Social Cohesion and Participation in a Digital Age for Diverse Young Australians

A Literature Review Report

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Youth, Diversity and Wellbeing in a Digital Age Stream
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.About this Report

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

With thanks to the following individuals who assisted with the organisation and co-facilitation of the Living Lab roundtables: Aiya Idris, Alex Lee, Alison Baker, Amanda Keddie, Anna Halafoff, David Cao, Edmee Kenny, Ezatullah Eiwaz Ali, Gemma Minuz, Hiruni Walimunige, Komal Grewal, Liam Magee, Phuong Nguyen, Sherene Idriss, and Vivian Gerrand.

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 and 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 and 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 and 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 and 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 and 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 and 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 and McDougall 2021; Grills and 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 and Wright 2015; Powell and 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 and Plummer 2019; MYAN 2019; Third, Bellerose, Dawkins, Keltie and 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 and 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 and 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 and 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.

Key Findings

This report summarises key findings from a literature review on diverse young Australians aged 12-25 and cohesion, participation and digital life. Young Australians are a highly culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse population. They contribute significantly to the socially cohesive nature of Australian society, and have positive attitudes towards difference, immigration, multiculturalism and constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians, especially when compared with older cohorts. However, diverse young Australians face considerable challenges, as well as opportunities, in relation to social cohesion and participation in a digital age. This report's key findings are:

- discrimination and racism are the most significant causes of a loss of a sense of social cohesion, belonging, and social and civic wellbeing, but:
- diverse young people have under-recognised competencies in contributing to social cohesion and civic life by drawing on their own multiple identifications and cultural resources
- minoritised and marginalised young people are often excluded from formal mechanisms for participation and having a voice, but:
- they are driving new modes of individualised, informal, creative and globally aware participation
- digital technology, the internet and social media are increasingly important to diverse young people's wellbeing and participation, but:
- young people's digital inclusion and capacity for digital citizenship is still shaped by social and economic inequalities.

Youth Diversity in Australia – An Overview

Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Diversity of Australian Youth

According to the most recent Australian Census statistics, there were nearly 3 million[1] young people aged 15-24 years old in Australia, representing approximately one eighth of the population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017a). According to a recent Scanlon Foundation (Markus 2017) report, the percentage of young Australians aged 12 to 25 is predicted to rise by 50% by 2050. Young Australians, like Australians in general, are very culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse. Around 49% of the Australian population is born overseas or has one parent born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017b). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, population growth was driven primarily by overseas migration, however from 2020-2021, population growth was almost entirely due to natural increase, while overseas migration decreased for the first time since 1946 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021a).

Among young people aged 12 to 24 in 2016, just under half were either first or second generation migrants, 25% were Australian born with at least one parent born overseas, and 20% were themselves born overseas (VicHealth, Data 61, CSIRO and MYAN 2017). Among young people, the percentage born overseas increases from the 20 to 24 age group upwards due to the high number of international students studying in Australia, while those born in Australia dominate the younger age groups (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021b). The CALD youth population overall is growing at a faster rate compared to the total population in this age group (Hugo et al. 2014). 5% of the Australian youth population (aged 10-24), or about 1 in every 20 young people, is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018: 3), and these Indigenous young people are also a highly culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse population.

In terms of religious diversity, the most recent census data shows that 52.1% of Australians identified as Christian, 30.1% with no religion, 2.6% as Muslim, 2.4% as Buddhist, 1.9% as Sikh, and 0.4% as Jewish in 2016. The most significant changes to note here are the decline in Christianity from 88% in 1966 to 52% in 2016, the increase in religions other than Christianity from 2.6% in 1991 to 8.2% in 2016, and the increase in 'no religion' from 0.8% to 30.1% over the same time period (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017c). 'Millenials' aged 20 to 34 represented the largest age group identifying with no religion (38.3% of millennials), Hinduism (3.6%), and Buddhism (3%), while 'Gen Zs' aged 0 to 19 were the largest age group identifying as Pentecostal (3.8%), Muslim (3.8%) and Sikh (2.2%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017c). Recent research on religion among Gen Z teens in Australia has also identified other nuances of youth religiosity, with Gen Zs falling into six categories indicating varying levels of engagement with religion and spirituality (Singleton, Rasmussen, Halafoff and Bouma 2019).

