



# EVALUATION OF THE WA HOME STRETCH TRIAL

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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# INTRODUCTION

**This report is an executive summary of the findings of the Evaluation of the WA Home Stretch Trial.**

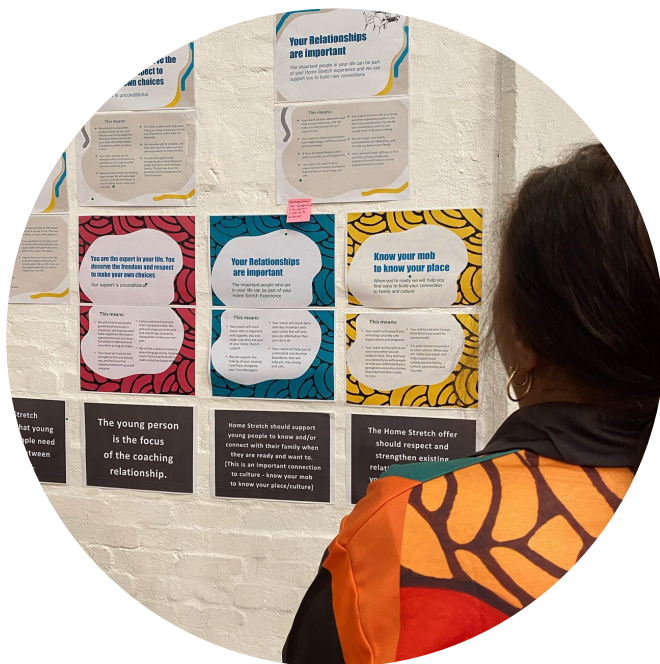
## Background

The Western Australian (WA) Home Stretch model is the result of a sector wide policy co-design process undertaken between 2018-2019. This process resulted in the Home Stretch Core Elements of a Safety Net, Transition Support and Support Circles, a base from which to create prototypes (practices, processes) to test in a service delivery context. The WA Home Stretch Trial was established at the Fremantle District with an initial onboarding of 15 young people. This later expanded to include a further 25 young people. Unlike other Australian jurisdictions, where existing services were remodelled to provide Home Stretch extended care, WA utilised a design process which:

*prioritised young people's voices in the development of a model of enhanced support that effectively simulates an extension of care within the Western Australian legislative and service system context. The co-design highlighted the need for an extended care arrangement to be optional, and that the direct support provided to young people should be provided from youth workers employed outside of the child protection system (Lund & Kazim, 2021, p. 44).*

During the Trial, the Anglicare WA Home Stretch team engaged in a partnership with Yorganop - an Aboriginal foster care agency - to inform the prototyping process of the core elements, along with the on-going development of Home Stretch practices, principles and processes.

