and the individual concerned) it is a step MYLO should consider.

“Representation on the reference group by members of the target group.”
Reference Group Evaluation Respondent 4

The reference group felt that funding constraints were the key limitation on the project’s progress. It was felt the best MYLO could do with this restraint was to use the evidence of the MYLO trial to engage government and community in adequate funding support. It was clear than limited resources and, in turn, limited time had a negative impact on the MYLO project development. There was some consensus that securing adequate funding in the first instance would reduce pressure on the workers and permit more flexibility in the involvement or outcomes for young people.

“Funding is the key. More, earlier, would reduce pressure on workers and, in turn, young people.”
Reference Group Evaluation Respondent 2

The reference group was also aware of the difficulties faced by workers seeking to find learning solutions for young people once they were effectively engaged. Having won the
battle to attract young people and inspire consideration of educational pathways, institutional barriers often made advancement very difficult for MYLO clients. This, it was felt, is a common and difficult problem to overcome. Suggested solutions were to use the experience of MYLO to promote cultural, organisational and policy change.

“Systematic challenges, particularly with other institutions, after young people had been successfully engaged.”

Reference Group Evaluation Respondent 6

**Extending the MYLO Project**

There was a clear consensus that the reference group felt that on the basis of the MYLO Trial results, the project needed and deserved to be extended into a longer term project.

“MYLO clearly demonstrates effective and positive changes in the lives of marginalised young people. This is very good evidence for keeping it going.”

Reference Group Evaluation Respondent 7

The group’s only additional reflection for moving forward was that all partners in the initiative deserved recognition for both the attempt and the outcomes.

"MYLO has been admirable and noteworthy attempt by RMIT to ‘do something’. The success of the project adds directly to cultural change and has the evidence to influence planning mechanisms (across sectors and institutions)."

Reference Group Evaluation Respondent 7
Trial Evaluation Personal Reflections

Above all else, the evaluation of the MYLO trial was a source of affirmation for me and for all of those who contributed so greatly to the MYLO project. Whilst we actively sought both positive and negative stories, and considered both intended and unintended impact, the results were overwhelmingly positive. When shortcomings were identified they were generally systematic (referral options out of MYLO to other services) or additions to the model (youth representation on the reference group) rather than problems with the model itself. Despite my own concern that the role of young people may have been underplayed in the management of the project, this was generally a time of affirmation and consolidation for the process and the content of the MYLO trial.

4.9 Reporting and Dissemination

The MYLO project was discussed at length by the reference group during its planning, writing and review. In keeping with the action research paradigm the report was expected to balance accessibility with analysis, and to provide specific advice on a way forward with the thematic concern. This ‘way forward’ was naturally to be based clearly and empirically on the based on the critical reflections of participants.

The report (Durable Record: Appendix Three) documents the origins of the project, the methodology and consultation findings, the development and trial of the model and the critical reflections throughout. It goes on to document a preferred use of the research and future for the findings. This ‘future’ was represented in five key recommendations, as listed below.
Recommendation One
That the principles guiding the development of the MYLO Model (regarding environment, communication, engagement practices and education styles) be recognised by policy developers, practitioners and the RMIT community as critical to the successful engagement of marginalised young people in informal learning

Recommendation Two
That the MYLO Model be recognised as a proven and successful primary intervention for assisting marginalised young people to engage in informal learning, pathways planning and personal development

Recommendation Three
That the MYLO Report be taken as evidence of a substantial gap in community and education resources for marginalised young people

Recommendation Four
That RMIT and partners continue the research and evaluation begun by the MYLO Project (regarding informal learning for marginalised young people)

Recommendation Five
That the MYLO Model, including the provision of pathways planning, be funded to continue fulfilling the learning needs of marginalised young people made evident in the MYLO Trial

Given the strategic nature of these recommendations, their publication and dissemination formed the completion of the major action research cycle for the
researcher and the reference groups. On the largest scale the team had planned, acted, reflected, analysed and planned again. The recommendations of the report quite explicitly paved the way for the next action, thereby moving into the next research cycle. The report was publicly launched to an audience of participants, advisors, community representatives and supporters. Furthermore, it was dispatched to a range of external organisations and individuals who might have been well positioned to support the findings and promote that next cycle of action.

4.10 The MYLO Pilot
Following the launch of the MYLO Report in March 2002, members of the Project team used the documented findings in the preparation of funding submissions to a number of sources. In July 2002, the University found a likely funding source in the form of a philanthropic trust with a keen interest in youth and education (the R.E. Ross Trust). The successful submission (Durable Record: Appendix Twenty Seven) led to a funding grant for a twelve-month pilot of the MYLO Model as it was applied during the MYLO trial. In August 2002 the reference group was re-established, the project researcher was re-employed as Project Co-ordinator and a position for a supporting project officer was developed and filled. With the arrival of the second worker, MYLO platform sessions began once more in late September of 2002. This point in the action research cycle represents the second full circle of MYLO on the largest scale, from reflection to analysis to planning and, finally, action for the second time.

An RMIT document summarizing the Pilot outcomes (Durable Record: Appendix Twenty Eight) explains that the project Team sought to apply the same reflective, action research methodology to the pilot program as it had done in the research, development and trial of the MYLO Model. MYLO sought to vigorously apply such notions to the
formal and informal management of the pilot. The project staff, the project team and the project reference group each made time to employ those fundamental steps of reflection, analysis, planning and action throughout the pilot. On each level those involved sought to review actions in the light of all the lessons learnt during research and development of the model. In this way programmatic challenges and weekly issues were never addressed without consideration of the fundamental pillars on which MYLO was built.

To maintain this rigour during the day to day hurdles of service delivery was challenging at times, particularly when the group was seen to stall or lose momentum, however the eventual success of the pilot can be directly related to this willingness to maintain group-governance principles. Reflective practice was further enhanced by the introduction of key topics for reflection at each of the monthly reference group meetings. In tandem with the usual analysis of recent events and planning of steps to follow, key issues of interest to the MYLO staff were formally flagged for discussion each month.

4.10.1 Pilot Outcomes and Statistics
The Pilot Summary document (Durable Record: Appendix Twenty Eight) explains that a total of over one hundred homeless and marginalised young people took part in the forty MYLO learning sessions held during the pilot period. Significantly over 80% of these young people returned to participate again. Approximately 60% of the total group became members of the email support group, sharing news and information about MYLO and personal learning goals over the Internet. Approximately 40% of the total participants were successfully engaged in individual support exploring education, training and personal development pathways.
**Peter**

Peter had just turned 20 at the time of engaging in MYLO. Family breakdown had led to homelessness, and he was residing in a short-term youth refuge. Although obviously bright and apparently very capable, Peter was unsettled and restless at the time of coming in contact with the program. Participation in the group environment unearthed dramatic change in his confidence and communication skills, and within a very short time Peter was among the most active participants in the group. A generous contributor of time and energy, he was central to the success of the group project. With this development came a new sense of optimism. With extensive one-to-one pathways support, barriers were overcome and a manageable plan of re-entering formal education was formulated. With the assistance of a JPET service and the MYLO worker, enrolment was secured in a community services certificate course. At the time of the pilot’s conclusion Peter had blossomed into his work, having had field placements and recently securing casual work in the field. He was proud and appreciative of his work and success as a member of MYLO.

A limitation of these findings is the absence of information on those young people that did not return to participate more than once in the pilot. Given the complex needs and marginalised position of the young people MYLO reached a repeat participation of over 80% is significant, however it is recognised that those not engaged may have had contrary attitudes to the bulk of participants. Notwithstanding this constraint, three case studies are provided within this section to offer some insight into the range of people that participated the MYLO intervention. These details are taken from the Progress Summary 2003 (Durable Record: Appendix 28, Pages 7-8). Names have been changed to protect anonymity.

**Paul**

When arriving at MYLO Paul was 17 and highly transient with very complex support needs. Paul did not successfully make the step into pathways planning, nor has he found a formal education opportunity that suits his needs. He had, however, been successfully engaged in a calm, respectful group environment where he has demonstrated extraordinary developments in communication and self-confidence. As a detached and often unhappy young man, involving Paul in any learning opportunity presents something of a challenge. In the MYLO environment however, he has become willing to listen to others, willing to wait his turn and willing to contribute an opinion without fear of criticism. He had also begun to consider personal development pathways that might help him progress to independence. Whilst not as tangible as other outcomes for MYLO clients, the success of the MYLO model as an intervention in Paul’s life is no less valuable. He is proud of his participation and is stronger as a result.
The most substantial group project was the development of the MYLO website
(previously available at www.mylo.net.au, Durable Record: Appendix Twenty Nine) that
offered opportunities for young people to express themselves, provide social comment,
advise other young people in crisis and gather technical expertise. As with the Magazine
developed during the MYLO trial, the website was chosen and developed by the
participants themselves and was broad enough to cater for a variety of group and
personal learning outcomes. A smaller group project was also developed late in the pilot
in the form of a segment for community television. MYLO members explored the issue of
homelessness drawing on facts, experiences, statistics and public opinion.

Mary
Mary was seventeen years old when she first arrived at MYLO. Complex circumstances
had led her to homelessness, and she had only just secured housing support through a
youth housing program. Having been frustrated by the formal education environment of
her secondary school, she had dropped out mid semester. Although shy and obviously
frustrated by her circumstances, she found MYLO a welcoming and supportive
environment. In particular, she found the opportunity to meet new friends in a safe
environment a real benefit of the program. Mary participated in the group project and
took up the opportunity for one-to-one pathways support, where she was quickly able to
express her learning needs. Specifically, she wanted to complete her VCE in an adult
environment where her lifestyle and relative maturity would be advantages rather than
disadvantages. After much support and advocacy by the MYLO worker, including
securing financial assistance and attending enrolment interviews, Mary was able to
convince an adult education provider that she was bright enough and responsible
enough to secure an adult place in spite of her age. AT the completion of the MYLO
pilot she was well on the way to successfully completing her VCE studies.

For the 42 individuals involved in personal pathways support, outcomes were many and
varied. All received advice on employment, education and training options and all
received assistance with pathways and barrier planning. More than 50% took part in
supported, onward referrals to other services that might assist with identified pathways
needs. Significantly, particularly given the complex needs of the MYLO target group,
approximately 30% took up enrolments in formal education. A further 10% were referred
or placed in short courses of one sort or another. More than 10% of those receiving personal support were in voluntary work, apprenticeships, part-time work or full-time work at the time of the pilot closing. Together, these results provide the necessary evidence that the experience of the MYLO trial can be repeated and extended over time.

The Summary Document goes on to describe and tabulate the specific pathways outcomes of participants, their living arrangements (between 70% and 86% of participants were homeless at the time of engaging with MYLO, depending on the criteria applied) and a range of additional achievements occurring during this period. Such achievements included the replication of the MYLO model in a northern suburbs setting and an invitation to present a second (follow up) conference paper at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow (Durable Record: Appendix Thirty). This paper in turn developed into a refereed article in the *Scottish Youth Issues Journal* (Bond, 2003). The summary document also outlined lessons learned and potential future modeling of MYLO beyond the highly successful pilot phase (see Durable Record: Appendix 29 for details).

### 4.10.2 MYLO Members Living Arrangements

It became apparent following the MYLO trial that readers were keen to understand the living circumstances of young people when they made contact with the program. Given the focus on young people experience housing instability or crisis, such a study offers insight to the program’s effectiveness at reaching the target group. This detail was captured in the MYLO pilot and is in keeping with the literature regarding diverse experiences of social exclusion. Of 100 participants some 71 were homeless, with a further 16 in either transitional housing or supported housing environments. Access to such programs is generally granted on the grounds of homelessness. Only 11 of the 100
young people suggested they enjoyed secure housing conditions. Two young people declined to provide details of their living arrangements.

Figure Six: Living Arrangements Table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emerg. Accommodation</th>
<th>Sleeping Rough or Squatting</th>
<th>Office of Housing</th>
<th>Relatives or friends</th>
<th>THM or YHP</th>
<th>Unstable Housing</th>
<th>Stable Housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEY to Living Arrangements Table:**

**Emerg. Accommodation:** refers to young people staying in refuges and hostels, along with other Emergency Accommodation measures such as Hotels and Caravan Parks.

**Sleeping Rough or Squatting:** refers to any participant who has no formal shelter at all.

**Office of Housing:** anyone with a permanent lease in Public Housing.

**Relatives and Friends:** anyone who is staying temporarily in these environments, including “couch surfers”. **THM and YHP:** anyone staying in Transitional Housing independently or housed in transitional Accommodation through a supported Youth Housing Program.

**Unstable Housing:** anyone at home or in private rental who suggests they are at risk of homelessness. **Stable Housing:** anyone who feels stable at home or in Private Rental, anyone in some other form of Accommodation regarded as stable.

**MYLO Pilot Personal Reflections**

The significant quantitative and qualitative outcomes for our target group were an obvious highlight of the second major MYLO cycle, exceeding expectations and confirming the strengths of the process. However the most significant personal reflection coming out of the pilot period, for myself as researcher and project coordinator, was the success of the action-driven reflective practice model. The reviews and debriefs
following each session with the pathways worker, the project team communications on a weekly or fortnightly basis and the more sophisticated monthly reflections of the reference group added depth and integrity to the program. The concerns I experienced during the model development and trial about the heavy dependence on myself as the ‘insider’ and driver were alleviated through the application of lessons learned and a more robust reflective system. It was clear at the time that this was not simply a matter of the model’s effectiveness, but was in part due to the better funding and the growing experience of the project team.

In terms of my professional development the confidence and know-how generated as a result of the MYLO project was already bearing fruit by the end of the pilot period. In addition to the research and program itself, opportunities to write papers and participate in educational fora offered invaluable experience and professional confidence. By this time, combining the experience gathered during MYLO with my earlier work, my career was blossoming with invitations to undertake planning, development and evaluation activities in a range of youth related settings.
Chapter Five
BEYOND THE TRIAL, REPORT AND PILOT

5.1 Developments in Literature and the Contribution of MYLO

In the years following the creation of the MYLO Project, literature on youth homelessness and marginalization continued to explore and clarify the issue. Reflecting the approach defined by MYLO, practitioners are advised to avoid defining young people by their experience of homelessness or assume common characteristics of young people from this cohort in terms of pathways or preferences (Council to Homeless Persons 2005:2). Similar advice linking youth pathways with the social and political context of young people (Wyn 2004:7) rings particularly true of those most marginalized young people. On the advice of the consultations MYLO promoted the relationship with workers and fellow participants as fundamental to the success of the learning model, and this too is reflected in recent literature regarding homeless young people. Notions of trust, support, flexibility and safety remain pressing and primary concerns in such relationships, so much so that it has been suggested the quality of relationships with workers may be more important that the actual service received (Rossiter Mallett, Myers and Rosenthal 2004:4).

The census of homelessness among students in 2001 led to comprehensive analysis of the expanding scale of the problem (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2002) and, in turn, of variations within this population according to geography and the availability of early intervention programs (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003). Building on the enumeration and analysis, the same authors expanded notions of good practice early intervention with recommendations for expanding the national ‘Reconnect’ program, further piloting
of adolescent community placement program, further coordination of early intervention services across the system and the introduction of national benchmarks for student welfare in schools (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2004). Given this, MYLO’s operational connection with such programs and provision of an early bridge between leaving secondary school and re-engaging with education programs has become increasingly relevant with the passage of time.

Resilience and Connectedness continue to feature strongly in youth literature, reflecting a continued push away from deficit and correctional models of youth policy to positive and preventative approaches (Damon 2004, Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard and Arthur 2002). Moreover, increasing attention is being paid to the links between specific activities (problem solving, decision making, planning, goal setting) and the development of protective factors in young people (Oliver, Collin, Burns and Nicholas 2006: 2). The consistent opportunities offered MYLO participants to decide, plan, and act upon group and personal goals, along with the support and encouragement necessary to facilitate this, led to those tangible developments for individuals that are reflected in the outcomes and evaluations from both trial and pilot (refer to Chapter Four).

Contemporary education model and learning pathway developments are similarly consistent with MYLO outcomes. Power and Waters provide one such example in their exploration of lessons learned from community learning models that may enrich classroom pedagogy. Specifically, formal schooling shortcomings such as a lack of options, relevance and connection are overcome, at least in part, by linking ‘play’ with adult responsibilities, by providing choices that include the learning venue and time, and by promoting the value of participant ideas in the learning process (Power and Waters 2004). Other authors offer evidence similarly supportive of the MYLO approach,
particularly around engagement through unstructured learning (Choy and Delahaye 2003), linked learning and service provision (Cole 2004) and education practice that seek, respect and value the contributions of individuals (Cole 2004, Kostos 2005).

Such pillars of the MYLO model and community learning broadly are increasingly reflected in Government policy and platforms, such as the South Australian Government’s Community Learning Statement 2005-2010 which acknowledges that innovative and responsive methods increase pathways to learning, training, employment and personal growth (Government of South Australia 2005). The Victorian Government has also continued the focus on cohesive and holistic education and learning pathways through continued support for Local Learning and Employment Networks and the expansion of programs such as Managed Individual Pathways and the Youth Employment Education and Training Initiative. Such progression has reflected the need to ‘expand and diversify’ young peoples transition options and consider the skills and expertise necessary not only for work but to shape community, economic and political life’ (Department of Victorian Communities 2006: 9). The MYLO project, through its reports, articles and papers, has contributed to this evidence base for alternative learning models and principles for effective engagement.

The youth work priorities of engagement, participation and empowerment remain themes of related literature since the time of MYLO’s inception. MYLO approach to bridging broader engagement techniques with educational pathways is mirrored in recent research (Livock 2004: 11) where flexibility and an individualized approach are seen as central to effective engagement in learning. Similarly, the participatory and reflective nature of MYLO’s decision making processes are coherent with the more recent literature, particularly when applying a rights-based approach to youth work and social
exclusion (Burfoot 2003, Jonssen 2003). The political nature of the empowerment model reflected in MYLO’s early development (refer to Chapter One) is also in keeping with more recent youth work literature, where youth work practice extends beyond the wellbeing of young people to the pursuit of justice (Bessant 2004) and youth work professionals are still implored to look beyond simplified models of problematic behaviours to acknowledge the structural constraints many young people face (Wyn 2004).

5.2 Long Term Outcomes: Youth Learning Models

MYLO demonstrated a successful blend of youth work principles, stakeholder awareness, pedagogical theory and reflective practice in reaching and surpassing its goal. As described in the Progress Summary 2003 (Durable Record: Appendix 29)…

Those elements of good practice central to the development of the MYLO Model were borne out in their practical application through the MYLO Trial. These fundamental lessons are the pillars of the Model and have remained fundamental to the delivery of pilot program. By rigorously maintaining a focus on respectful, flexible and individualised engagement the pilot has continued to reach and retain those most marginalised of young people. Self-determination and ownership of the group by the group has been consistent and is well justified by the eventual outcomes. The opportunity for calm and enjoyable social interaction is still seen as rare in the lives of our target group and is particularly popular as a result. Perhaps most importantly, a priority outcome of the MYLO project is that participants, including those that might only participate once, recognise themselves as the owners of the group and as stakeholders in any outcomes achieved by the group as a whole.
At the end of 2003 the findings and practices of MYLO had been shared among the Melbourne youth service system, throughout RMIT University and across the education community at large. Through the local, national and international networks established during the project cycle lessons learned during the Project contributed to the shared notions of goods practice in youth learning, particularly as these apply to the most marginalised of young people.

The pilot program operated out of a multi-sectoral youth service (Frontyard Youth Services) managed by Melbourne City Mission (MCM) and included a range of service options for young people. MCM and the constituent services became key partners in the success of the model as it was applied under the auspice of RMIT University. The Progress Summary provided in Durable Record: Appendix 29 also included a forward plan for the model which was handed over (along with the MYLO Report and range of supporting documents) to Melbourne City Mission (MCM). Whilst they were unable to assume the funding responsibility for the forward plan at that time, key elements of the model can now be seen reflected in the service delivery and participatory learning exercises of related youth services at Frontyard.

Within RMIT, the model and associated evidence for practice was embraced by the Youth and Community Partnerships Group (CYPG, formerly CIECAP/NIECAP), now applying a reflective action research platform for all of their work linking young people and their communities. Specific advice from the MYLO experience was now reflected in a range of CYPG activities including ‘Linking Young People with Education and Training’, the Local Community Partnerships Initiative and the RMIT VET Pathways Program. The MYLO report is still quoted in RMIT planning and reflection around
informal learning and the CYPG Report *Creating Opportunities for Young People* offers evidence of the ongoing contribution of the MYLO experience (RMIT YCPG 2005).

### 5.3 Long Term Outcomes: Personal and Professional Development

The impact of MYLO on my own personal and professional development cannot be overstated. My confidence with reflective action-research methodologies, evaluation techniques, participatory practice, service delivery and program development and planning all lifted markedly as a result of my role. During and since my time with RMIT I have undertaken consultancies and contracts in youth and education related posts in not-for-profit, governmental and multi-lateral (UN) agencies across Australia and the Asia Pacific. Up to and including my current role as a senior manager and Program Quality Advisor for Save the Children Australia, all such posts have been influenced by the skills learned, techniques applied and capacity built during my time with MYLO.

Most of all the priorities of participatory practice, reflective learning and academic rigour are those I have taken forward from this project. I now share such processes and tools with hundreds of practitioners in diverse settings across the international development community. My satisfaction and relative professional success are in no small part owed to the providers, partners and (most of all) participants of the Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities Project.
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Durable Record

Appendix 1
MYLO Project Scope Document
Durable Record

Appendix 2

MYLO Research Proposal
Research Proposal: Masters of Education by Project

The Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities Project

Glenn Bond

Supervisor: Associate Professor David Maunders, RMIT
# Table Of Contents

**Project Summary** ................................................................. 4

- Project Origins.........................................................................................4
- Goal .........................................................................................................4
- Objectives and Proposed Outcomes........................................................4

**Situational Analysis** ............................................................................. 5

- Project Partnerships.................................................................................5
- Working with and for Marginalised Young People................................5
- Organisational Change .............................................................................6

**Research Methodology** ........................................................................ 7

- Action Research Concept.........................................................................7
- The MYLO Action Research Cycle ...........................................................8
- Data Collection and Ethical Safeguards...................................................8

**Project Planning** ................................................................................. 10

- Step by Step...........................................................................................10

**Appendix One** ............................................................................... 12

**References** ..................................................................................... 13
Project Summary

Project Origins
In June 2000 RMIT University held a search conference to explore the issue of marginalised young people in Melbourne's Central Business District. Participants included representatives of various departments within the university and interested parties from the city's community at large. The conference sought 'a way forward' for the visible community of young people out of touch with education and employment. Recognising the significant physical and social presence of the university in the city area, it was envisaged that partnerships could be formed within and around RMIT that would lead to the productive usage of existing resources in reaching the specified target group.

Among the conference outcomes were a series of networking lunches, hosted by RMIT, held to discuss and act upon the apparent enthusiasm for reaching Melbourne's marginalised youth. This network determined that issue required greater focus and commitment, and the Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities (MYLO) Project was the result. The university allocated seeding funding to employ a worker two days per week for twelve months to establish and the develop the project goals.

Goal
The strategic intent and primary goal of the MYLO project may be best summarised by the following vision statement:

We (the MYLO Project Team) will develop and implement a strategy for access to learning by marginalised young people in Melbourne's Central Business District and environs. The project seeks to reach both transient and resident populations of young people, particularly those not currently engaged in employment or education. The resulting strategy will present learning opportunities that are not limited to the current physical facilities of the university and will include technology-facilitated access.

Objectives and Proposed Outcomes
The MYLO project scope document outlines a series of objectives and outcomes developed to achieve the goal outlined in the vision statement. The project objectives seek to establish the core tasks of the project team and include the following:

- Identification of existing curriculum and facilities with RMIT that may be of most value to the project vision
- Development of a complimentary funding strategy for concurrent and future project funding
- Development of strategic links between the university and key agencies/community groups
- A clear and demonstrable process of reflective practice ensuring project activity is researched, evaluated and documented effectively
- Development and expansion of novel ideas that may effectively reach the target group
- Development and expansion of the communication and consultation processes established within the MYLO network.

The proposed project outcomes represent the expected results from implementation of project objectives. These include the following:

- A summary of the activities, curriculum and facilities within RMIT of most value to the target group
• Formalised partnership with both external and internal stakeholders
• Further funding (in partnership with key external stakeholders)
• A project brochure, summarising key project objectives
• A strategy document, reflecting project results and forward planning
• A series of results and evaluations from consultations with young people, youth service providers and the community at large
• A series of results and evaluations from the piloting of MYLO project learning and access models

The reflective, action-research processes of the MYLO project (see Methodology) encourage flexibility when determining the nature of project outcomes. As such, it is possible the project outcomes may alter somewhat in shape or content over the life of the project.

Situational Analysis

Project Partnerships

The success of the MYLO project is greatly dependent on the development and maintenance of key internal and external partnerships. Such partnerships relate not only to the funding strategy and economic future of the project, but also to the success and acceptance of the project within RMIT and the CBD community at large. Several project partners pre-exist the project in its current form, given the history of the conference and networking forum that created MYLO as it now stands.

Internal partnerships take a number of forms in the MYLO project. In the first instance, a partnership exists between the project owner (RMIT Vice-Chancellor), the project manager (Director of Community Services and Regional Partnerships) and the project team. The project team consists of several RMIT staff (project officer, project supervisor etc) and members of the reference group. Other examples of critical internal partnerships include links to the related academic faculties, namely Education Language and Community Services (Higher Education) and Social and Community Services (TAFE sector). Given the obvious relationship between youth work/youth research and the project, a natural affinity exists between the project and these academic streams. The project will also rely on effective communication between the project team and RMIT curriculum or facilities that may be attractive to the target group. Examples include, though are not limited to, the department of Access and Preparatory Studies, RMIT Union (& Student Services) and the RMIT Apprenticeship and Traineeship Unit.

Externally, MYLO will seek to develop practical partnership arrangements with key providers of services to marginalised young people in the CBD area. Organisations such as Melbourne Youth Support Services, the Young People’s Health Service and the Young People’s Legal Service will play the role of a conduit between MYLO and the young people the project seeks to reach. Other external partnerships will be forged with relevant government departments or agencies that have links to the city’s youth. Such institutions include the Victoria Police, the Department of Employment, Education and Training, the Department of Justice and the Department of Human Services. In these and other examples, partnerships with the MYLO project may lead to funding opportunities but may also ensure consistency between the project aims and external activities related to the project objective. Further external partnerships will include those with interested parties from the city business precincts, the Police Community Consultative Committee (PCCC) and members of the MYLO Networking Forum.

Working with and for Marginalised Young People

Central to the success of the MYLO initiative is an awareness of issues for marginalised young people and the skills required to effectively reach this group. It is significant to note that the project officer has both formal youth work qualifications and extensive community experience as a practitioner with disenfranchised
young people. Furthermore, the strong links with key youth service providers that are central to the MYLO approach (see Project Partnerships section) will ensure project activities are undertaken with a sympathetic regard for the ‘real life’ needs and expectations of the target group.

In exploring the issue of young people, public perceptions and public space, Rob White (1990) suggests broad range of responses by young people to their social position and their relative lack of economic, political and social power. These include membership of ‘spectacular’ sub-cultures; ‘opting out’ strategies (such as suicide and the taking of drugs or alcohol); engaging in crime and, in some instances, the seeking of religious ‘salvation’ (p 195). Such responses are seen as typical of the visible community of marginalised young people frequenting Melbourne's CBD and environs, and evoke a degree of panic in the community at large. The MYLO project seeks to move away from the historic youth work function White describes as “containing youth problems” (p 174) to recognise the basis from which these visible responses stem, and then strategically create new and attractive options.

The concepts of empowerment and participation that are central to contemporary youth work practice and theory bring with them their own risks. Irving, Maunder and Sherington (1995) discuss a theoretical and administrative construction of 'youth', for the purposes of age-based social analysis late last century, that sought to empower young people according their common needs. They warn that such a construction could actually lead to disempowerment for young people through “the creation of an artificial community which ignored the different bases for identity among young people” (p 340). MYLO is required to build mechanisms for participation and empowerment that are respectful of the many different circumstances and skill bases which may have led to membership of the project target group.

