Social Issues and Diverse Young Australians

A Report on Key Challenges and Young People's Concerns

Kim Lam, Anita Harris and Michael Hartup,
with Philippa Collin, Amanda Third and Soo-Lin Quek

Youth, Diversity and Wellbeing in a Digital Age Stream
Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies

CRIS
Centre for Resilient
and Inclusive Societies

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Context and Background

About the Youth, Diversity and Wellbeing in a Digital Age Research Stream

Our Objectives

- Partner with young people to address the challenges and opportunities of creating resilient communities where people feel connected and actively want to participate

- Enhance diverse young people's social and civic wellbeing

- Support young people as active citizens and change leaders in a culturally complex digital age

Aims of the Stream:

1. Establish effective mechanisms for strengthening civic engagement and social belonging amongst a diversity of young people

2. Address racism and discrimination as key drivers of risk to social cohesion and causes of marginalisation

3. Understand relationships between young people's local worlds, transnational networks and online communities to build a productive sense of belonging

4. Investigate young people's civic and political uses of the internet and digital media, and understand the relationship between digital affordances and global citizenship capacity building

5. Evaluate and establish youth-focused social cohesion, digital literacy, digital and global citizenship, resilience (including digital resilience) and participation initiatives, programs, curricula and interventions, including those designed for and with young people

We take a proactive, interconnected, strengths-based and capacity building approach to exploring issues of diversity and social wellbeing for young people in a digital age. We aim to overcome what has often been a siloed approach to these interrelated challenges and opportunities. We recognise the intersectionality of youth identities as well as the interconnectedness of challenges and opportunities.

We want to move away from interventions that focus on individual young people. They tend to miss the opportunity to leverage the powerful protective factors of young people's peer and intergenerational relationships, emergent forms of social and civic connection, and new networks and communities.

About the Foundation Project

Our Foundation Project underpins the work of the Youth, Diversity and Wellbeing in a Digital Age Research Stream. The Foundation Project builds a structure for the rest of our projects through Literature Reviews and Living Lab Roundtables. This means all our stream's work comes from strong evidence backed by young people themselves.

To find out more about some of the young people we are working with, please visit our website.

1. Literature Reviews

We read and evaluate existing evidence in academic research, policy documents, and grey literature to find the most significant issues and identify gaps.

2. Living Lab Roundtables

We work with young people and other stakeholders in an ongoing series of roundtable discussions to find out what they think about these issues. Together, we discuss how we can design and develop our research, so that we find effective solutions with roots in young people's expertise.

Through our Living Lab, over 50 representatives from government, community and academic organisations, as well as young people, participated in a series of six roundtable sessions, held from November 2020 to March 2021. Participants included young people from diverse backgrounds and representatives from the organisations in the table below.

These key stakeholders, researchers and young people reviewed the literature findings and kick-started the roundtable consultations. We then worked separately with young people and our stakeholders, communicating key insights from each workshop to the different groups.

In the final stage, we held a 'Mini-Summit', bringing together youth, government, community, academic and university stakeholders. The aim of the Mini-Summit was to collaboratively review the information collected from previous roundtables, identify key issues, and generate a plan to guide the future work of the stream.

Living Lab Participants

Deakin University

Western Sydney University

The Centre for Multicultural Youth

The Victorian Multicultural Commission

The National Youth Commission

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority

the Department of Education and Training

Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network

The Scanlon Foundation

Foundation for Young Australians

Indigenous Digital Excellence

Diversity Arts Australia

Domestic Violence Victoria

Victorian Local Government Multicultural Issues Network

Alannah and Madeline Foundation

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WH& Y – Centre of Excellence in Research in Adolescent Health

Faith Communities Council of Victoria

Casey Multifaith Network

Victorian Arabic Social Services

Eloqium

About this Report

This report is based on the literature review and Living Lab components of the Foundation Project. The literature review looked at academic and grey literature on youth, diversity and social and civic wellbeing in Australia in the context of global trends. The review had a specific focus on work published in the past five years on social cohesion, participation and digital life, and sought to understand the key issues facing young people in these interconnected domains today. To situate this work and develop a more holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by young people in action to address social cohesion, resilience and inclusion, this report also provides an overview of youth diversity in Australia, examining cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. It surveys a range of reports, research, and policy approaches and findings, and academic materials that address diverse young Australians' experiences and engagement with matters of cohesion, civic and political participation, and digital life.

Methodology

The literature review that underpins this report drew from academic youth studies and grey literature, such as program evaluations, and policy and strategy documents focused on the broad fields of social inclusion, social cohesion, participation, diversity, wellbeing and young people. Following best practice, the review began by establishing an Endnote library to import relevant abstracts. For brevity, and for the purposes of informing the research, program and policy-directed activities of the Youth, Diversity and Wellbeing in a Digital Age Stream for CRIS, this literature review mainly focused on developments over the past five years. It included research conducted by academics, government departments, peak bodies, multinationals, social and market research companies, and local community groups that deal with youth issues. It focused on findings from research that are either large scale (involving a sizeable number of participants), utilise robust methodologies, and/or have been conducted in partnership with university researchers.

Initial grey literature searches were conducted using a range of key search terms. These searches were conducted using Google and began with the search terms "youth+wellbeing+Australia" and "youth+diversity+Australia". Searches were then conducted with each state and territory replacing Australia. Additional searches were carried out via the publication records from various youth organisations, organisations that publish youth specific reports, and CRIS stakeholders, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Centre for Multicultural Youth, Mission Australia, the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils Australia, Foundation for Young Australians, Young and Well CRC, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (Australia), ReachOut.com, and the Victorian Multicultural Commission. Initial academic searches were conducted using Google Scholar, and specific databases in the social sciences and humanities, including ProQuest, Taylor & Francis, and Web of Science. Searches were conducted using the following series of search terms: "youth+diversity+wellbeing+Australia".

Searches were then repeated with "diversity" replaced with "cultural background", "race" "ethnicity", "migrant" "refugee", "sexuality" "gender diverse", "culturally and linguistically diverse", "Indigenous", "disability", "interfaith", "social inclusion", "social cohesion", "anti-racism", "citizenship" and "civics". Citation snowballing was also used as a means of capturing additional relevant academic and grey literature. Of the final results from the literature search (368 results), only the most relevant sources were included in the final literature review (130 results).

Key Terms and Concepts

Youth

As numerous academic and policy documents point out, there is no uniform definition of 'youth'. While the 'youth' phase is in many ways a unique time period, factors such as cultural background, socioeconomic conditions, policy approaches, governance structures, and indeed, time of writing may limit or protract what is considered to be this life phase. Generally, however, the 'youth' phase is understood in academic, policy and program terms as the period of transition from childhood to adulthood, with increasing acknowledgement that this period is extending and changing as adult milestones (for example, financial independence, home

ownership, job security and so on) are becoming more difficult for the current youth generation to achieve (Dwyer et al. 2005). Moreover, young people may progress in different ways through this phase as they adjust to these new conditions of what an adult life can entail.

For the most part, this report considers youth as those aged between twelve to twenty-five. This age range is broadly consistent with definitions provided by youth peak organisations and services providers, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), VicHealth, the Multicultural Youth Advisory Network (MYAN), Youth Action, and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). It covers a period of significant development during adolescence and early adulthood, as well as a number of important social transitions. These include the transitions from primary school to secondary school, secondary school to tertiary education, education to employment, and movement away from the family home (VicHealth 2017: 6). As the AIHW (2017) explains, 15 is the age associated with sufficient literacy and numeracy skills to complete year 12; 19 is the age associated with the completion of an initial qualification or commencement of further education, and 24 is the age associated with establishing a career path, after having completed a higher qualification.

The report recognises, however, that not all young people experience these transitions, and that young people may experience them in a different order or in non-linear fashion depending on myriad factors including socio-economic status, dis/ability, illness, Indigeneity, gender, class, education levels, and cultural background (Wilson & Wyn 1987). It also recognises the economic, social and cultural changes that have restructured the education system and labour market since the 1970s (including increasing credentialism, greater employment precarity and a shift from collective to individual responsibility), leading to greater complexity in young people's employment pathways and independent living (Dwyer et al. 2005; Wyn 2007). Consequently, this report situates young people in the context not only of their own individual pathways from childhood to adulthood, but in terms of the ways they can make a life and have a voice through their relationships with older and younger cohorts, communities and with organisational and institutional structures such as the education system, political system, the workplace, and broader social and cultural norms. In doing so, this report seeks to account for both the individual and structural factors that shape young people's transitions to adulthood (Cuervo & Wyn 2011), and their experiences of citizenship, inclusion, participation and social cohesion.