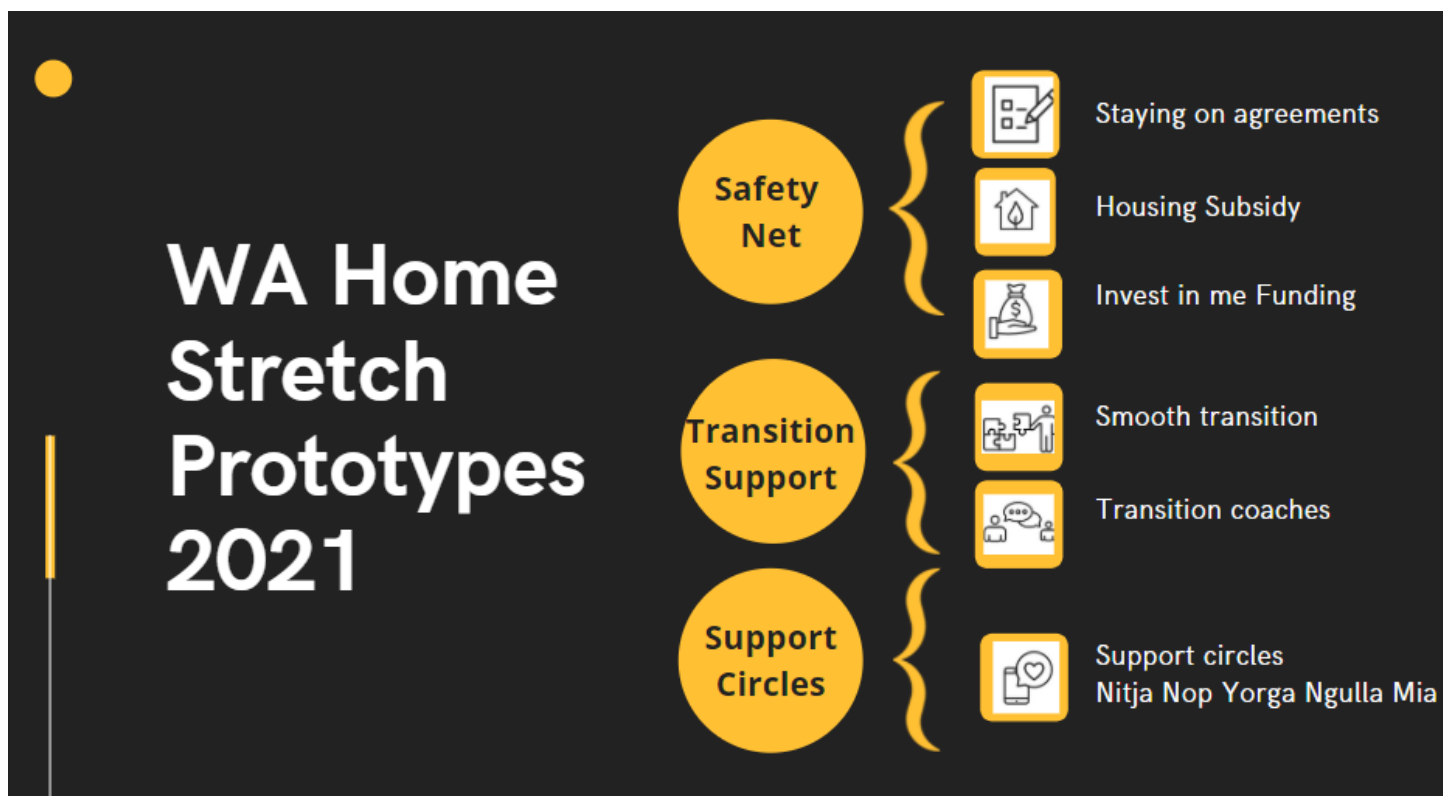
The aim of the partnership with Yorganop, which became known as Nitja Nop Yorga Ngulla Mia (Our Boys and Girls are Staying Home) was to ensure that the various elements of the Home Stretch model being tested and developed could be adapted to become culturally safe for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This partnership resulted in the reconceptualisation of Support Circles to become an overarching principle of Home Stretch enhanced care, rather than as a core element. Both organisations acknowledged the importance of this partnership to the development of the Home Stretch model.



From these processes the WA Home Stretch Trial has resulted in a set of core principles and elements that can be scaled up to further enhance the support to young people leaving care in WA.

# WHAT IS THE HOME STRETCH MODEL?

The Model began with these Core Elements from the 2018-2019 co- design process and the WA Home Stretch Trial utilised a process of further testing and co-design with stakeholders to elaborate the design. The result is represented below.



The Anglicare WA Home Stretch team; the Youth Advisory Group (YAG); the Home Stretch Steering Group; Fremantle District Staff; Yorganup team members; Young people; foster carers and other community stakeholders have all played a role in the process of prototyping and testing the core elements of the Home Stretch Model. This has resulted in the building of a shared language and understanding of the principles of Home Stretch across different parts and stakeholders within the system. It has meant discussion of what each element of the model entails, testing the change within the practice and reflecting on the results. Young people have been involved in all these stages. Other group members found this involvement to be invaluable.

*I found everything that was said in the YAGs to be very consistent with what we hear from young people all the time... it felt really good that something was really tangibly being put in place*

Steering Group member

*[It has] been a really good opportunity to see what that kind of continuum of care can look like when you've got a team that's dedicated to that leaving care age bracket and how they interact with Home Stretch.*

Communities Worker

# EVALUATION AIMS

1

Understand and document what difference the Home Stretch Trial Program can make to the lives of young people participating in the project

2

Document and strengthen the program logic of the Trial Program's emerging strategies, characteristics and practices that address the diverse and complex experiences of young people leaving care

3

Identify and document aspects of the Trial that are foundational to better outcomes and can be replicated or suggest important system changes

4

To include the expertise of young people with out of home care experiences in the design of the evaluation and emerging model of practice



5

To document the ways in which young people's expertise has been influential in the design and implementation of the Home Stretch Trial

6

Identify any aspects which are influenced by the local context in which it is being trialled and develop draft principles of locality based design for Home Stretch

# EVALUATION FINDINGS

Below we present key findings against the evaluation questions.

01

## ROLE OF CO-DESIGN AND PROTOTYPING IN ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

- Stakeholder co-design was central to building an understanding and for supporting central involvement of young people.
- Co-design created a shared language amongst the participants about enhanced care.
- Some stakeholders were not included in the original co-design (foster carers; parents who have been involved with Child Protection & Family Support) and could be involved in subsequent co-design of the model.