**Organisational Change**

Innovation and organisational change requires adequate planning and transparency in actions. Such processes provide all constituent agents with a clear understanding of their new roles and the reasons behind them. Sensitivity to the difficulties often encountered when seeking organisational change is perhaps central to one’s eventual success. The MYLO project seeks to explore new territory within the organisation itself, with objectives that are clearly outside the university’s ‘core-business’ of teaching/learning and research/development. The project aims include the development of a new and enhanced profile for the university as a ‘player’ amongst providers of programs in the city area. Whilst similarities are visible between current or historic activities of the university and various MYLO objectives, the project is primarily seeking change outside existing parameters.

Morrish (1976) identifies a broad and complex range of variables consistently found in processes of educational change. Most simply, these may be broken down and classified into participants, structures, roles and relationships (p 48). In the case of MYLO, participants can be identified as partners in the process (see Project Partnerships section). Formal structures include RMIT, the network of local youth services providers, the economic and legal legislative environment for young people and any external funding partners that may contribute to the project. Informal structures are perhaps less obvious, but include such components as the social fabric of the youth community in the CBD and the informal networks within youth service provision. By identifying the roles of each participant and structure in the process of creating change, MYLO will seek to work within the boundaries and expectations of all when meeting the project goals. Similarly, careful nurturing of new or pre-existing relationships between the agents of change is likely to enhance the project’s potential of meeting objectives.
Research Methodology

**Action Research Concept**

The MYLO project seeks to employ an action research model in achieving its outcomes and objectives. Action research may be described as a continuous cycle of planning, action and review of the action undertaken (Cherry, 1999). The review of action may be further broken down into the steps of reflection and analysis, where the opportunity is taken to carefully consider the detail of the action experience before considering the implications of this for current and future actions. This ‘Research Cycling’ process of planning, action, reflection and analysis promotes a necessary objectivity when considering significant project steps, yet need not be confined to the core stages of a research project. Cycling can occur on a weekly, daily or even hourly basis throughout the life of a project to the point where ‘reflection has become integrated into every aspect of the action research cycle’ (Cherry, 1999).

Stephen Kemmis recognises that in reality the spirals of research cycling are likely to be fluid and responsive, not necessarily neat and self-contained throughout the life of a project. Stages overlap and plans may quickly alter in the light of new learning (Kemmis, 1995 p 35). This researcher also identifies a separation in action research activities between those grounded in ‘functional reason’ (where rational-purposive actions are taken in order to “get on with the job”) and those grounded in ‘critical reason’ (where communicative actions are employed to allow greater reflection on “what the job is and what it might otherwise be”). Kemmis argues that in the process of research cycling functional reasoning and critical reasoning may alternate with (and complement) each other (p 41-2). The MYLO project will seek to co-coordinate these two approaches by focussing on substantial practical outcomes whilst undertaking broad communicative reflection.

Kemmis (in Reason & Bradbury, 2000) also identifies three categories by which action research processes may be defined. Among these are

- **technical**, where research targets functional improvement measured by changes in particular practice outcomes;
- **practical**, where technical aspirations are included yet a broader goal exists to inform the decision making of practitioners;
- **emancipatory**, where research seeks to achieve functional improvements and inform practitioners, whilst also providing a critique of practitioners work or work settings (p 5)

The MYLO project is most appropriately placed in the ‘practical’ category. The proposed outcomes include the evaluation and measuring of specific functional models, yet the broader project aim is to inform the practice of the university and its partners over time. The development of a strategy document and forward plan is central to the MYLO vision.

Within the action research framework and central to the MYLO project will be a process of narrative inquiry. The reflective cycle will bounce between technical observations and the narrative reflections of key participants (the researcher, the reference group, young people themselves). Joy Goodfellow argues that narrative inquiry provides opportunities for an individuals “self” to be actively or thoughtfully involved when gaining insight into phenomena, and that the richness or resonance of narrative data enhances a study’s credibility (Higgs, 1997 p 82).

Given the qualitative action-research paradigm central to the MYLO project, quantitative research criteria are clearly inappropriate mechanisms with which to judge results. The project will seek to employ alternative mechanisms for research quality that ensure credibility when interpreting narrative and other qualitative data. Smith (cited in Higgs, 1997 p 97) offers five key criteria which are necessary for quality in qualitative research. They include
• **Rigour** (consistent, systematic research and reporting)
• **Consistency** (research consistent with canons/assumptions identified in methodology)
• **Validity** (ensuring the readers/audience are able to understand/connect with research)
• **Evidence** (a clear/visible basis for any claims made in the research)
• **Interest** (the research reported is interesting to the readers/audience)

These and similar criteria will be employed through each cycle of the action-research process, and the eventual report and strategy documents will closely reflect these concerns.

**The MYLO Action Research Cycle**

The spiralling, cyclical approach (central to the action research paradigm employed for the MYLO project) will be demonstrable alongside the project plan throughout the life of the study. Whilst core tasks for each week, month and stage of the project can be described in tasks and outcomes (see ‘Step by Step’ section), a parallel process of research cycling can also be seen. For each core task or action, and for each smaller step within such stages, the cycle of reflection, analysis, planning and action will continue. In the first instance, this will be undertaken by the project officer when interpreting results and choosing the next step. On a more substantial level, the project team (approximately once a fortnight) and the project reference group (once a month) will provide a mechanism for considering the steps most recently undertaken and employing these reflections in planning the next action.

Appendix One (Figure One) displays the action-research spiral that will operate alongside the more clinical project plan. Based on the cycling model of a similar action research project (Bond, 2000), this figure demonstrates eight ‘core actions’ and the reflective processes that accompany each of these. It is important to recognise that the creation of models and development of the strategy may also be seen as one full cycle (i.e. reflection, planning, analysis and action on the largest scale).

**Data Collection and Ethical Safeguards**

As identified in the project plan (see ‘The MYLO Action Research Cycle’ and ‘Step by Step’ sections), there are three primary processes of data collection. Firstly, a process of record keeping and reflection will occur during the exploration of relevant literature and the development of key partnerships. Next, the consultation stage of the project will involve a three-tiered strategy of information collection across the three sections of the community seen as most valuable to the project outcomes. The three data collection methods include:

- Surveys
- Interviews, using the survey model as a guide
- Focus Groups

The three community groups approached will include

- Marginalised Young People
- Youth Service Providers
- Interest Groups from the Community at Large

It is anticipated that there will be minimum of five youth focus groups and five service provider focus groups. According to apparent demand or enthusiasm within the broader communities of interest, anywhere from two to four focus groups will be held with these participants. The project will seek a minimum of 100 surveys
and interviews with young people from the target group and a similar number with service providers. Smaller numbers of surveys and interviews are expected from other interest groups in the community.

Mechanisms will be put in place early in the life of the project to secure pathways for effective consultation with each of the specified groups. Young people will be contacted through existing links with project partners (service providers, police, community facilities). Youth Service Providers will be reached through established partnerships and through the network operations already in place for services in the city area. The community at large will have the opportunity to contribute through three avenues, namely:

- The MYLO networking forum
- The Police Community Consultative Committee (PCCC)
- The “Business Precinct” bodies already established in key city areas.

Finally, in trailing the models for learning opportunities that are developed out of MYLO’s early investigations, data collection will take place in a number of ways. Records will be kept of attendances, return rates, enthusiasm and apparent strengths or weaknesses of the model. Young people will be consulted pre and post participation and asked a series of unobtrusive questions regarding their experience within the models. Similar consultations will be undertaken with any project partners participating in or witnessing the models trials. At project’s end, interested participants (partners, reference group, networking forum, community at large, young people themselves) will be invited to reflect on the project as a whole and comment on direct or incidental implication of the study. The project officer will seek evaluative contributions from all people involved in the study, from consultation to closure.

Among the ethical concerns associated with qualitative social research is the issue of informed consent. Allan Kimmel explains that informed consent is considered by many the central norm governing the relationship between investigator and research participant. Originally designed for biomedical research, the procedure can be less readily applicable in social research as it is often difficult to assess the degree of risk involved (Kimmel, 1988 p66-68). The nature of inquiry proposed in the MYLO project offers virtually no risk to participants, however steps will be taken to ensure subjects are more than adequately informed. Specifically, three criteria identified by Kimmel (p 69) as critical to informed consent will be maintained. These include:

- A Statement offered to subjects indicating that participation is voluntary
- A Description offered to subjects of what can be expected (in terms of purposes, methods, risks, benefits and alternative procedures)
- A Statement offered to subjects inviting questions and explaining the freedom to withdraw at any time

Of similar ethical concern in social research is the process of participant selection. Kimmel (1988) identifies that a danger exist of ‘coercing individuals from among the most powerless groups in society into programs researchers consider to be beneficial to them.’(p 77) He suggests the possibility that researchers, influenced by their own confidence in the potential strength of a particular technique or program, may make promises whilst recruiting that cannot be guaranteed (p 77). Conscious of this concern, the MYLO project officer will ensure that all subjects are advised that although the project has a reasonable chance of creating positive change (and little or no chance of producing negative effects), no guarantees can be made about the benefits for any given individual. It is the MYLO premise, furthermore, that the relative strength or weakness of project interventions is central to the investigation itself and participants should be encouraged to be as honest as possible in their appraisals.
Risks of negative effects through the project are further nullified through a number of important factors. The extensive professional experience of the project officer as a practitioner with the target group (marginalised young people) ensures the project will be sensitively prepared and undertaken. Those project partners likely to come into direct contact with young participants (either during the consultation or trailing stages) are also those most skilled in sound practice with this group. All contributions to the research (consultation, model trial or evaluation) will be strictly confidential, and no personal details will be kept with the data collected. Furthermore, there will be no component of the consultation or program delivery with the potential to raise unattainable hopes or promote unreasonable expectations. As a final safeguard, mechanisms will be set in place to provide timely referrals should any issues arise (outside of the project scope) that require support.

Project Planning

Step by Step

The MYLO project seeks to work flexibly within a clearly structured strategic plan. The project plan, as with other key elements of the project, is determined through reflective processes within the project team, the reference group and the MYLO Network. It is anticipated that components of the project plan may alter somewhat when responding to reflections and research findings.

For clarity, the MYLO project plan has been broken down into five sections beginning with Project Preparation and progressing through Stages One, Two, Three and Four. The theory and practice identified in the methodology section of this proposal are consistently represented in each of these five stages. For each stage the tasks, timelines, responsibilities and record keeping mechanisms have been established and are under cyclic review by the project reference group. This plan has been carefully prepared to achieve the project outcomes within the 52-week (12 month) timeline. It is regarded as highly likely that the project will be extended to approximately 78 weeks (18 months), in which case the timelines will be accordingly extended to allow for more substantial results.

Project Preparation: Pre-Dates 52 week Timeline

Preparation for the project involves five basic steps to set up the framework from which the project may develop. These five steps are determined in consultation with the MYLO Network, and include the following:

- Develop project worker position description and recruitment processes
- Prepare draft project scope document and vision statement
- Appoint Project Officer
- Establish Reference Group
- Establish Secretariat

Stage One: Weeks One to Twelve

Stage One involves the establishment of key project partnerships and the initial development of all tasks outlined in the project objectives. This stage includes:

- Undertaking an audit of existing RMIT curriculum and facilities of relevance to the MYLO project.
- Initiating contact with key internal and external partners
- Explore potential opportunities for complimentary funding (ongoing)
- Begin discussions and reflective processes regarding possible project models
- Review and finalise Project Scope document
- Review and finalise Project Vision Statement
Stage Two: Weeks Thirteen to Twenty Six

Stage Two sees the extension of partnerships, strategies and actions identified in Stage One. Furthermore, this stage focuses on the creation and implementation of the MYLO consultation strategy and the development of MYLO learning models. Actions include:

- Development of a project brochure
- Extension of contact with (and submissions to) possible providers of complimentary funding
- Extension of contact with government departments regarding partnerships, possible models and funding support
- Extension of contact with other external and internal partners regarding possible project models and support with the consultation process to follow
- Development of a consultation strategy that reaches young people, service providers and interested elements of the community at large
- Development of evaluation mechanisms for consultation strategy
- Undertaking of project consultations
- Interpretation of consultation results, before combining with previous reflections and research findings
- Finalisation of models for trial

Stage Three: Weeks Twenty-Seven to Forty-Four

This stage is perhaps the most critical in terms of the final outcomes and potential value of the MYLO project. Stage three includes the learning model trials and evaluations that will form the basis of the strategy document and the forward plan. The stage also involves a reflective review process for the internal and external partnerships central to the MYLO project. Specific steps include:

- Development of model evaluation mechanisms
- Undertaking of learning model trials
- Documentation of trial findings
- Documentation of evaluation findings
- Review and documentation of internal and external partnerships
- Review and documentation of changes to funding and future funding opportunities

Stage Four: Weeks Forty-Five to Fifty-Two

The final stage, this component of the project is primarily one of summarising the project activity and meeting key project outcomes. Actions include:

- Undertaking final consultations/evaluations with internal and external project partners
- Exploration of final reflections by project team, reference group, networking forum and other interested project participants
- Preparation and distribution of draft strategy document for comment
- Preparation of final strategy document reflecting on project activities and comparing results with proposed outcomes.
- Launching of MYLO Strategy and forward plan.

The potential exists for the project to move immediately on to a new stage, should funding bodies and the project owner seek implementation of the forward plan. In this instance, a new implementation plan will be drawn up.
Appendix One

CORE ACTIONS

1. Review Lit & Scope
   • Establishment of Reference Group and Project Officer Position
   • Beginning of informal consultations with stakeholders
   • Analysis and planning by Reference Group and Worker

2. Audit RMIT facilities
   • Establishment of key (internal) RMIT partners
   • Reflection, analysis and planning by worker, reference group
   and MYLO networking forum

3. Contact partners/funders
   • Consideration of possible external partners
   • Consideration of project funding options & strategy
   • Reflection, analysis and planning by worker and reference group

4. Consultation Strategy
   • Consideration of model ideas (ongoing)
   • Consideration of partner advice
   • Reflection, analysis & planning by worker and reference group

5. Consultations
   • Consideration of models ideas (ongoing)
   • Reflection, analysis and planning by worker and reference group
   and MYLO networking forum

6. Models: creation/trial
   • Review of funding status
   • Reflection, analysis and planning by worker and reference group
   • Development of models & pre-trial questions

7. Model Evaluations
   • Consider progress, plan post-trial evaluations
   • Reflection, analysis and planning by worker & reference group
   • Consideration of Strategy Document

8. Strategy and Report
   • Consider project evaluations
   • Reflection, analysis and planning by worker, RG & Network
   • Final consultation with participants

   • Submission of draft report
   • Reflection, analysis and planning by worker, RG and MYLO networking forum regarding launch and forward plan.

Reflection, Analysis, Planning and Action
References


MYLO Project Scope

Title: Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities (MYLO)

Owner: Deputy Vice-Chancellor, RMIT University

Manager: Professor Graham Mulroney (Director: Community Services and Regional Partnerships, RMIT University)

Strategic Intent: The VISION STATEMENT for MYLO is as follows:

“To develop and implement a strategy for access to learning by marginalised young people in the Central Business District of Melbourne. The project seeks to reach both transient and residential populations of young people not currently engaged in employment or education. It is anticipated that the resulting strategy will present learning opportunities outside the normal physical facilities of the university and will include an emphasis on technology-facilitated access.”

Objectives: Project Objectives include the following:

- Identification of existing curriculum and facilities within RMIT that may be most valuable to the project vision
- Development of a complimentary funding strategy for concurrent and future project activity
- Development of strategic links between the university and key agencies/community groups
- A process of reflective practice ensuring project activity is researched, evaluated and documented effectively
- Development and expansion of novel ideas that may effectively reach the target group
- Development and expansion of the communication and consultation processes within the MYLO Network.

Outcomes: Project Outcomes include the following:

- A summary of the activities, curriculum and facilities within RMIT of most value to the target group
- Partnerships with external and internal stakeholders
- Further funding (in partnership with key external stakeholders)
- A project brochure, summarising the key project objectives
- A strategy document, reflecting project results and forward plan
- A series of results and evaluations from consultations with young people and service providers
- A series of results and evaluations from the piloting of MYLO access model(s).

Description/Summary: A planned series of actions linking RMIT with external stakeholders and young people themselves to establish and implement the MYLO project strategy.
MYLO Project Scope

Stakeholders: RMIT, Young People, Melbourne City Council, Frontyard Youth Services, Victoria Police, CBD Churches and Action Groups, Youth Workers, State and Federal Governments, Welfare Agencies, CBD Businesses and others.

Resources: $30,000, allocated by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor RMIT (Staff Hours and Support)

Project team: Within RMIT
Glenn Bond (Project Officer)
Professor Graham Mulroney (Manager, RG Member)
Trish van Lint (PO Supervisor, RG Member)
Catherine Burnhein (RG Member)
Melinda Hatton (RG Member)

Outside RMIT
Barry Pullen (RG)
Dave Hamra (RG)
Jim Downing (RG)
David Doherty (RG)
Mark Keen (RG)
Michael Berestord-Smith (KG)
Networking Lunch Participants
Focus Group/Consultation Participants

Management: Professor Graham Mulroney

Roles & Responsibilities:

Owner: Provide funding

Manager: Ensure outcomes are achieved
Lead the project team
Manage the budget
Ensure timelines are met

Team: Ensure outcomes are achieved
Adhere to timelines
Participate in meetings where appropriate
Provide advice to the manager

Communication Plan: Regular meetings between members of the project team will take place including monthly meetings of the reference group, sub-group meetings as required and constant communication between the project worker and line management. Networking lunches will occur quarterly and all project outcomes will be documented and disseminated to stakeholders.
MYLO Project Scope

Reporting: The Project Officer will report to the Project Team and Project Manager. The Project Manager will report to the Project Owner.

Consultation Mechanisms:
- Project team to consult with reference group
- Project team to consult with networking forums
- Project officer to consult with young people in CBD
- Project officer to consult with internal/external stakeholders
- Project officer to formally evaluate all consultations

Evaluation Strategy:

*Basic evaluation will consist of three points:*
1. Whether the project was completed within specified timelines
2. Whether all outcomes were achieved
3. Whether the project was completed with the specified budget

*Additional evaluation mechanisms will include:*
- Young peoples evaluations of consultations and model(s)
- Stakeholders evaluations of consultations and model(s)

Records & Monitoring Action:

1. minutes from networking and project team meetings
2. relevant files
3. relevant emails
4. project scope document
5. finalised strategy document
6. evaluation summaries

Dissemination of information and celebration:

- Launch and publicity for finalised strategy document
- Final report back to networking and project team meetings
- Celebratory drinks

RISK MANAGEMENT:

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<tr>
<td>Adhering to timelines</td>
<td>Monitor implementation plan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ensure backup for absences</td>
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<td>Adhering to budget</td>
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<td>Maintain awareness by project team</td>
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<td>Lack of commitment from stakeholders</td>
<td>Assign specific accountabilities</td>
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<td>Continually monitor actions / involvement</td>
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Durable Record

Appendix 3
The MYLO Report
THE MELBOURNE YOUTH LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES VISION

We (the MYLO Project Team) will develop and implement a strategy for access to learning by marginalised young people in Melbourne’s Central Business District and environs. The project seeks to reach both transient and resident populations of young people, particularly those not currently engaged in employment or education. The resulting strategy will present learning opportunities that are not limited to the current physical facilities of the university and will include technology-facilitated access.

Project Officer: Glenn Bond
Project Manager: Trish van Lint

Project Funding Provided By RMIT University
# Contents

Executive Summary .................................................................................. 3

Acknowledgements .................................................................................. 6

1. Project Origins ...................................................................................... 7
   1.1 RMIT Search Conference ................................................................. 7
   1.2 RMIT Networking Forums ............................................................... 7
   1.3 Creation Of The MYLO Project ....................................................... 7

2. Project Particulars .................................................................................. 9
   2.1 Objectives and Outcomes ............................................................... 9
   2.2 Project Methodology ..................................................................... 9
   2.3 Limitations of the Research .......................................................... 9
   Figure One: The MYLO Methodology Graphic .................................. 10

3. Partnerships and Consultation ............................................................... 11
   3.1 Internal Research .......................................................................... 11
   3.2 Partnership Development .............................................................. 11
   3.3 Consultation Strategy .................................................................... 12

4. MYLO Strategy Development ............................................................... 13
   4.1 Consultation Results ..................................................................... 13
   4.2 Key Elements of the MYLO Strategy .......................................... 13
   4.3 Creation of the MYLO Model ....................................................... 14
   4.4 The MYLO Model (please refer to Figure Two) ......................... 14
   Figure Two: The MYLO Model Graphic ........................................... 16

5. The MYLO Trial .................................................................................... 17
   5.1 Trial Plan ...................................................................................... 17
   5.2 Trial Process ................................................................................ 17
   5.3 Reflections and Learnings from the Trial .................................... 18
   5.4 Trial Outcomes: Facts and Figures .............................................. 20

6. Reflections and Evaluations ................................................................. 21
   6.1 The MYLO Trial Participants ....................................................... 21
   6.2 The MYLO Project Reference Group ........................................ 24

7. Forward Planning and the Future for MYLO ...................................... 28
   7.1 Piloting MYLO ............................................................................ 28
   7.2 Funding ....................................................................................... 28
   7.3 MYLO Project Recommendations .............................................. 29

Appendix One: Action Research Framework ........................................ 30

Appendix Two: Summary of Consultation Findings .............................. 32

Appendix Three: The MYLO Trial, Week by Week ................................ 34

Appendix Four: Project Officer’s Personal Reflections ............................ 38
Executive Summary

The Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities (MYLO) Project is an RMIT University initiative that has researched, developed and implemented a strategy for engaging marginalised young people in informal learning. The project has focused on the community of unemployed young people who frequent the Central Business District of Melbourne. A particular emphasis has been placed on homeless young people and those individuals that find themselves distanced from educational opportunities. A trial of the resulting strategy, the MYLO Model, was held over sixteen weeks from October 2001 to February 2002. The results of this trial are documented in the following report.

The MYLO project developed out of an apparent willingness on the part of RMIT University and partners to seek “a way forward” for young people frequenting the city area. A networking forum and project team determined that resources should be particularly directed towards those individuals unable to access education or other opportunities for personal development. A general consensus arose that the young people concerned had very limited access to learning opportunities, either as a result of their own (often negative) experiences of formal education or a lack of appropriate alternative options. Learning needs for the group were considered particularly complex, extending well beyond a simple focus on employment, education and training. It was felt that in many cases the primary learning needs might focus on social skills and the self-confidence to participate in the community rather than technical or academic aspirations. The university allocated seeding funding for sixteen months to establish, develop and implement the project objectives. The following vision statement was prepared to reflect the project aims:

_We (the MYLO Project Team) will develop and implement a strategy for access to learning by marginalised young people in Melbourne’s Central Business District and environs. The project seeks to reach both transient and resident populations of young people, particularly those not currently engaged in employment or education. The resulting strategy will present learning opportunities that are not limited to the current physical facilities of the university and will include technology-facilitated access._

A cyclical and reflective action research framework was employed to achieve the project goals. A reference group consisting of key stakeholders was set up to undertake a monthly reflection and planning process for the life of the project. An early analysis of resources and partnerships available was prepared before a broad consultation with young people, service providers and other interested parties. In this manner MYLO was able to develop a clear picture of those elements most critical to success when engaging the target audience. Consultation results consistently advised MYLO of the importance of relaxed and respectful facilitation, sensitivity to diversity within the target group, a careful balance between structure and flexibility and a clear separation from formal education styles and environments. These and other points formed a body of knowledge that was, in turn, developed into a model that might be practically applicable within the inner-Melbourne community.
The MYLO Model was then implemented over a trial period of four months to assess its suitability and success. The results were outstanding and comprehensive. In the brief time period available, the MYLO Model engaged forty-three young people aged between 14 and 25 years in the informal learning process. Remarkably, of these forty-three individuals, some 80% were seen to return and participate more than once in the variety of learning opportunities presented by the MYLO Model. Thirty of the group took at least the first serious step into planning their education, employment and personal development pathways. Twenty-six participated in Information Technology learning support and eighteen were directly involved with a group-learning project (a magazine entitled “Keep Walking”). By the completion of the MYLO Trial, some fourteen of the group were enrolled in either formal or informal education programs and five had secured work of some description.

Those elements of good practice central to the development of the MYLO Model were borne out in their practical application through trial. By rigorously maintaining a focus on respectful, flexible and individualised engagement the model reached and retained those most marginalised of young people. Self-determination and ownership of the group by the group was consistent and was well justified by the eventual outcomes. The opportunity for calm and enjoyable social interaction is seen as rare in the lives of our target group and was particularly popular as a result. Qualitative evaluations, both with the young people involved and with partners in the venture, suggest the initiative has met or surpassed all expectations of success. Participants uniformly appreciated the opportunities presented by MYLO and believe the model is worthy of an ongoing place in the inner-Melbourne community.

Perhaps the strongest finding of the MYLO Project is the evidence of need; the sheer volume and enthusiasm of marginalised young people when presented with the opportunity to participate in informal learning. Given the small scale of the operation and the brief time period available for trial, partners in the project are left to contemplate this demonstrable gap in learning support for marginalised young people. It is the opinion of all partners that the MYLO model offers a significant solution to this community demand and the project team offers the following recommendations as a result:

**MYLO Project Recommendations.**

- that the principles guiding the development of the MYLO Model (regarding environment, communication, engagement practices and education styles) be recognised by policy developers, practitioners and the RMIT community as critical to the successful engagement of marginalised young people in informal learning

- that the MYLO Model be recognised as a proven and successful primary intervention for assisting marginalised young people to engage in informal learning, pathways planning and personal development
that the MYLO report be taken as evidence of a substantial gap in community and education resources for marginalised young people

that RMIT and partners continue the research and evaluation begun the MYLO project (regarding informal learning for marginalised young people)

that the MYLO Model, including the provision of pathways planning funded to continue meeting those unmet learning needs made evident by the MYLO trial.
Acknowledgements

Recognition and acknowledgement must firstly be extended to the Office of the RMIT Vice-Chancellor for providing the resources to undertake the Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities (MYLO) Project. This contribution was both generous and admirable, being well outside the traditional University concepts of Teaching and Learning or Research and Development. Within the University, Professor Graham Mulroney was the director of RMIT Community Services and Regional Partnerships at the time of MYLO’s creation. Professor Mulroney demonstrated great enthusiasm for the both the motivations behind the initiative and the practical development of its goals.

The reflective action-research process employed by the MYLO project would not have been possible without the commitment and belief demonstrated by members of the Project Reference Group. They include Simon Le Page, Frontyard Youth Services, Dave Hamra, Melbourne City Council, Barry Pullen, Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services, Kellie Smith, DEET Office for Youth, David Doherty, Melbourne Business Community, Jim Downing, Whereveruni Project, Catherine Burnhjem, RMIT Chancellory, and Trish van Lint, RMIT CIECAP. This group was both communicative and thorough, and the MYLO Project is far richer as a result. Sergeant Mark Keen (Victoria Police) and David Mackenzie (RMIT Centre for Youth Affairs Research and Development) also contributed to this forum early in the life of the project.

MYLO management was ably and enthusiastically taken on by Trish van Lint. Trish provided sound guidance and consistent support as supervisor to the project officer and as a key member of the MYLO Reference Group. Thankyou Trish. Thanks also to the CIECAP Administrative team and MYLO secretariat including Donna Drew, Helen Tsimiklis and Cate Ellul.

Maryla Skiba was the Project Officer for the CBD Pathways Project, a parallel initiative and an inseparable function of the MYLO Model. Maryla is personally and directly responsible for facilitating many of the great achievements made by young people throughout the MYLO trial. Her skills and persistence with both the client group and the systematic barriers they face brought exceptional rewards. The project and the young people it has reached are all the more successful for your involvement, Maryla.

Many workers and service providers have contributed to the success of the MYLO Project. The project extends thanks to all constituent members of the Melbourne Youth Services Forum for providing an audience for project developments and providing young people themselves during MYLO’s consultation and trial. Thanks are extended Frontyard workers and to the Salvation Army Urban Heart Community Centre. In particular, Marshall Currie has been a very generous contributor of space, support and enthusiasm.