Diversity

Diversity is another key concept addressed in this report. In line with CRIS objectives and the government bodies and industry partners with which CRIS works, this report focuses mainly on young people's cultural, religious and linguistic diversity and the academic literature, programs and policies that extend our understanding of youth diversity in multicultural Australia. Where appropriate we focus on culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) or culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse (CRALD) youth, broadly interpreted, while acknowledging the problems with this term. We focus on refugee, asylum seeker, migrant, religious and ethnic minority, and Indigenous youth cohorts in relation to experiences of social and civic wellbeing, social cohesion, participation, and digital access and inclusion. As Harris and Johns (2020: 13) have written:

> although this term [CALD] is frequently used in the policy literature to broadly identify "racial, ethnic and religious minorities in Australia who are migrants or descendants of migrants" (Caluya, Bororica & Yue 2018) like other similar terms, (NESB youth, multicultural youth) it has been problematized as a frame which subtly racialises and 'others' minority cultural, racial and ethnic groupings, setting them apart from white, Anglo or European background youth, and marking them as being in need of different modes of government (Cuervo & Miranda 2019). We acknowledge the problematic associations of the term, but use it … where relevant to challenge another tendency in the literature, which is to collapse all young people into the homogenous category of 'youth' which closes down possibilities to critically interrogate how expressions of racism and marginalisation differentially impact youth populations.

This report also recognises the complexities

within youth communities, adopting an intersectional lens to consider how different categories of diversity, such as ethnicity, race, religion, gender, sexuality, class and ability may intersect to produce multiple and interlocking forms of oppression and disadvantage (Crenshaw 1990; Mansouri & Johns 2017). To this end, we focus on research that illuminates how experiences of marginalisation (such as racism, poverty, isolation and poor mental health) are often experienced simultaneously rather than in isolation, and by individuals who may be disadvantaged by gender and ethnicity, for example, in intersecting rather than parallel ways (Crenshaw 1990). At the same time, as research shows, youth diversity cannot simply be understood through the lens of categorical framing, even when multiple categories such as ethnicity and socio-economic status are considered in tandem. Young people increasingly experience not only hybrid, but also fluid and cosmopolitan identifications in a hyper-diverse Australian context (Harris 2013; Noble 2009). Khan, Wyn and Dadvand (2019: 33) for example argue that 'policies and categorisations forged on the basis of "nationality" and "country of birth" cannot adequately capture the complex and highly dynamic nature of youth affiliations and patterns of belonging'. In many cases, young people's hybrid and situated identities, and their transnational connections and cosmopolitan aspirations complicate an established multicultural framework that tends to 'lock' young people into static and discrete, ethnic groupings (Harris 2013).

It is increasingly recognised in government and youth sector programming and policy that diverse young people possess unique strengths and insights due to their situatedness across various life-worlds, their linguistic, cultural brokerage and digital skills, and intergenerational and community ties, and that harnessing these capacities is crucial for enhancing social cohesion and community resilience (Marlowe & Bogen 2015). At the same time, diverse young people's capacity to contribute may be impeded by complex factors, including length of settlement, socio-economic status, intergenerational dynamics, living circumstances and adverse life events such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Couch, Liddy & McDougall 2021; Grills & Butcher 2020). This report therefore seeks to develop an agenda for working with diverse young people to enhance cohesion, participation and social

and civic wellbeing in ways that recognise both the strengths and vulnerabilities of diverse young people's hybrid identities and affiliations (Shakya et al. 2014).

Wellbeing

While the term 'wellbeing' has widespread social and political appeal, it is often used in a broad-ranging and at times ill-defined way in youth research, policy and program (McLeod & Wright 2015; Powell & Graham 2017: 214). Wright (2015: 214) observes that an initial focus on interventions aimed at 'problem children' has shifted over the twentieth century to now include universal interventions and programs to improve social, emotional and psychological health among young people in general. Across this broad remit, organisations emphasise different forms of health in relation to wellbeing. VicHealth (2019) and UNICEF (2019) for example refer to youth wellbeing in the form of mental and physical health, while in other publications, 'wellbeing' may be used in the same sentence along with other terms such as 'mental health' and 'resilience' (for example, 'health and wellbeing', and 'resilience and wellbeing'). In these instances, the meaning of wellbeing is often implied through the words it is grouped with. Conversely, some publications may refer to mental health without specifically referring to the term 'wellbeing', or may refer to 'emotional wellbeing' without identifying its components, such as sense of belonging, social inclusion, or positive self-regard.

Notwithstanding issues of definition, the normative view articulated in youth policy and programming is that it is beneficial to enhance youth 'wellbeing' in all its forms, as this leads to better life outcomes for young people, and improved social and economic outcomes for society more broadly (Carlisle, Fildes, Hall, Perrens, Perdreau & Plummer 2019; MYAN 2019; Third, Bellerose, Dawkins, Keltie & Pihl 2014). Taking into account the objectives of CRIS to promote resilient and inclusive societies, the political and social expediency of the term 'wellbeing', and the problems that emerge when the meaning of 'wellbeing' is implied or undefined, this report focuses on social wellbeing, specifically in the form of belonging, inclusion, active citizenship, civic and political participation, social cohesion and resilience. This working definition reflects the salience of these terms in the literatures on youth diversity and inclusion, and in

policies and programs that seek to enhance youth social wellbeing.

Wellbeing in this report is thus conceived not as a personal attribute (for example, individual psychological wellbeing), but a quality that has meaning specifically in relation to others and to society more broadly. A multidimensional understanding of resilience may involve examining more closely 'the mobilisation of resources from everyday encounters with complex assemblages of people, things and places' (Atkinson 2013: 137). This outlook resonates with UNICEF (2019: 4) research which shows that children are becoming more and more aware of the external factors that influence their wellbeing, such as their families, school teachers, doctors, counsellors, and the government, through laws, policies, initiatives and regulations. A relational understanding of wellbeing may further be enhanced by attending more fully to 'socio-technical assemblages that are complex and performative' – particularly in a 'digital age' in which young people's lives are increasingly mediated by online and digital technologies (Collin & Swist 2016).

A 'Digital Age'

For the current generation of youth, it may seem axiomatic yet in many ways outdated to talk about a 'digital age'. For many young people who have grown up surrounded by technology (boyd 2014, Caluya, Bororica & Yue 2018), the notion of a new era of technological advancement holds perhaps little, if any meaning, unlike for older generations who likely recall the 'dot-com' boom of the late 1990s. Today, as much of the literature indicates, so-called 'digital' and 'real' worlds are tightly interwoven, and often experienced as inseparable by young people. As technological advancements continue to unfold, governments, peak bodies and organisations are investing an increasing amount of attention in research on young people's engagements with the 'digital' world, and the risks and opportunities that emerge with the expansion of digital technologies. In a 'digital age', the internet is no longer viewed simply as a useful tool; rather, society has become reliant on 'global digital networks' for their 'very infrastructure' (Livingstone & Third 2017: 658). This report considers what new challenges and opportunities emerge for youth social wellbeing in a time when digital technologies pervade virtually all spheres of life. It explores how notions of citizenship, belonging, and participation might be reconfigured for young people who have grown up with digital technology, and considers how their engagements with the digital may create new inequalities, yet also contribute to new opportunities to enhance resilience and social cohesion.

Summary of Key Findings

It is intended that findings from this report will inform our future issues-based research and program initiatives. To facilitate ease of reading, the report is divided into sections addressing each of the four issues.

Identifying Four Key Issues

Through reflection on the literature review findings and building on professional expertise, community and stakeholder knowledge, policy insights, programming directions and frontline experience, the roundtables identified four key issues of importance for work with diverse young people in a digital age: Discrimination and Racism, Education, Employment and Health.

This report provides background and context to these issues, overviewing the literature and synthesising the data that describes and analyses the key features of these issues and young people's concerns about them. It canvasses literature published before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, identifying areas of ongoing concern, as well as issues that have been exacerbated or become more prominent due to the pandemic. It includes findings from the Living Lab Roundtables that were conducted during the pandemic, adding to the growing body of data in this area.