Young people are not only diverse themselves; they also have positive views of diversity. According to Scanlon Foundation research, young people aged 18 to 24 have the most positive attitudes towards immigration, multiculturalism and diversity, with 73% holding positive views (Markus 2020: 107). 96% of 18-24 year-olds also agreed with the statement: 'Multiculturalism has been good for Australia', compared to 73% of 75+ year-olds. Young adults also showed high levels of support for the statement: 'Immigration from many different countries makes Australia stronger', with 84% of 18-24 year-olds agreeing with this statement, compared to 63% of 75+ year-olds (Markus 2020: 107). Migrant and refugee youth in Australia report their appreciation of the services, support and social activities provided to multicultural youth, and express a desire to improve their English language skills, attain employment and build a life in Australia (Bansel, Denson, Keltie, Moody and Theakstone 2016: 6). Young people have very positive attitudes towards constitutional recognition of Indigenous people (ANUpoll, 2014).

Regarding religious diversity, 91% of Gen Z teens from the AGZ study agreed that 'Having people of many different faiths makes Australia a better place to live'; 88% believed that religious groups should be free to practice their religion the way they want; and 74% had a positive attitude towards

1 AIHW estimates that there are now 3.3 million young Australians aged 15-24 (AIHW 2020) https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/health-of-young-people

Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism (Singleton et al. 2019: 3, 11)[2]. The same study also found that while most Gen Zs do not identify with a religion, many are interested in Eastern spiritual practices and beliefs such as reincarnation, karma, meditation, and yoga (2019: 6-7). There was also strong support among Gen Z teens for marriage equality, with 83% supporting it, compared to 62% of the adult population, (2019: 17)[3]. Most participants did not support religious exemptions for schools to discriminate in relation to hiring/firing staff on the basis of religious beliefs, and applying religious teachings to determine how issues of gender and sexuality is taught in schools (2019: 19). At the same time, young Australians are more likely to hold negative views towards Christianity than older Australians, with 28% of Scanlon Foundation survey respondents aged 18-24 holding negative views towards Christians in November 2020, potentially reflecting lower levels of Christian identification amongst young people (32% of 18-24 year-olds, compared to 72-83% of 75+ year-olds) (Markus 2020: 104).

Given the extent and nature of diversity amongst young Australians, questions of social cohesion, belonging, civic participation and inclusion have been prominent in research, program and policy agendas. Social cohesion has emerged as one of the most important issues for Australian society and young people's role within it.

Youth, Diversity and Social Cohesion

What is Social Cohesion?

Social cohesion is a concept that has been well-established in academic work, and has a more recent history in the policy context. An interest in the establishment and maintenance of social cohesion in society has grown since the mid-1990s, in the context of globalisation, increasing migration flows and culturally diversifying populations, and concerns about political stability, civil unrest and terrorism (Harris 2010; Vasta 2013). Social cohesion is a guiding principle underscoring Australian multiculturalism. The *Scanlon Foundation-Monash University Social Cohesion Project* (Markus 2015: 12) outlines three common elements in definitions of social cohesion:

1. Shared vision: that is, it requires universal values, mutual respect and common aspirations or a shared identity of some sort;

2. A property of a group or community: it is evident in well-functioning groups that have shared responsibilities, goals and a willingness to cooperate;

3. A process: it is an ongoing process of achieving social harmony rather than an outcome.

Social cohesion is fundamentally about shared values, a common purpose in society, and strong sense of belonging (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2015: 12). Leading Australian migration scholar Castles outlines that:

> A cohesive society is a peaceful one, without high rates of crime or social disorder. In addition, it may be marked by a fair degree of consensus on basic values and the mode of government. Finally, one could add such aspects as willingness to help others and feelings of belonging together (Castles, 1999: 37).