The author’s personal thanks are also due to Anna, for her ongoing support, to Andrew, for his consistently generous contribution of expertise and time and, finally, to the forty-three young people who showed us that MYLO works.
1. Project Origins

1.1 RMIT Search Conference
In June 2000 RMIT University held a search conference to explore the issue of marginalised young people in Melbourne’s Central Business District. Participants included representatives of various departments within the university and interested parties from the city’s community at large. The conference sought ‘a way forward’ for the very visible community of young people frequenting the city area who were out of touch with education and employment. Recognising the significant physical and social presence of the university in the city area, it was envisaged that partnerships could be formed within and around RMIT that would employ existing services and resources to reach the specified target group. Among the conference outcomes were a series of networking meetings, hosted by RMIT, held to discuss and act upon the apparent enthusiasm to develop a university and community response for marginalised young people.

1.2 RMIT Networking Forums
The networking meetings took the form of community lunches where parties could consider and explore their thoughts. Discussions led to a general consensus that the young people concerned had very limited access to learning opportunities, most probably as a result of their own (often negative) experiences of formal education and a lack of appropriate alternative options. Learning needs for the group were considered particularly complex, extending well beyond a simple focus on employment, education and training. It was felt that in many cases their primary learning needs might focus include social skills and self-confidence rather than technical or academic aspirations. The network determined that the issue required greater focus and commitment, and the Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities (MYLO) Project was the result. The university allocated seeding funding for twelve months to establish, develop and implement the project goals.

1.3 Creation Of The MYLO Project
Development of the project brief fell to the Director of Community Services & Regional Partnerships at RMIT University at that time, Professor Graham Mulroney. Operational management fell to the City Interactive Education Coordinated Area Program (CIECAP), managed by Trish van Lint. A project team was set up consisting of various other RMIT personnel representing the Chancellory, the Centre for Youth Affairs Research and Development, CIECAP and others. RMIT representatives were then joined by community members of the MYLO Network in a project team that would oversee the establishment and maintenance of the research project.
Members of the Project Team developed a position description for a project officer to undertake the research, design and implementation of a strategy. It was determined by all concerned that an action research model was the most appropriate mechanism for achieving project aims and the position description reflected this understanding. Recruitment promptly followed and the MYLC Project officer was employed in November 2000.

A reference group was established to provide monthly opportunities for discourse and reflective practice. As this group was to play a decisive role in the nature of responses to the target group, the project team sought to represent by a variety of parties that were familiar in the issues confronting marginalised young people. Although some changes in personnel occurred in the early weeks of the project, the eventual MYLO Reference Group consisted of the following members:

| Melbourne City Council:                  | Represented by Dave Hamra                  |
| Frontyard Youth Services:                | Represented by Simon Le Page                |
| Good Shepard Youth & Family Services:    | Represented by Barry Pullen                 |
| DEET Office for Youth:                   | Represented by Kellie Smith                 |
| Victoria Police:                         | Represented by Sgt Mark Keen                |
| Melbourne Business Community:            | Represented by David Doherty               |
| RMIT CIECAP:                             | Represented by Trish van Lint              |
| RMIT Chancellory                         | Represented by Cath. Burnhiem               |
| RMIT Whereveruni Project                 | Represented by Jim Downing                  |
| RMIT Youth Affairs Research & Development| Represented by David MacKenzie              |
2. Project Particulars

2.1 Objectives and Outcomes
A Scope document was developed that outlined a series of objectives and outcomes that might be employed to achieve the goal outlined in the vision statement. The proposed outcomes represent the core tasks of the project officer and include the following:

- a strategy document, reflecting project results and forward planning
- a summary of the resources within RMIT of most value to the project
- formalised partnerships with both external and internal stakeholders
- a complimentary funding strategy
- a series of results from consultations
- a series of results & evaluations from the piloting of the MYLO model.

2.2 Project Methodology
A reflective action research process was employed throughout the project, as reflected in the MYLO Methodology Graphic (Figure One, overleaf). The steps of reflection, analysis, planning and action were consistently employed to determine project activities. More information regarding the principles of action research as they apply to MYLO is available in Appendix One.

2.3 Limitations of the Research
The MYLO project and the reflective practice model, whilst highly effective in researching, developing and implementing a model of informal learning for the target group, have been strictly limited by available time and resources. The seeding funding generously provided by RMIT University allowed for one worker for an average of three days per week over the sixteen months of the project’s lifetime. During developmental stages of the research this equated to one worker at two days per week, rising to four days per week during the trial of the MYLO Model. External resources provided by the Victorian Department of Employment, Education and Training (for an associated pathways project) allowed for additional support with service delivery and client outcomes during the trial; however this was only available to MYLO for the sixteen weeks from October 2001 to February 2002.

A larger research team, supported by supplementary resources for activities and service provision, would have enabled a more extensive research framework and a more comprehensive trial. At the very least, additional resources could have extended the duration of the trial itself. To analyse the impact of the trial on individuals and the community of marginalised young people was certainly possible over the given time-frame, however the numbers and outcomes are accordingly limited. This is particularly true of a study involving the MYLO target group, for whom the tumultuous realities of day-to-day living mean that sixteen weeks is not necessarily adequate time to engage in and act upon informal learning opportunities.
Figure One: The MYLO Methodology Graphic

MYLO: Core Actions and Reflective Process

CORE ACTIONS

1. Prepare Project
   - Establishment of Reference Group and Project Officer Position
   - Beginning of informal consultations with stakeholders
   - Analysis and planning by Reference Group and Worker

2. RMIT Partnerships
   - Establishment of key (internal) RMIT partners
   - Reflection, analysis and planning by worker, reference group and MYLO networking forum

3. External Partnerships
   - Consideration of possible external partners
   - Consideration of project funding options & strategy
   - Reflection, analysis and planning by worker and reference

4. Consultation Strategy
   - Consideration of model ideas (ongoing)
   - Consideration of consultation strategy
   - Reflection, analysis & planning by worker and reference group

5. Consultations
   - Consideration of models ideas (ongoing)
   - Reflection, analysis and planning by worker, reference group and MYLO networking forum

6. Model Development
   - Review of consultation results
   - Reflection, analysis and planning by worker and rel group
   - Development of model & pre-trial questions

7. Model Trial & Evaluation
   - Plan trial, plan post-trial evaluations
   - Reflection, analysis and planning by worker & reference group
   - Consideration of Strategy Document

8. Strategy and Report
   - Consider project evaluations
   - Reflection, analysis and planning by worker, RG & Network
   - Final consultation with participants

Reflection, Analysis, Planning and Action

MELBOURNE YOUTH LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES: The MYLO Report
3. Partnerships and Consultation

3.1 Internal Research

Following the recruitment of the MYLO project officer in November 2000 a number of key partners within and outside the university were identified. An extensive series of meetings was held to discuss and explore possible directions for MYLO to take. The project worker secured commitments of continued participation and support from a number of quarters, including key departments within the university, relevant government departments (also potential funding bodies) and several city based youth services.

An audit was undertaken of RMIT curriculum or facilities identified as relevant or attractive to the project target group. Key areas were flagged for their potential usefulness with the MYLO project or the young people it sought to reach. Areas of particular significance included the Department of Access and Preparatory Studies, Apprenticeships and Traineeships and the Regional Learning Networks. Links were also apparent between the work of MYLO and the faculties of Social and Community Services in TAFE and Education, Language and Community Services in Higher Education. A summary was drawn up to detail these findings for the MYLO network. At the three-month mark a reviewed project scope document was ratified by the MYLO reference group, including a revised vision statement (as shown earlier) and a step-by-step implementation plan for achieving project goals.

3.2 Partnership Development

With key partnerships underway and proposed project outcomes solidified, the project worker set about extending relationships with those parties central to an effective consultation process. It was determined that youth service providers in the city area would be best placed to act as conduits between the MYLO project and young people. This would be necessary for the purposes of consultation and, later, the model trials. Much time was spent meeting with such service providers to encourage their ownership of the consultation process and to secure commitments for their active participation throughout. Additional project activity during this time was spent on formalising the methodology and mechanisms for data collection. A partnership was also formed with the Centre for Youth Affairs Research and Development, a section of the university dedicated to youth research issues, for support when determining and analysing data collected during the study.

As the project moved towards development of a consultation process, four model ideas had been clearly identified in the discussions and reflections of the stakeholders. These included Personalised Information Technology Training (where young people might identify their IT learning needs and be supported in addressing these), Email Support Groups (where a community of young people would be supported to employ email facilities to address learning, social and support needs). Recreation-Based Learning Opportunities
(where young people, attracted to recreational opportunities, would be supported to identify and address learning needs) and a Peer Education/Peer-Support Learning Model (where personal and group learning needs may be identified and addressed in a group setting). The project team chose to explore the popularity and relevance of these four ideas when undertaking the broader MYLO consultations.

3.3 Consultation Strategy

Key partners and members of the MYLO project team considered and discussed the content of the proposed mechanisms for consultation. Of particular interest were the key questions to be asked during the process. Through a series of reflective discussions within and outside the project team, it was determined that MYLO should promote a particular focus on the concepts of engagement, environment and educational styles. Given the disenfranchised nature of the project target group, it was recognised that perhaps the greatest challenge facing the project was recruiting and maintaining those young people who had long ago fallen out of any form of education and/or long ago lost confidence in their ability to participate in the education system. MYLO would then seek to support the data collected around engagement with clear notions of what learning content should be included in the model developed.

A questionnaire was developed that asked specific, qualitative questions about what would attract young people to a learning model, what would make the learning process more entertaining or ‘fun’, what would encourage ‘repeat’ or return participation and what rewards would be appropriate for participation in such an event. The questionnaire went on to explore which of the content themes being considered by MYLO would be seen as most attractive or relevant to the target group. A series of focus group prompts were then developed that mirrored the issues identified in the questionnaire. Anticipating that some young people may not feel confident with the expectations of a focus group, and may not possess the literacy/numeracy skills to complete a questionnaire, it was determined that individual interviews could take place using the questionnaire as a guide.

In early June the MYLO reference group ratified all aspects of the consultation strategy, including the content and targets for focus groups and questionnaires. It was confirmed that the project worker would consult broadly with young people and service providers, supporting this process with additional data from interested parties within the RMIT networks. The consultations took place throughout June and early July and results provided substantial consistencies with which MYLO could progress.
4. MYLO Strategy Development

4.1 Consultation Results
Approximately one hundred questionnaires were completed and returned for analysis, with an equal representation of young people from the target group and adults from agencies within the MYLO network. Seven focus groups were held, four with young people and three with service providers, with an average of five participants in each. A number of broad consistencies were identified across the data collected and little variance was visible between the opinions of young people and workers. Much data was compiled and tabulated and a summary of key points is provided in Appendix Two.

4.2 Key Elements of the MYLO Strategy
The consultation results (refer to Appendix Two) formed the key elements of the MYLO strategy. The project was advised that an informal learning model for marginalised young people in inner Melbourne must include:

- a relaxed, respectful and non-threatening environment
- relaxed, respectful and non-judgemental facilitators
- a recognition of the diversity of individuals in any given group
- a range and variety of tasks and approaches
- flexibility in expectations regarding attendance and achievement
- incentives for participation (food, certificates, recognition)
- a balance between structure and flexibility that suits participants
- freedom for participants to own, determine and change goals
- sensitivity to short attention spans (breaks, short sessions etc)
- a clear and spoken separation from formal education styles
- a clear separation from the physical environment of formal (especially secondary) educational institutions
- facilitators willing to seek out a personal understanding of (or connection with) individual participants
- a low ratio of facilitators to participants (a maximum of 1:10)
- a venue that is comfortable for young people
- a location that is very central and easily reached
- a time that is not too early or too late (afternoons).
4.3 Creation of the MYLO Model

Having undertaken the consultation process, the challenge for MYLO was to create a model that would recognise the broad consistencies identified, yet still be manageable within the time and resource limitations available for the MYLO trial. The time spent developing partnerships early in the life of the project was in part designed to create confidence when sharing provision between the MYLO project and existing services. With this in mind, a learning model was developed that included responsibilities to be shared between MYLO and other providers.

The data collected throughout the project, from the earliest reflections of the project team to the tabulated consultation results, was brought together in the creation of the MYLO model. Those concepts identified as most critical for the given target group (engagement, environment, education styles) were given due focus, and the model reflects a balance between identified learning needs and appropriate cultural methodologies.

4.4 The MYLO Model (please refer to Figure Two)

The MYLO Platform

The MYLO Platform forms the primary learning opportunity for young people and the centre-pin of the MYLO Model. Based on a facilitated ‘peer-support’ approach, this includes a regular (weekly) meeting of young people determining their own learning needs and being supported by guest presenters, group activities and rewards for ongoing participation. It is in this environment that MYLO offers those elements of good practice that the research demonstrates are central to effectively engaging our target group (incentives, flexibility in attendance, self determined goals and a balance between structure and freedom of movement). Should the group deem it appropriate, the MYLO Platform includes the development and completion of a group-learning project with both individual and group learning outcomes.

Specific learning needs of individuals are then met outside the regular MYLO group by organised referrals to needs-specific learning streams. These referrals are supported by basic learning plans developed through negotiation with MYLO, the young person themselves and (when appropriate) a partner provider.

Participation in the MYLO platform and group-project is highly flexible and ongoing regardless of a young person’s involvement in any of the MYLO learning streams. It is in this platform environment that MYLO encourages the development of social skills and self-confidence that many young people identify as a primary need (and a pre-cursor to confidence in broader learning goals). Participation in any of the MYLO learning streams is encouraged but entirely voluntary, and occurs only when specific learning or living needs have been identified. Rewards are provided (certificates, recreational activities) for participation in the broader MYLO platform and/or for efforts and achievements in the personalised learning streams.
MYLO Learning Stream: Pathways Planning

The work being undertaken in the MYLO project led to RMIT successfully securing resources to pilot a Managed Pathways Program that was targeting the same clientele (i.e. marginalised young people frequenting the CBD). Resources for this project were provided by the Victorian department of Employment, Education and Training. Pathways support would always have been a key learning stream of the MYLO project, however in the light of the pilot resources (particularly the part time pathways planner position), this learning stream became the primary partner project for the MYLO Trial. Members of the MYLO Platform are encouraged, when ready, to take a referral outwards into personalised pathways development. The pathways program seeks to assist young people in determining short and long-term goals and developing a plan to start achieving these. The focus of plans includes, but is not limited to, thoughts about employment, education and training. Provision of Pathways support is sensitive to the complex life-issues of the target group, and may start with very simple goals about living skills and personal safety before extending to include career issues. A strong partnership must exist between the MYLO platform provider and the pathways planner to ensure smooth transition between the two.

MYLO Learning Stream: Information Technology.

Information Technology was a consistent theme throughout discussions about the specific learning needs of the MYLO target group. Not simply a recognition of the omnipresence of IT in employment, education and training, this is also a reflection of a common enthusiasm, even among society’s most marginalised, for developing and using computer-based skills. Where participants in the MYLO platform demonstrate interest or enthusiasm for developing IT skills, personalised learning plans are developed between the young person, the Platform facilitator and (in some instances) Youthnet, a provider of IT skills training for marginalised young people based in central Melbourne. A partnership has been developed with this recently established service that enables a shared-care arrangement between MYLO and Youthnet Staff. The personalised learning plans reflect the varying levels of skills held by young participants, and vary from the very basic procedures of using and mouse and creating a word document to more advanced PC applications.

MYLO Learning Stream: Email and Web Support

Recognising the apparent popularity and/or interest in email facilities expressed by young people in the city, the Email Support learning stream offers an opportunity to develop email and internet surfing skills. Personalised plans are created (again, in some instances, with Youthnet) and a network of interested participants then have the opportunity to share skills and resources over the world-wide-web. Communication about MYLO platform activities is then distributed via email to all participants in the email-support learning stream. Participants are encouraged to start using email as a method of communicating with workers, government and the community at large. Links are commonly drawn between memberships of the IT learning stream and the email support learning stream.
MYLO Learning Stream: Personalised Learning

A more general learning stream, the personalised learning spin-off from the MYLO platform is tailored to the individual needs and desires of platform members. It may well be a series of individual explorations rather than those of a group. Partnerships and links have been forged between MYLO and a number of service providers in the city area, such as YWCA Girlstorey and Kia-Kaha Drop-in Centre, and personalised learning plans are developed according to the demonstrable interests of the individual concerned. This may include links to creative arts programs, living skills programs and any number of other learning issues.

Figure Two: The MYLO Model Graphic
5. The MYLO Trial

5.1 Trial Plan
Having ratified the MYLO Model through reflective discussions with the MYLO reference group and project team, a number of preparatory steps were undertaken. Recognising the need for a “youth-friendly” venue, a new partnership was forged with the Salvation Army’s Urban Heart Community Centre on Bourke Street. Within the centre an education space was already in place that could be employed by the MYLO trial for the running of informal learning sessions. This environment met all of the expectations of the consultations results by being centrally located, non-threatening, non-academic and appropriately proportioned. The suitability of this venue was further enhanced by the availability of Internet-enabled computers in the learning space as well as on-site access to support workers, emergency relief facilities (for food, clothing etc.), public showers and a comfortable community lounge. A mutually agreeable time was negotiated that permitted MYLO to run weekly sessions on Wednesday afternoons for the duration of the trial.

With the venue determined, advertising for participants began. Once again, MYLO sought to use existing youth service providers as conduits between the project and young people. Letters and flyers were sent to all members in the Melbourne Youth Service Network and this process was supported by a presentation to the quarterly forum for the network explaining the objectives of the project and promoting participation in the trial. Planning the MYLO Platform sessions also included setting up arrangements for the food, drink and comfortable surrounds demanded in the consultation results. These aspects were duly organised and were added to all advertisements for the sessions.

MYLO had sixteen weeks in which to explore the strengths and weaknesses of the model in operation. Recognising the need for ownership and self-determination over group activities by the group itself, the challenge for MYLO was to adequately prepare for possible directions whilst not imposing any predetermined values or expectations. The resulting plan identified several possible directions the trial could take alongside certain unavoidable expectations that had to be met for the trial to work. These compulsory steps, such as the creation of group rules and mechanisms for ensuring all participants were aware of the trial’s limitations and duration, were included in a plan encompassing a variety of non-compulsory ideas. In this manner, MYLO sought to adequately prepare for the trial without disempowering the actual owners of the process, the participants.

5.2 Trial Process
The central focus for the MYLO trial was the running of the MYLO Platform sessions. The sessions were facilitated by the MYLO and Pathways project officers. The sessions had an eventual average of nine participants each week (from a low of four in the first session to a peak of 18 in week seven).
Early in the trial a decision was made that the group-learning project would be a one-issue magazine that would very likely be the primary focus of each weekly session. Two sessions were dedicated to guest presenters (chosen, of course, by the group members) that were of relevance to creating and releasing a magazine. Sarah Nicholson, YouthLaw, attended and discussed defamation and racial vilification law as it applies to publishing. Ben Butler, The Big Issue magazine, attended and discussed the failings and strengths of the editing process. Participants used session time each week to discuss content and publishing issues, as well as working on their own contributions. The launch of the magazine, entitled “Keep Walking”, offered a sense of closure to the trial. RMIT took this opportunity to present all participants with certificates for their participation and congratulate them on their work.

The Platform sessions were employed as the primary point of engagement for marginalised young people. Members were then supported with pathways planning and other learning streams outside of the group itself. For the outcomes in external MYLO Learning Streams please refer to the Trial Outcomes section. A comprehensive, week-by-week review of the MYLO Platform sessions is provided in Appendix Three.

5.3 Reflections and Learnings from the Trial

A number of characteristics of the MYLO target group became apparent over the course of the model trial. It was clear, for example, that the realities of daily survival for homeless participants meant that appointments, tasks and attendance at the MYLO Platform sessions could not always be made a priority. Moving from one crisis accommodation option to another, often at very short notice, consistently arose to impact on learning opportunities. Similarly, legal issues (contact with police, court appearances and incarceration) were regularly seen to restrict the capacity for even the most dedicated participants to maintain their involvement. A number of MYLO members also lived either full-time or occasionally in ‘squat’ housing and displayed the inconsistencies in availability so common to this difficult lifestyle.

The MYLO Model was prepared with these conditions in mind and, as a result, was careful not to exert any negative consequences on those individuals that failed to meet agreed arrangements. All parties were consistently reminded that no penalties applied in MYLO, that every contribution was voluntary and that every attempt to participate could only lead to positive outcomes. In this way, those most marginalised of young people were engaged and re-engaged in MYLO activities in the full knowledge that they would not lose face or importance if they were not able to follow through on every occasion. Whilst perhaps obvious to practitioners of youth work, this approach is not common in educational settings and was seen by the Platform members and facilitators as a great strength. The trial also demonstrated the need for a longer operational period, as in many instances the MYLO project was over before willing participants were able to return.
The vast majority of advice provided to the project during consultation and strategy development was to prove accurate and effective. Respectful communication techniques, non-judgemental attitudes, appreciation for the broad variety of learning needs and capabilities and personalised communication with individuals was seen to improve both participation levels and outcomes. It was also apparent that the productivity of the learning sessions was greatly enhanced when the ratio of workers to participants was lower than the initial guideline of a 1:10 maximum. It is a learning of the MYLO trial that generous space must be provided; the venue for MYLO became troublesome when more than 12 or 13 attended, and that a worker/student ratio of 1:6 or 1:7 is most appropriate for the MYLO cohort.

Further reflection on the week-to-week experience of the MYLO Trial suggests that success in reaching so many young people was greatly supported by the young people’s enthusiasm for the model. The advertisements were well placed and well received, however the real basis for the trial’s logistical success was the word-of-mouth advertising that occurred within the community of marginalised young people. MYLO was able to generate significant goodwill and when participants were successfully engaged they, in turn, sought to encourage others to attend. Recognising this, the facilitators consistently promoted this form of advertising throughout the trial. The trial process demonstrates that this mechanism should not be underestimated in the event of any future MYLO activities.

Finally, a review of the MYLO trial would not be complete without recognition of the clear and evident need that exists for informal learning amongst the MYLO target group. For all of the apparent challenges associated with encouraging, engaging and maintaining interest in learning by this group, MYLO demonstrates that it is not only possible, it is popular. During the peak of MYLO interest (approximately seven weeks into the trial) the reference group was forced to consider denying new members access to the project. This was avoided, fortunately, however it remains a learning of the MYLO Trial that space and resources are more pressing limitations than the numbers of willing participants.
5.4 Trial Outcomes: Facts and Figures

The age of MYLO Platform participants ranged from 14 to 25 years with an average age of just over 18 years. These young people most commonly heard about MYLO through Frontyard Youth Services, Salvation Army Urban Heart or by word-of-mouth. Over the sixteen weeks of the MYLO trial forty-three young people from the target group participated in the MYLO Platform sessions. This figure far exceeded the expectation of workers, partners and the MYLO reference group. Of these forty-three young people;

- thirty-six (80%) either came back to the MYLO platform or made appointments outside the MYLO group for pathways support
- thirty took at least the first step into pathways support, including identifying barriers to education and employment
- eighteen participated in the MYLO “keep walking” group project
- twenty-six individuals joined the email-support sub-group and/or developed IT learning plans (including many first-time email users)
- thirteen young people enrolled in formal courses (including VCE, CAE literacy, alternative year 10 and others)
- nine were referred to alternative learning/pathways/support programs
- five found work
- one enrolled in an informal information technology course
- one undertook a summer tutoring program before returning to school
- six have been referred to creative arts and/or personal development programs (including writing, dance and music classes).

These facts and figures represent the substantial formal outcomes from the sixteen weeks of MYLO and Pathways activity. It is also worthy of note that the opportunities for social interaction were very highly regarded by the participants (see section 7.1). Whilst such statistics are not easily demonstrated, MYLO presented all forty-three participants with a weekly opportunity for a calm, friendly and respectful social intercourse. This filled a tangible absence in the lives of many marginalised young people. This is particularly true in the case of those participants who required time to build confidence before identifying learning needs and desires.
6. Reflections and Evaluations

6.1 The MYLO Trial Participants
Participants in the MYLO trial were invited to comment on their experience and understanding of the project. This included reflection on the MYLO Platform itself, reflection on the broader activities of the MYLO model, reflections on personal outcomes as a result of MYLO and reflections on the future for MYLO after completion of the trial. Records were also kept of individuals who wished to be contacted in the event of any future MYLO activity, along with their ideas for any future group projects.

Of the fourteen evaluation participants, all bar one had been involved in the group project, the Keep Walking magazine, and all bar two had been involved in MYLO Learning Streams outside the MYLO Platform. All respondents claim to have found this broader participation both enjoyable and satisfying. The only additional comment regarding learning activities outside the MYLO Platform came from one respondent who wished that more contact with the group had been possible. All respondents would choose to be involved in MYLO over a longer period if that were possible.

The following is a generalised account of all other responses to the evaluation process.

Did you find the weekly MYLO sessions comfortable and inviting?
Respondents uniformly felt that the weekly sessions were both comfortable and inviting. Additional comments included praise for the friendly, conversational nature of the Platform sessions and the fact that there was "something to do" each Wednesday afternoon.

"Yes, because everyone was always talking and getting to know each other"

"It was good to have somewhere nice to go and something to do each Wednesday if you weren't going to school"

Did you, personally, feel welcome when actually in the MYLO sessions?
Respondents uniformly felt personally welcome in the weekly sessions. The responses to this question were consistently strong and additional comments included suggestions that the group facilitation and the calm environment added to this sense of welcome.

"Yes. Absolutely. There was never any trouble, so that made it especially good."

"Yes, most definitely. I'm a very quiet person and was a bit nervous, but the way the group was run was good. There was respect and this made all the difference. It wouldn't have worked otherwise."
Did you benefit from the opportunity to participate in the group and/or group project?
Respondents uniformly felt a personal benefit from their participation in MYLO. The answers were very confident and covered a variety of reasons for this pleasing result. A palpable sense of accomplishment was apparent in many of the answers.

"Definitely. It helped me focus so I didn’t get further off track."

"Bloody oath I did.

"Absolutely. Seeing my work go out to audience. Getting some acknowledgement. It was great."

"For sure. I learnt something. It felt good."

Did MYLO succeed, generally, in attracting young people to participate?
All respondents felt that MYLO had done well in attracting the target group. When prompted, several also offered suggestions for broadening this attraction to reach more people. One respondent felt that the short-term nature of the trial restricted our ability to get people back who, for one reason or another, had drifted away.

"Yes, it definitely did. Especially when people came through the door and found out that it was actually quite good!"

"If you had the money, more advertising would get even more people in."

"It sure did. Bigger Posters and more advertising of them might work even better,"

"It worked. If you had more time there would be a chance to get back some of the people who came once or twice."

What was the best outcome for you, personally, as a result of participating in MYLO?
The respondents were naturally varied in their responses to this question, however answers generally fell into three categories: the accomplishment of goals, the social benefits of participation and the education or employment outcomes they experienced. Several also mentioned getting their name and/or contribution printed in the Keep Walking magazine.

"I guess for me it was the social experience ...and improving my email skills"

"Getting my article in the magazine and making new friends"

"Enrolling in school, definitely."

"Accomplishing something. Meeting my goals and objectives".
What goals did you achieve during the MYLO trial?
Answers to this question were often similar to the “best outcome” responses although not in all cases. Respondents most commonly listed goals achieved as getting into courses, writing their article, getting a job and/or meeting new people. In most cases respondents demonstrated a clear sense of ownership over their achievements.

“I widened my social group, improved my email skills and got my name in print. I think the newspaper (magazine) was really good for self-esteem.”

“Getting into work and getting back to school were my biggest achievements. I didn’t know where to start.”

What did you most like about MYLO?
Among the variety of answers to the question, the themes of a pleasing atmosphere and a good opportunity for meeting other people were the most consistent. Other answers referred to learning outcomes and the chance to have one’s work recognised.

“The atmosphere, the people, the food. The chance to meet and interact, I guess.”

“Meeting people. Making new friends”

“Getting to know people. Being able to see past the “toughness” of some of them.”

“The chance to have something constructive to do. It’s what everybody is looking for... something that interests them.”

“Getting my work to an audience, I guess, but also the personal opportunities MYLO presented.”