Education

Employment

Social Issues

For Diverse Young Australians

Health

Racism and Discrimination
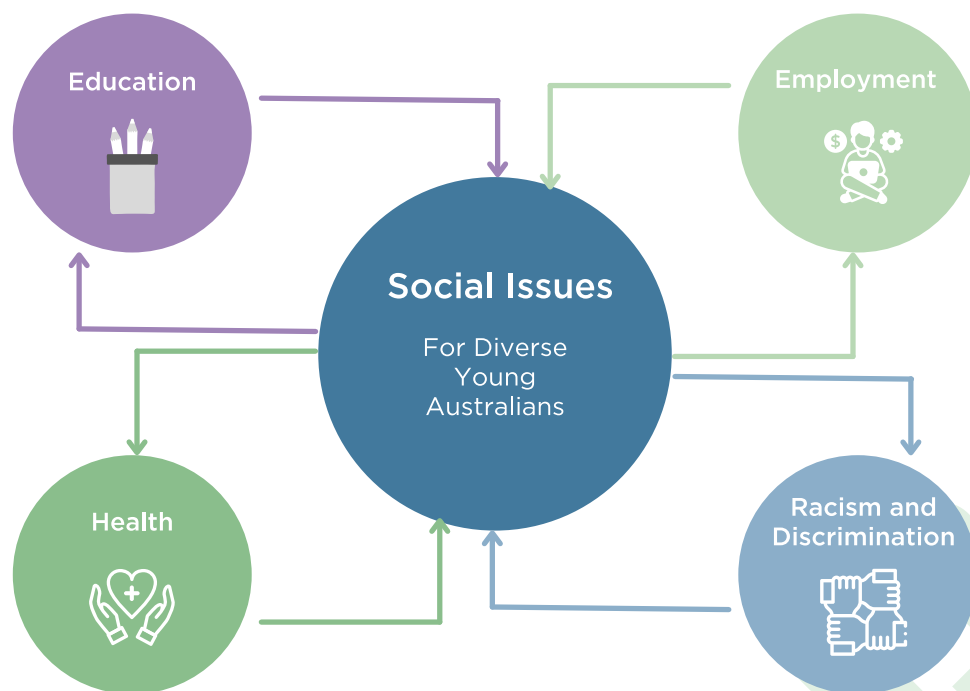
Key Findings and Emerging Research Priorities

Discrimination and Racism

- CALD and Indigenous youth experienced an exacerbation of racism during the COVID-19 pandemic

- Racism and discrimination became more salient issues for young people during the pandemic

- Schools and online settings are key sites for racism and discrimination as experienced by CALD and Indigenous youth, with an escalation of cyberbullying during the pandemic

- Racism and conviviality co-exist in young people's intercultural encounters in ways that move beyond existing frameworks for managing diversity

- Research might focus on addressing definitional ambiguities; strategies for dealing with the exacerbation of racism in online settings; barriers to reporting and addressing racism; establishing better reporting tools; consequences of mainstream media depictions on young people's wellbeing; and consolidation of existing research

Education

- CALD youth are well represented in school education, and more likely than those from English-speaking backgrounds to pursue further education

- Recently arrived youth are more likely to experience disruptions and challenges to education

- Indigenous youth are under-represented in school and tertiary education, and over-represented among the total cohort of young people not engaged in education or employment

- Young people are concerned that quality education is not equally accessible to all

- Young females are more concerned than young males about school or study problems

- Online education has posed significant challenges for young people and their families during the pandemic, with students from low socio-economic backgrounds, students living in remote and rural areas, and Indigenous youth most negatively affected

- Inequalities in digital technology access and proficiency exacerbated educational disadvantage during the pandemic

- Research might focus on the social, educational and financial consequences of disruptions to education during the COVID-19 pandemic; changes to family/intergenerational dynamics in relation to learning and working from home; and the long-term effects of government changes to the education and employment trajectories of young people

Employment

- High levels of un- and under-employment are longstanding issues experienced by CALD and Indigenous youth

- Barriers to finding sustainable employment include: pre-migration trauma, lack of English language proficiency, lack of experience and confidence, lack of local experience in Australia, discrimination and racism, and family pressures to attain tertiary qualifications

- Lack of educational opportunities and labour market marginalisation continue to seriously affect CALD young people's capacity for social and economic inclusion, albeit with great variation within this group

- The labour market has deteriorated significantly for young people due to the Global Financial Crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, young people (especially young women) bore the brunt of job losses in industries most affected by lockdowns, including the hospitality, retail, entertainment and tourism industries

- The disruption of young people's employment due to numerous lockdowns and their uptake of low-paid, low-skilled work is predicted to have a long-term

impact on their career development

- Research might focus on the long term 'scarring' effects of under- and un-employment during the pandemic; changes to career ambitions due to employment disruptions during the pandemic; barriers and enablers of employment for CALD and Indigenous youth during the period of recovery from the pandemic

Health

- Young adults in Australia have reported the most significant increase in severe psychological distress from pre-pandemic levels, compared to all age groups

- Rates of psychological distress are much higher for young women than young men

- Other specific cohorts that have been more severely affected include LGBTIQA+ youth, young people with pre-existing mental health conditions, unpaid caregivers, and essential workers

- Research on youth mental health during the pandemic shows that young people have experienced disruptions to their freedom, social connection, routine, education, employment, access to counselling and youth centres, and changes to caring responsibilities

- Research suggests that poor mental health among refugee and migrant background youth has been exacerbated by the pandemic

- Refugee and migrant background youth have experienced increased levels of racism, hypervigilance and concern about re-engaging in public settings, compared to Anglo-Australian youth

- The pandemic has focused attention on the efficacy of digital and online mental health services

- Online mental health services are not suitable or appealing for all young people, and issues of affordability also remain with regard to access to digital technology for disadvantaged groups

- Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds often demonstrate

resilience in the face of adversity

- For newly arrived CALD youth, sport may foster a sense of belonging and transitioning into communities, and can play a positive role in facilitating physical health, wellbeing and settlement in Australia

- Research might focus on the barriers and enablers of accessing online mental health services during the pandemic; new forms of mental health support (e.g. online communities, new hobbies/interests) that may have emerged during the pandemic due to issues of affordability/accessibility in relation to professional support; and youth action-research projects that look at local data, existing programs, mapping and evaluations and trial a range of place-based initiatives

Summary

Young Australians face ongoing challenges in relation to discrimination and racism, education, employment, and health. These challenges are experienced most acutely by minoritised young people on the basis of ethnicity, religion, citizenship status, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status and location, and have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Challenges and Young People's Concerns

Discrimination and Racism

Overview

Discrimination and racism are key challenges for young Australians. According to Scanlon Foundation research (Markus 2020: 84), the youngest people in their cohort experience the highest levels of discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of skin colour, ethnic origin or religion, with 23 – 24% of 18 – 44 year-olds reporting discrimination in 2020, compared to 9% of 65 – 74 year-olds and 2% of 75+ year-olds). In the 2020 Mission Australia Youth Survey, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth were more likely to report being treated unfairly in the past year (49%) than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (26.5%) (Tiller, Fildes, Hall, Greenland, Liyanarachchi & Nicola 2020: 5). Multicultural young people in the MY Australia Census (Multicultural Youth Australia Project Team 2018: vi) also report high levels of discrimination. Nearly 50% of participants had experienced discrimination in the past twelve months, and nearly two-thirds had witnessed others being discriminated against (2018: viii). While they expressed a strong desire to belong, and were highly optimistic about their future, their sense of optimism declined with age, and time spent in Australia, with many experiencing racism and other forms of discrimination. The top three issues for Australia identified by participants in the MY Australia Census reflect these experiences, with diversity and discrimination coming first, followed by education, then jobs and employment.[1] Experiences of discrimination are also higher among those born overseas who do not speak English (31%), compared to those born overseas who speak English and those born in

Australia (15% and 14% respectively) (Markus 2020: 85).

Combined data from 2018 to 2020 from Scanlon Foundation research also shows that 55% of Muslims, 37% of Hindus and 31% of Buddhists experience discrimination (Markus 2020: 85). According to this research, racial discrimination has increased over the past decade, with 2016 marking the highest levels of racial discrimination since the research began in 2007 (Markus 2017). Perhaps not surprisingly, UNICEF research shows that young people aged 14 – 17 feel that other young people were most likely to be treated differently because of race (64%), because they have a disability (64%), have a different view on sexual orientation (58%), gender identity (55%), religious beliefs (52%), culture (51%) or socio-economic status (50%) (UNICEF 2019: 7).