By these measures, Australia is a stable and highly cohesive society. This high level of social cohesion might be understood by unpacking the complementarity of social cohesion with multiculturalism in Australia. According to the Australian Human Rights Commission, 'multiculturalism has been an important element in the making of modern Australia, and has been critical to fostering social cohesion and inclusion' (Triggs 2014). National social cohesion surveys undertaken over the last 20 years have shown that there is popular support for multiculturalism, and that this is longstanding (Markus 2015; see also Kamp et al. 2017). The *Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion* measures social cohesion in the

2 This is similar to the UNICEF Australia (2019: 5) finding that a high percentage of young people (79%) consider themselves to have a 'good' or 'neutral' connection with culture, religion, spiritual belief or practices.

3 Corresponding figures for those aged 65 and older with a school education, trade or apprenticeship were 27%, 54% and 77% respectively.

Australian community in five domains: belonging, worth, social justice and equity, participation, and acceptance and rejection (legitimacy). The surveys, conducted since 2007, establish high levels of social cohesion in Australia over time. Further, since 1980, Australia has consistently scored higher than any other rated nation on the Multiculturalism Policy Index (Banting and Kymlicka 2013), and multiculturalism has been bipartisan policy since its inception in the 1970s.

Young People as Enablers of Social Cohesion

In many ways Australian youth are at the forefront of this multicultural success story. They are the most culturally diverse grouping of the Australian population, and are those most likely to claim hybrid identifications (Ang et al. 2006), to be most deeply engaged in intercultural mixing (Ang et al. 2006; Collins et al. 2011; Harris 2013), to have higher rates of acceptance of migration and diversity (Kamp et al. 2017), and to demonstrate everyday cosmopolitan competencies (Harris 2013; Herron 2018; Collins et al. 2011). Young people with a university education (nearly 40% of young Australians) are particularly supportive of migration and diversity. As the Scanlon Social Cohesion research finds (Markus 2018: 48), 'A notable feature of highly educated young adults is the very low level of agreement with the propositions that immigrants increase crime (7%), that the immigration intake is too high (7%), that immigrants do not bring new ideas (2%), and are not good for the economy (1%)'.

Young people often have multiple personal connections with nations and places beyond Australia owing to their own cultural heritages, and navigate transnational, translocal and national senses of belonging and identity (Ang et al. 2006; Collins et al. 2011; Harris, 2013). Such transnational connections have sometimes been problematized for producing 'bonding' capital within ethnic communities as opposed to 'bridging' capital that connects people across difference (Putnam, 2000). However, the literature reviewed for this report challenges this assumption, showing that transnational connections strengthen young people's wellbeing, sense of cultural identity and belonging, and participation (Harris and Johns, 2020; Leurs, 2015; Baldassar, Kilkey, Merla and Wilding 2016). Australian youth are also increasingly transnationally mobile, especially to pursue opportunities for education, work and cultural connection. They have strong aspirations for mobility and global citizenship competencies as they are aware they have to compete in a global labour market (Robertson, Harris and Baldassar, 2018; Skrbis et al. 2014; Wyn 2015).

Young People and Challenges to Social Cohesion

While Australia rates highly on social cohesion measures, and young people are often drivers of inclusion, intercultural and transnational connection, and cosmopolitan outlooks, the literature identifies key factors that threaten to disrupt social cohesion if not addressed within policy and programmes. These include the problems of limited intercultural contact, reduced support and capacity for culture maintenance, racism, and lack of promotion of diversity and pluralism (Dandy and Pe-Pua, 2013), as well as rising extremism and polarisation in the public sphere, especially in its digital forms (Aly, Macdonald, Jarvis and Chen 2016; Conway 2017). For all young people, racism and discrimination are major threats to social cohesion as well as having a direct impact on the lived experience of CALD, migrant and refugee background and Indigenous youth, affecting their wellbeing and civic and social participation (Blades-Hamilton 2015: 12; Priest et al. 2011; Paradies 2018). As noted in the *CALD Youth Census*: "Cultural diversity provides Australia with a vibrant society and a number of advantages; however, children and young people from CALD backgrounds may face a number of issues that make them a vulnerable social group" (Hugo et al. 2014: 16).