What would you most like to change about MYLO?
Five respondents offered suggestions of positive changes for the MYLC model. Of these, four were suggesting an increase in the size and number of MYLO activities. The fifth comment asked for a stronger task-orientation in order to achieve greater outcomes.

“A bigger room. More sessions. More activities”

“Not much. More activities, I guess.”

“If it was a bit stricter more things would get done.”

What should happen to MYLO now that the trial has finished?
Respondents uniformly felt that MYLO should keep going and/or start again as an ongoing program for young people in Melbourne. Some added that the scale should be enlarged or that new activities should be planned.
“MYLO should be ongoing... it should be available on a permanent basis”

“it should keep on going, with new activities and a new issue of the magazine.”

**If you think MYLO should keep going or start again, why?**

Respondents appeared very confident and quite persuasive in their explanations for MYLO expanding. Uniformly they were able to provide reasons for a continuation.

“...because people got used to it. They had something to do and started to really like it.”

“...because MYLO is a manageable learning course for us.”

**Do you have any other comments to make about MYLO?**

By this point in the evaluation process most respondents felt they had said enough, however two made the following comments:

“It was a great atmosphere with good people. Everything was great. It kept me off the streets, anyway!”

“It was a good experience. Something I can look back on and say I’ve done.”

**6.2 The MYLO Project Reference Group**

A focus group was held with the project reference group at the completion of the MYLO trial. The session allowed for final reflections from these key players on the relative success of the project and the learnings generated over the sixteen months. The following is a summary of the prompts employed for this purpose and the themes arising from ensuing discussions.

**Did we meet our core goal of developing and implementing a strategy for engaging marginalised young people in informal learning opportunities?**

“Absolutely. We not only engaged young people, but we reached those truly marginalised individuals we sought.”

“...They (the young people) owned the group from the outset, which meant real rather than tokenistic engagement.”

An overwhelming consensus was apparent that MYLO had not only achieved the core goal but that the engagement had led to exceptional outcomes for many of its cohort. Key reflections focused on the quality of individual results.
It was clear that reference group members felt the model trial had exceeded expectations in terms of learning outcomes, enhanced confidence and personal development for individual participants. The group was wary of the engagement of marginalised young people being somewhat tokenistic however as the participants had “owned” the trial from the outset and there had been a marked “boom in confidence” as a result of participation, this was not felt to be the case in the MYLO project. The fact that a number of young people had stayed involved right until the closure of the trial was seen as further evidence of success. The ability of the model to attract and maintain individuals in a group that was never the same from week to week was also highly regarded.

What would you regard as the best outcomes generated by the MYLO Project?

“It (The MYLO Trial) shows not only the need and the desire for participation in informal learning, but it shows something that works!”

“MYLO was able to change the (negative) notion of education and learning for many of its participants.”

Reference Group members felt that MYLO had greatly contributed to a sense of community among the target group, particularly by enhancing social skills and opportunities for interaction. MYLO was seen to offer great ownership and strength to participants. The results and learnings from the trial were regarded as very substantial outcomes as they demonstrate need and enthusiasm, whilst also offering a practical model that actually works. The high percentage of young people successfully supported in pathways planning was further evidence of project success and was therefore also among the best outcomes. Discussion led to the negative notions of education and learning often held by the MYLO target group. The reference group felt that perhaps the best outcome of all was MYLO’s success in changing these long-standing notions by presenting education and learning in an attractive and self-determined light.

Did the MYLO Model and MYLO Trial accurately reflect your understanding of the advice provided in consultations with young people and service providers?

“Yes. What young people wanted was clearly represented. All the vital ingredients were included”

The reference group clearly believed that the consultation results that led to the development of the MYLO model were accordingly represented in the actual provision of the model for trial. The advice and research findings remained critical factors throughout the development process and there was consensus within the group that all key elements were included and maintained throughout the sixteen weeks of trial.
What do you believe the MYLO project should seek to do better in the event of future MYLO activity?

"Funding is the key. More, earlier, would reduce pressure on workers and, in turn, young people."

"Tenuous tenure affects the young people and everyone else who is involved."

The reference group felt the most pressing improvement would be to secure adequate financial resources to do justice to the MYLO model. It was clear that limited resources and, in turn, limited time had a negative impact on the MYLO project development. There was some consensus that securing adequate funding in the first instance would reduce pressure on the workers and permit more flexibility in the involvement or outcomes for young people.

Was your involvement in the MYLO Reference Group and the Reflective Practice Model appropriate and satisfying?

"The reflection worked very well. It kept partners and workers engaged in the process throughout."

"The reference group was good for floating ideas and consistent peer review."

Once again, reference group members appeared very positive about the appropriateness and relative success of the group itself and reflective practice model they employed. Reflection offered opportunity for debate and a "hands on packing and unpacking of ideas". The group was able to regularly return to the key principles of the project and review the status of the work accordingly. Group members felt ownership and recognition for their contributions.

What were the greatest strengths of reference group/reflective practice model?

"It was a sound example of the practice. Effective use of the group as a sounding board."

The strengths identified mirrored the reasons for satisfying involvement in the reference group. Put simply, the group felt the process was engaging and practical for the workers and the members themselves. An additional strength was identified in the effective balance found between written and oral reporting by the MYLO and Pathways workers.

What would you seek to change about the MYLO reference group practice in the event of future MYLO activities?

"Representation on the reference group by members of the target group."

The only suggested change to the reference group and/or the reflective practice model was to consider including someone from the target group on the reference group itself. This brought about some discussion over tokenism
and other perils associated with this model of practice, however the sense was that if it could be managed effectively (to the benefit of the project and the individual concerned) it is a step MYLO should consider.

Please outline any limitations you felt impeded the progress of the MYLO Project and any solutions you may have to address these.

"Funding limitations and, as a result, resource and tenure limitations."

"Systematic challenges, particularly with other institutions, after young people had been successfully engaged."

As suggested earlier, the reference group felt that funding constraints were the key limitation on the project's progress. It was felt the best MYLO could do with this restraint was to use the evidence of the MYLO trial to engage government and community in adequate funding support. The reference group was also aware of the difficulties faced by workers seeking to find learning solutions for young people once they were effectively engaged. Having won the battle to attract young people and inspire consideration of educational pathways, institutional barriers often made advancement very difficult for MYLO clients. This, it was felt, is a common and difficult problem to overcome. Suggested solutions were to use the experience of MYLO to promote cultural, organisational and policy change.

What do you think should happen with MYLO now that the developmental project is complete?

"MYLO clearly demonstrates effective and positive changes in the lives of marginalised young people. This is very good evidence for keeping it going."

"We should use this great evidence to promote (the MYLO Model) and create something bigger and ongoing."

There was a clear consensus that the reference group felt that on the basis of the MYLO Trial results, the project needed and deserved to be extended into a longer term project.

Do you have any additional reflections or comments about the MYLO Project?

"MYLO has been admirable and noteworthy attempt by RMIT to 'do something'. The success of the project adds directly to cultural change and has the evidence to influence planning mechanisms (across sectors and institutions)."

The group's only additional reflections represented the view that the project was a success and all partners in the initiative deserved recognition for both the attempt and the outcomes. Personal reflections from the MYLO Project Officer are available in Appendix Four.
7. Forward Planning and the Future for MYLO.

7.1 Piloting MYLO
The outstanding success of the MYLO Model has led to a consensus among all parties involved that the model requires funding over a longer time-frame. The project team, the reference group, all active project partners and, perhaps most importantly, the trial participants themselves have unanimously stated that they feel an extension is both warranted and necessary.

Recognising the project’s apparent strengths the reference group and project team require resources to operate a full-scale pilot over twelve or, most effectively, twenty-four months. Operating budgets have been prepared that allow for a variety of program styles, from the MYLO model in its simplest form, as it was during the trial, right up to a more comprehensive education package that includes TAFE training and Mentoring Programs within the MYLO framework.

The potential to mirror the successes of the recent trial over a longer time period is, in itself, worthy of such resources. It is commonly felt, however, that in the event of an adequately resourced pilot the outcomes would develop well beyond those already achieved. It is the very nature of this marginalised target group that conflicting needs and circumstances limit an individual’s capacity to stay involved in such a program. A longer-term pilot would allow not only for the big step of engagement, but also allow for the drift in focus and attendance evident throughout the MYLO trial. In this manner, MYLO might seek to engage and then re-engage those young people experiencing levels of crisis that might otherwise see them drop through the learning opportunity net.

7.2 Funding
Throughout the MYLO project consistent attempts were made at sourcing additional funding and preparing the project for any new funding opportunities that might arise. Thus far the developing project has not been successful in securing any such funds. If the program in its early stages required a stronger evidence base to promote the value of the MYLO model, then this evidence is now at hand.

A series of funding documents have been prepared that represent the project well and promote the potential benefits of further MYLO activity. Included among these are project outlines, project reports, a transferable “Case Statement” that sums up key elements of the MYLO Program and, finally, a variety of budgets that reflect the different possibilities for piloting MYLO over twelve or twenty four months. In this way MYLO is prepared to seek funding from a variety of sources over coming months as those opportunities present themselves. The RMIT Development Unit, which liaises between RMIT initiatives and various funding bodies, have formed a partnership with MYLO to seek out such support beyond the completion of the MYLO Project itself.
7.3 MYLO Project Recommendations

The MYLO Project Officer and Reference Group make the following recommendations regarding the Melbourne Youth learning Opportunities Project:

- that the principles guiding the development of the MYLO Model (regarding environment, communication, engagement practices and education styles) be recognised by policy developers, practitioners and the RMIT community as critical to the successful engagement of marginalised young people in informal learning

- that the MYLO Model be recognised as a proven and successful primary intervention for assisting marginalised young people to engage in informal learning, pathways planning and personal development

- that the MYLO Report be taken as evidence of a substantial gap in community and education resources for marginalised young people

- that RMIT and partners continue the research and evaluation begun by the MYLO Project (regarding informal learning for marginalised young people)

- that the MYLO Model, including the provision of pathways planning, be funded to continue fulfilling the learning needs of marginalised young people made evident in the MYLO Trial.
Appendix One: Action Research Framework

Action Research Principles

The MYLO project has employed an action research model to determine and achieve its outcomes and objectives. Action research may be described as a continuous cycle of planning, action and review of the action undertaken. The review of action may be further broken down into the steps of reflection and analysis, where the opportunity is taken to carefully consider the detail of the action experience before considering the implications of this for current and future actions. This ‘Research Cycling’ process of planning, action, reflection and analysis promotes a necessary objectivity when considering significant project steps, yet need not be confined to the core stages of a research project. Cycling can occur on a weekly, daily or even hourly basis throughout the life of a project to the point where ‘reflection has become integrated into every aspect of the action research cycle’.

It is recognised that in reality the spirals of research cycling are likely to be fluid and responsive, not necessarily neat and self-contained throughout the life of a project. Stages overlap and plans may quickly alter in the light of new learning. Stephen Kemmis identifies a separation in action research activities between those grounded in ‘functional reason’, where rational-purposive actions are taken in order to “get on with the job” and those grounded in ‘critical reason’, where communicative actions are employed to allow greater reflection on “what the job is and what it might otherwise be”. Kemmis argues that in the process of research cycling functional reasoning and critical reasoning may alternate with and complement each other. The MYLO project sought to co-ordinate these two approaches by focussing on substantial practical outcomes whilst undertaking broad communicative reflection.

Kemmis also identifies three categories by which action research processes may be defined. Among these are:

- **technical**, where research targets functional improvement measured by changes in particular practice outcomes;
- **practical**, where technical aspirations are included yet a broader goal exists to inform the decision making of practitioners;
- **emancipatory**, where research seeks to achieve functional improvements and inform practitioners, whilst also providing a critique of practitioners work or work settings.

The MYLO project is most appropriately placed in the ‘practical’ category. The proposed outcomes include the evaluation and measuring of specific functional models, yet the broader project aim is to inform the practice of the university and its partners over time. The development of this strategy document and forward plan is central to the MYLO vision.
2.2 Methodology and Timelines

The spiralling, cyclical approach central to the action research paradigm employed for the MYLO project can be demonstrated alongside the project plan throughout the life of the study. Whilst core tasks for each week, month and stage of the project are described in tasks and outcomes, a parallel process of research cycling can also be seen. For each core task or action and for each smaller step within such stages, the cycle of reflection, analysis, planning and action will continue. In the first instance, this was undertaken by the project officer when interpreting results and choosing the next step. On a more substantial level, the project team, approximately once a fortnight, and the project reference group, once a month, provided a mechanism for considering the steps most recently undertaken and employing these reflections in planning the next action.

The MYLO Methodology Graphic (see Figure One) displays the action-research spiral that has operated alongside the more clinical project plan. Based on the cycling model of a similar action research project, this figure demonstrates eight ‘core actions’ and the reflective processes that accompany each of these. It is important to remember that the creation of models and development of the strategy may also be seen as one full cycle (i.e. reflection, planning, analysis and action on the largest scale).

Appendix Two: Summary of Consultation Findings

As suggested in section 5.1, broad consistencies were identified through the tabulated results of questionnaires and focus groups. The most pressing points of concern for model development are listed below.

Education Styles:

"The environment and communication must be unthreatening and respectful"

Incentives were seen as critical for encouraging both initial and repeat participation: uniformly this included the provision of food and often suggestions of drinks, groceries, transport tickets and shelter. A relaxed environment with approachable workers was also seen as essential. Facilitators of learning models required respectful, non-judgemental attitudes towards participants if the model was to attract and maintain young people, and these workers must also offer sensitivity to the skills and needs of individual young people rather than assume common characteristics across the group. It was very clear that a diversity of activities would also be necessary to maintain the interest of the target group, and that flexibility in expectations regarding attendance or achievement would be central to the success of any model.

Structure:

"We all have different learning abilities and we all learn at a different pace"

Most participants agreed that some structure and/or discipline was necessary in the creation of a model, particularly when it came to a regular time and place for model activity. Within the learning program, however, flexibility and self-determination were seen as critical. Given that the lives of young people in the target group are often complicated, it was regularly suggested that there should be no penalties or disadvantage for young people missing sessions. It was commonly felt that there must be choice in all aspects of participation, and regular opportunities to own, determine and change both group and individual goals. The model structure also required some sensitivity to often short attention spans, with regular breaks provided and sessions of no more than two or three hours.

What To Avoid:

"It can't be like school. You need to be willing to listen if you want us to be willing to learn."
A uniform recognition was apparent that most people the MYLO project seeks to reach have had difficulty in the past with the formal education system. As such, it was felt great care should be taken to distance the MYLO learning model from the secondary school style. This included "not being like school teachers", not having a physical space that resembles a classroom, not having formal assessment processes in the first instance and not having the formality in relationships that is common to the school system. It was made very clear that inflexibility, high demands and any perceived formality would turn young people away. If the young people involved could not quickly develop a respectful and personal connection with the model facilitator, it was felt they would quickly lose interest.

General Advice:
Similarly consistent data was gathered around the physical location of the learning model, the characteristics of good and bad facilitators, appropriate times and places for running a model and methods for presenting ideas. Also explored was the idea of rewards for participation (such as certificates and a formal opportunity for congratulations) and this was generally regarded as very valuable to any learning model trial.

Learning Model Content:
In terms of learning needs and model content, the four key model ideas suggested through the consultation process were each met with much enthusiasm. In the focus groups, all suggested models were received warmly with a number of additional suggestions or qualifications. Among these was the strong suggestion that a combination of models, rather than a single, specific type might engage and maintain the target group. A combination might also provide a platform for building confidence when determining more specific or personalised needs. MYLO was warned that guest presenters or designated "experts" also have to be willing to communicate comfortably and respectfully with young people or interest will be lost. Several subjects suggested that recreational opportunities would interesting and engaging, but perhaps better as an occasional (surprise!) aspect of the learning model.

Quantitative Support for Learning Model Content:
The statistics from the questionnaires back up the focus group results regarding specific model content. Over 90% of respondents supported an Information Technology model, over 80% supported a Peer Support Model and approximately 70% supported both the recreational and email support type models. In these later two areas, significant numbers were also uncertain about, rather than against, the proposed models. Again, questionnaire statistics point to a combination of models as appropriate and the informal, peer group and small group learning environments were rated very highly.
Appendix Three: The MYLO Trial, Week by Week.

Week One:
The first MYLO platform session. Key activities included discussing the short-term nature of the MYLO trial and the various possibilities that the group could and should achieve for its members. A particular focus on encouraging these early members to consider what they felt could be best achieved in the initial stages of the project. A very practical session that produced the first-draft of some group rules and a theory for policing these, as well as some early thoughts on a group project topic. An introduction to the “CBD Pathways Project” was presented. Much time was spent discussing what the members might seek to achieve through participation in the platform sessions.

Four attended.

Week Two:
Included a review of the basics expectations of the MYLO trial followed by a review of the first week’s activities. The members considered, discussed and ratified the self-determined group rules before discussing the external Learning Streams and possible ideas for recreational activities. Further discussion was held regarding the possibility of guest presenters, however it was felt the group needed to decide on a topic for the communal project before this could be confirmed. The strongest idea for a group project was a single-issue magazine that all participants could contribute to if they so chose.

Five attended (including two new members, for a total of six).

Week Three:
This session included another review of the key facts about MYLO (particularly for the new members) and a review of Platform activities thus far. Confirmation that the magazine idea should go ahead was followed by a general focus on ideas for content. Animated group discussions over guest presenters to assist with the group project and specific tasks for individuals. The platform facilitators used this session to strongly promote opportunities for learning support outside the MYLO sessions.

Seven attended (including three new members, for a total of nine).

Week Four:
The arrival of many new members saw the Platform really gain momentum at week four. After reviewing group rules and the basic facts about the MYLO Trial, a very strong session followed focussing on content for the magazine and people’s preferences for support outside the platform sessions. An excellent opportunity for discussions, the session included a broad discourse on issues confronting group members and how these may be represented in the MYLO magazine. Platform facilitators sought to focus on securing pathways appointments and email-support appointments outside the group sessions.

Twelve attended (including five new members, for a total of fourteen).
Week Five:
The arrival of many new members and a large group of previous participant made for a challenging session. This week proved to be an unexpected test of the facilitator’s skills (and also of the small space being used for the platform sessions). A mixture of loud, boisterous and highly sexualised behaviour exhibited by the group. Where focus could be maintained, there was a general assessment of who was doing what and how everyone was progressing. Confirmation of a guest presenter to discuss the legal issues associated with printing a magazine.

Eighteen attended (including seven new members, for a total of twenty-one).

Week Six:
Consistent attendance by a core group of participants provided a relaxed and enthusiastic session. The group appeared to naturally determine a focus or reviewing decisions and ideas from the previous week before discussing new ideas and next steps. An enforced reflection on the group’s own rules was undertaken before the session got underway, with a particular emphasis on the previous week. The group reviewed and acknowledged the flaws in the previous week’s activities and uniformly owned the decision to redress those elements. The group also reflected well on their progress with the group project and the external learning streams. Many worked on their contributions within the platform session.

Fourteen attended (including four new members, for a total of twenty-five).

Week Seven:
An “Expert Learning Session” where Sarah Nichison from the Youthlaw Service was a guest presenter discussing issues of importance to the group project. A particular focus on defamation and racial vilification law as they apply to the media. Excellent interaction was demonstrated between the group and the presenter. A focus on progress with articles and other contributions after the presentation was completed. A group exercise to determine the title for the magazine.

Thirteen attended (including four new members, for a total of twenty-nine).

Week Eight:
The final session before a break for Christmas saw the return of a few faces that had been missing for a couple of sessions and the disappearance of some among the most regular. Once again a very relaxed and enthusiastic session where all parties appeared to own the MYLO process. Work on group projects, contributions and a final decision on the magazine title. “Keep Walking” was seen to reflect a perception common across the group that doors were forever closed and opportunities always a few steps away. A review of progress and tasks for the Christmas break.

Fourteen attended (including five new members, for a total of thirty-four).
Weeks Nine and Ten: The Christmas and New Year break.

Week Eleven:
A smaller group than those previous, week eleven was a focused and productive session. Conscious of the approaching deadlines for the group project, most attention was paid to specific contributions by individuals.

Six attended (including two new members, for a total of thirty-six).

Week Twelve:
The second “Expert Learning Session” with a guest presenter, on this occasion Ben Butler (a freelance writer and editor from the Big Issue magazine). A focus on the editing process and the reasons behind changes to contributions before a publication goes to print. Once again great interaction occurred between the group and the presenter. A confident exchanging of ideas following the departure of our guest and another focused session preparing contributions for “Keep Walking”.

Eight attended (including four new members, for a total of forty).

Week Thirteen:
A session focused on planning, particularly exploring the layout, printing and launch of the MYLO Magazine. Activities focused, once again, on completing contributions and reviewing the involvement of group members that had lost contact with MYLO. A final decision was reached on the recreational exercise for the week before the launch (Go Karting).

Six attended (including two new members, for a total of forty-two).

Week Fourteen:
As for week thirteen, with the addition of some group discussions about external MYLO Learning Streams. Typical of the sessions late in the trial, week fourteen was small, focused and highly productive.

Six attended (including one new member, for a total of forty-three).

Week Fifteen:
The final “normal” MYLO session was attended by a small group of dedicated parties. The contributions completed, much of this group was spent discussing the launch of the magazine and finding members of MYLO who had been otherwise engaged in the last weeks but may be able to participate in the launch of the project.

Five attended.
Week Sixteen: Recreational Excursion (Go Karting).
A go-karting expedition to Port Melbourne was held one week before the launch (as a reward for participation in MYLO). Employed by the MYLO Project Officer as the first opportunity for post-trial evaluations with participants. Sadly, after much enthusiasm, the event was poorly attended. This was perhaps related to the expectations of independent travel (away from the city area). The afternoon was great fun for the four individuals that did participate.

Week Seventeen: Launch of the “Keep Walking” Magazine.
The launch took the form of a final farewell for the young people who had participated in the MYLO Trial. Session activities included presentation of certificates from RMIT and, of course, the public launch of young people’s work in the form of the “Keep Walking” magazine. Nine group members were able to attend and receive their rewards. Several more were unable and apologised, opting to pick up their magazines and certificates up at a later point. The young people owned and thoroughly enjoyed the experience of the launch. This opportunity was also used by the MYLO Project Officer to undertake participant evaluations of the MYLO Trial.
Appendix Four: Project Officer’s Personal Reflections

As the researcher, designer and key practitioner behind the model trial, I obviously have a great deal of personal investment in the success and outcomes of the MYLO Model in action. This recognition aside, I was personally quite taken aback at the sheer enthusiasm demonstrated by the young people participating in MYLO. Whilst I most certainly had confidence in the consultation process and those key elements of the strategy that are reflected in the MYLO Model, it would also be fair to say that my knowledge of the negative notions of learning common to this group lowered my expectations about likely levels of interest. Put simply, given the nature of the individuals we sought to engage, I would have regarded the trial as a great success if we had reached one third of the young people we actually did.

The reality of the MYLO trial is that regardless of those planned and strategic steps, such as a comfortable environment, provision of food, respectful mannerisms, promotion of ownership and self-determination, it was really up to the participants themselves to take that big step inside. The model worked on their terms, at their pace and with their authority, which I would regard as its great strengths. It is true that such factors most certainly encouraged repeat participation, however it is the need and thirst for something to do that led to them to us. Of the many lessons to be taken from the MYLO project, this demonstration of a gap in community resources is perhaps the greatest.

The MYLO Project offered marginalised young people something they wanted and needed. The Model itself did this in such a way as to maximise the quality of the process in a young person’s eyes and, in so doing, ensure the success of the strategy on the ground. Even more satisfying, perhaps, is the knowledge that MYLO managed to attract and maintain those young people so tainted by their experiences of formal education that many thought they could not be engaged. I, like the project partners and the young people themselves, feel the outcomes of the MYLO project overwhelming meet the expectations of this initiative as they were laid down some sixteen months ago.
Durable Record

Appendix 4
RMIT Partners and Facilities List
# MYLO PROJECT: Key Existing Learning Opportunities

## Key Program & Contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINEE SHIPS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Montague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150 streams, 4000 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Connections website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Partners in various fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal entry requirements in some instances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET in Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACCESS AND PREPARATORY STUDIES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Butler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult VCE: 500 + students 12/12 out of school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma of Further Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate 1 &amp; 2 in Gen Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Skills Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualised support according to interest/need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Off Campus&quot; Learning options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Almost) Full Time Support Staff Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TAFE COURSES (VET)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Stewart and Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taster Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modular Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instances of minimal entry requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particular Interest: SACS and Life Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leone Wheeler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven Partners (Providers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific (Needs Based) target groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMIT Accreditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexi-Learning Opportunities (Virtual Campus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGHER EDUCATION:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various Faculties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various Contacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult but possible education outcome, dependent on an individual's academic background and apparent skills. Most likely an exit point post-preparatory studies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**MYLO PROJECT:** *Key Internal Supports and Partners*

### Key Program & Contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MYLO Reference Group</th>
<th>NATURE OF SUPPORT/ASSISTANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All members</td>
<td>• <strong>Direction and Support</strong> for Project Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Links to RMIT activities</strong> (ie: Equity Working Party, Other MECAP activities)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FELCS (Justice and Youth Studies, Youth Affairs Research and Development)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D. Maunders/D. Mackenzie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Research Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Project Based Masters Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Youth Consultation Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Student Placement Support if necessary</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Student Research Support if necessary</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ART DESIGN AND COMMUNICATION</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robin Williams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Certificate 4 in Multimedia</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Games Room Plans</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Youth Space project team</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Youth Space facilities after July</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RMIT UNION</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steve Levakis: Arts &amp; Com Servs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary Calvart: Sport and Rec</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Arts Activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Sport and Rec Facilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Health and Dental</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Legal</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Open to any RMIT student</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT UNION COUNCIL</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities Officers: Julie McBride and Steve Hooper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Activities for TAFE students</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Support for TAFE students</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Community Initiatives</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OTHER INTERESTED FACULTIES/DEPARTMENTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Various</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>A breadth of support including possible modular learning units, student support staff, student placement support etc.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Includes all parties mentioned in key learning opportunities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## MYLO PROJECT: Key External Supports and Partners

### Organisation & Contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Nature of Support/Assistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MELBOURNE CITY COUNCIL</strong></td>
<td>- Key Interest in MYLO Outcomes&lt;br&gt;- Potential Funding Source&lt;br&gt;- Pivotal Role in CBD Activities&lt;br&gt;- Key Partner in funding applications?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave Hamra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FRONYARD YOUTH SERVICES</strong></td>
<td>- Key Service Provider in CBD&lt;br&gt;- Potential Youth Contact Point&lt;br&gt;- Potential support agency for MYLO students&lt;br&gt;- Key Partner in funding applications?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Beresford-Smith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VICTORIA POLICE</strong></td>
<td>- &quot;Fer Out&quot; Program&lt;br&gt;- Access to Juvenile Justice Clients&lt;br&gt;- Potential for ongoing partnership&lt;br&gt;- Important partner in CBD relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snr Const. Andrew Bevan&lt;br&gt;Leanne Sergont (YAU)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEET</strong></td>
<td>- Bravesties Project&lt;br&gt;- Links to LLENS activities&lt;br&gt;- Support for new learning opportunities&lt;br&gt;- Potential funding Source?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki Deighton&lt;br&gt;LLENS Contacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SALAVATION ARMY</strong></td>
<td>- Links to a variety of Support Programs&lt;br&gt;- New &quot;Public Space&quot; with links to MYLO&lt;br&gt;- Seeking to improve youth relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshall Curry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES</strong></td>
<td>- Potential support for MYLO&lt;br&gt;- Potential funding source?&lt;br&gt;- Links to Youth Space Project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YOUTH SERVICE NETWORK</strong></td>
<td>- Forum for service provider consultations&lt;br&gt;- Vehicle for enhancement of MYLO profile&lt;br&gt;- Critical mechanism for supporting MYLO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various Contacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MYLO CONSULTATION STRATEGY: SKELETON.

How do we consult?