02

## WHAT IS THE AFTER CARE RESPONSE THAT IS UNIQUE TO THE HOME STRETCH MODEL?

- Safety Net - includes 3 types of funding (Staying on; Rent subsidies and Invest in Me).
- Transition support - Coaches who provide practical support, brokerage and mentoring working alongside young people towards independent living and fostering interdependent connections. Coaches also assist with a smooth transition from care via service system collaboration and communication.
- Support Circles - warm referral; a trauma-informed relational practice process focused on building interdependent networks of support for young people.

03

## WHAT CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING OUTCOMES HAVE BEEN EXPERIENCED?

- Establishing trust across different organisations takes time and energy.
- Staffing and turnover impacts on continuity of care
- COVID-19 presented a challenge during the evaluation - due to lockdowns and restrictions some processes took longer; recruitment of young people took extra time.

# EVALUATION FINDINGS

04

## WHAT CONTEXTUAL FACILITATORS TO ACHIEVING OUTCOMES HAVE BEEN EXPERIENCED?

- Information was considered key to engaging with young people but it is more likely to be taken on if it is warranted by someone they trust or have a relationship with.
- Time to make a decision about taking up the opportunity was important.
- Informing carers was a key enabler of Staying on agreements.
- Opt in and Opt out was identified as a unique feature of Home Stretch design and was welcomed by the young people participating.

05

## WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES FOLLOWING PARTICIPATION IN THE TRIAL?

- Alleviation of homelessness.
- Opportunities to build relationships with coaches.
- Access to role models and others to support the decision making processes of young people.
- Continuity in education was facilitated by access to Invest in Me funding.

06

## WHAT DO MEMBERS OF THE YAG HOPE TO ACHIEVE THROUGH THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE TRIAL

- YAG members were motivated by wanting the system to change for the better.
- To advocate for others using their experience as a catalyst for change.
- Social interaction and learning from others were considered key benefits.
- Members welcomed the opportunity to participate with Yorganop and felt they had learnt a great deal from the experience.

# EVALUATION FINDINGS

This section discusses the evaluation question related to scaling up the WA Home Stretch model for delivery in districts across Western Australia.

## WHAT ASPECTS OF THE TRIAL COULD BE REPLICATED IN OTHER LOCALITIES?

07

- Structure of funding (brokerage model)
- Coaching model
- Early engagement
- Smooth transitions are all elements that are replicable.

It is recommended, however, that before contracting or establishing a Home Stretch program in each District, a co-design process is undertaken which is aimed at bringing together local stakeholders. The purpose is not to redesign the Core Elements of the Home Stretch model but it would have the aim of initiating community readiness, local collaboration and provide opportunities for exploration of service gaps. This would aid in finding local solutions for adapting the Home Stretch approach. A place-based approach is key to ensuring the elements of Home Stretch are replicated effectively. Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled organisations should be facilitated in any replication of Home Stretch.

08

## WHAT ASPECTS OF THE TRIAL ARE LIKELY TO BE VARIED ACCORDING TO LOCAL CONDITIONS?

There is likely to be some variation depending on the existing service system and local cultures. Building local and statewide practice infrastructures such as Communities of Practice and commissioning providers after co-design processes, mentioned above, will assist with managing local variations. Local Communities of Practice should include young people to inform their on-going practices.

# Scaling up Home Stretch in WA

Our recommendations are aimed at what actions could be taken to support the scaling up of Home Stretch across WA. We present them according to sector responsible for leaving care services:

- Department of Communities (as Policy makers and service contractors)
- Department of Communities (CPFS) (as service delivery)
- Community Sector (as service delivery and stakeholders)

We commence with the Department of Communities.



## DEPT OF COMMUNITIES

## PURPOSE

## OUTCOME

Establish a statewide Home Stretch Steering group to support any Scale up process; should ideally include Aboriginal Practice Leaders

- Contributes to the practice infrastructure needed for adoption of Home Stretch Core Elements
- Ensures representation of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people

Facilitation and dissemination of learnings from Home Stretch Trial

Utilise co-design processes undertaken in each district to facilitate readiness for Home Stretch service *prior* to contracting

- Adaption of Home Stretch program to local needs/networks
- Prospective Home Stretch providers are supported to deliver the Core elements

Locally based Home Stretch providers are supported and are able to provide a place-based Home Stretch program

Support an extension of a Home Stretch Trial co-design focussed on practices with young people with complex needs (e.g. Residential care; young people accessing NDIS; foster carers; people in Regional areas)

- Bring together diverse stakeholders to inform policy & practice navigating NDIS
- Builds knowledge for translation of Home Stretch to regional areas
- Includes stakeholders who were not included in the original co-design

Builds pathways for transitions to independence for young people who need NDIS support and contributes to addressing regional challenges and leverages



# Scaling up Home Stretch in WA

The recommendations here relate to the Department of Communities (CPFS), the key issue is supporting existing good practice and extending and supporting a change in practices working with Home Stretch providers. The section outlines a range of strategies with this need in mind.