Dandy and Pe-Pua's (2013) report on factors that enhance or disrupt social cohesion identifies some key areas that are particularly relevant to young people, including cultural awareness, community spaces and contact; access to social and economic opportunities and resources; and opportunities for mentoring/leadership (including media training and engagement). For CALD youth in particular, opportunities for leadership and advocacy, network building and employment are significant enablers of social cohesion and participation (Blades-Hamilton, 2015). The Victorian Multicultural Commission (2015: 12) also highlights the importance of engaging young people from diverse backgrounds in measures to strengthen social cohesion. The consistent finding across the literature is that, for youth, discrimination and racism are the most significant causes of a loss of a sense of social cohesion and local belonging

(Blades-Hamilton 2015; Mansouri, Jenkins, Morgan and Taouk 2009; Francis and Cornfoot 2007) and also contribute to poor mental health (VicHealth 2007: 11).

An emerging field of investigation is how race, religion and anti-religious sentiment intersect and contribute to social exclusion among C(R)ALD youth, including and beyond more commonly documented accounts of discrimination experienced by Arab and Muslim youth (Mansouri and Wood 2008; Noble 2008; Poynting and Mason 2007). Addressing social exclusion that derives from intersections of ethnicity, religion and anti-religious sentiment may be particularly pertinent for C(R)ALD youth, given that ABS statistics show higher levels of religiosity among overseas-born youth, compared to their Australian-born counterparts (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017c). However, despite a steep rise in non-religious identification in the most recent Australian census, with 39% of young adults aged 18 to 34 reporting no religious affiliation in 2016 (2017c), research on social exclusion among religiously-identifying young Australians, particularly those from CRALD backgrounds, remains scant.

Many researchers, however, note young people's own competencies in contributing to social cohesion by flexibly drawing on their own multiple identifications and cultural resources and contributing to the rich social fabric of Australian society in the process, even while noting unique challenges facing some groups of young people (such as those who are newly arrived and/or of refugee background). For example, Liddy (2011, p. 6) notes that:

> Multicultural young people often develop and negotiate complex notions of identity that are flexible and dynamic, by juggling the intersection between, and influences of, family, cultural and faith communities, peers, technology, and the broader society. For some young people this 'juggle' becomes a valuable skill, and is integral to a strong sense of belonging and economic and social participation in Australian society. For others, particularly newly arrived young people, it can be experienced as an enormous pressure in addition to particular barriers they may face in accessing services and opportunities. These barriers include language, culture, unfamiliarity with Australian systems and processes, racism, and discrimination. These factors can place newly-arrived young people at social and economic disadvantage within Australian society.

Hutchinson and Dorsett (2012) highlight the 'enormous strength and resilience' of refugees settling into Australia, noting that while refugees may face significant language barriers, racism, discrimination and other hardships throughout the settlement process, they also possess many strengths that are often overlooked in practice settings. According to practitioners, it is important to move beyond a deficit framework for working with refugees (Papadopoulos 2001) and individualised notions of resilience that place blame on individuals for their current circumstances (Pulvirenti and Mason 2011). Additionally, an overemphasis on trauma 'at the expense of resilience and coping strengths may in fact contribute to or prolong the alienation of refugee people and impede their inclusion into Australian communities' (Hutchinson and Dorsett 2012: 56).

Implicit in discussions about youth, diversity and social cohesion is consideration of the conditions, opportunities and mechanisms for young people to actively engage in civic and political life. Debate about youth participation increasingly focuses on new modes of engagement and the diversification of participatory practices and networks.