Racism and Discrimination During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Emerging research shows that many young people from CALD backgrounds experienced an exacerbation of racism and racist attacks during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was experienced predominantly by Australians of Asian background early on in the pandemic (All Together Now 2020; Asian Australian Alliance 2021; Kamp, Denson, Atie, Dunn, Sharples, Vergani, Walton & Sisko 2021). Research conducted by the Australian National University and Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) found that young Victorians in particular experienced the effects of a 'racism pandemic' (Devakumar, Selvarajah, Shannon, Muruya, Lasoye, Corona, Paradies, Abubakar & Achiume 2020), contributing to fears about returning to public life and facing racial discrimination. CMY's survey of 376 young people conducted during Victoria's second wave of infections, in June 2020, found that 85% of respondents reported at least one direct experience of racial discrimination since the COVID-19 pandemic began, and that 63% experienced worry about facing racism with the return to daily activities (Doery, Guerra, Kenny, Harriott & Priest 2020: 18, 20). Similarly, research on Asian-Australians' experiences of racism during the COVID-19 pandemic conducted by Kamp and others (2021) found that younger people were more likely to report experiencing racism than older cohorts. This racism was found to negatively impact health and wellbeing, and undermine social cohesion (2021: 4).

Issues of racism and discrimination were further highlighted in 2020 due to global events such as the Black Lives Matter protests, which originated

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1 This compares to Mission Australia (Carlisle et al. 2019: 4) findings, which show that the top three issues of national importance for young people in 2019 (undifferentiated by cultural identity and migration background) were mental health, the environment, and equity and discrimination.

in 2013 but experienced a resurgence in 2020 following the police killing of George Floyd in the United States. Mobilisation against police brutality and systemic racism quickly gathered momentum across the globe (Gottbrath 2020), including in Australia, where dissent largely focused on Aboriginal deaths in custody and refugee rights (Steinwall 2020). Indigenous youth, in particular, experience disproportionate levels of discrimination and disadvantage in relation to incarceration. The AIHW (2019: v) reports that although Indigenous children made up only 5% of those aged 10 to 17 in Australia in 2017–2018, almost half (49%) of all children in Australia's youth detention centres during this period were Indigenous. Indigenous youth aged 10 to 13 were also more likely to enter justice supervision at a young age than non-Indigenous youth, representing 39% of young people under supervision in 2017–2018, compared to 15% non-Indigenous youth (2019: vi). These statistics are part of a long history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth over-representation in justice supervision in Australia (Johnston, Williams, Butler & Kinner 2019).

The organisation of Black Lives Matter protests in the midst of pandemic-induced lockdowns highlights the growing salience of issues of racism and discrimination globally and locally. In Australia, it is notable that equity and discrimination rose to become the most important national issue for young people in 2020, according to respondents of the Mission Australia Youth Survey. 'Equity and discrimination' was identified as the most important national issue by 40% of respondents, followed by COVID-19 (39%) and mental health (31%). By comparison, in 2019, only 25% of respondents identified 'equity and discrimination' as a top national issue, representing an increase of 60% (Tiller et al. 2020: 5).

Racism and Context

Schools

As Priest, Ferdinand, Perry, Paradies and Kelaher (2014) point out, racism remains an enduring feature of youth intercultural relations in Australia. Schools are common sites for racial discrimination, where children and adolescents regularly interact with one another (Mansouri & Jenkins 2010). Research conducted prior to the pandemic showed that the majority of bullying cases took place at school (79.9%) (Carlisle et al. 2019: 4). These findings resonate with UNICEF (2019) research, which shows that while 89% of young people report feeling safe at school, a significant 9% report feeling unsafe. Forty-three percent of young

people aged 14 to 17 have been bullied at school in the last two years. However, while diverse youth are often targets of racism and discrimination, they may also be perpetrators of racism. Almost half of the school staff from Priest and others' (2014: 8) research reported that students from their school experienced racism from other students. A higher percentage (54%) of LGBTIQA+ young people have been bullied in school in the last two years. Indigenous youth also report particularly high rates of both racism and bullying in schools (Priest, King, Bécare & Kavanagh 2016: 1882). Forty-five percent of young people who had been bullied felt that action taken by their school had little effect, while only 20% felt their school had taken bullying seriously (UNICEF 2019: 6).

Racism and Discrimination 'Online'

A significant amount of bullying takes place online or on social media (Carlisle et al. 2019: 4). Research indicates that young people of colour experience higher rates of racism and discrimination online as they do in schools. One in five young people from a study conducted by the Centre for Multicultural Youth and University of Melbourne on CALD young people and digital citizenship (Caluya et al. 2018: 5) had experienced harassment, discrimination and bullying online, and one in four reported that they had a friend who had experienced harassment or discrimination online. The same study also found that CALD young people were more likely to experience harassment and bullying if they were politically active. Bullying is also a significant issue for Aboriginal youth, and Aboriginal young women are (21.4%) more likely to be 'extremely' or 'very' concerned about bullying than Aboriginal young men (8.7%) (Tiller et al. 2020: 48). Kennedy's (2020) research into Indigenous young peoples' experiences of harmful content on social media found that 97% of respondents surveyed indicated that they encountered negative content on social media at least every week, 78% had witnessed hate speech at least weekly and 62% had witnessed cyberbullying at least weekly. More recently, concerns have been raised about the exacerbation of cyberbullying due to the increased reliance on technology for online learning during the pandemic, and young people's exposure to inappropriate content (Drane, Vernon & O'Shea 2020: 6). Online settings have also been identified as key sites for experiencing racism by all age groups during the pandemic, with racism experienced most frequently in online settings according to Denson and others' (2021) research on Asian-Australians' experiences of racism during the pandemic.

Researching Racism

While racism is generally understood to be the differential treatment of individuals based on perceptions of racial, ethnic, cultural, and more recently, religious difference (Grigg & Manderson 2015: 196; Walton, Priest & Paradies 2013: 75; van Dijk, 2003), scholarship on racism has highlighted the difficulties of researching and addressing the everyday nature of racism. Grigg and Manderson (2015: 203) have found in their study of racism among young Australians aged 14 to 22 that while many young people acknowledged being occasional perpetrators of racist thoughts, actions and beliefs, they also minimised some forms of racism, particularly racist humour and were uncertain about classifying thoughts, actions and beliefs as racist, demonstrating the ambivalence and ambiguities of conceptualising racism. Young people in this research also pointed out the coexistence of both multiculturalism and racism in Australia, which as Grigg and Manderson (2015: 204) argue, highlights the contradiction between official rhetoric about a socially cohesive Australia and lived experiences of systemic, cultural and interpersonal racism. Similarly, as Harris (2018: 613–4) points out, little attention has been paid to the coexistence of convivial and prejudicial attitudes among young people, and to the ways 'issues of prejudice, structural racism, discrimination or ethnicised power relations' are often overlooked by youth social cohesion initiatives. As Harris (2013) and Herron (2018) show, racism, conflict and conviviality often coexist, and contrasting practices may be deployed strategically and flexibly by young people to navigate hierarchies in relation to ethnicity, gender and sexuality, in ways that complicate binary framings of racism versus conviviality. Harris (2018: 619) argues that a recognition of these complexities may be a starting point for understanding how young people both experience and deploy conflictual intercultural relations in ways that move beyond established frameworks for managing diversity (see also Harris and Herron, 2017). Likewise, Walton and others. (2013) suggest that there is a need for continued qualitative research on the complexities of racism among young Australians.