The consultation strategy for MYLO will seek to reach three social groups: Young People, Youth Service Providers and the Community at Large (including business representatives). For each of these groups a separate approach will be necessary, however I will seek to develop consistency in the way consultation results may be combined. At this stage I propose a three tiered qualitative research approach, including:

Surveys

A straightforward survey to be developed with minor alterations across the three targeted participant groups. Whilst language and complexity will have to be altered to suit the skills and expertise of each group, the basic themes of questions will be consistent across the three surveys. In each case one (or perhaps two?) questions will be specific to the individual participant group (ie. for service providers: "What collaborative mechanisms need to be in place to support new learning opportunity models?")

Small Focus Groups

Matching the themes of the surveys, small focus groups will be sought out in each of the participating social groups. Discussion will be encouraged and records kept of consistent themes emerging from the groups. This can be done a number of ways and will have to be discussed.

Interviews

Where one-to-one opportunities present, a series of questions (closely related to the surveys and focus group prompts) will be asked of willing participants. In this way the project may reach the voices of those people (particularly youth) unwilling to participate in focus groups and unwilling (or unable) to complete a MYLO survey. An interview proforma will be developed by the project worker which will allow for spontaneous participation in the consultations where the MYLO worker (or project partners) sense an opportunity.

Who do we consult?

Reaching participants in each of three social groups will require a strategic approach. Early proposals for reaching each group are as follows:

Young People

With the support and assistance of youth workers, Frontyard Youth Services will be a key vehicle for reaching young people. Representatives of Melbourne Youth Support Service, Young People's Health Service, Young People's Legal Service and Youth Net have all offered support with engaging young people in one or more of the research strategies. Complimentary youth consultations will hopefully occur through YWCA's JPET program, the Victoria Police "Far Out" program and Melbourne City Council's youth activities around the month of June.
Youth Service Providers

Early thoughts on Service Provider Consultations involve employing the MCC Youth Service Network mailing list as a vehicle for surveys and as an advertising mechanism for a series of focus groups. The project reference group and other project partners may also be approached for focus groups or one-to-one interviews. As with young people, when unplanned opportunities present to the MYLO worker or project partners during the consultation period, an interview proforma may be used.

Community at Large

Using established links to the Police Community Consultative Committee (PCCC) and MYLO networking lunches, representatives of the broader community will be invited to participate in the consultation process. Early indications suggest surveys and individual interviews may prevail in reaching the community at large.

What do we want to know?

There are a number of themes already identified in the MYLO project that we should seek advice on during the consultation period. Broadly, these include:

Education Styles: What would make learning more interesting, more attractive, etc.
Environment: The what, where and how of environmental arrangements for learning opp’s
Model Presentation: How can we best present a learning opportunity to encourage participation.
Model Ideas: What do consultation participants believe would be the most valuable LO models

There are two themes well represented in the project brief and the literature around informal youth education processes. These should form part of the consultation process, and include:

Computers and Information Technology: Harnessing existing skills or interest in Info Tech
Peer Education Models: Recognising the relative comfort and success achieved by young people when supported by their peers.
Ideas for youth consultation questions.

Preparatory introductions should explain the basic expectations of the consultation and what the likely outcomes are. An explanation of the concepts "Learning Opportunity" and "Feeling Comfortable" should be offered. Examples of models should also be offered for clarity, however it should be stressed that these examples are in no way exhaustive.

**Education:**

What would make learning more fun?

What would make you lose interest?

What sort of things would you need to help you with your learning experience?

What things might stop you from trying out a new learning opportunity?

**Environment:**

If you were sharing a class or session with other young people, how many would be a good number?

What sort of place would make you feel comfortable trying something new out?

Are there particular days of the week or times of the day that are good times to provide an information session or new learning opportunity?

If a worker was there to help you, what would help you trust them and feel comfortable asking questions?

What other services might you need help from to take up a learning opportunity?

**Model Ideas:**

What sort of thing would you most enjoy learning about?

Is getting into a course or a job of some sort important to you right now?

What is most important to you out of the following:

- Learning about the skills and services that can help you get by independently (finding somewhere to live, staying healthy, getting out of debt).
- Getting help deciding what you want to do and how to get there.
- Getting into a traineeship or apprenticeship that combines work and qualifications.
- Getting a job.
- A chance to do further study or finish school.
- Something else entirely?
Computers and Information Technology:

Do you know much about computers and the Internet?

Would you like to learn more about computers and the Internet?

How long should a learning session on computers go for (an hour, two hours, all day)? And how regularly should they be held (twice a week, weekly, fortnightly)?

What would make a computer session more interesting for you?

What supports might make you more comfortable attending a computer session?

Peer Education:

One model idea is for young people to meet as group to talk and learn from each other. These sessions may have a different theme each time and might be supported by someone with expertise or experience in the chosen field.

What sort of topics would you like to discuss in a peer education setting?

How many young people should be in a peer-education group?

How often would you wish to attend peer-education sessions?

Would you like the session topics to be decided in advance or would you like to decide the topic for the next session at each session you attend?

Model Presentation:

Of the following options, how would you prefer a learning opportunity presented:

- Information sessions where someone explains things to you?
- A city excursion exploring different opportunities in the area?
- Groups of young people teaching and learning from each other?
- A drop in situation where you can get written information?
- A drop in situation where you can access computers and learn online?
- A regular meeting, where you are assisted to learn about different things?

Does it matter who presents the learning opportunity?

How can MYLO make a learning opportunity attractive to you and your friends?

What would make you follow up after (or keep coming to) a MYLO Learning Opportunity?

PLEASE NOTE:

These questions are written to encourage reflections and contributions by the MYLO reference group. It is anticipated that different questions will be developed for service providers and the broader community within similar areas (i.e. peer education, environment, info technology etc).

Are there any topics or considerations missing from this outline?
Durable Record

Appendix 6
*Draft Youth Questionnaire*
MYLO Youth Questionnaire: DRAFT QUESTIONS

Later this year, the MYLO Project is going to try out a few different types of learning models for young people in the city. A “Learning Model” is some sort of activity or group that helps you learn about the things you want to know. We don’t know exactly what they’ll be like yet and we need your assistance. By answering the following questions you can help us make the models fun and interesting. You can also help us make them popular things to do. Please answer honestly, and ask someone for help if you don’t understand a question.

Making MYLO fun and worth coming back to!
What can MYLO do to attract young people to the learning model trials (i.e. pizza, rewards etc)?

What factors would make learning opportunities more entertaining or ‘fun’ (i.e. sports activities, short spells of work etc)?

What would make you keep coming to a MYLO Learning Model (i.e. Good feedback, Answers to questions etc)?

Who should present the Learning Models (i.e. Workers you know, “experts” in different things etc)?

What other sort of help would you need to participate in a Learning Model (help with housing, money, reading)?

What rewards would you like for participation in model trials (i.e. certificates, prizes, show bags etc)?

IDEAS FOR LEARNING MODELS

MYLO wants to know what the most important things to include in Learning Models are. You can help by looking at the lists below and numbering the three you think are most important. Put 1, 2 and 3 next to your choices in each list.

What are the most important learning issues to focus on in model trials?

- Computers (including email or the internet)
- Help with getting a job
- Groups with other young people, deciding what to learn as you go
- Help with getting Traineeships or Apprenticeships
- Help with getting back into education (in TAFE or UNI or school)
- Help with education outside of TAFE, UNI or School
- Help with Living Skills (like paying bills, looking after your health etc)
- Something Else?

What would be the best type of learning environment?

- Drop in Computer programs
- Drop in information programs (about courses, jobs etc)
- Peer Support Programs (groups with other young people, with various topics)
- Recreation-Activities (Arts/Sports)
- Recreation Activities (Excursions)
- Information Sessions with “Experts” in different things
- Regular Group Gatherings (combining all of the above)
- Something Else?

Specific Ideas For Models MYLO is already thinking about a number of different Learning Models types. These model ideas are not definite though and the project wants to know how good you think they are. Please answer by circling the response that is the closest to how you feel.
Information Technology and the Internet
Computers and the Internet are important for young people to learn about.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Uncertain Disagree  Strongly Disagree

A Learning Model with computers and the Internet would be popular with young people

Strongly Agree  Agree  Uncertain Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Young people would want to keep coming to a Learning Model with computers and the Internet.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Uncertain Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Peer Support Programs
Group meetings of young people (deciding their own topics for discussion and learning) would help young people learn about important things.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Uncertain Disagree  Strongly Disagree

These group meetings would be popular with young people in the city.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Uncertain Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Young people would want to keep coming groups like this if they chose their own topics.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Uncertain Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Recreational Models
Recreational activities, with learning sessions, are an important way of helping young people.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Uncertain Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Recreational activities, with learning sessions, would be popular with young people in the city.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Uncertain Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Young people would want to keep coming to recreational activities (such as arts, sports and excursions) with learning sessions.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Uncertain Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Supported Email Groups
Support with accessing, learning about and using email is important for young people

Strongly Agree  Agree  Uncertain Disagree  Strongly Disagree

A supported email group would be popular with young people in the city.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Uncertain Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Young people would want to keep participating in a supported email group.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Uncertain Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Model Regularity
The trials of MYLO Learning Models will not be available forever… they’ll go for about two months (maybe up to six months if we can get enough money). Try to remember this when you answer the following questions. Just circle the answer you like the most for each question.

How many young people should make up a group to share any one learning opportunity?
2  4  6  8  10 Another Number……

How regularly should learning opportunities be held to maintain all interest and meet expectations?
3 per week  2 per week  1 per week  1 per fortnight  1 per month Other?……

Thankyou for helping us with our project. Your assistance will make sure the Learning Models that we trial are useful and popular with young people in the city.
Durable Record

Appendix 7
Draft Adult Questionnaire
MYLO Service Provider Questionnaire: DRAFT QUESTIONS

The Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities (MYLO) Project seeks to develop and trial a series of models over the later months of 2001. The models are to be ‘Learning Opportunities’ for marginalised young people and may take a variety of forms. Answers to the following questions will inform the shape, style and content of the models themselves. Please consider your understanding and experience of the target group when responding.

Education Styles and Model Presentation

**MYLO seeks to present the models for trial in an attractive and interesting manner that encourages participation and ‘repeat’ participation. Consider the following questions in the context of short term trials. Please circle the answer you consider most accurate for each question, or write your own.**

**What can MYLO do to attract young people to the learning model trials (i.e. food, rewards etc)?**

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

What factors would make learning opportunities more entertaining or ‘fun’ for the target group (i.e. recreational components, short spells of work etc)?

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

What steps might be taken to encourage continued or ‘repeat’ participation (i.e. acknowledgement, feedback etc)?

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Who should present the learning opportunities (i.e. known workers, relevant experts etc)?

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

What support mechanisms will be required to enable participation in trials (i.e. referral protocols, proximity to other services etc)?

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

What rewards would be appropriate for participation in model trials (i.e. certificates, prizes, show bags etc)?

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

General Ideas for Models

**Whilst a number of specific model types are being considered, MYLO is interested to hear what ideas are perceived to be most valuable by service providers. Please rank your answers 1,2 and 3, marking only those 3 most important.**

What, in your view, are the most important learning issues to focus on in model trials?

- Support & Access to Information Technology
- Support & Access to Job Seeking
- Support & Access to Peer Education Programs
- Support & Access to Traineeship/Apprenticeship Programs
- Support & Access to Formal Education Opportunities
- Support & Access to Informal Education Opportunities
- Support with Independent Living Skills & Personal Goal Setting
What, in your view, would be the most attractive style of learning opportunity for the target group?

- Drop in Information Technology programs
- Drop in Education Access Programs
- Peer Support Programs (with weekly themes, i.e. accessing education)
- Recreation-Based Learning (Arts/Sports)
- Recreation Based Learning (Excursions)
- Facilitated Information Sessions
- Regular Group Gatherings (combining all of the above)

Specific Ideas For Models

A number of learning opportunity models are currently being considered by MYLO, based on advice from relevant literature and key project partners. These model ideas are not definite inclusions for the trial period, and the project seeks to assess their relevance to the target group. Please answer the following series of positive statements by circling the response that best reflects how you feel.

**Information Technology and the Internet**

Information technology is an important learning need for marginalised young people.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Uncertain
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Information technology is a learning need that is attractive to the target group.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Uncertain
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Information technology, including online learning programs, is a useful vehicle for engaging the target group.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Uncertain
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Peer Support Programs**

Peer Support Programs, with learning themes or topics determined by participants, would address important learning needs of marginalised young people.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Uncertain
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Peer Support Programs would be attractive to the target group.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Uncertain
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Peer Support Programs, including self-determined topics and the use of ‘experts’ where desired, would be a useful vehicle for engaging the target group.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Uncertain
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Recreational Models**

Recreational activities, with learning components, could address a variety of learning needs for marginalised young people.
Recreational activities, with learning components, would be attractive to the target group.

Recreational activities (such as arts, sports and excursions) with learning components would be a useful vehicle for engaging the target group.

Supported Email Groups

A supported email group, including co-ordinated information sharing, would address an important learning need for marginalised young people.

A supported and affordable email group would be attractive to the target group.

A supported email group (with themes of electronic community, education, living skills etc) would be a useful vehicle for engaging the target group.

Model Regularity

The model trials will be held over periods of approximately two months, with the likelihood that at least one model will operate for up to six months (funding dependent). Please consider the following questions in the context of these time limitations.

How many young people should make up a group to share any one learning opportunity?

2  4  6  8  10 Another Number……

How regularly should learning opportunities be held to maintain all interest and meet expectations?

3 per week  2 per week  1 per week  1 per fortnight  1 per month  Other?……

Thankyou for participating in this data collection. Your contributions will assist in the development of learning opportunities that are both relevant and attractive to the young people we seek to reach.
Durable Record

Appendix 8
Consolidated Youth and Adults Questionnaire
The Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities (MYLO) Project is currently developing learning opportunities for young people in Melbourne. Later this year, several models will be trialed with groups of young people. The project seeks your input and your answers to the following questions will inform the shape, style and content of the models themselves.

Specific Ideas For Models

A number of specific learning models are currently being considered by MYLO. These model ideas are not definite inclusions for the trial period, and the project seeks to assess how relevant and attractive young people might find them.

A. Information Technology/Internet activities (Learning with computers)
Do you think information technology (computers) and Internet skills will be seen as relevant by young people?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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</thead>
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<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Do you think that learning about information technology is attractive to young people?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>5</td>
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</table>

B. Peer Support Programs (Learning in groups of young people)
Do you think that Peer Support Programs, with learning themes or topics chosen by participants, will be seen as relevant by young people?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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</table>

Do you think that learning through Peer Support Programs is attractive to young people?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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</table>

C. Recreational Models (Learning during recreational activities)
Do you think that recreation focused learning activities will be seen as relevant by young people?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

Do you think that learning through recreation activities is attractive to young people?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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</table>

D. Supported Email Groups
Do you think that a supported email group, including message boards and other facilities, will be seen as relevant by young people?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you think that learning through a supported email group is attractive to young people?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Education Styles and Model Presentation

MYLO seeks to present the models for trial in an attractive and interesting manner that encourages participation and encourages young people to 'come again'. Please consider the following questions and think about what would make you, or young people you know, want to participate in learning models. Answers may include anything that you feel would increase the popularity of models.

1. What do you think would be the most effective ways for MYLO do to attract young people into the learning models? How could MYLO tempt you or a young person you know to give it a go?

2. What strategies would make learning opportunities more entertaining or 'fun' for young people?
3. Who would be the best people to present the learning opportunities for young people?

4. What other assistance or support would need to be in place to ensure that the young people get the most out of the program?

General Ideas for Models
What, in your view, are the most appropriate learning activities to focus on? More than one idea may be assessed as highly appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help, Support or Assistance with...</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computers/Information Technology Activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment/Job Seeking Activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Education/Support Programs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traineeship/Apprenticeship Programs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Formal Education (Uni, TAFE etc)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Education Opportunities/Activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Living Skills Programs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation Programs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
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</table>

The other issue important issue for MYLO is how we provide the learning models themselves. Please assess how appropriate the following learning environments might be. You may assess several approaches as appropriate and several approaches may be combined in the one model trial.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models presented with...</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal 'Drop In' approach</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Support Group approach</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation-Based approach</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal classroom approaches</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Sessions with Facilitators</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Group work activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About You.
The MYLO project does not need to know your name or other private details about you, however it will help us to know what part of the community you are from. Please provide us with the following information about yourself.

If you are a young person (under 25 years of age), please circle the appropriate answers:

AGE: up to 18 10 21 22 26  GENDER: Female Male

If you are from another section of the community, please circle which one:

A Community Agency   The MYLO Network   RMIT University   Other (Please Specify) .................

Thankyou for participating in this consultation. Your input will assist in the development of learning opportunities that are relevant and attractive to Melbourne's young people.
Durable Record

Appendix 9
Focus Group Prompts
Focus Group Prompts: MYLO Consultation Strategy.
Preparatory introductions should explain the basic expectations of the project and the focus groups, and what the likely outcomes are. An explanation of the concepts “Learning Opportunity” and “Barriers to Success” should be offered. Examples of models should also be offered for clarity, however it should be stressed that these examples are in no way exhaustive.

Education:
What would make learning more fun?

What can MYLO do to attract young people to learning model trials? Rewards?

What would make young people lose interest?

What sort of things would marginalised young people require to assist with their learning experiences?

What things might stop young people from trying out a new learning opportunity?

Environment:
If sessions with other young people were in groups, how many would be a good number?

What sort of place would make young people feel comfortable trying something new out?

Are there particular days of the week or times of the day that are good times to provide an information session or new learning opportunity?

If a worker was present during learning opportunities, what would help young people trust them and feel comfortable asking questions?

What other services might young people need help from to be able to try a new learning opportunity?

Model Ideas:
What sort of thing would young people most enjoy learning about?

What examples come to mind of the most pressing learning needs for young people?

What, of the following, do you regard as most important:

- Support & Access to Information Technology
- Support & Access to Job Seeking
- Support & Access to Peer Education Programs
- Support & Access to Traineeship/Apprenticeship Programs
- Support & Access to Formal Education Opportunities
- Support & Access to Informal Education Opportunities
- Support with Independent Living Skills & Personal Goal Setting
Particular Model Examples:

A number of ideas are being considered for trial in the MYLO project. The following four models covered are in no way an exhaustive list, but represent the strongest ideas coming out of the project so far. Focus Group responses will assist in determining the level of interest in each idea and how best they may be presented should they eventually be included in the trials. In discussing each, the facilitator should seek out a sense of value, attractiveness and potential barriers to model success.

Computers and Information Technology:
Do marginalised young people know enough/much about computers and the Internet?

Would you/they like to learn more about computers and the Internet? Is this attractive?

Are there particular computer skills you/they would most like to learn about?

What would make you/them feel most comfortable if you were learning to use a computer?

What barriers might exist for an IT learning model?

Email Support Groups:
Would a supported email facilities provide an attractive and valuable learning option for young people?

What are the main barriers to participation in such a group? (PC access, Cost etc)

If barriers can be overcome, what areas are the most important aspects of participation in such a group (computer skills, information provision, contact with services, sense of community etc)?

Peer Education/Peer Support:
Would a self-determining peer-support model be an attractive learning option for young people?

What sort of things should be talked about in a group of this kind?

What barriers might exist in presenting such a model?

What sort of workers would be most helpful?

Would it be better to have a series of sessions mapped out or to decide at each session what to discuss at the next session?

Recreational Model
What sort of recreational activities would attract young people to a learning opportunity?

How regularly should recreation based learning opportunities be offered?
How best might learning opportunities be built into recreational activities?

Model Presentation:

Of the following options, how would you prefer a learning opportunity presented:

- Drop in Information Technology programs
- Drop in Education Access Programs
- Peer Support Programs (with themes, i.e. accessing education)
- Recreation-Based Learning (Arts/Sports)
- Recreation Based Learning (Excursions)
- Facilitated Information Sessions
- Regular Group Gatherings (combining all of the above)

Does it matter who presents the learning opportunity?

How can MYLO make a learning opportunity attractive to you/them?

What would make young people follow up after (or keep coming to) a MYLO Learning Opportunity?

What would you/they most like to achieve out of a new learning opportunity?

PLEASE NOTE: These ideas are presented in this way to encourage feedback and reflection from the focus group. The focus group itself will determine which prompts are most relevant and how long might be spent on each issue. Within reason (as determined by the focus group facilitator) conversation may extend beyond the prompted clues.
Durable Record

Appendix 10

Plain Language Statement

MELBOURNE YOUTH LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT: SERVICE PROVIDERS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

My name is Glenn Bond and I am inviting you to participate in the Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities (MYLO) project. MYLO is seeking to develop and trial some new and innovative ways of learning for young people who frequent the inner-city area of Melbourne. In time we hope to offer young people, especially those out of touch with employment and education, some different ways of learning about things that are really important to them. Later this year we will trial a few such models and then use the results of these trials to plan the future of MYLO. This project will be the topic for my Masters of Education degree within the Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services at RMIT. Over the next few weeks, MYLO will be asking some questions to help us determine how and what these learning models should look like. We are seeking the opinions of service providers working with young people (and other interested community groups) to support the advice provided by young people themselves.

You can become involved in one of two ways: either by being part of a focus group or by filling in a questionnaire (a questionnaire takes about ten minutes to complete). Participation is entirely voluntary. As you may be aware, a focus group is an opportunity for people to sit together and discuss issues important to the project. It will take between 45 and 50 minutes to complete, and no one is asked to participate in more than one group. The conversations will be recorded on paper by the group facilitator. No one has to know your name and MYLO will not keep any records of which individuals say or write particular comments.

By participating in either way, you can help us know what you would most like to be included in the learning models MYLO develops later in the year. We will try to listen to everyone who contributes, although it may not be possible to include everybody's desires in the eventual trials. The models will be open to any young person that is interested and information about the model trials will be made available through all services involved in the consultations.

In a focus group the following steps would be required of you:

- You would have to attend a meeting with other young people at a certain time and place
- We would then talk through a few questions about different styles of learning, different topics to learn about and different times or places you might like to learn
- And that's all!

If you wanted to fill in a questionnaire, you would take the following steps:

- Get a copy of the MYLO questionnaire
- Follow the instructions to fill it out
- Return it to the box or safe place provided.
- And that's all!

If you wanted to participate, but are not sure about filling in the questionnaire or joining in a focus group, you could speak to the Project Officer about another way to contribute (my details are at the bottom of this page). The contact details for my Masters of Education supervisor (David Maunders) are also available below. Thank you in anticipation of your assistance.

Yours Faithfully

Glenn Bond, MYLO Project Officer, Phone 9925 9541 or email to: glenn.bond@rmit.edu.au

Any complaints about this project should be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, University Secretariat, GPO 2467V, Melbourne 3001. Phone 9925 1745. David Maunders can be reached on 9925 7736.
Durable Record

Appendix 11
Reduced Consultation Results: Quantitative
Reduced Consultation Data for consideration by the MYLO Reference Group

Quantitative Results Summary

With the assistance of the Centre for Youth Affairs research and Development at RMIT, the consultation questionnaires were coded and displayed for the MYLO project. The displayed data consisted of 34 pages of frequency distributions, percentage totals and coded text in line with each component of the questionnaire. These results have been summarised to approximate percentages below. Of young people responding, 66% were female and 34% male, with 20% aged 18 or less, 36% aged 19-21 and 44% aged 22-25. Of the adults responding, 49% represented community agencies working with young people, 16% were members of the MYLO Network, 12% represented RMIT University and the remaining 23% were from other parts of the inner-Melbourne community. Quantitative responses are summarised below. Qualitative responses have been combined with the focus group and interview responses in a separate qualitative consultation results summary.

A. Information Technology/ Internet activities (Learning with computers)
Do you think information technology and Internet skills will be seen as relevant by young people?
Strongly agree  Agree  Uncertain  Disagree  Strongly disagree
52 % 39% 6% 1% 0
Do you think that learning about information technology is attractive to young people?
Strongly agree  Agree  Uncertain  Disagree  Strongly disagree
29% 56% 15% 0 0
Summary: Over 90% of respondents agree that IT & Internet activities will be seen as relevant to young people, and over 85% of respondents believe it to be attractive to the group

B. Peer Support Programs (Learning in groups of young people)
Do you think that Peer Support Programs, with learning themes or topics chosen by participants, will be seen as relevant by young people?
Strongly agree  Agree  Uncertain  Disagree  Strongly disagree
30% 42% 22% 3% 1%
Do you think that learning through Peer Support Programs is attractive to young people?
Strongly agree  Agree  Uncertain  Disagree  Strongly disagree
20% 50% 26% 3% 1%
Summary: Less comprehensive than the IT question, however at least 79% of respondents peer support programs will be relevant and attractive to young people. At least 1 in 4 respondents are uncertain or disagree.

C. Recreational Models (Learning during recreational activities)
Do you think that recreation focused learning activities will be seen as relevant by young people?
Strongly agree  Agree  Uncertain  Disagree  Strongly disagree
25% 56% 18% 1% 0
Do you think that learning through recreation activities is attractive to young people?
Strongly agree  Agree  Uncertain  Disagree  Strongly disagree
30% 54% 14% 1% 0
Summary: over 80% of respondents agree that Recreational models of learning are both relevant and attractive to the target group. Almost no respondents disagree with either point.

D. Supported Email Groups
Do you think that a supported email group, including message boards and other facilities, will be seen as relevant by young people?
Strongly agree  Agree  Uncertain  Disagree  Strongly disagree
32% 54% 14% 1% 0
Do you think that learning through a supported email group is attractive to young people?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary:** Whilst more than 85% of respondents perceived email groups as relevant to young people, some 40% felt uncertain that this would be attractive.

**E. General Ideas for Models**

**Question One:** What, in your view, are the most appropriate learning activities to focus on? More than one idea may be assessed as highly appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help, Support or Assistance with…</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computers/Information Technology Activities</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment/Job Seeking Activities</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Education/Support Programs</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traineeship/Apprenticeship Programs</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Formal Education (Uni, TAFE etc)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Education Opportunities/Activities</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Living Skills Programs</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation Programs</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary:** Ranking on a scale of 1-5 (from not appropriate to highly appropriate) more than 80% of respondents ranked IT, Peer Education, Independent Living Skills and Recreational Activities with either a 4 or a 5. Whilst most categories were seen as generally appropriate (more than 70% of respondents ranking then 4 or 5) there was some doubt Job Seeking activities (30% ranking this 1-3) and, especially, Access to Formal Education (34% ranking this 1-3).

**Question Two:** The other issue important issue for MYLO is how we provide the learning models themselves. Please assess how appropriate the following learning environments might be. You may assess several approaches as appropriate and several approaches may be combined in the one model trial.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models presented with…</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal 'Drop In' approach</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Support Group approach</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation-Based approach</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal classroom approaches</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Sessions with Facilitators</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Group work activities</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary:** The suggested models for presenting learning programs met with mixed responses. The informal, peer support and recreation based approaches all received rankings of either 4 or 5 (appropriate-highly appropriate) from 70% or more of respondents. The idea of small group work activities was seen as resoundingly appropriate, with over 80% of respondents ranking it as a 4 or 5. There was some doubt about the facilitated information sessions with 35% ranking this in the middle ("3") and formal classroom approaches were seriously questioned with 80% ranking this as a 1 to a 3 (not appropriate to uncertain.
Durable Record

Appendix 12

Reduced Consultation Results: Qualitative
Reduced Consultation Data for consideration by the MYLO Reference Group

Qualitative Results Summary

The results from focus groups, interviews and the qualitative aspects of the MYLO questionnaire have been reduced and tabulated below for your consideration. As discussed previously, the data has been gathered according to our deductive themes of inquiry and then coded and further reduced under inductive themes emerging from the responses. Emerging themes are listed accordingly to their popularity amongst respondents as ‘Very Common” (more than six references), “Common” (4-6 references) and “Occasional” (less than three references)

**Deductive Theme: Making Learning Models More Attractive**

**Emerging Themes: Very Common**
- There must be respect for young people, regardless of their skills or circumstances
- There must be a connection, one on one, between facilitator and participant
- Offer Food
- It must be a relaxed environment

**Emerging Themes: Common**
- Facilitator must there to help individuals, not just the group
- Do not apply too much pressure
- Familiar and accessible venues
- Offer Incentives & “treats” (drinks, tram tickets, vouchers, groceries)
- Recognise achievements.
- Some sort of qualifications as an outcome
- “if they (the facilitator) are willing to listen, the student will be willing to learn”
- Variety: too much of the same thing is boring.