Youth, Diversity and Participation

Debates about Youth Participation and 'Civics Deficit'

From the 1990s onwards there has been an explosion of interest and concern regarding young people's participatory citizenship. Research and debates from this time onwards have frequently identified a 'civics deficit'; namely that young people are not sufficiently engaged with politics and are not well informed about the role of citizens (see, for example, Furlong and Cartmel 2007; Harris 2009; Keeter et al. 2002; Torney-Purta et al. 2001). Accordingly, young people have been framed as particularly 'apolitical', even threatening the

foundations of democratic societies (Haigh, Murcia and Norris 2013). In general terms it has been found that young people are less likely than older people to be interested in formal politics, to vote, to affiliate with a political party or to exhibit high levels of political knowledge (Harris, Wyn and Younes, 2010; Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). Marginalised youth, in particular, migrants, refugees, Indigenous young people, and religious minorities, are often framed as 'disengaged' or 'suspect' citizens, and targeted by government programs and policies that aim to enhance their participation (Harris 2013; Johns, Mansouri and Lobo 2015).

At the same time, the 'civics deficit' thesis itself is increasingly being critiqued, with renewed attention to the wider context of socio-economic change in which this so-called deficit is situated. Academic scholarship draws attention to the different ways participation is perceived by adults and young people, and how young people are discursively framed, managed and/or excluded (Harris 2016; Vromen 2003; Vromen and Collin 2010; Collin 2015) and the diverse ways young people themselves define and engage in civic and political activities that extend beyond formal and institutionalised activities such as being informed about political knowledge and institutions, voting in an election, writing letters to politicians, and participating in election campaigns (Arvanitakis and Sidoti 2011: 137; Galei 2016: 4). Youth participation may furthermore be shaped by family, cultural and religious expectations in ways that unsettle 'conventional' understandings of participation (Mansouri and Kirpitchenko 2016).

This section reviews recent scholarship on youth participation in Australia, identifying recent and emerging trends in participation through DIY or individualised, self-actualising, critical, informal, everyday, collective and issues-based action. It reviews literature that documents shifts to more individualised modes of engagement, the significance of 'everyday' and cultural forms of participatory practice, the role of both digital and global domains as spheres for youth participation, and mechanisms through which young people work in partnership with organisations and engage in other initiatives to contribute collaboratively to social change processes. It takes note of critical scholarship that cautions against adopting binary framings of youth participation – as *either* formal/informal, apathetic/activist, online/offline, and individual/collective, and identifies the need for more nuanced analyses that recognise the diverse ways young people contribute to social cohesion and wellbeing through civic and political participatory practices.

New Socio-Economic Conditions and Youth Participation

Within youth citizenship studies there have been efforts to understand how new socio-economic conditions of risk, insecurity and especially individualisation (Bauman 2001; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001) have transformed the nature of political identities and activities for young people, especially as citizenship is no longer linked to an old model of transition (Harris, Wyn and Younes 2010). Participation, belonging, recognition and rights have typically been seen as part of the conventional transition-to-adulthood story: young people become effective, active and legitimate members of society as they move along structured pathways to adulthood and reach certain milestones. Today, however, diverse and more complex transition patterns are challenging the conventional notion of a clear-cut entry point to 'adulthood' (Wyn 2013: 60). Traditional sources of collective identity such as family, place and work have also weakened in relevance (Furlong and Cartmel 2007: 3, Wyn 2013). The shift from industrial to post-industrial society has changed the nature of work, with the widespread emergence of flexible and precarious employment in place of a career for life (Wyn 2013: 59). There has been an extension of the period for which youth are dependent on their families and a reduction in welfare support. This has an impact on young people's capacity for economic security, which is a conventional pillar of citizenship, but more broadly results in an inability to achieve the stability associated with adulthood in previous generations (Wyn 2013: 61).