A synthesis of the literature reviewed above suggests the following possible research directions in relation to CALD and Indigenous youth, racism and discrimination:

- Research on CALD and Indigenous young people's strategies for dealing with racism and discrimination in online settings during and beyond the pandemic

- Better engagement of young people in research on racism to address ambiguities regarding definition

- Research on how young people's contrasting practices of racism, conflict and conviviality are experienced by other young people, and resulting opportunities and barriers to social cohesion

- Research on the barriers and opportunities for reporting and addressing racism in schools and online settings

CRIS Living Lab Roundtables also identified the following research priorities in relation to racism and discrimination, some of which overlap with the above:

- Better reporting tools to collect data

- Consolidation of research to provide a larger overview of issues

- A 'barometer' to see where we are and to work out how to get to the 'ideal state'

- Ethnographic research to provide greater insight into experiences of discrimination to capture missing voices and intersectionality

- Co-designed and co-created evidence

- Data on how government and other research reports are used, actioned and reported to communities

- Data on race, gender and age of leadership teams

- Mapping of how many young people (including those from marginalised backgrounds) work in the mainstream media, and what stories they write

- Research on how mainstream media representations affect (culturally diverse) young people

- Research interviewing journalists, exploring the limitations/constraints they face, and how news cycles and other demands shape what we see

Education

Cultural Diversity and Participation in Education

The majority (88%) of young people aged 15 to 24 are in education and/or employment (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020a). CALD youth are especially well represented in school education: with 'over 95 percent of CALD youth aged 12-17 enrolled in full or part time education…. the rate of enrolment in schooling for the CALD youth population aged 12-17 is higher than other population groups, including the Australia born youth population (93.5 percent of the Australia born youth population aged 12-17 are enrolled in schooling)' (Hugo et al. 2014: 13). Young immigrants from non-English speaking countries are significantly more likely to continue with further study between the ages of 18 – 23 than immigrants from English speaking countries and non-immigrants, according to longitudinal data drawn on by Parasnis and Swan (2020: 530). However, young immigrants' rates of participation in further study are affected by length of settlement. Refugees and humanitarian entrants from new and emerging communities are particularly vulnerable to interruptions to education due to financial and housing insecurity, and limited recognition of prior qualifications (FECCA 2018: 6). The African Australian Multicultural Employment and Youth Services, for example, notes that African migrant youth have had their education opportunities curtailed by forced displacement, lack of schooling opportunities, lack of resources, and pressures to prioritise employment over further education (Ahmed 2017). Despite these challenges, however, younger adult migrants (aged 15 to 24) have comparable rates of non-school qualification (46%) to young females aged 20 to 24 (51%) and young males aged 15–24 (42%) in the overall Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2019).

Other research has identified an under-representation of Indigenous youth in education. The percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents in the 2020 Mission Australia youth survey who were studying full-time (71.1%) was less than the overall percentage of respondents studying full-time (87.5%) (Tiller et al. 2020: 13). In 2016, 65% of Indigenous youth had completed secondary school as their highest qualification, and 42% had a post-school qualification (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2021). Indigenous people are under-represented in tertiary education, with Harris and Prout Quicke (2019) noting that they make up 1.6% of domestic student enrolments, and are four times less likely

to graduate with a bachelor's degree than non-Indigenous Australians. While the 2019 Mission Australia Youth Survey showed that university study was the most popular option indicated by young people following the completion of school (64.8%), only 40.1% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents nominated university study as a preferred option after finishing school (Carlisle et al. 2019: 3). This may indicate the barriers they anticipate, lack of institutional and practical support for these pathways, or discriminatory screening and streaming processes that direct their ambitions away from university study. Furthermore, 42% of Indigenous youth aged 20–25 are not in employment, education or training, compared to 13% of non-Indigenous youth (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018: 33). Young Indigenous Australians aged 15–24 are over-represented among the total youth cohort who are not in education, employment or training, making up 10% of this cohort of youth in 2016 (compared to young people in the same age group overall). Given that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population has a relatively young age structure, with over one-third (36%) under the age of 15[2], these figures provide an indication of the extent of disadvantage and impact of discrimination among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2021).

Unsurprisingly, young people are concerned that quality education is not equally accessible to all Australians (UNICEF 2019). Young people in the UNICEF (2019: 6) study were concerned about the cost of attending schools and universities, and the divide in quality across regional and urban locations. Ninety-two percent of students in the UNICEF (2019: 6) study were 'concerned' about accessing quality education and 55% were 'very concerned'. These concerns are well founded, given that Year 12 completion rates for those under 19 are generally lower for those in remote or very remote locations[3], those who live in low socio-economic areas, and those who are Indigenous or have a disability (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017). However, there are notable gender differences regarding concerns about education. In the Mission Australia survey, 41% of female respondents,

2 This is double the percentage of those aged under 15 who are non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

3 Residents in Australia's capital cities were almost twice as likely to hold a bachelor's degree and 2.5 times more likely to hold a postgraduate degree than residents in regional areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017).

compared to only 21% of male respondents, reported that they were either extremely or very concerned about school or study problems (Tiller et al. 2020: 29).

Experiences of Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Education in Schools

Concerns regarding the quality of young people's education experiences increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. In a recent Mission Australia Youth Survey (Tiller et al. 2020), education was identified as the top personal issue for young people (34.2%), followed by mental health (17.2%) and COVID-19 (9.3%). Online versus on-site learning has been a key issue in relation to the pandemic, with different policies operating across states and territories (O'Sullivan, Rahamathulla & Pawar 2020: 136), leading to varied experiences of education. Research commissioned by the Australian Government on the effects of remote learning on vulnerable children and young people found that home-based learning was likely to increase anxiety and stress due to increased social isolation. Many families lacked space, experience, time and resources to support home-based learning; and remote learning restricted students' access to school-based health and wellbeing support and intervention (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2021: 17). Many young Australians reported having their education disrupted or stopped completely, with the closure of schools impacting young people's daily structure, ability to cope, and motivation (Marlay, Attenborough & Kutcher 2020). While nearly half of school populations were vulnerable to the effect of remote learning, young people from low socio-economic backgrounds, comprising approximately 20% of school populations, students from remote and rural areas, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, were particularly affected (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2021: 17).

Drane, Vernon and O'Shea (2020: 5) report that the 'speedy global mass movement to online and off-site delivery of education' placed students from low socio-economic backgrounds most at risk of educational disadvantage, exacerbating longstanding socio-economic differences in educational quality and achievement (Edwards & Baxter 2013). Families from low socio-economic backgrounds were more likely to access the internet from mobile-only plans, and were also less likely to own a laptop or desktop computer due to issues of affordability (Marler 2018; Rowsell et al. 2017: 159). These patterns of engagement

with digital technology created disadvantages for students from low socio-economic backgrounds, since smartphones have limited functionality, speed, memory, storage capacity, and access to particular types of content (Mossberger et al. 2012; Napoli & Obar 2014). Thomas and others (2019) also note that mobile plans often have lower download limits which incur additional costs if exceeded. Concerns regarding the digital divide have been addressed unevenly by states and territories, with the Queensland Government deciding to deliver curriculum via television due to poor internet connectivity (Moore 2020). This programming included targeted content to assist parents with homeschooling their children. However, similar infrastructure has not been available in other states and territories. Concerns have also been raised about the expectations placed on parents to become educators, particularly for families that have been impacted by disruptions to employment and financial and psychological distress (Drane, Vernon, & O'Shea 2020: 11). Fifty percent of parents have expressed concern about their children falling behind due to COVID-19 disruptions to learning, with parents in Victoria expressing the least satisfaction with their children's education institution (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2021: 18–19).

Post-Secondary Education and Full Participation

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a damaging effect on the percentage of young people fully engaged in full-time education, full-time employment, or both employment and study. In 2020, the percentage of young people not engaged in any employment or education increased to 12%, from 8% in 2019. This increase was more prominent among young men aged 15 to 24, with 13% neither working or studying in May 2020 – the highest point since the beginning of data collection for this category, in 2004 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020a). However, it is worth noting that females are still less likely than males to be fully engaged from the age of 25 and above. Data on education and work collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2020 shows that while 71.8% of males and 69.8% of females aged 20 to 24 were fully engaged, only 61.7% of females, compared to 77.5% of males, aged 25 to 29 were fully engaged (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020a).

Regarding post-secondary school ambitions, 64% of respondents in the 2020 Mission Australian Youth Survey wanted to go to university after finishing school (Tiller et al. 2020: 4). This is significantly higher than the percentage of young people

actually studying in higher education institutions. Young women are more likely than young men to be studying in higher education institutions such as universities (46% of women compared to 38% of men), while young men are more likely than young women to be studying in TAFE institutions (13% of men compared to 7% of women) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020a). Young women aged 20 to 24 are also more likely than young men to hold non-school qualifications (a certificate, diploma or degree), 51% compared to 42%, and women of any age are more likely to hold a non-school qualification than males (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020a). However, the Government's restructuring of university course fees in 2021, whereby a reduction in government funding to just 7%[4] for management, commerce, arts (excluding languages), humanities, law, economics and communications (Universities Australia 2020) has also been criticised for making study in these disciplines all but unaffordable for students from low socio-economic backgrounds (Visentin 2020). The tertiary sector has also experienced significant upheaval since the beginning of 2020, starting with the closure of Australia's borders, first to China, then eventually all other countries. As a result, many international students have been prevented from either returning to Australia to continue their studies, or arriving to Australia to commence their degrees in person.