**Emerging Themes: Occasional**
- Recognition for participation, recognition for more than just participation
- Financial Incentive
- Formal feedback at the end
- Recreation and Games are important

**Deductive Theme: What would stop young people participating?**

**Emerging Themes: Very Common**
- Unapproachable teachers/facilitators.
- If it’s like school, no-one will come “lots of people who might come didn't like school, maybe for good reasons, so it can't be like that”
- If there was no respect
- If there was no flexibility
- Too many rules

**Emerging Themes: Common**
- If there was no mutual understanding
- If there was no personal element
- If there was too much pressure
- Not enough rules

**Emerging Themes: Occasional**
- Inflexible hours: always having to come
- If you always had to be doing something: “some days you might want to come but not do anything.”

**Deductive Theme: Session Structure**

**Emerging Themes: Very Common**
- Regular time and place
- Have to know when it’s going to happen and how often
Must have flexibility in the sessions themselves
No penalties
Approachable and friendly teachers/facilitators

**Emerging Themes: Common**
- Some Routine is a good thing
- A calm, non-threatening environment
- Must have regular breathers: “Lots of people don’t have much attention span”
- It must be your own choice (coming or not and what tasks you do)

**Emerging Themes: Occasional**
- They should be able to choose for themselves how it all works
- Facilitators: be good at giving advice and be willing to consult about individual needs
- Opportunities to change it around to keep it interesting

**Deductive Theme: Getting young people to come back again**

**Emerging Themes: Very Common**
- Incentives
- An established rapport with facilitator
- Must have connection with group
- Respect

**Emerging Themes: Common**
- Options for when and how often you come
- No trouble if you haven’t been coming

**Emerging Themes: Occasional**
- A changing schedule to keep it interesting
- Rules: Respect each other, respect opinions, non-judgemental communication, safety

**Deductive Theme: Group Size**

**Emerging Themes: Very Common**
- No more than 10 per worker
- Has to be small enough to allow for plenty of one-to-one

**Emerging Themes: Common**
- 5 per worker

**Emerging Themes: Occasional**
- Bigger groups invite friction and clashes: has to be small enough to deal with that

**Deductive Theme: Session Times**

**Emerging Themes: Very Common**
- No more than two-to-three hour sessions
- Mid-morning at the earliest

**Emerging Themes: Common**
- Afternoons are good
- Once a week
- Attention spans are short
- Must be brief enough to keep interest

**Emerging Themes: Occasional**
- Some discipline in the timing is probably good.
Should allow for extra time afterwards for individuals that want it

**Deductive Theme: Participation and Ownership**

**Emerging Themes: Very Common**
- Input into decision making
- Outings that the group choose

**Emerging Themes: Common**
- Invitation to set up program
- Regular updates, one way or another, on what’s happening

**Emerging Themes: Occasional**
- Things to look forward to will make people feel more attached

**Deductive Theme: General Advice on Learning Models**

**Emerging Themes: Very Common**
- Must be comfortable for young people
- Young people must be able to enjoy themselves, whatever they’re learning.

**Emerging Themes: Common**
- “Platform” idea: one basic starting point with options within or away from that.
- Must be a social thing as well as a learning thing
- Should include a focus on social skills and getting along with the group

**Emerging Themes: Occasional**
- Might help with literacy; but got to be careful of different levels of literacy
- Careful of different levels of skills.
- Computers are a good idea
Durable Record

Appendix 13
Glasgow Slides 2001
Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities

Project Origins
- University sector conference
- Creation of MYLO Network
- Consideration of primary learning needs
- Allocation of seeding funding
- Appointment of project officer

Melbourne’s Young People
- The World’s Most Livable City?
- The City of Melbourne and the CBD
- Changing attitudes towards young people
- An increasing prevalence of homelessness

MYLO Vision Statement
“We (the MYLO Project Team) will develop and implement a strategy for access to learning by marginalised young people in Melbourne’s Central Business District and environs. The project seeks to reach both transient and resident populations of young people, particularly those not currently engaged in employment or education. The resulting strategy will present learning opportunities that are not limited to the current physical facilities of the university and will include technology-facilitated access.”

Proposed MYLO Outcomes
- A summary of activities, facilities and curriculum
- Formalised partnerships (internal and external)
- A complementary funding strategy
- A MYLO strategy document, including forward plan
- A series of consultation results
- A series of results and evaluations from the MYLO Model Trial

Methodology
- Action Research Concept
- Reflection, analysis, planning and action
- Research cycling
- Functional reason/critical reason
- Technical, Practical & Emancipatory action research
Methodology

Project Implementation Plan
- Project Preparation
- Stage One: Project Development
- Stage Two: Consultation and Model Development
- Stage Three: Model Trial and Evaluation
- Stage Four: Reflection and Strategy Development

The Story So Far...

Project Development
- Partners identified and secured (university departments, government departments & services)
- Audit of RMIT curriculum and facilities
- Initial discussions re: MYLO Learning Model
- Reviewed scope and implementation plan
- Identification of four possible models: IT Training, Email Support, Recreation Base & Peer Support

The Story So Far...

Consultation Strategy
- A focus on management, environment and education styles
- Questionnaires: collection of quantitative and qualitative data
- Focus group prompts developed to encourage broader responses to survey questions
- Interview option developed using survey as a guide

The Story So Far...

Consultation Results
- On Styles: incentives, flexibility, individualist, respectful attitudes, variety and spontaneity
- On Structure: some discipline (time & place), regular breaks, short sessions, self-determination
- On ‘What to Avoid’ distance from all links with school, minimise formal assessment, avoid formality, avoid high demands, avoid distant facilitators

The Story So Far...

Model Development
- Recognition of time and resource limitations
- Employing partnerships with providers to full advantage
- Mutual (shared) responsibilities
- Triangulation of data (literature, resources, research)
- Due recognition of those concepts (engagement, environment, education styles) seen as critical
The MYLO Model

- Information Technology
- Personalised Learning
- Managed Pathways
- Email Support Group

MYLO PLATFORM
- Peer Group Meetings
- Recreational Activities
- Personal & Group Goals
- Incentives & Rewards for participation
- Self-determined Topics

The MYLO Trial

- A four month window October 2001-January 2002
- Partnerships with sub-group providers in place
- Evaluation mechanisms being developed for participants (pre and post trial completion)
- Stakeholder reflections considered during trial and evaluations at completion of trial

The Future For MYLO

The Policy and Theoretical Framework
- Resilience and Connectedness
- Local and state government directions
- Global context

Where To From Here?
- A strategy and beyond
- Partnerships and future funding
Durable Record

Appendix 14
MYLO Trial Flyer
Are You A Bit Bored Hanging Around The City? Wanna Be Part Of A Project Just For Young People? Come Along To…

MYLO!

Every Wednesday afternoon the MYLO! group meets on Bourke Street. MYLO! is an opportunity for young people to chill out, talk about stuff that interests them and think about things they would like to learn more about. We are putting a newspaper and web page together. If you want some help sorting out your own, personal learning goals, you can get that at MYLO! too! In MYLO! you can:

- Write a newspaper article
- Have some free pizza!
- Help with the paper layout
- Get an email address
- Learn computer and internet skills
- Have some free soft drink and chips!
- Learn about journalism and graphic design
- Go on excursions doing fun things
- Get help with education and courses
- Get help for anything at all to do with learning!

...and lots of other stuff.

Where/When? Every Wednesday at 2pm, Salvation Army, 69 Bourke Street, City. Starting Wednesday October 31st.

How Much? Absolutely Free! Free Food & Drinks Too!

More Information? Phone Glenn Bond on 9925 9541
Durable Record

Appendix 15
Examples of Personal Learning Plans
## MYLO Internal Learning P.L.P.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Contact at:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Support People:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Interests:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Learning Tasks:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions:</td>
<td>By When?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is helping?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MYLO Worker:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anyone Else:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there barriers to success?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What can be done to overcome these?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasks for MYLO Worker:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Address:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement on learning actions and tasks:</td>
<td>DATE:.............</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant............ MYLO worker............ Learning Provider............</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of learning actions and tasks:</td>
<td>DATE:.............</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant............ MYLO worker............ Learning Provider............</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### MYLO External Learning P.L.P.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Contact at:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Support People:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Interests:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Specific Learning Tasks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>By When?</th>
<th>Done?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Who is helping?**
- MYLO Worker:
- Learning Provider:
- Anyone Else:

**Are there barriers to success?**

**What can be done to overcome these?**

#### Tasks for MYLO Worker:

| 1.      |          |
| 2.      |          |

#### Tasks for Learning Provider:

| 1.      |          |
| 2.      |          |

**Agreement on learning actions and tasks:**

**Completion of learning actions and tasks:**

- DATE: .......... 
- Participant .......... MYLO worker .......... Learning Provider ..........
## MYLO Email Support P.L.P.

### Name:  
### Contact at:  

### Key Support People: 

### Learning Interests: 

### Specific Email Support Tasks: 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>By When?</th>
<th>Done?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Create/ Check Email address</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Send and receive emails to/from MYLO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Send and receive attachments to/from MYLO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Who is helping? 
- **MYLO Worker:** Glenn Bond  
- **Learning Provider:** Simon Le Page (Youthnet)  
- **Anyone Else:**  

### Are there barriers to success?  

### What can be done to overcome these?  

### Tasks for MYLO Worker: 
1. Send and Receive emails & attachments  
2.  

### Tasks for Learning Provider: 
1. Support with above tasks where required  
2.  

### Agreement on learning actions and tasks:  
**DATE:**.............  
**Participant:**.............  
**MYLO worker:**.............  
**Learning Provider:**.............  

### Completion of learning actions and tasks:  
**DATE:**.............  
**Participant:**.............  
**MYLO worker:**.............  
**Learning Provider:**.............
Appendix 16

Examples of Pathways Planning Tools
Name: ________________________________
Address: ______________________________________
Suburb: ___________________ Post Code: ________
Telephone: _______________mob: _______________
Email address: ______________________________________
Date of Birth: _______________ Age: _______________
Gender: _____female  _____male
Country you were born in: __________________________
Aboriginal or Torres Straight Islander: ____Yes  ____No
Emergency Contact: Name _____________________________________________
                  Tel: ________________________________________________
I have a:   _____learner’s permit   _____driver’s license
Are you in contact with any other services? __________________________

Worker | Service | Telephone
---------|---------|---------
         |         |         
         |         |         
         |         |         

0101-tools-mms
CBD Pathways project

EDUCATION & WORK EXPERIENCE

I have completed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Term 1 &amp; 2</th>
<th>Term 3 &amp; 4</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Term 1 &amp; 2</th>
<th>Term 3 &amp; 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which school did you attend? ________________________________

Have you had a job before? ________________________________

Employer Type of job

________________________

________________________

________________________

________________________

Interests/ Goals:

________________________

________________________

________________________

________________________

________________________

0101-tools-mms
NAME: 

CONTACT: 

Things I have done that I liked:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities/Hobbies</th>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Things I have done that I didn't like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities/ Hobbies</th>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SKILLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things I am good at</th>
<th>Things I am not so good at</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PATHWAYS PLAN

Things I would like to do or try:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities/Hobbies</th>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Which of these things are the most important to me?

What is stopping me from doing these things?

What can I do so that I can try some of the things I'd like to do?

Who do I need to contact?

**Contact 1:**
Name: 
Address: 
Telephone: 

**Contact 2**
Name: 
Address: 
Telephone: 

**Contact 3**
Name: 
Address: 
Telephone: 

**Contact 4**
Name: 
Address: 
Telephone: 

0102- tools- mms

RMIT-CIECAP- 0102- tools- mms
**CBD PATHWAYS**

**LONG AND SHORT TERM GOALS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are my short-term goals? (Things I would like to do soon)</th>
<th>What are my long-term goals? (Things I would like to do later)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SHORT TERM</strong></td>
<td><strong>LONG TERM</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CBD PATHWAYS PROJECT

CONSENT FORM

Permission to release and/or seek confidential information

Your pathway plan may require that we share information with other services like Centrelink, health, youth and other services. You must complete this form before this can happen.

I, _____________________________ understand the nature of the information required and give my permission to the CIECAP pathways officers to release/seek the following information:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

To/from the following persons/agencies:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

For the purpose of assisting in developing my Pathways Plan and no other purpose.

Signature __________________________ Date: ________________

Staff signature ____________________ Date: ________________
Durable Record

Appendix 17
MYLO First Contact Forms
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MYLO Initial Contact Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Circumstances?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you hear about MYLO?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in Group Learning or Group Project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in Personal Learning &amp; Support?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particular interests or skills?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember: All questions voluntary, All answers confidential, All attitudes respected.
Durable Record

Appendix 18
Platform Session Journal Template
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>NEW</th>
<th>RETURNING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**ACTIVITIES:**

**OUTCOMES:**

**CONCERNS/DEVELOPMENTS/LEARNINGS:**

**OTHER COMMENTS:**
Durable Record

Appendix 19
Welcome to MYLO Handout
Welcome to MYLO!

Here are some things you should know about the MYLO Trial:

- It is a trial, which means we are testing to see whether MYLO works for you!

- We have only three months (until the end of January) to test MYLO out!

- It is entirely voluntary; only stay involved if you want to!

- MYLO needs your advice and help... you can assist us by telling us what you REALLY think about MYLO!

- MYLO is confidential: no one has to know if you are involved and the workers will not share information about you unless you want them to!

- There are rules about behaviour that are decided by YOU and the rest of the group. Ask Glenn about these.

- You can get help with any sort of learning that interests you!

- You can get help with planning your future (one week, one month, one year from now) if that interests you!

- You can participate in recreational activities that YOU choose about once a month!

- If you don't want to do the tasks or activities in MYLO you don't have to...you can just hang out with everyone on Wednesday afternoons!
Durable Record

Appendix 20
RMIT Certificates
INSERT HARD COPY OF RMIT MYLO CERTIFICATE HERE
Masters of Education
MYLO Project
Glenn Bond

Durable Record

Appendix 21
‘Keep Walking’ Magazine
Keep Walking
opinions and stories from the young people of inner Melbourne

The Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities Magazine
**A Word from the MYLO Man.**

The Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities (MYLO) Project is an action-research initiative of RMIT University. The project seeks to research, develop and implement a strategy for engaging marginalised young people in informal learning activities. Specifically, MYLO targets young unemployed people who frequent the Central Business District of Melbourne and have fallen out of touch with the education system.

A further emphasis is placed on those young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

After broad consultation with youth service providers and young people themselves, the MYLO Informal Learning Model was developed in August 2001. The Model seeks to provide a calm environment in which to engage young people who have been disenfranchised from mainstream schools and are finding difficulty identifying or addressing their learning needs. Employing the advice of young people from the target group, MYLO attempts to offer a respectful, gently paced opportunity to build confidence and awareness regarding pathways to independence and education. A sixteen-week trial of MYLO was begun in late October, ending with the launching of this magazine in February 2003.

"Keep Walking" is just one of several outcomes for the young people involved in the model trial. The magazine is a group project developed by the participants themselves and has been employed as a vehicle for focusing the weekly MYLO sessions. The title reflects a common perception across the MYLO group that doors are forever closed and opportunities are always a few steps further than one might think. The articles and contributions included have meant different things to their various creators: In some cases this has been an opportunity to express oneself, in others simply a way of filling another slow-passing day. For all contributors, however, this magazine represents time spent in an environment of personal development, self-determination and enhanced independence.

Through consultation with the authors and the group at large, articles in this magazine have been edited to some degree. We have, however, sought to minimise this intervention and maintain as much of the original content and feeling as possible. Congratulations to the contributors and to all those young people involved in the development of the "Keep Walking" idea. Here's hoping that MYLO has helped open some of these doors and that the next opportunity is right where you stand.

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**Keep Walking Contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>page one:</th>
<th>A word from the mylo man</th>
<th>by Glenn B.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>page two:</td>
<td>Stuart's story</td>
<td>by Stuart W.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>page three:</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>by Emma B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>page four:</td>
<td>Being a young mum</td>
<td>by Renee S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>page five:</td>
<td>The Streets of Melbourne</td>
<td>by Skits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>page six:</td>
<td>Brent's Gig Guide</td>
<td>by Brent S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>page seven:</td>
<td>Going Back to School</td>
<td>by Samantha W.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>page eight:</td>
<td>Illustration</td>
<td>by Peter D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>page nine:</td>
<td>Film Reviews</td>
<td>by Christy M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>page ten:</td>
<td>My Run-In With The Law</td>
<td>by B.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>back page:</td>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>by Eve P &amp; Rahim M.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Glenn Bond  MYLO Project Researcher
Stuart's Story

This is my story. I'm the only one who can tell it. It all started around 6 weeks ago, early January. I had gained an interview with a Tafe for a position in their Fine Art Photography and Painting Diploma. It was in my favour that I present to them some sort of artwork/photographic work. A 'portfolio'. I didn't have one. Being Thursday I needed to gather something to show by the following Monday. This left me reaching or some sort of solution.

Knowing that I can't paint or draw (part of the reason for doing this course) I was left with the obvious, some sort of photographic portfolio. How would I acquire one? I had no camera, no money to hire a camera or produce film. Hmmmm. After searching through my resources, old and new, I came across an art group who have an understanding both of my current homelessness and my desire to participate in the course. After a brief discussion we came to the conclusion that, although I wanted high-quality photographs, given my options and the available time frame this wasn't really possible. So I set off for my mate's automatic camera, which we deemed the only solution at that time.

Coming to mid afternoon Thursday I was off with the automatic and taking some shots, which I thought fitted the Fine Art end of the spectrum. I am highly capable of taking goods shots. The automatic, although not my preference, was not going to hold me back.

My knowledge of 'Fine Art' photography was limited to the basics of romanticized, sensual, manipulated and artistic impressions of the world. Similar to that of the magazine Black and White. While taking the first of my images I struggled to think of other areas to photograph. I needed to show a varied knowledge of the field at the interview.

I looked through the yellow pages for photography and fingered out a few numbers from the larger advertisements. I then made my way to the phone box. It went unnoticed by me that I had just called one of the major photography institutes. A place that is highly renowned and somewhere I would like to learn. In talking over various aspects and angles of 'Fine Art', I mentioned my current situation. On the end of the phone, not yet having seen me. I was told in good faith that I could borrow a camera and use a film. Free of charge! The most selfish thing I've encountered this century.

Come Friday morning I was out taking the sort of images I wanted, with an SLR camera, an aperture and a zoom lens to telephoto. On returning the camera I could see this person's trust in me and in himself being well greeted by us both. 'I wouldn't let it to you if I thought you would steal it, yo bastard and my lesson would have been if this person I say I hope you still learnt I perhaps a better one than you thought you have gained entry into the course. Thankyou'

This morning after telling the person my was greeted with a smile and a trust. His hand to shake, but also offered advice on the insight into the industry and, finally, him "mentor". All of which are very valuable and a lot to me, particularly as they are things so far I have been innermost. A "mentor" of this sort will I hope to excel in the field I've come most to appreciate. On finishing the meeting with morning I walked out with a new perspective on life and its offerings.

All movements in life have ripples and all are yours to make. I don't want to be a sellout. It's your turn, not just called one of the major photography institutes. A place that is highly renowned and somewhere I would like to learn. In talking over various aspects and angles of 'Fine Art', I mentioned my current situation. On the end of the phone, not yet having seen me. I was told in good faith that I could borrow a camera and use a film. Free of charge! The most selfish thing I've encountered this century.

Stuart Wallace is responsible throughout "Keep Walking"
Afghanistan

I see all the news footage, I read the stories, I hear the talk and still it goes on. The war between the Americans and the Taliban. Well that’s what they say it is. Yet all around me it seems more than that.

Children talk of how they want to blow up the Afghans and bash the people that they now call enemies because this is what the “adults” are doing. They want to run off and blow each other up...the children hear this and absorb it all and then are asked not to play with guns or fight. Most children aren’t allowed to watch certain TV shows or say certain words, yet why bother? Do you send your children away from the nightly news? I remember I used to be encouraged to read the paper and watch the news to keep up with what’s going on in the world. Why not just give the children toy guns and pump them full of war-time movies? It would save the short amount of time it takes for their minds to be filled with real wars and a hatred they don’t even understand.

Adults say that teenagers don’t understand. What I understand is that it’s people: brothers, fathers, husbands, sons, mothers, daughters and sisters that go off to war and never come back. The fact that the politics of war preys on the human nature of fighting makes me sick. Every person, no matter how kind and good-hearted, has the ability to kill if threatened with being killed themselves. If John Howard says so then off we go to fight in a war. What is it exactly we are fighting for? I was told it was “our freedom”.

What freedom is there in being told that your baby’s father is dead, never to hold his child or play in the sand. Where is the freedom in being sent off to war by a politician, like a nameless number. If 50,000 people died in four years of war, I feel confident in thinking that most of these 50,000 probably thought they could go off to war, kill their enemies and come back as heroes to a happy place.

Why not send those who want war, all the hot-heads that want to kill each other, off to a deserted island where they can have it out away from those who see past the anger. I don’t know how the family and friends of those killed will feel and I don’t know how they think, I do know however, that I don’t want to worry that my brother might go off to war and not come back to me. Or that my sister won’t ever return from her grade six camp to Parliament House. If people want to fight for a freedom that doesn’t really exist, then please take it someplace else. I, for one, will not willingly lose my family and friends to a war that is so politically “ass-about” that we don’t even know why we’re fighting. What freedom is there for the children that will die? Think about that before you send us off to pull those triggers. Johnny.

- EMMA B

Being a young Mum

I have a 2 year-old daughter and her name is Jamie Lee Simms. I love her very much and she means the world to me (of course). I will tell you how my life changed after having my daughter. I was 19 years old and I was living in Geelong West, and that was a home to live in; it’s not the best place to bring a child up in. I was going out with my partner for about 2 years before things went down hill... Any, we all know how babies are made, so I won’t go into those details. So, what happened?

I started to feel sick for some reason and I went to the doctors to get a pregnancy test. I was so worried that I might be pregnant, thinking that I would have to chance everything I used to do before I was having a baby. In a way, though, I did want a baby, because my family didn’t give me much love and I had this special gift that I knew would give me love. And that’s for sure!

It’s so hard to bring up a child. I think to myself that she is always no.1 to me, but at this moment I don’t have my child because I couldn’t look after her. Like I said its so hard to look after a child. I’ve got a bad temper and I didn’t want to take my anger out on her which is a good thing. Because most mum’s do, and that’s not like me. My daughter is now with my dad, which is all right I guess. And her father is with someone else and has now got a child with that person. So Jamie’s got a step brother and I hope they have a good relationship.

So people (girls) think before you have sex. Consider if you really want to bring a child into the world, because children are not toys. You can’t have them and then give them back. They will always be yours. Right now, at this very moment. I regret giving my child away and I’m always trying to get over it. I’ll always love my daughter. She’s a nick- name, which is “Little munchkin”. And why’s that? Because my mum use to call me that when I was little.

So like I said, please think about yourself and your life. Thank you for reading this, and I hope you enjoyed, and listened, to what I’ve said. And I hope you understand the direction I’m pointing you in.

RENNEE S

P.S. And if anyone is pregnant and its the first
You can talk to me about it.
The Streets of Melbourne

Upper class society looks down on "streeties" because they think we're all smackheads or on drugs or whatever. But they're wrong. It is true that the squats are covered in needles and trash, but it's a roof over your head, and four walls is all you need. Not everyone's on drugs, but everyone sure as hell needs somewhere to sleep. Everyone also thinks that all stuff that happens on the streets is bad, but the truth is that there are good things as well as bad.

An upside to living on the streets is you get to meet heaps of interesting people, and you get to hear about what the streets are like in different states of Australia. The friends that you make while living on the streets are most likely going to be the ones that will last for a long time. The "streeties" motto is: "streeties stick together! Our experience of life on the streets is less of a challenge now, because we've been doing it for so long. We help the people that need help.

As for the bad side, it's true that most of us have probably scammed money off people at some stage, not for drugs and alcohol, but for food and clothing. We steal from food stores to survive, not just for fun. You will find that most "streeties" have come from a very bad background. For example, violent parents, drugs in the family, or no matter what they do they just cannot get along with their parents.

The scamming part of living on the streets is so degrading. I mean, how would you like to ask someone for a dollar or something, to get a feed? It rips the pride right out of you. - SKITZ

Brent's Club Guide

Metro Nightclub 69 Bourke Street, Melbourne.
Review: My personal experience of the Metro suggests you should go there only once in a while. Perhaps you could go there once every month, but more than that would be a waste of your time. I have found that sometimes the club is full of sickheads and therefore does not have a good atmosphere.

Heat Nightclub, Crown Casino, Melbourne.
Review: In my personal opinion, Heat is a good option if you are looking for an easy way to pick up someone! If that's what you are looking for, then that's the place to go. The music it is alright if you are in to commercial dance.

Wild Bills Saloon Bar Southland Shopping Centre
Review: My personal opinion of Wild Bills is it really positive. It has a great atmosphere, great people, good music and really nice staff.

- BRENT

Going Back to School

It all started when I made it clear to everyone that I was NOT doing school and that school was falling apart. The people there were SO unpleasant, their attitude, their language and their fashion sense (including the teachers, except Mr Dobbs). Anyway, 6 months went by and I decided I wanted to do something with myself, so I moved out of my sisters, and moved in with my girlfriend's family.

That's when I started to look for some work. Nothing happened. No one would take me seriously. I am fairly young to look for apprenticeships (being 15 and all). So then I got referred to Glenn and Maryla (at the MYLO program). Maryla (my Pathways worker) was straight on the job. She showed me all my options, such as doing a pre-apprenticeship course or doing an alternative yr 10 at Swinombe or the CAE. We had a lot of coffee!

It took quite a while for me to decide on what would be best for me. Just before school started, I decided to go to Number One. It's an annex of Collingwood College. I got referred there by Steve Sutton, he's a worker from Kia Kaha (a JPET program). Anyway, there are 15 kids in the whole school and it's pretty close to this after-school thing I go to at Kia Kaha. It's mostly just homework help and support and stuff. So it's pretty sweet. I go there on Wednesdays, and my niece and brother are going to the school right next to me. Which is quite a drag.

So anyway the day before I started I met up with Maryla and she gave me my pathways plan sheets, with all of the necessary things I'm going to need when I want to go back to hairdressing or gc further on with school. So I think that Maryla has got me pretty well covered. I've so far just experiencd my 5th day of school and I'm loving it! By the time this is printed in Keep Walking, it'll be close to two or three weeks. That's it.

- SAMANTHA W.

Keep Walking: The MYLO Magazine
Film Reviews...

NEW RELEASE: Vanilla Sky. Starring: Tom Cruise. Penelope Cruz, Cameron Diaz, Jason Lee. Director: Cameron Crowe. Plot: A happy-go-lucky guy’s life changes after a car accident, leaving him deformed and reclusive. Things go from bad to totally weird after his operation. After reforming with his true love, things don’t seem the same... Crowe has directed some classic movies. Almost Famous and Singles among them. This one left me really unsure whether I liked it or not. I was never sure what was happening in it and, particularly to the characters themselves. Not a movie I’d watch again. - 2 stars.

SMALL SCREEN STUFF... WORTH A RENT
My Best Friend’s Wedding. Starring Julia Roberts, Cameron Diaz, Rupert Everett. A laugh and a half for this mushy romantic comedy. Watch out for Cameron Diaz’s god-awful singing! - 3 stars.
Woman On Top. Starring Penelope Cruz. Another not-so-bad romantic comedy. - 3 stars.

SMALL SCREEN STUFF... IF YOU'RE CURIOUS
Eyes Wide Shut. Starring Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman. Stanley Kubrick’s last movie before his death is not a masterpiece. Where’s the plot? Please explain the sit when Tom does a mask and cap to go to the party with a secret password? And why Nicole isn’t in it much? - 2 stars.

SMALL SCREEN STUFF... RENT FOR A LAUGH
You know him as Drew Barrymore’s now ex-husband. Tom Green-cancer survivor and comedian. Check out his Tom Green Show videos for his bizarre skills. He embarrasses his poor parents and people on the street. He’s a security guard’s worst enemy. He even walks around with his feet on fire, thinking he’s “Burning Feet Man”. Warning: he’s really gross too.