CPFS & DISTRICTS	PURPOSE	OUTCOME
Explore co-location of Home Stretch providers in District offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aids in building interorganisational collaboration</li> </ul>	Assists with Smooth transitions via warm referral processes
Establish a Leaving Care Practice Specialist (LCPS) in each District (along the same principles as the Senior Practice Development Officer (SPDO))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute to practice infrastructure for Leaving Care processes</li> <li>Develop a practice specialism</li> <li>Facilitates relationships and/or co-location with local Home Stretch providers</li> </ul>	<p>Signals the importance of focus on Leaving Care planning</p> <p>Facilitates knowledge of entitlements across services system</p>
Establish a statewide LCPS network across the Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides a Community of Practice for dissemination of best practice in care leaver planning and support</li> <li>Contribute to future policy development on leaving care services</li> </ul>	Dissemination of knowledge about the current needs of young people leaving care
LCPS establishes (where absent) or collaborates with Home Stretch providers & local networks to increase the support young people are able to access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LCPS role aims to build and/or contribute to local service system supports for young people</li> <li>Provides a network link between CPFS and (local and statewide) service systems</li> </ul>	Increases the likelihood of young people gaining access to support post leaving care

# Scaling up Home Stretch in WA

The recommendations in this section are primarily focussed on changes that could be supportive to scaling up Home Stretch service delivery. The focus here is on the Community Sector as service delivery and advocates for young people leaving care.



COMMUNITY SECTOR	PURPOSE	OUTCOME
Provide on-going facilitation and support of care experienced young people to participate in future Home Stretch co-design and policy processes young people in the policy process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy with and for young people to participate in processes that affect them</li> </ul>	The experience of Care Leavers continues to be included in policy processes
Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations included in future development of culturally safe Home Stretch practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds on the learnings from the Anglicare WA -Yorganop partnership for culturally safe leaving care practices</li> </ul>	System wide change to support culturally safe transitions to interdependent living for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
Establish workforce development (metropolitan & regional) for increasing the skills and knowledge for working with young people across the service system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures young people are able to access skilled coaches and case workers who understand their particular needs</li> </ul>	Home Stretch providers will be able to draw on a skilled workforce across the service system

# Conclusion

In conclusion, the WA Home Stretch Trial has been an enormous co-design undertaking with the aim of keeping the voices of young people as central to testing and developing the agreed on principles of a visible safety net, transition support through a coaching model and developing support network, or circles, for young people as they make the transition to independence after leaving care. The Youth Advisory Group, the Anglicare WA, Yorganup and the District office of Fremantle CPFS teams have been engaged for many months in meetings, processes, workshops and in testing the ideas through real-world application. The Home Stretch trial has been supported by a Steering group which has provided expertise in policy and service design. Together they have produced a blueprint for a significant step change in extended care services within Western Australia.

The Home Stretch trial did not occur in a leaving care service vacuum as there are existing leaving care services that do already provide support to young care leavers. What most would agree with is that the system can be improved and Home Stretch goes some way to provide that opportunity. The Home Stretch trial has produced a great many practice guides, ways of working and principles that can be adapted and further tested in new localities.



The Department of Communities has an opportunity to build new practice infrastructure with the aim of supporting the growth of the Home Stretch model across the many districts of CPFS. Some aspects of the service system need additional development - for example housing, ways of ensuring young people can access housing subsidies and entitlements even if not engaged with Home Stretch. There is also the opportunity for workforce development across the state to grow a workforce community of practice so that expertise in working relationally with young people can be shared and supported. There is a chance now to build on this significant body of practice work to make a real difference for care leavers in this state.



# Acknowledgements

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We would like to thank the young people involved as peer researchers on the evaluation – the project would be much poorer without their insight and we enjoyed working alongside them enormously. We thank the Anglicare WA Home Stretch team Laura Florisson, Vanessa Msapenda, Ben Dancey, Jess Sharp, Jess Powers, Hayley McKenzie, Natasha Waller for answering our questions and assisting us with engaging young people to be involved with the evaluation. We reserve a special acknowledgement for Andy Kazim for his passion for betting the circumstances for young people in WA and for his leadership of the Home Stretch trial. Thanks also to Philippa Boldy for her incredible patience. We thank the crew from the Fremantle District office for their involvement in the evaluation: Vania De Paz and Michelle Charlton and other Leaving Care Team Members – we appreciated their passion for doing better with Leaving Care services and their sharing about Leaving Care processes within the Department were invaluable. We thank Department of Communities Staff Kimberley French and Amanda Bateman.

This Executive Summary was prepared by the Curtin University Home Stretch Evaluation Team: Dr Lynelle Watts, Bronte Walter, Darcee Schulze, Dr David Hodgson and Professor Donna Chung. Thanks also to Social Work student Robert Nguyen for assisting with interviews.

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