A synthesis of the literature reviewed above suggests the following possible research directions in relation to CALD and Indigenous youth and education:

- Research on the social, educational and financial consequences of disruptions to education during the COVID-19 pandemic

- Mapping and evaluation of resources and programs available to bridge digital divides and enhance digital proficiency at the local, state and federal level

- Research on changes to family/inter-generational dynamics in relation to learning and working from home

- Research on the long-term effects of government changes to the education and employment trajectories of

young people, particularly international students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, for example, whether changes to fee structures have led to changes in education ambitions and enrolment in higher education courses.

CRIS Living Lab Roundtables also identified the following research priorities in relation to CALD and Indigenous youth and education:

- Research on the effects of online learning on mental health

- Data on teachers' training and skills in cultural competence

- Mapping of culturally inclusive pedagogies and texts used in schools

- More detailed data on education outcomes linked to students' migration profiles

- How recently arrived and diaspora young people experience the current system across secondary and tertiary sectors

- Research on the similarities and differences in perspectives on what 'works' for different cohorts according to students, teachers, administrators and community groups.

Employment

CALD and Indigenous Youth Un- and Under-Employment

High levels of un- and under-employment are longstanding issues experienced by CALD youth (Hugo et al. 2014: 14), with those from newly arrived communities particularly affected (Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network 2016; Centre for Multicultural Youth 2019; Refugee Council of Australia 2009). Data from the MY Australia Census shows that migrant youth experience great difficulty securing adequate levels of employment, with almost half (49.6%) of participants indicating that they want more work hours. While multicultural young people in the study were highly educated, they experienced higher rates of underemployment than their non-migrant counterparts (2018: ix). Migrant youth in this study identified the following reasons contributing to

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4   The average public-private contribution split was previously 58% public contribution and 42% individual contribution.

difficulty gaining employment: ethnicity of names on resumes, uncertain visa status, lack of relevant social networks, unfamiliarity with job application processes, and difficulties attaining relevant qualifications due to fees associated with migrant visas (Khan et al. 2019: 45; see also Blades-Hamilton 2015; Derous et al. 2016; McFeeter 2014; Sawrikar, Griffiths & Muir 2008). Other barriers to finding sustainable employment include: pre-migration trauma, lack of English language proficiency, lack of experience and confidence, lack of local experience in Australia, discrimination and racism, and family pressures to attain tertiary qualifications (Bansel et al. 2018: 24; Federation of Ethnic Communities Council Australia 2018: 8).

Indigenous youth are also less likely than non-Indigenous youth to be employed, with AIHW and ABS data (2018–2019) showing that only 43% of Indigenous youth aged 15 to 24 were employed, compared to 65% of non-Indigenous youth in the same age category. Mission Australia (2020) research also shows that Indigenous youth (43%) are more likely than non-Indigenous youth (33.8%) to be looking for work (Hall, Fildes, Tiller, Di Nicola & Plummer 2020: 8). Wright and others (2017) note that Indigenous Australians may be more likely to be unemployed due to the greater likelihood of living in remote areas, the younger age profile of Indigenous Australian communities, differential access to educational institutions due to living in remote areas, the effects of trauma, cultural and family responsibilities, and a reluctance among some businesses to employ Indigenous Australians. Generic youth employment services may not meet the needs of Indigenous youth navigating these challenges. Concerns have also been raised about the efficacy of existing support services for CALD youth jobseekers. These include the channelling of CALD youth jobseekers into insecure employment, which disproportionately disadvantages CALD youth by eroding financial security, social connectedness, family and other relationships, skills training, career progression, and ability to meet the costs of day-to-day living (Federation of Ethnic Communities Council Australia 2018: 7–8).

The Federation of Ethnic Communities Council Australia (FECCA) (2018: 7) calls for greater cultural competency among job service providers and better assistance for young people to maximise their future employment prospects. For newly–arrived migrants in particular, FECCA (2019: 2) points out the need for a reconsideration of the Newstart, Youth Allowance and related payments, and the long wait periods involved in accessing these payments that 'inflict unnecessary hardship on vulnerable people'. Other measures suggested include: better education for CALD youth to understand their rights as workers, increased funding for community organisations to help young migrants and refugees transition to life in Australia, increased opportunities for young migrants and refugees to improve their English skills, more equitable hiring practices and efforts to address racism and discrimination by employers, and greater assistance for CALD youth to access housing, transport, health services, child care and community support to promote better education to employment outcomes (Bansel et al. 2018: 7; FECCA 2018: 11). Lack of educational opportunities and labour market marginalisation (Mansouri & Kamp, 2007; McMichael, Nunn, Gifford & Correa-Velez, 2015) continue to seriously affect CALD young people's capacity for social and economic inclusion, albeit with great variation within this group, indicating that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is not appropriate for supporting their diverse needs (VicHealth et al. 2017: 11).

Global Financial Crisis Impacts

For the overall youth population, the labour market for 15 to 24 year-olds has deteriorated significantly since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), which led to a decade of high youth unemployment (Brotherhood of St Laurence 2020). For young people aged 15 to 19, the number of full-time jobs has halved since the GFC (Coates, Cowgill, Chen & Mackey 2020). According to a Foundation for Young Australians (2018) report, young people have faced increasingly significant challenges to finding full—time work, with approximately 50% of 25 year-olds unable to secure full-time employment, despite 60% holding post-secondary school qualifications. In the Youth Action (2018) survey of young people aged 12–25, participants spoke about the difficult of entering the job market, and of the flow-on effects of unemployment for housing, superannuation, standards of living and wellbeing. Issues of workers' rights were also raised, with participants speaking out about worker exploitation, reductions to penalty rates, and the rise of unpaid internships (2018: 20–21).

COVID-19 Impacts

Youth under- and un-employment remained higher than that of the overall population prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and have continued to be negatively affected by protracted lockdowns. Prior to the pandemic, in December 2019, 70.9% of young people aged 12 to 24 were participating in the workforce, while 29.1% were not in the labour force. 40.7% were employed full-time, 47% were employed part-time, while 11.6% were unemployed

(Australian Bureau of Statistics 2019). As the COVID-19 pandemic hit, young people bore the brunt of job losses in industries most affected by lockdowns, including the hospitality, retail, entertainment and tourist industries (Tiller et al. 2020: 23). Unemployment levels rose from 11.6% in February to 16.4% in June for young Australians aged 15 to 24 – higher than the post-GFC peak of 14.4% in 2014 (Brotherhood of St Laurence 2020). Underemployment has also disproportionately affected young people, albeit with notable gender differences. Australian Bureau of Statistics data show that while both young women and men were significantly affected by underemployment during the pandemic (spiking at 17.9% in April 2020), young women were more likely to be casually employed in industries and occupations most affected by COVID-19 lockdowns – retail, accommodation and hospitality. They were also more likely to remain underemployed once lockdown restrictions eased in October 2020, with 20.1% of young women underemployed compared to 16.3% of young men (Brotherhood of St Laurence 2020; Cassells & Duncan 2020). Young women were further more likely to be employed on the frontline as essential workers engaged in health care, social assistance, cleaning, teaching, childcare and aged care, increasing their risk of infection (Cooper & Mosseri 2020).

Issues of under- and un-employment have been compounded for international students in Australia during the pandemic, with options for receiving assistance comparatively fewer than for Australian citizens. On 3 April 2020, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced that 'Australia must focus on its citizens and its residents to ensure that we can maximise the economic supports that we have', adding that 'there is the alternative for them [visitors and international students] to return to their home countries' (Gibson & Moran 2020). Support for Australian citizens was offered predominantly in the form of two payments: JobKeeper and JobSeeker[5] But these forms of support were not available to the majority of international students due to their visa status and employment conditions. Without access to the same 'safety net' as Australian citizens, and with few options for returning to their home countries due to unavailable or expensive flights, or closed borders, international students and other temporary visa holders have largely been left to 'sink or swim' throughout the COVID-19 pandemic

5 The coronavirus supplement was initially $550 per fortnight, dropping to $250 in September and $150 in December 2020. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-11-10/jobseeker-changes-coronavi-rus-supplement-reduction-extension/12868070

(Askola, Forbes-Mewett & Shmihelska 2021: 7–8, 20, 33, 43). Many international students have turned to charities, social services and religious and cultural organisations to meet basic needs during the pandemic (Eddie & Hall 2021). Emerging research suggests that Australia's reputation as a viable destination for international students has been damaged, at least in the short term (Decobert & Lamb 2020; Roe 2020).