DON’T BOTHER WITH THESE
Bruber (silly suspense thriller)
Blair Witch 2 Book of Shadows (pointless sequel)
Jesus’ Son (unfunny coming of age comedy)
Urban Legends: Final Cut (pointless sequel)
Chopper (Eric Bana sees Chopper as a funny character. When he’s not. Give the part to Russell Crowe. I’d say!)
Any Given Sunday (yawn)

- CHRISTY M.

My Run-in with the Law

It all started when I was sixteen. I was really bored and didn’t think the law would ever catch up with me. I started doing internet fraud with my brother. We were getting heaps of shit and we thought we were never going to get caught. We did it for it for about 3 months and before we got a knock on the door from the Rosebud C.I.B. Mum knocked on the door and said a member of the police force was there to see me. He read me my rights and said lets go to the police station. He got my brother, too, and we went to the police station for interviewing. After about 3 hours of questioning they let finally let us out. Mum had to come and get us from the police station. Later, when I went to court, I got a 500 dollar fine and a 12 month good behaviour bond.

My next run in with the law was this time I was seventeen and I was drinking at a pub. As we left the pub and my mate went to take a leak we got asked how old we were. We said we were 17 and I got done for drunk and disorderly and drinking at a licensed pub under age. I was worried going to court for a second time, but I still didn’t take it too seriously. I got a five year good behaviour bond and a fine.

When I was eighteen I came in contact with the law again. I got done for breach of an intervention order. I was homeless at the time and things were pretty rough. My Dad had put an intervention order on me because he is a shit head and he did not believe that I could have friends or i that I was old enough to do anything I wanted to. I came home after 2 days of partying and my dad told me to get out of the house. Later I got charged again and went to court again. It got more serious and I got a Community Based Order (CBO).

My last run in with the police was last year when I got done for assaulting a police officer. resisting arrest and willful trespass. I know that this time I might not be so lucky with a C.B.O or a fine. I talked to my lawyer and he said I might even be doing jail for six to twelve months. I guess that things add up and I wish I had taken it more seriously from the beginning. Most of all I wish that I hadn’t lost contact with friends and family who don’t want to know me anymore because of my trouble with the law. - By B.S.
Homelessness

Being homeless can bring up all sorts of issues such as the living conditions in a refuge, life on the streets, crime and drug use.

Why does it happen?
Young people get kicked out of home for many reasons. Some leave of their own accord to escape heavy discipline or for other reasons. Many kids who are homeless go through abuse and family breakdown.

Refuges
The kinds of things that a refuge has are; access to food, a safe warm bed every night and they also offer a sense of security. You always feel safe in your refuge and have people to talk to that are going through similar types of problems. There are workers to talk to; they are really great people for advice. In a refuge you have to listen to what the workers say because they may have a reason to kick you out if you keep disobeying the rules of the refuge. Another thing that comes in handy for the refuge is to keep the peace with the other residents because if you don’t the conflict can get in the way of the safe environment of the refuge. Unfortunately you can’t put all your trust into the other residents as your own personal property can get stolen (not in all cases, of course).

Why do some homeless kids turn to crime?
Homeless young people can turn to crime because they often don’t have any money. This makes life harder for them because they cannot buy food and other important items to survive. In turn, by turning to crime and breaking the law, things can get worse still.

Drug Use
Drug use among homeless young people is very high because people who are homeless live under very high stress. The stress comes from danger on the streets, trying to keep warm and finding somewhere safe to sleep. They use drugs to relieve this stress and this sometimes makes them feel better. Drug use also leads to crime for youth. Young people go to drugs as a way to get out of their unhappiness or to follow their peers. They might think it is cool to hang out with others because they can fit in some where in the group. This is a big problem for society: not just keeping every one safe from used syringes on our beaches but keeping young people away from serious crimes, drug dependency and overdose.
Today many drug users are dying from overdoses: this is not just because they are addicted to the drug, but also because of unsafe and hidden drug use.

Website Design

By resident computer GURU - Anthony Radford

To start with, you either need your own web-server, know a company with one, or look on-line for someone willing to host your site. For those without easy access to a web server, Yahoo has teamed up with GeoCities web hosting to make Yahoo GeoCities web hosting. Or if you like advertising Angefire is the way to go.

The next step is having a web-authoring tool. The two most common ones are Microsoft FrontPage and Netscape Communicator package. If you have an advanced programming degree, you can use windows Notepad and HTML tags to create the basis for your web-site.

The third thing you need is IDEAS! What is the site about? What sort of layout is required? Are there any pictures? Links to sites you like? A guest book or survey page?

The next thing you need is a contact e-mail address. It doesn’t have to be anything to do with the site is hottopic@strat.com.au or it can be your nickname kwskrew@mixi011.com.au

Hotmail, Yahoo or Start are good for web masters, as you can cut and paste almost straight away. Or if you have a POP3 account, Microsoft Outlook is a good program.

To view your web-site, I suggest either Microsoft's Internet Explorer 5.5 or higher or Netscape Navigator 6.xx, both with 'Flash' plug-ins for animations, or 'Real Audio' if your site includes background sounds or music.

Remember to save often!!!
Buy Your Kid a Job

I was in a train, travelling to Hawthorn for a job interview, and I saw an advertisement 'BUY YOUR KID A JOB, BUY AUSTRALIAN.' This advertisement got me thinking.

I believe that the economy of Australia and the general standard living for 'all' people living in Australia will be much better if Australia becomes more self-sufficient. There will be more jobs and the unemployment rate will undoubtedly fall.

Australia has huge amount of resources and potential to produce its own goods. These include feedstuffs, stationary equipment, clothes, cars, machinery and electronic equipment. I also believe that the Australian government should try to do more funding to set up mass production factories and start producing goods for the people living in Australia rather than importing the goods from overseas. If the Australian Government starts doing this there will be much more less pressure on the people living in Australia to find a job. This will benefit every person living in Australia. Every person of whatever age/sex/ethnic background will benefit.

- ANDREW S.

The Wilderness Society

My name is Peter Hall and I am writing about the Wilderness Society. I have started studying now but I still have a part-time job going door-to-door and buggling people to sign up as wilderness defenders and give a monthly donation. There are a number of things that the wilderness society fights for, and I would like to bring just a few of those to your attention: Did you know:

- The Forestry Industry has clear felled over 87% of old growth trees and we are fighting to save the last 13 percent.
- Farmers dip carrots in 10-80 poison so that the rabbits and possums don't eat the new growth. This is putting the Tasmanian Wedge Tailed eagles in danger because they eat the possums and rabbits. There are only 70 breeding pairs of wedge-tailed eagles left. When the rabbits and possums are poisoned they die so the eagles have no prey and face extinction.
- You will soon have a choice between providers of electricity... between 'green' electricity and normal electricity. Green electricity providers do much less harm to the environment.
- In some places wood-chips is still used to generate electricity, especially now that the Japanese market for woodchips has dropped off. This is a terrible waste.

- PETER H.

Collingwood Alternative

A lot of you will know what I mean when I say "gone down the wrong track". Half way through this year I was a mess. I had dropped out of school, was doing drugs, staying out all night and sleeping all day. I was losing self-esteem by the minute. I didn't know what I was going to do with myself until a friend suggested I enrol in his school. Collingwood Alternative. Straight away I loved the place. It's not like other schools! The teachers don't treat you like one big group... they treat you like individuals (which is exactly what we all are). Every student is different but they all accept each other for who they are, which is unlike mainstream schools.

In mainstream schools there's always the "popular" group who think they have the right to put everyone else down or make comments as you walk past about how your hair or your make-up look that day. At Collingwood Alternative you don't find this and you don't find teachers that expect everyone to be the same, either. In normal schools, once you have been labelled a trouble-maker then no matter what you do, or how much you change yourself, that name sticks to you like glue.

I have been going to Collingwood for four months and already I've grown, changed and learnt more than I ever did at my previous school. It seems everyone who goes there is pretty much in the same boat as I am. Every morning we have a lesson dedicated to gaining back self-esteem, learning to be assertive and realising that we are worth a lot more than we have grown up to think we are.

If you are ever feeling like I was four months ago, and if this sounds interesting to you, then I'd recommend going for an interview. At least you could see if you liked it.

- RUTH B.
Eminem

"His music is disgusting, crude and excessively violent. Every second word is f*** or s***. He shows no respect." Well, that's what you hear from most of the people (adults) out there with regard to 'The Slim Shady' or 'The Marshall Mathers' CD's. Yet: as a seventeen year old girl who has lived out of home since the age of fifteen, I find Eminem (Slim Shady) to be a great release for my anger and frustrations. It is not like he was sent to Earth to annoy the world (as said in one of his songs). I believe he is the one and only escape for many teens out there who don't know what to say or how to say it.

People should actually listen, not just to the swearing, but past that to the story told in each song. For example, '97 Bonnie and Clyde is a continuation of the song 'Kim' which tells the tragic and violent story of a man kicked out by his wife (who keeps their child). Unable to deal with this, he then goes on to commit a terrible triple murder. He then, in the continuation, has to try to explain to his daughter that he really loves her and come up with a nicer explanation for what has happened.

Other songs (explore) how hard it is to get off drugs. Another goes on to discuss how it is f***ed that one day you're nobody and yet you write down a few words and put out a CD and suddenly everybody loves you. Eminem says what we (young people) often think and it makes me sick to see people so scared of thoughts and feelings being said out loud by a misunderstood musical artist.

I believe he is a talented man with a message that comes not only from within himself, but from within many teenagers who have a need to release. He is a true master of the thoughts of adolescents. People have said his music is violent but I would prefer to hear my children yell and scream out their opinions than lash out as I sometimes do. I wish that Eminem had been discovered and released when I was thirteen. I truly believe that if I had this kind of release earlier I might not have had such a roller-coaster of emotions (mostly anger) since then. You may hate him but he is my hero.

- EMMA B.

Life

What is the meaning? In the end we don’t make a difference. In 100 years we will all be forgotten. We all have our ups and downs, but the downs always outweigh the ups. Love is the only thing that has ever made it all worthwhile, but as quickly as it comes it goes again and you’re back to where you started. There is so much anger in the world, so many wars and murders, what is the point of all that? All it does is make the world a sadder and sicker place and it doesn’t look like things are ever going to change.

You see so much hatred on the streets and the more you see of it the more it grows inside you until it drives you mad. Dangerous thoughts start swimming around your head. Things that would never have even crossed your mind when you were a child, when you hadn’t seen or felt any of this or hadn’t yet grown to realise it was there.

Drugs are everywhere and they are terrible. Slowly killing everybody’s soul until everything they do is not for themselves or for anybody else, but for the drug which in the end will kill them. Perhaps over time, perhaps right there on the spot. So why do people do it? Because it makes them feel better. Or maybe they just need something, like people need cigarettes, their own drug “addiction”. Or maybe they just do it to escape the harsh reality of what our world has become.

Like I said, there is only one thing that ever makes life worthwhile. It’s not having an endless supply of money and it’s not having the fastest car in the world. It’s not even being the most beautiful person in the world. Love is all you need. Everybody needs someone to love and everybody needs love in return. If we all had this, everything would be OK.
Global Warming

Global Warming is caused by several factors:

a) Burning of fossil fuels such as coal and oil.
b) De-forestation
c) Using products that emit CFC's such as spray cans and refrigerators.

global Warming causes:

a) desertification - Everywhere the climate is getting hotter, especially in countries like Mongolia, Spain, southern Italy, The Middle East and parts of Africa where they are having their natural plains of green landscape turn into lifeless, unproductive, scorching hot deserts.
b) Natural disasters - these include hurricanes, typhoons, acid rain and floods.
c) Extinction of animal and plants - desertification causes extinction because the plants and animals do not have any water or food to survive.
d) Hardship on human beings - Humans cannot grow crops in places which have a severe degree of desertification.

Rate of Global Warming can be decreased by:

a) Using Renewable energy - these are solar energy, wind power and hydroelectricity. These types of energy are free, virtually limitless and, most importantly, they don't cause pollution.

b) Decrease in the rate of world population growth-
Some people (especially in third world countries) have to be educated and try not to have so many children. For example, in India, Afghanistan it is common for a woman to bear 6-12 children during her life. This causes a lot of strain on the world economy as more resources are needed to support large families.

c) Control over how much carbon dioxide/ greenhouse gases are emitted per capita for each country. Ex: On average, each American emits 20 times more greenhouse gases than each Indian, 9 times more than each Chinese, twice as much as each Japanese and one and a half as much as each German. Regardless of the rate per country, however, if countries like India continue to have such a high population growth the total amount of greenhouse gases emitted by that country will far exceed than that of even the highest gas producer, America. The amount of emissions multiply as the population multiplies (i.e.: it is better to have 5 people use 5 tonnes of coal each than 100 people use 2 tonnes of coal each).

d) Regeneration of forests and plant life.
e) Recycling

CONCLUSION:

I believe that more funding, research and implementation should take place on renewable energy. Everyone has to be educated on this subject as it is affecting each person on this earth. People need to understand that these renewable energies are just as good as the kind of electricity that we have today. We can operate radios, televisions, heaters, hot water, fridges, machines, cars etc. with renewable energy. ALSO, much more effort should be made by rich/ well-off countries to help poor/third world countries. This is because not only will they live more humane lives but it is believed that the fertility rate will decrease dramatically as their basic necessities are met.

- ANDREW S.

Left school early... can't find a job... don't know what to do... bored out of ya mind... want to do better? Maybe pathways can help!

On TV: Ken and barbie-types live perfect lives - they afford luxury housing on coffee machine wages (about $10 an hour) How does this happen? In the flood of information and media images portraying unrealistic lifestyles on unrealistic wages, young people are coming to terms with the difference between social expectations and reality. The movement of education and employment opportunities away from merit to "network contacts" is adding to inequality in the job market and further distancing (particularly young) people from participation. In this context, the Pathways project has aimed to reconnect young people to opportunities in employment, education and training.

The CBD Pathways project focuses on working with young people on a one on one basis to identify their goals, aspirations and barriers to them. The project targets young people who are outside employment, education or training or 'disconnected' from access to these, and assists them in identifying opportunities and options.

Young people meet with their 'pathways worker' informally directly through the MYLO project or through a referral from other youth services. Some young people have entered the program through recommendations from friends and peers. Young people get the chance to identify their goals and assess the steps required to achieve them. For example, one pathways client with a life long passion for performance has identified a drama degree as her step to a performance career and has returned to VCE to fulfill her goals. Another client has found it difficult to commit to a regular school timetable so he is advancing his already advanced computer knowledge through an informal Information Technology and electronic design program.

Pathways provides access to opportunities and direct links to educational providers (formal and informal), employment and training agencies and other supports the individual might need - but this isn't always easy. Accessing relevant and current course information from Universities and TAFE's is a virtually impossible task in some departments. Being transferred seven times through the telephone system and still not having your question answered to answer a simple query is frustrating. Retention can be, not just frustrating, but disempowering for young people. And further, young people, particularly with unconventional backgrounds often face discrimination from some educational institutions, so one of the Pathways officer's tasks has been persevering with more conservative educational providers reluctant to taken on particular young people. A little perseverance on the part of staff and program participants has seen 14 enrolments, 3 job placements and strong participation in casual 'drop-in' programs.

- Maryle Skiba CBD Pathways Project

Compiled by Andrew S.

CROSSWORD

Across:
1. Queen of the jungle
2. Place for early development
3. Varia-
4. Time since birth
5. Elas
6. Center
7. Foreword
8. Retirement
9. Similar to Georges
10. A False animal
11. Complete
12. Cipher
13. Lift
17. Burger, Coke and
18. Difficulty
19. And suffering
21. No shelter
22. Causing Anxiety
23. Performer
24. The War Against...
26. Schedule
27. Beast
31. Drop in Start
33. Circle
34. The river of...
35. Island

Down:
1. Morning
2. Scared
3. The opposite
4. A colour
5. Start
6. A food
7. A piece of furniture
8. A location
9. A tool
10. A sound
11. A topping
12. A shape
13. A distance
14. A part of
15. A bird
16. A drink
17. A type of food
18. A place
19. A type of vehicle
20. A type of clothing
21. A type of music
22. A type of restaurant
23. A type of sport
24. A type of exercise
25. A type of exercise
26. A type of exercise
27. A type of exercise
28. A type of exercise
29. A type of exercise
30. A type of exercise
31. A type of exercise
32. A type of exercise
33. A type of exercise
34. A type of exercise
35. A type of exercise
HUNGRY? ...here is a list of free food options around the city of Melbourne... Compiled by Brent & Mark

Breakfast:

- St Peters Church, McArthur St Melbourne. Catch 112 tram on Collins St. (Monday to Sunday).
- St Mary's House of Welcome Brunswick St Fitzroy. Catch the 112 tram and get off at the Fitzroy Commission Flats (Monday to Friday).
- Salvation Army Urban Heart, 69 Bourke St Melbourne. Catch either the 91 or 86 tram and get off at the top of Bourke St (Parliament Station end, Sundays).

Lunch:

- Baptist Church, Collins Street Melbourne. Go up Little Collins Street and then turn into the Baptist place. 12 till 12:30pm Tuesday to Friday.
- Oznam House: Catch the 57 tram and get off at 268 Abbotsford Street, North Melbourne. It stops right outside. 12 till 1pm.

Dinner

- Oznam House. Address as above. 5pm till 8pm Monday to Friday.
- St Vincent de Paul Bus comes between 8:30 and 9pm on Monday and Wednesday. It is located on Flinders Street near the end of Elizabeth Street.
- Rosie's Food Van located at Flinders Street near The Flinders Steps. Arrives about 8:30 and finishes about 10:30pm. Wednesday and Friday.
- Open Family Food Van comes around 9:00pm and finishes about 10:30pm. The van is located on Flinders Street near St Paul's Cathedral. Tuesday, Friday and Saturday.

Marvi. She is located near the car park at St Paul's Cathedral, Flinders and Swanston Streets.
Durable Record

Appendix 22
Trial Participant Data Summary
**Trial Outcomes: Participant Facts and Figures**

The age of MYLO Platform participants ranged from 14 to 25 years with an average age of just over 18 years. These young people most commonly heard about MYLO through *Frontyard Youth Services*, *Salvation Army Urban Heart* or by word-of-mouth. Over the sixteen weeks of the MYLO trial forty-three young people from the target group participated in the MYLO Platform sessions. This figure far exceeded the expectation of workers, partners and the MYLO reference group. Of these forty-three young people:

- thirty-six (80%) either came back to the MYLO platform or made appointments outside the MYLO group for pathways support.
- thirty took at least the first step into pathways support, including identifying barriers to education and employment.
- eighteen participated in the MYLO “keep walking” group project.
- twenty-six individuals joined the email-support sub-group and/or developed IT learning plans (including many first-time email users).
- thirteen young people enrolled in formal courses (including VCE, CAE literacy, alternative year 10 and others).
- nine were referred to alternative learning/pathways/support programs.
- five found work.
- one enrolled in an informal information technology course.
- one undertook a summer tutoring program before returning to school.
- six have been referred to creative arts and/or personal development programs (including writing, dance and music classes).

These facts and figures represent the substantial formal outcomes from the sixteen weeks of MYLO and Pathways activity. It is also worthy of note that the opportunities for social interaction were very highly regarded by the participants (see section 7.1). Whilst such statistics are not easily demonstrated, MYLO presented all forty-three participants with a weekly opportunity for a calm, friendly and respectful social intercourse. This filled a tangible absence in the lives of many marginalised young people. This is particularly true in the case of those participants who required time to build confidence before identifying learning needs and desires.
Appendix 23
Evaluation Interview Prompts
# MYLO MODEL TRIAL: Participant Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How did you hear about MYLO?</th>
<th>Age and Gender?</th>
<th>Group Project Participant?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

## The MYLO Model Itself:
- Did you find the weekly MYLO sessions comfortable and inviting?
- Did you feel welcome when actually in the MYLO sessions?
- Did you benefit from the opportunity to participate in the group and/or the group project?
- What did you most like about MYLO?
- What would you most like to change about MYLO?

## Broader MYLO involvement:
- Did you participate in other learning activities through the MYLO trial?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Email Support?</th>
<th>Pathways Support?</th>
<th>Other IT Support?</th>
<th>Other Personal Learning?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
- Was your involvement in other MYLO learning activities enjoyable and satisfying?
- What would you change about your involvement in other MYLO Learning Activities?

## Outcomes for MYLO Participants:
- What was the best outcome for you, personally, after participating in MYLO?
- What goals did you achieve during the trial of the MYLO Model?
- Are there any things that could be done better to improve your personal outcomes?

## Attracting Young People to MYLO?
- Did MYLO succeed in attracting young people to participate?
- What could MYLO do better when attracting young people to participate?

## The Future For MYLO:
- As you know, the trial of the MYLO Model lasted only four months. What do you think should happen with the MYLO Model now that the trial is finished?
- If you think MYLO should keep going, Why?
- Would you be involved over a longer time if MYLO kept going or started again?
- Any ideas for other group projects (like the Magazine in the MYLO trial)?

## DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS ABOUT MYLO?
Durable Record

Appendix 24
Reference Group Evaluation Prompts
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>MYLO MODEL Reference Group Evaluation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DATE</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The MYLO Project:**
- Did we meet our core goal of developing and implementing a strategy for engaging marginalised young people in informal learning opportunities?
- What would you regard as the best outcomes generated by the MYLO project?
- What do you believe the MYLO project should seek to do better in the event of future MYLO activity?

**The MYLO Model:**
- Did the MYLO model succeed in attracting and engaging young people in informal learning?
- Did the MYLO model accurately reflect your understanding of the advice provided in the research /consultation leading up to model development?
- With hindsight, what would alterations would you make to the MYLO model of informal learning?

**Reference Group and the reflective practice model:**
- Was your involvement in the MYLO reference group appropriate and satisfying?
- What were the greatest strengths of the reference group/ reflective practice model?
- What would you seek to change about the MYLO process in the event of future MYLO activities?

**Limitations of the research:**
- Please outline any limitations you felt impeded the progress of the MYLO Project.
- Please outline any solutions you may have to address these limitations.

**The Future For MYLO:**
- What do you think should happen with the MYLO Model now that the project is finished?
- If you think MYLO should keep going, Why?
- Would you be involved over a longer time if MYLO kept going or started again?

**DO YOU HAVE ANY ADDITIONAL REFLECTIONS OR COMMENTS ABOUT MYLO?**
Durable Record

Appendix 25
Evaluation Respondent List: Participants

MYLO Evaluation Participant List: Young People
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Group Project?</th>
<th>Personal Support?</th>
<th>Weeks Involved and best outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Email, Pathways, PLP</td>
<td>17: Course enrolment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Email, Pathways, IT</td>
<td>10: School Enrolment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Email, Pathways</td>
<td>6: Hairdressing Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>8: Social Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Email, Pathways</td>
<td>13 Accomplishing Pathways goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Email, Pathways, IT, PLP</td>
<td>7: Getting work and ideas for study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>9: Name in Print and friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Email, Pathways, PLP</td>
<td>14: Article in magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Email, Pathways</td>
<td>6: Social Skills &amp; Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>12: Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Email, Pathways</td>
<td>14: Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pathways</td>
<td>5: Course Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Email, Pathways</td>
<td>13: Magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Email, IT</td>
<td>7: IT skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Durable Record

Appendix 26
Evaluation Respondent List: Reference Group
### MYLO Evaluation Participant List: Reference Group Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Trish van Lint</td>
<td>RMIT CIECAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Barry Pullen</td>
<td>Good Shepard Y&amp;FS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dave Hamra</td>
<td>Melbourne City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kellie Smith</td>
<td>Office for Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mark Keen</td>
<td>Victoria Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Catherine Burnheim</td>
<td>RMIT Chancellory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Simon Le Page</td>
<td>Frontyard Youth Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Jim Downing</td>
<td>RMIT Whereveruni</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Durable Record

Appendix 27
Ross Trust Submission
PROPOSAL TO THE R E ROSS TRUST
RMIT University - Making a difference since 1887
RMIT was established in June 1887 as the Working Men’s College, through the foresight and generosity of Frances Ormond. After 95 years as Victoria’s leading technological educator and having offered degree courses for over 30 years, RMIT was granted formal university status under the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Act 1992. Today more than 55,000 students and 3,300 staff work and study at RMIT University.

RMIT's mission is to be a world-class university at the forefront of technical and professional education that develops people for employment and leadership and to undertake research programs that address “real-world challenges” within an international and community context.

We receive support and funding from all sectors of the community, including State and Federal Government, Companies, Charitable Trusts and Foundations, Civic and Community Organisations and Individuals.

MYLO - Project Background
Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities or (MYLO) is the project that we would like the R. E. Ross Trust to consider funding. MYLO is an initiative led by RMIT University that has researched, developed and implemented a strategy for engaging marginalised young people in informal learning. The project developed out of a concern of RMIT and other organisations based in Melbourne’s Central Business District (CBD) that young people frequenting this area had very limited access to learning and training opportunities.

The city area is particularly popular with young people not engaged with any form of work or education. Increasing attention has been placed on this community of disenfranchised youth over recent years, particularly as their street presence has become more profound. Perceptions of dropping community safety have set the created significant disquiet between the business and professional community and the young people using the city area as their public space.

Of these detached young people, increasing numbers appear to be joining into ‘high risk’ circumstances, such as homelessness and substance abuse. In 1996, Melbourne Youth Support Services (a key provider of youth services in the city area) was averaging between 400 and 450 homeless clients per annum, however estimates of the homeless population of the city area currently vary between 1000 and 4500 depending on the measuring device. There has been a consistent increase in illicit drug use in the city over recent years, and the injecting drug users in Melbourne CBD are generally younger than those in outer city regions (including approximately 50 percent aged under 20 years). Frontyard (a consortium of health, housing welfare and legal youth services based in the centre of the city) suggest that approximately 80 percent of their clients are regular drug users.

To explore these issues, RMIT held a conference in June 2000 attended by various members of the University and interested organisations from the broader community.
The conference aimed to develop new services for the homeless community of young people in the centre of Melbourne, who were out of touch with education and employment. Given the physical and social commitments of RMIT, it was foreseen that partnerships could be formed with the University to reach the target group. Through the conference a network, hosted by RMIT was established to look at possible solutions to the needs of this problem. Following a number of meetings the network group established that the young people concerned had very limited access to learning opportunities, either as a result of their own often negative experiences of formal education or a lack of appropriate alternative options. Learning requirements of this group were extremely complex and extend beyond a simple focus on education, employment and training. In order to find an appropriate solution to this problem further research was needed to identify an approach that would engage young homeless people in education.

Research and Consultation
RMIT allocated seeding funding to establish, develop and implement a model that would allow the possible achievement of this goal. This funding allowed for the recruitment of one worker in November 2000 to work part time for three days a week over the lifetime of the project. MYLO’s project officer initial activities comprised a wide ranging consultation with key stakeholders that included several city based youth services as well as members of the target group themselves to establish the form of MYLO.

The consultations took place in June and July 2001 and involved one hundred participants, with a roughly equal split between marginalised young people and representatives from community organisations working with youth at risk. Outcomes from the consultation gave the key characteristics that would form the MYLO model. Amongst the central themes that were needed in order to engage the target audience are:

- An appropriate venue for young people with a relaxed, respectful and non-threatening environment;
- Incentives for participation (food, certificates, recognition);
- A clear and spoken separation from formal education styles and environments;
- Freedom for participants to own, determine and change goals;
- Flexibility in expectations regarding attendance and achievement.

The findings from the consultation process were presented to the network group and endorsed by them. These findings became the basis for the MYLO model.

MYLO Model
The model has a central platform as its key component. The platform is a regular weekly meeting of young people determining their own learning needs and being supported by guest speakers, group activities and rewards for ongoing participation. Within this environment we deliver activities in accordance with the themes mentioned above necessary to engage marginalised young people. The platform allows the group if they deem it necessary, the means to identify and conduct a group learning project with both individual and group learning outcomes.
Individual learners can then determine their specific learning needs outside of the regular group meetings. These are be met through a referral to a specific learning stream or program that has been identified by each individual completing a basic learning plan supported by MYLO, RMIT and/or the partner organisation delivering the program.

The key learning needs that we identified in the research and consultation phase are for pathways planning; information technology; personal development and email and web support. Referral to pathways planning gives the participants information on future long and short-term education and training courses that they may wish to undertake. Referrals to IT and email and web support reflect the popularity of modern technology that is prevalent in all groups of this age, including those who are marginalised from learning and homeless or at risk of homelessness. A personal development program will reflect individual interests that are not catered to through the group activities and may cover more practical aspects.

The MYLO Trial
Salvation Army’s Urban Heart Community Centre on Bourke Street was the venue for the sixteen-week trial that started in November 2001. Discussions with the Centre prior to commencing the trial identified there would be suitable space for the running of informal learning sessions. Additionally the Centre with its location in the CBD also provided a number of other services beneficial to the model, including Internet-enabled computers, emergency relief facilities for food and clothing and a comfortable community lounge. To gain participants for the trial, advertising was conducted through the contacts that MYLO had with youth service providers.

Initial activities in the trial focused on what the participants thought the project could achieve, rules for the group and possible activities for a group project. By the fourth week of the trial, MYLO already had fourteen members and a single-issue magazine had been confirmed as the focus for the group project. A number of individuals were already determining their individual learning needs through referrals to the learning streams for pathways planning and email support.

In weeks seven and twelve outside speakers attended the sessions and advised on issues relevant to the production of the magazine. In the final week of the trial the magazine entitled “Keep Walking” was launched and the contributions of all those involved was recognised.

Evaluation and Reflections of the Trial
The overriding aim of the MYLO project and the trial of its model were to engage marginalised young people in learning. The success of the model can be shown by the following statistics:

- Forty-three marginalised young people participated in the group, ranging in age from 14 to 25 with an average of just over 18 years;
- Eighty percent of whom either came back to the MYLO platform or made appointments outside the MYLO group for pathways support;
• Thirteen young people enrolled in formal education courses;
• Nine were referred to alternative learning/pathways support programs;
• One enrolled in an informal information technology course.

There were many lessons learnt from the trial. Given the personal circumstances of the participants, the fact that they may have to move from one crisis accommodation option to another at short notice or be living in squat housing, attendance at MYLO sessions every week was not always a priority. The model was design with this in mind and participants were reminded that all contributions were voluntary. In this way, those most marginalised of young people were engaged and re-engaged in MYLO activities in the full knowledge that they would not lose face or importance if they were not able to follow through on every occasion. Whilst perhaps obvious to practitioners of youth work, this approach is not common in educational settings and was seen by the Platform members and facilitators as a great strength. The trial also demonstrated the need for a longer operational period, as in many instances the MYLO project was over before willing participants were able to return.

The success of the model is also demonstrated that the most efficient form of marketing for the project was through word of mouth. Members were enthused and excited by the opportunities given to them and encouraged others to attend. The project officer recognised this and consistently used this as the preferred method of advertising in the trial.

The difficulties experienced in the trial occurred namely when there was a large number of participants. In week five eighteen members attended and the session was hard to control. The number of participants was above the preferred ratio of one worker to ten participants and given the location, space was tight. Given the current facilities and staffing, the trial has taught that each session is optimised when no more than twelve members attend and when a worker/student ratio of 1:6 can be maintained.

The numbers involved in the project show there is a clear need for a project such as MYLO and that as a model it is successful in engaging the target group in education. The overriding lesson learnt from the trial being that space and resources are more pressing limitations than the numbers of willing participants.

The Future for MYLO
To build on the successes MYLO enjoyed in its trial and learn from the problems that occurred, we would like to conduct a year long pilot of the project. This would allow the project officer to study young people who left the group and then returned to the group. Additionally a pilot of this length would allow a number of group activities to be conducted and thus engage a greater number of marginalised young people as more diverse projects are instigated.

Over the course of the year we would be to set up a support network of members that had successfully participated in MYLO and were able to act as mentors to new members. The young people that were successfully reengaged in education and learning as a result of
MYLO will also be studied to evaluate their experiences of further education upon leaving the project and the long term benefits that they had derived from MYLO. The project workers will conduct a full evaluation of the pilot after six-months, this will be used to secure the funding from a combination of Government, Philanthropic and Corporate sources to ensure the long –term sustainability of MYLO.
Durable Record

Appendix 28
MYLO Progress and Success Summary 2003
Summary of Progress and Success
2003

Prepared by Glenn Bond
MYLO Co-ordinator and Researcher
RMIT University CIECAP

December 2003
The R. E. Ross Pilot

Following the launch of the MYLO Report in March 2002, members of the Project team used the documented findings in the preparation of funding submissions to a number of sources. In July 2002, the University found a likely funding source in the form of a philanthropic trust with a keen interest in youth and education (the R.E. Ross Trust). The successful submission led to a funding grant for a twelve-month pilot of the MYLO Model as it was applied during the MYLO trial.

In August 2002 the reference group was re-established, the project researcher was re-employed as Project Co-ordinator and a position for a supporting project officer was developed and filled. With the arrival of the second worker, MYLO platform sessions began once more in late September of 2002.

The project Team sought to apply the same reflective, action research methodology to the pilot program as it had done in the research, development and trial of the MYLO Model. Appendix Two demonstrates the manner in which reflective learning was formalised to become central to the programmatic planning and service delivery decision making. Whilst elements of reflective practice are common in most workplaces, MYLO has sought to vigorously apply such notions to the formal and informal management of the pilot.

The project staff, the project team and the project reference group each made time to employ those fundamental steps of reflection, analysis, planning and action throughout the pilot. On each level those involved sought to review actions in the light of all the lessons learnt during research and development of the model. In this way programmatic challenges and weekly issues were never addressed without consideration of the fundamental pillars on which MYLO was built. To maintain this rigour during the day to day hurdles of service delivery was challenging at times, particularly when the group was seen to stall or lose momentum, however the eventual success of the pilot can be directly related to this willingness to maintain group-governance principles.

Reflective practice was further enhanced by the introduction of key topics for reflection at each of the monthly reference group meetings. In tandem with the usual analysis of recent events and planning of steps to follow, key issues of interest to the MYLO staff were formally flagged for discussion each month.

Those elements of good practice central to the development of the MYLO Model were borne out in their practical application through the MYLO Trial. These fundamental lessons are the pillars of the Model and have remained fundamental to the delivery of pilot program. By rigorously maintaining a focus on respectful, flexible and individualised engagement the pilot has continued to reach and retain those most marginalised of young people. Self-determination and ownership of the group by the group has been consistent and is well justified by
the eventual outcomes. The opportunity for calm and enjoyable social interaction is still seen as rare in the lives of our target group and is particularly popular as a result. Perhaps most importantly, a priority outcome of the MYLO project is that participants, including those that might only participate once, recognise themselves as the owners of the group and as stakeholders in any outcomes achieved by the group as a whole.

Outcomes and Statistics

At total of over one hundred homeless and marginalised young people took part in the forty MYLO learning sessions held during the pilot period. Significantly over 80% of these young people returned to participate again. Approximately 60% of the total group became members of the email support group, sharing news and information about MYLO and personal learning goals over the Internet. Approximately 40% of the total participants were successfully engaged in individual support exploring education, training and personal development pathways. Given the complex needs and marginalised position of the young people MYLO reaches, these results are particularly impressive.

The most substantial group project was the development of the MYLO website (www.mylo.net.au) that offers opportunities for young people to express themselves, provide social comment, advise other young people in crisis and gather technical expertise. As with the Magazine developed during the MYLO trial, the website was chosen and developed by the participants themselves and was broad enough to cater for a variety of group and personal learning outcomes. A smaller group project was also developed late in the pilot in the form of a segment for community television. MYLO members explored the issue of homelessness drawing on facts, experiences, statistics and public opinion.

External experts were drawn into the group environment for topical learning sessions on legal issues, television production and Information Technology skills. MYLO members held a public launch of the MYLO website, which included a public question and answer forum on informal learning. The MYLO group also enjoyed many weeks of planning, discussing and acting on group learning goals and projects. Substantial developments were witnessed in terms of connectedness, resilience, self-esteem and confidence.

For the 42 individuals involved in personal pathways support, outcomes were many and varied. All received advice on employment, education and training options and all received assistance with pathways and barrier planning. More than 50% took part in supported, onward referrals to other services that might assist with identified pathways needs. Significantly, particularly given the complex needs of the MYLO target group, approximately 30% took up enrolments in formal education. A further 10% were referred or placed in short courses of one sort or another. More than 10% of those receiving personal
support were in voluntary work, apprenticeships, part-time work or full-time work at the time of the pilot closing. Together, these results provide the necessary evidence that the experience of the MYLO trial can be repeated and extended over time.

Pathways Outcomes Table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment, Education and Training Advice</th>
<th>Pathways and Barrier Planning</th>
<th>Formal Education</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Short Courses</th>
<th>Onward referrals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key to Pathways Outcomes Table

Employment, Education and Training Advice: refers to advice and counselling regarding possible steps towards EET outcomes, including research and advocacy on behalf of clients.

Pathways and Barrier Planning: refers to the process of identifying areas of interest for personal or professional development, identifying steps that might be taken towards such outcomes and recognising the barriers that must be overcome in this regard.

Formal Education: refers to any enrolment in a formal education environment that has been supported or engineered with the assistance of the MYLO program. Such outcomes include various certificate courses in Community Services (4 clients), various VCE courses (5 clients), Certificates of General Education for Adults (CGEA- 2 clients), a certificate course in Multimedia (1 client) and a certificate course in information systems (1 client). Other formal education enrolments were also possible at the time of the pilot closing.

Employment: Refers to full-time, part-time or voluntary work that has been supported or engineered with the assistance of the MYLO program. Includes one full time job, two part time jobs, an apprenticeship and regular voluntary hours for a fifth client.

Short Courses: refers to any short course supporting personal or professional development. Includes a fork-lift course, a radio production course, learners permit testing and a music course.

Onward referrals: refer to those clients that were supported to continue receiving assistance from other pathways or EET services. In particular this includes JPET services (most commonly) and other employment agencies or educational institutions.
MYLO Members Living Arrangements

It is of great interest to the MYLO Program to understand the living circumstances of young people when they make contact with the program. Given the focus on young people experience housing instability or crisis, such a study offers insight to the program’s effectiveness at reaching the target group. Of 100 participants some 71 were homeless, with a further 16 in either transitional housing or supported housing environments. Access to such programs is generally granted on the grounds of homelessness. Only 11 of the 100 young people suggested they enjoyed secure housing conditions. Two young people declined to provide details of their living arrangements.

Living Arrangements Table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergency Accommodation</th>
<th>Sleeping Rough/Squatting</th>
<th>Office of Housing</th>
<th>Relatives or friends</th>
<th>THM or YHP</th>
<th>Unstable Housing</th>
<th>Stable Housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KEY to Living Arrangements Table:

**Emergency Accommodation:** refers to young people staying in refuges and hostels, along with other Emergency Accommodation measures such as Hotels and Caravan Parks

**Sleeping Rough and Squatting:** refers to any participant who has no formal shelter at all

**Office of Housing:** anyone with a permanent lease in Public Housing

**Relatives and Friends:** anyone who is staying temporarily in these environments, including “couch surfers”.

**THM and YHP:** anyone staying in Transitional Housing independently or housed in transitional Accommodation through a supported Youth Housing Program

**Unstable Housing:** anyone at home or in private rental who suggests they are at risk of homelessness

**Stable Housing:** anyone who feels stable at home or in Private Rental, anyone in some other form of Accommodation regarded as stable.
## Case Studies

By way of example, three case studies are provided below offering some insight into the success of the MYLO intervention. Names have been changed to protect anonymity.

### Peter

**Peter had just turned 20 at the time of engaging in MYLO. Family breakdown had led to homelessness, and he was residing in a short-term youth refuge. Although obviously bright and apparently very capable, Peter was unsettled and restless at the time of coming in contact with the program. Participation in the group environment unearthed dramatic change in his confidence and communication skills, and within a very short time Peter was among the most active participants in the group. A generous contributor of time and energy, he was central to the success of the group project. With this development came a new sense of optimism. With extensive one-to-one pathways support, barriers were overcome and a manageable plan of re-entering formal education was formulated. With the assistance of a JPET service and the MYLO worker, enrolment was secured in a community services certificate course. Peter has since blossomed in his line of work, having had field placements and recently securing casual work in the field. He is proud and appreciative of his work and success as a member of MYLO.**

### Paul

**Paul is 17 and highly transient with very complex support needs. Paul has not successfully made the step into pathways planning, nor has he found a formal education opportunity that suits his needs. He has, however, been successfully engage in a calm, respectful group environment where he has demonstrated extraordinary developments in communication and self-confidence. As a detached and often unhappy young man, involving Paul in any learning opportunity presents something of a challenge. In the MYLO environment however, he has become willing to listen to others, willing to wait his turn and willing to contribute an opinion without fear of criticism. He has also attempted to consider personal development pathways that might help him progress to independence. Whilst not as tangible as other outcomes for MYLO clients, the success of the MYLO model as an intervention in Paul's life is no less valuable. He is proud of his participation and is stronger as a result.**

### Mary

**Mary was seventeen years old when she first arrived at MYLO. Complex circumstances had led her to homelessness, and she had only just secured housing support through a youth housing program. Having been frustrated by the formal education environment of her secondary school, she had dropped out mid semester. Although shy and obviously frustrated by her circumstances, she found MYLO a welcoming and supportive environment. In particular, she found the opportunity to meet new friends in a safe environment a real benefit of the**
program. Mary participated in the group project and took up the opportunity for one-to-one pathways support, where she was quickly able to express her learning needs. Specifically, she wanted to complete her VCE in an adult environment where her lifestyle and relative maturity would be advantages rather than disadvantages. After much support and advocacy by the MYLO worker, including securing financial assistance and attending enrolment interviews, Mary was able to convince an adult education provider that she was bright enough and responsible enough to secure an adult place in spite of her age. She is now well on the way to successfully completing her VCE studies.

Additional Achievements

The MYLO project has drawn national and international attention over the last twelve months, with enquiries from across Australia and several from overseas regarding the program. The MYLO Co-ordinator has recently returned from presenting a paper at "Connections that Count: An International Conference on Young People, Social Capital and Empowerment" in Glasgow, Scotland. The Scottish Youth Issues Journal has requested an article based on the conference paper for publishing. The MYLO Co-ordinator was also invited to be a part of an international action-research panel on young people and youth work practice based at the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland. Within Australia, an invitation has been received to write a journal article on MYLO for Youth Studies Australia whilst additional interest has also been received from program providers in several states.

Partnerships are another significant achievement of the R.E. Ross Pilot, with the bolstering of those key links created during research and development of MYLO. Key partner providers include the JPET services operating within inner Melbourne, education providers in the city and surrounding areas (especially the CAE and TAFE providers) and a variety of health and welfare agencies working with young people from our target group. Perhaps most important, however, are the links created with Melbourne City Mission (MCM) and the Capital City LLEN. By relocating sessions to MCM's Frontyard Youth Services, MYLO has not only placed itself in the best possible position for reaching young people from the target group, the program is also very well placed for a long-term role in the community infrastructure of Melbourne. Having signed a co-location agreement with Frontyard, MYLO has the potential to entrench itself as a key element of the holistic supports offered across this agency. Combined with support from the Capital City LLEN, MYLO should, given adequate operational time, become integral to the funding of the youth sector in the city area.
A Program Proposal 2004-2005: Key Learnings In Practice

A New Formula
Key learnings of the R.E. Ross Pilot are central to the proposal for MYLO’s operations over the next two years. It is a learning of the pilot that to enhance opportunities for the target group it would be appropriate to offer two, rather than one, weekly MYLO sessions. Limitations in staff availability have also been seen to detract from the successful uptake of pathways support in some instances, and it is felt that a five-day per week presence would enhance MYLO effectiveness for more clients. An allowance for group projects is in the current budget and needs to be maintained, just as session costs such as food, drink and materials are included in this proposal. Costs and arrangements for staff accommodation, staff resources, session accommodation and staff hours at Frontyard will be met by RMIT and MCM.

The proposed funding formula includes two workers, one employed at .6 EFT (three days per week) and one employed at .8 EFT (four days per week). This would allow for a five day office presence should the workers overlap on two days only. One worker would be employed in senior (co-ordinator) capacity. Wages for staff have been brought down to maintain affordability whilst increasing the presence of MYLO staff. The new formula also asks for two weekly MYLO sessions, obviously to be run on two of the days when both workers are available. It is anticipated that sessions would run on 44 of the 52 funded weeks, totalling 88 sessions in a year. Finally, an additional budget line is included that allows the project to support some of the clients with enrolment expenses where this cost cannot be met elsewhere in the community. This addresses a learning that in some instances accessing enrolment costs proves as difficult as accessing enrolment opportunities themselves.

Outcomes and Objectives
The overlying objectives of the MYLO program proposal are to engage marginalised young people from the CBD area in informal learning. A particular emphasis is placed on those young people experiencing homelessness. Young people will be encouraged, at their own pace, to take up opportunities for personal pathways support exploring employment, education and personal development options. Where possible and appropriate, young people will be further supported to make the transition into formal learning environments. Both group and individual learning opportunities will include a focus on enhancing feelings of connectedness, resilience, self-esteem and community.
Specific Program Outcomes will include:

- 2 Weekly MYLO sessions, 44 weeks per year for 2 years (176 sessions)
- 1 major group production or project per year (2 major projects)
- 2 minor group projects per year (4 minor projects)
- Daily availability for personal pathways support
- Employment, Education and Training advice for ALL Pathways Clients
- Support and Negotiation of formal enrolments wherever possible
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of progress
- Statistical upkeep demonstrating progress against targets
- A target of 200 participants over the two year period

Broader Objectives and Outcomes

MYLO is seeking a permanent future as a key education and learning link for marginalised young people in central Melbourne. As such, partnerships must be maintained and enhanced throughout the life of the program and every effort must be made to promote a secure funding future for the program. MYLO has also demonstrated an ability to reach traditionally dislocated young people in a way that has potential relevance in other geographic areas. As a result, it is also appropriate that MYLO seek to promote and replicate the MYLO model in other areas.

Broader Program Outcomes will include:

- Continued negotiation with State and Federal Governments
- Continued negotiation with Key Partners, particularly MCM and the Capital City LLEN, regarding a sustainable future for MYLO
- Regular dissemination of MYLO’s progress through Youth Service Networks and Peak Bodies
- Development and dissemination of a program guide for implementing MYLO in other areas
- Negotiation with other providers and other regions regarding the relevance of the MYLO model in achieving local goals

Methodology, Staffing and Evaluation

Should funding be secured, the MYLO Program would seek to maintain the reflective methodology currently used in the management of the project. This will include a monthly reference group of key experts and stakeholders undertaking reflection, analysis, planning and action in a constant, rigorous cycle throughout the life of the project. Staff will include professionals with qualifications and experience in the combined fields of youth work and education, the more senior worker (co-ordinator) also being well versed in the management and
development of new or emerging programs. Evaluation will be cyclical, with expertise provided by RMIT to analyse progress and efficiency in an ongoing manner throughout the life of the project. Formal evaluation will also occur at the end of the first and second 12 months periods of operation.

**Replicating MYLO: The SYLO Partnership**

Through a partnership with SPAN Community House in Darebin, an analysis has recently been undertaken to assess the viability of replicating the MYLO program in that area. Substantial support from key local providers suggests this may be entirely appropriate and SPAN have been supported with funding templates, strategic plans, program toolkits and a comprehensive partner analysis towards this end. It is anticipated that SPAN and partners may seek funding for a SPAN Youth Learning Opportunities (SYLO) program sometime in early 2004. It would be appropriate and valuable for RMIT (CIECAP) to play a role in assisting and advising with any such developments. The partnership and analysis has been well documented and would be readily re-applied should another organisation or community seek to explore MYLO replication elsewhere.

**Status and Prospects for the MYLO Program**

The experience of the R. E. Ross Pilot provides compelling evidence of the need for learning alternatives for this target group, and further evidence of the appropriateness of the MYLO Model for facilitating this role. The partnerships generated as a result of the project are particularly solid, as is the goodwill among the cohort of MYLO clients. MYLO quite purposefully falls into a gap in services (and funding) between homelessness and education, with the result that ongoing financial support is difficult to secure. It is the belief of all parties associated with the MYLO project that further funding should be sought through philanthropic or corporate sponsors to continue building the program’s place in the community. It is the contention of the project team that over adequate time this will lead to recurrent government funding on some level.

The positioning of MYLO within the Frontyard Youth Services Consortium, ongoing support and commitment from Melbourne City Mission Management, close and supportive ties to the Capital City LLEN and continuing awareness raising across relevant government departments all contribute to a sense of optimism about MYLO’s funding future. The reality, however, is that establishing a new program into an already extended welfare and education system is a slow process and this is further complicated by MYLO’s position in the service gap between education and welfare. Nonetheless, given a further 24 (rather than 12) months to promote this goal and work towards it, the opportunities to entrench the program are substantially improved.

Hopes for a new funding arrangement with the R. E. Ross Trust were dashed when the Trust Board rejected our submission in December 2003. Whilst they
may be willing to be a partner in supporting the program, it seems they are not willing to be the sole supporter. Copies of relevant program documents are now in the hands of the RMIT Development group and a list of possible alternative funding sources has been drawn up. Similarly, key members of the project team (CIECAP, MCM and the CCLLEN) are representing MYLO in negotiations with various government funding streams as opportunities arise. It is hoped that a pool of resources, from a single or combined sources, will be found to regenerate MYLO into 2004 and beyond.
Durable Record

Appendix 29
MYLO Website Frontpage
Funding for MYLO is provided by
The R.E. Ross Trust

What's MYLO?

"MYLO" is the Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities Project, an informal learning program for unemployed young people hanging around central Melbourne. MYLO members participate voluntarily and direct their own learning & individual pathways support. This website offers an example of the group's work. Many members of the MYLO group endure insecure housing and face a variety of other challenges.

What's the website for?

This website is created by and for young people. It is somewhere opinions are shared and stories are told. MYLO members use this site to express themselves, to offer advice and to provide information. It is also where MYLO members and others can find out what is happening in the MYLO program. It is a work in progress.

Where's MYLO?
Durable Record

Appendix 30
Glasgow Slides 2003
Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities

Project Origins
- University search conference
- Creation of MYLO network
- Consideration of primary learning needs
- Allocation of seeding funding
- Appointment of project officer

MYLO Vision Statement
We like MYLO Project Team will develop and implement a strategy for access to learning by marginalized young people in Melbourne’s Central Business District and surrounds. The project seeks to reach both transient and resident populations of young people, particularly those not currently engaged in employment or education. The resulting strategy will present learning opportunities that are not limited to the current physical facilities of the university and will include technology facilitated access.

Melbourne’s Young People
- 3.4 million people, 36% under 25 years of age
- Relative affluence
- High representation of young people in CBD - a contested space
- Significant numbers of homeless young people
- High levels of burnout, turmoil, stress and access issues

Methodology
Action Research Concept
- Reflection, analysis, planning and action
- Research cycling
- Functional, relational, critical
- Technical, Practical & Emancipatory action research

The MYLO Research Project
Project Development
- Partners identified and secured (university departments, government departments & services)
- Audit of RMIT curriculum and facilities
- Initial discussions re: MYLO Learning Model
- Revised scope and implementation plan
- Identification of four possible models: IT Training, Email Support, Recreation Enrich & Peer Support
The MYLO Research Project

Consultation Strategy
- A focus on engagement, environment and education styles
- Questionnaire: combination of quantitative and qualitative data
- Focus group prompts developed to encourage broader responses to survey questions
- Interview option developed using survey as a guide

The MYLO Research Project

Consultation Results
- On Styles: incentives, flexibility, individual, respectful
- On Structure: homogeneity (time & place), regular breaks, short sessions, self-determination
- On ‘What to Avoid’: distance from all links with school, minimise formal assessment, avoid formality, avoid high demand, avoid distant facilitators

The MYLO Research Project

Model Development
- Recognition of time and resource limitations
- Employing partnerships with providers to full advantage
- Mutual (shared) responsibilities
- Translation of data (literature, resource, research)
- Use recognition of those concepts (engagement, environment, education styles) seen as critical

The MYLO Model

Managed Pathways
- Personalised Learning
- Email Support Group
- MYLO PLATFORM
  • Peer group meetings
  • Recreational activities
  • Personal & Group Goals
  • Incentives & Rewards for participation
  • Self-determined Topics

The MYLO Trial: Planning

- A four-month window: October 2001–February 2002
- Partnerships with sub-group providers
- Evaluation mechanism developed
- Preparation of venue (and advertising)
- Careful planning of compulsory elements

The MYLO Trial: Process

- Platform Sessions with two facilitators
- Group Project: a one-issue magazine
- Guest ‘Presenters’: youth-friendly ‘Experts’
- Launch of the magazine: provided closure and a substantial sense of accomplishment for members
- ‘Point of Engagement’ for personalised assistance
The MYLO Trial
Facts & Figures

- Forty Three Participants over sixteen weeks
- 80% returned to the group or personal pathways
- More than 50% took the 1st step to pathways
- 80% participated in the email support stream
- 30% enrolled in formal education
- 20% found work, short courses or alternative support

Evaluations

- Qualitative evaluations with participants and partners
- Against both Project Objectives and Model Criteria
- Surpassing of expectations
- Uniform recognition of success
- Uniform argument for continuation
- Evidence of Need (volume and enthusiasm)
- Demonstrable gap in learning support

The MYLO Report

- Report launched in March 2002 (as evidence base)

Recommendations

- Maintenance of (and recognition for) MYLO principles
- Proof of success as primary intervention
- Evidence of a substantial gap in community programs
- Continued research and evaluation
- Funding for continuation and extension

Piloting MYLO

Finding Funding

- Submissions employing the MYLO Report Findings
- Successful application to the R.E. Ross Trust

Establishing Pilot

- Funding for 12 months
- Re-establishment of Reference Group
- Staffing of Coordinator and Project Officer positions
- Sessions underway again in September 2002

Research Principles in Practice

- Reflective methodology applied to pilot management
- Reflective methodology applied to service delivery
- Consistent review of actions in light of principles
- Reflective Topics introduced to Reference Group meetings on a monthly basis

Empowerment in Practice

- Respectful, flexible and individual engagement
- Self-determination and group ownership of goals
- Rare opportunity for calm & enjoyable interaction
- Resilience: promoting pride and confidence
- Connectedness: sense of community and team
- Promotion of protective factors for all participants
- ALL participants as owners of the group and as stakeholders in ALL outcomes achieved in MYLO
- Care taken to maintain empowerment model during 100 trials

Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities
Pilot Outcomes & Activities

- A Minor Group Project: Segment on homelessness for Puck! TV
- Expert Learning Sessions: Law, Television, IT Message Boards
- Public Forum on Informal Learning
- Public Launch of the MYLO Website
- Consistent opportunities for planning, discussing and acting on group learning goals. Substantial developments in terms of connectedness, resilience, self-esteem and confidence
- Over 100 participants, with over 40% exploring personal pathways

Pathways Facts and Figures

- Of the 100+ MYLO participants, approximately 40% took up the option of personalized pathways support and of these:
  - Employment, Education and Training advice for 100%
  - Pathways and Barrier Planning for 100%
  - Supported training referrals for over 50%
  - Enrolment in formal education for approximately 30%, in short courses for approximately 10%
  - Full or Part Time work, apprenticeships or volunteering at 12%
  - Addicional advice, support and referral for related issues such as housing, health, IT, legal issues, resume writing etc.

Learnings and MYLO’s Future

- Ability to participate jeopardised by lifestyles & crime
- Lack of consequences = engagement/re-engagement
- Longer period of operation likely to allow for re-engagement of those experiencing crisis
- Outcomes in accordance with consultation findings
- Review of maximum worker/participant ratio
- The value of word-of-mouth promotion

Learnings and MYLO’s Future

- Staff Accessibility
- Additional Sessions
- Review of funding formula to accommodate learnings
- Balancing affordability with maximum availability
- Fundamental re-definition of role, regardless of all those challenges associated with engaging these groups
- “Space and resources are more pressing limitations than the number of willing participants”