Long-Term Risks

The long-term economic, and specifically labour market, effects of the 2020 global pandemic cannot yet be calculated, yet are predicted to disproportionately affect youth. It is expected that young people, women and those from refugee and migrant backgrounds will be additionally disadvantaged (International Labour Organization 2020) by ongoing challenges, including barriers to digital access, an increase in family and community caring responsibilities, and systemic racism (Centre for Multicultural Youth 2020: 5). Youth under- and un-employment have only recently shown signs of recovery from the deleterious economic impact of COVID-19 (Coates, Cowgill, Chen & Mackey 2020). In April 2021, the proportion of all young people aged 15 to 24 who were employed was 61%, compared to 60% when the pandemic hit in March 2020. The unemployment rate in April 2021 was 11%, compared to 12% in March 2020. However, the current unemployment rate of young people remains double that of the whole population, which was 5.5% in April 2021. Similarly, the youth underemployment rate (17%) has remained much higher than that of the whole population, which was 7% in April 2021 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2021).

The disruption of young people's employment due to numerous lockdowns, and their subsequent uptake of low-paid, low-skilled work is also predicted to have a long-term impact on their career development (Wright 2020). In Victoria, research conducted by the Centre for Multicultural Youth on refugee and migrant background youth employment found that of the young people who were working prior to COVID, 38% lost their jobs during the March to April lockdown in 2020, 33% had their hours reduced, and 30% withdrew from the labour market completely (Centre for Multicultural Youth 2020: 6). Research has demonstrated that individuals who enter the labour market during a downturn can experience reduced earnings for up to a decade after graduating from education (Borland 2020; Brotherhood of St Laurence 2020). This 'scarring' effect has been observed following previous recessions,

and is expected to similarly impact the 'corona class' (Organisation Economic Co-operation and Development 2020) of 2020 (Andrews, Deutscher, Hambur & Hansell 2020; Productivity Commission 2020). Additionally, the growth of part-time, casual and insecure employment, rather than full-time employment during the recovery period increases the risk that young people will be underemployed, with insufficient earnings to meet their needs (Brotherhood of St Laurence 2020).

A synthesis of the literature reviewed above suggests the following possible research directions in relation to CALD and Indigenous youth and employment:

- Research on the long-term 'scarring' effects of under- and un-employment during the pandemic

- Research on the flow-on effects of employment scarring to living conditions, including mental health, housing afford-ability and new or exacerbated inequalities in relation to gender, length of settlement and visa status

- Research on changes to career ambitions due to employment disruptions during the pandemic

- Barriers and enablers of employment for CALD and Indigenous youth during the period of recovery from the pandemic.

CRIS Living Lab Roundtables also identified the following research priorities in relation to CALD and Indigenous youth and employment:

- Research capturing stories about the employment of diverse young people, comparing mainstream media depictions and public commentary with stories of everyday experiences, elicited from employment support programs for young people

- Development of measurement scales/ indexes to award/champion those who set a gold standard in supporting young people in employment op-portunities – highlighting the good (reverse public shaming).

Health

Mental Health

Mental health has emerged as a key issue affecting young people in a range of reports, even prior to the pandemic. Prior to 2020, Mission Australia (Carlisle et al. 2019: 2) research showed that mental health had been the top national issue for young people for three years in a row. In 2018, headspace [sic] also reported that nearly one in three (32%) young people aged 12 to 25 experience high or very high levels of psychological stress. This was more than triple the rate (9%) in 2007. Young people aged 18 to 21 experienced the highest rates of stress, at 38%. Rates of psychological distress are also much higher for young women (38%) than young men (26%), and young females were more likely to identify mental health as a key issue in Australia (35% of females compared to 25% of males) (Carlisle et al. 2019). ABS data from 2018 showed that more Australian young people aged 15 to 24 were dying by suicide than by any other cause. Young people at heightened risk of suicide are those who experience poor mental health, are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, are LGBTI, live in a rural or remote area, are in statutory care systems, or have been exposed to suicide (Lifeinmind, n.d.). Indigenous youth have been found to have high rates and levels of psychological distress, with higher levels of suicide and self-harm than non-Indigenous young people, and experience serious disparities in mental health (Dickson et al. 2019). The report on Indigenous Young People's Resilience and Wellbeing (Marriot et al. 2016) found that 'these young people experience high levels of psychosocial distress, racism and the ongoing impacts of social and economic determinants related to colonisation' (Walker et al. 2021: 10).

Research on the prevalence of mental ill-health in Australian refugee and migrant communities is comparatively more fragmented, with a high level of inconsistency in reported rates (Orygen and the Centre for Multicultural Youth 2020: 8). For example, first and second generation refugee and migrant youth have different experiences and needs (such as language proficiency and visa status), requiring greater complexity in policy response (Orygen and the Centre for Multicultural Youth 2020: 13). Further, it is recognised that many refugee and migrant youth experience numerous challenges and stressors, including challenges of settlement, disrupted supported networks, interruptions to education, issues of identity formation, racism and discrimination and pre-migration trauma, contributing to poor mental health and wellbeing outcomes in the form of depression, anxiety and

psychological distress (Priest, Paradies, Trenerry, Troung, Karlsen & Kelly 2013). At the same time, young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds often demonstrate remarkable resilience in the face of adversity (Orygen and the Centre for Multicultural Youth 2020: 4).

COVID-19 Impacts

Recent research suggests that poor mental health among refugee and migrant background youth has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Orygen and the Centre for Multicultural youth (2020: 2) report that multicultural youth have experienced increased levels of racism, hypervigilance and concern about re-engaging in public settings, compared to Anglo-Australian youth. Other research conducted in Victoria also shows that young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds have experienced an increase in family and community caring responsibilities, often with little support, impacting on their ability to practice established coping mechanisms such as engaging in hobbies and spending time with friends. Their mental health issues have been exacerbated by increased family tensions, and the re-traumatising impact of physical confinement which has provoked memories of detention and persecution in their home countries (Couch, Liddy & McDougall 2020). Other specific cohorts that have been more severely affected include young women, LGBTIQA+ youth, young people with pre-existing mental health conditions, unpaid caregivers, and essential workers (Dawel et al. 2020; Tiller et al. 2020: 2; Toh et al. 2021). There are also concerns that Indigenous young people are at greater risk of the mental health impacts of social isolation (Usher et al. 2020). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth aged 15-19 in the Mission Australia Survey reported higher levels of psychological distress (34%) in 2020, compared to non-Indigenous youth (26.2%) (Brennan et al. 2021). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth who experienced psychological distress were also more likely to feel that they were unable to access help due to issues of affordability, transport, limited service provision, and discrimination (Brennan et al. 2021: 48).

In general, young adults in Australia have reported the most significant increase in severe psychological distress from pre-pandemic levels, compared to all age groups (Biddle, Edwards, Gray & Sollis 2020). Young people have experienced disruptions to their freedom, social connection, routine, education, employment, access to counselling and youth centres, and changes to caring responsibilities (Biddle et al. 2020; Connolly 2020; Fisher et al. 2020). They have also reported stress and anxiety about the loss of personal and family income, the health of family members, and the disproportionate emphasis placed on young people not taking COVID health directives seriously (Connolly 2020; Marlay, Attenborough & Kutcher 2020). In 2020, the Mission Australia youth survey identified mental health as the second most important issue affecting young people, with 30.6% of participants identifying mental health as the most important national issue (Tiller et al. 2020). Poor mental health among young people manifests in a range of symptoms including anxiety, depression, substance use, suicidal thoughts and poor sleep (Czeisler et al 2020; Pierce et al. 2020). Significant mental health issues have been reported by Victorians, who, at the time of writing, have endured the longest lockdowns in the world. A study of 1157 Victorians, conducted in September 2020, during Stage 4 Lockdown, found that one in three participants reported anxiety or depressive disorder symptoms; one in five had suicidal thoughts; and one in 10 seriously contemplated committing suicide in the previous 30 days (Czeislder, Wiley, Facer-Childs, Robbins, Weaver, Barger, Czeisler, Howard & Rajaratnam 2021).

Digital and Online Support Services

While concerns about existing youth mental health support services have been raised previously, the pandemic has focused attention on the efficacy of digital and online mental health services. Research on young people's experiences of digital and online health services conducted prior to the pandemic focused on the barriers, opportunities and benefits (Robards, Kang, Steinbeck, Hawke, Han, Sanci, Liew, Kong & Usherwood 2019a: 2). This research found that benefits included greater accessibility for young people living in rural areas, greater flexibility in accessing after-hours care, and more opportunities to find and connect with preferred services (Robards et al. 2019a: 2, 7). Young people who engaged in youth mental health services online found it to be a 'stepping stone' to accessing face-to-face services (Robards et al. 2019a: 11). However, young people also reported numerous barriers to online and digital mental health support services for young people, including cost, especially for young people from low-socio-economic backgrounds, insufficient access to digital technologies, and difficulties and inefficiencies navigating an unfamiliar and fragmented system.

Refugees and older people were more likely to experience language or cultural barriers (Robards, Kang, Luscombe, Sanci, Steinbeck, Jan, Hawke, Kong & Usherwood 2019b: 585), and refugee youth also had the responsibility of navigating

the system on behalf of family members. Young people belonging to multiple marginalised groups – including sexuality and gender-diverse youth, Aboriginal youth, and homeless youth – faced additional barriers, including, stigma, shame, and insufficient support to meet their needs (Robards et al. 2019a: 9–10). Young people in Australia and internationally also report confidentiality concerns as a significant barrier to accessing mental healthcare (Robards et al. 2019b). Research conducted by UNICEF (2019: 5) found that the provision of mental health services online was 'significantly inferior to physical, face-to-face delivery' – a significant finding given the rapid transitioning of health and other services online during the pandemic.

Similar concerns regarding the provision of youth mental health services remain during the pandemic. Research remains in the very early stages, with findings largely limited to existing clients who chose to and are able to access such services. In general, young people who have used digital and online health services during COVID have mostly reported positive experiences, with convenience, flexibility and comfort cited as key advantages (headspace 2020; Nicholas, Bell, Thompson, Valentine, Simsir, Sheppard & Adams 2021). Issues of affordability have been partly alleviated due to the Australian Government's introduction of a $1.1 billion government subsidised telehealth plan, including access to essential health care online (Australian Government Department of Health 2020). However, online mental health services are not suitable or appealing for all young people. Particular groups of concern to clinicians and service providers include young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, young people with disabilities which may limit the capacity to use technology, young people from low socio-economic backgrounds who may experience barriers to accessing digital technologies, and young people with complex or high-risk presentations (Nicholas et al. 2021: 5). Issues of affordability also remain with regard to access to digital technology for disadvantaged groups. For example, Walker and others (2021:1) find that for Indigenous young people, 'Digital technologies and social media contribute to strong cultural identity, enhance connections to community and country and improve mental health, social and emotional well-being outcomes', but serious inequities exist in relation to affordable access. Further research is required to establish how telehealth and other forms of digital support may enhance mental health among diverse young people, and what and for whom telehealth may be suitable for (Nicholas et al. 2021: 6).

Physical Health

The relationship between mental and physical health is another key issue for young Australians, and is included in many policy and program documents addressing youth wellbeing. In the UNICEF Australia Young Ambassador Report (2019), physical health is identified as one of the most significant measures of wellbeing among young people. Ninety-four percent of young people were concerned about health and fitness, with 52% being very concerned. Among the top two activities for young people in the Mission Australia Survey (Carlisle et al. 2019: 5) were sports as a participant (68%) and sports as a spectator (56.3%). In the Youth Action and Australian Research for Children and Youth (2016) survey, young people ranked health as the second most important priority. In particular, respondents were most concerned about mental health, obesity, dental care, body image, and access to health services. For newly arrived CALD youth, sport may foster a sense of belonging and transitioning into communities by enabling migrants and refugees to interact with other young Australians in ways that do not necessarily require the same language proficiencies (Bansel et al. 2018: 21). Research on sport-based youth mentoring in Melbourne has also shown that 'intense, embodied encounters and emotions experienced in team sports can help break down barriers of cultural and religious difference between young people and facilitate experiences of resilience, mutual respect, trust, social inclusion and belonging' (Johns, Grossman & McDonald 2014: 57).

However, while research shows that sport can play a positive role in facilitating physical health, wellbeing and settlement among CALD and refugee communities in Australia (Abur 2016; Rosso & McGrath 2016), racism towards non-White players and normative Whiteness remains an issue among youth sport clubs (Farquharson, Spaaij, Gorman, Jeanes, Lusher & Magee 2018; Fox & Paradies 2019). There are also concerns that sport is sometimes treated as a solution to structural and institutional problems; for example, research on sport-for-development programs for Australian Aboriginal communities to 'offset' the loss of culture language and identity has found that their effectiveness remains limited (Sheppard, Rynne & Willis 2019). While sport may be 'a powerful vehicle for engaging Indigenous Australians in positive outcomes which lead to non-sport outcomes such as education, employment, health and wellbeing' (Commonwealth of Australia 2013: 10), racism is often ignored or trivialised by sports organisations that lack Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in leadership positions (Morgan &

Wilk 2021: 18–19). Sheppard, Rynne & Willis (2021: 41) also note that top-down approaches to sport programs that target marginalised youth in colonial contexts overlook the use of sport as a tool by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and groups themselves to promote self-determination, and counteract the effects of colonisation.

A synthesis of the literature reviewed above suggests the following possible research directions in relation to CALD and Indigenous youth and health:

- Barriers and enablers of accessing online mental health services during the pandemic

- New forms of mental health support (for example, online communities, new hobbies/interests) that may have emerged during the pandemic due to issues of affordability/accessibility in relation to professional support

- Mapping and evaluation of free/affordable mental health services and their availability to different cohorts

- The effects of 'lockdown' and reduced physical activity/participation in sport on mental health, social inclusion, belonging, identity development and settlement.

CRIS Living Lab Roundtables also identified the following research priorities in relation to CALD and Indigenous youth and (mental) health:

- Community consultations with young people who access or try to access youth mental health services

- Youth-created video series of youth experiences of mental health that are engaging and relatable

- Research on the lived experiences of young people willing to talk about mental health challenges and opportunities

- A youth action-research project that looks at local data, existing programs, mapping and evaluations and trials a range of place-based initiatives.

Concluding Comments

While the above issues have long been important for diverse young people, emerging research suggests that they have all been exacerbated by the pandemic. COVID-19 has also contributed to a reprioritisation of issues, with mental health, discrimination and domestic violence receiving greater attention than in previous years (Tiller et al. 2020: 5, 19). COVID-19 itself might currently be considered an important issue affecting young people, despite initial commentary focusing more attention on the health impacts to older people (Churchill 2020: 784). In the most recent Mission Australia Youth Survey, COVID-19 was identified as the second most important issue for young people, after equity and discrimination (Tiller et al. 2020: 2). At the time of writing, greater awareness about the susceptibility and hospitalisation rates of young people, particularly young workers, have partially reframed public narratives about young people as largely immune to the COVID-19 virus, leading to establishment of mass vaccination hubs for all Australians aged 18 and over in late July 2021, approval of vaccines for ages 16+ in August, with ages 12+ to become eligible soon after (previously the majority of Australians aged under 40 were ineligible for the vaccine due to the government approach of rolling out the vaccine by descending age group) (Miller 2021). Recognising the disproportionate consequences of COVID-19 for young people – and the significant role played by young people during the pandemic as essential workers, cultural and digital interlocutors, caregivers, providers and innovators – youth sector and other organisations have called for governments to engage diverse young people as equal partners in pandemic recovery (Connolly 2020; Couch et al. 2020; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2020).

As the discussion above outlines, young Australians face many ongoing challenges to full and active participation in adult life in relation to discrimination and racism, education, employment, and health. These challenges are experienced most acutely by young people who are minoritised in complex and intersecting ways on the basis of ethnicity, religion, citizenship status, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status and location, and have been exacerbated in a COVID-19 context. Scholarship highlights the importance of recognising the interconnectedness of challenges and opportunities for intervention, considering young people as part of communities with significant strengths, yet also recognising and addressing ongoing discrimination, lack of resources and structural inequalities. This report has outlined the key elements of the four issues identified as most pressing for young people today: discrimination and racism, education, employment, and health. It has highlighted the literature and synthesised the data in relation to these issues and young people's concerns about them, to provide the foundation for a research and program agenda for work with diverse young people in a digital age.

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Deakin University
221 Burwood Highway
Burwood VIC 3125
Australia

Contact
info@crisconsortium.org
crisconsortium.org