In their comprehensive overview of the field, Furlong and Cartmel (2007) demonstrate how these broad socio-economic changes affect youth political participation, illustrating how individualization within education and work has led to weaker mechanisms of political socialization, and how job insecurity and neo-liberal ideology alienate young people from the political system and from a sense of reciprocal relationship with the state. The challenges of establishing security in the new economy also emerges as a significant barrier to participation, as young people's overwhelming priority is to take charge of their livelihoods and to focus on study and work (Andres and Wyn 2010; Lagos and Rose 1999). These developments have also had an impact on young people's approaches to formal politics, as there is reduced faith in the state's capacity to protect their rights. They feel that politicians do not seem to listen to their

concerns, and they find themselves increasingly targeted by civic education campaigns that construct them as inadequate citizens (see Bessant, 2003; 2004; Harris 2006; Harris, Wyn and Younes 2010), or only ever citizens-in-the-making.

Some scholars argue that young people's political participation is declining because disengagement is a logical response to these conditions. Others suggest that 'disengagement' must be more carefully analysed as disengagement from conventional or formal politics, not wholesale disengagement from activity in the public sphere for social change or expression of political voice. Less narrow definitions of 'participation', are proposed to capture these practices, for example Vromen's (2003: 82–3) widely influential characterisation of participation as 'acts that can occur, either individually or collectively, that are intrinsically concerned with shaping the society that we want to live in'. Smith et al. (2005: 441) suggest that a broad interpretation of participation is necessary to capture young people's citizenship practices today, because they are more likely to be involved in informal socially constructive activity than formal, organized types of participation (see also Roker 2008), as we explore further in the next section.

Changing Forms of Youth Participation

In addition to noting that analyses of youth participation increasingly respond to new socio-economic conditions, Vromen (2017: 11) identifies key trends in scholarship on emerging forms of participation among young people, including a focus on informal and collective action that transcends state borders; an acknowledgement of everyday and ad-hoc participation, rather than long-term allegiance to a particular party, and recognition of individualised civic and political practice. Participation that involves rapid, collective mobilisation of citizens in response to issues represents a movement away from state-led political processes from citizens who may feel excluded from the state, and/or desire a greater say in the decisions affecting their lives (Bang 2005; Dalton 2008). Targets are more likely to include transnational corporate actors and other civil society actors rather than governments. This is because of the expanding space where young people feel a sense of civic duty. There is growing research interest in the global dimensions of young people's civic and political responsibility and belonging. For example, research shows that cosmopolitan beliefs and practices are more evident amongst younger generations (Norris 2001; Phillips and Smith 2008). Young people are to some extent those who are driving a shift from more traditional, fixed, monocultural ideas about nationality and belonging to more flexible forms of citizenship (Ang et al. 2006; Maira 2009). Such cosmopolitanism may be fragile or changeable, however, and can be tested by economic crisis, political conflict, and shaped by increasing polarisation of the public sphere.

Global concerns, if not always cosmopolitan ethics, do however drive many young people. Harris and Wyn's (2009) research with young Australians has found that while they are most personally concerned about doing well in their studies and getting a good job, their highest rated national and international concerns are war, terrorism, the environment and poverty. Global social wellbeing is more important to young Australians than it is to an older generation (Devinney et al. 2012), and international politics and NGOs engage them more than domestic issues and party politics (Huntley 2006). They place a high value on human rights (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission [HREOC] 2005), are concerned about global poverty and the growing gap between rich and poor (Huntley 2006).

Scholars also argue for the recognition of the actions of loosely-connected actors who bypass formal networked structures, and respond in an ad-hoc way to specific issues and causes, such as donating blood, renovating a park, or participating in a protest (Vromen 2017: 15). Micheletti (2015) describes a new 'individualised collective action', whereby citizens may become involved in collective issues and causes in an everyday, hands-on way, such as by boycotting products, starting online petitions, and purchasing FairTrade coffee (Vromen 2017: 24). Vinken (2005: 155) describes this as a form of youth citizenship characterised by 'dynamic identities, open, weak-tie relationships and more fluid, short-lived commitments in informal permeable institutions and associations'.

There is evidence that less formal and organized forms of participation have become increasingly common amongst young people, who are turning away from classic civic associations and political institutions, and instead creating informal, short-term and individualised forms of civic and political identification and participation (see Harris 2005; Harris and Roose 2014; Bang 2004; Bennett 2012; Vinken 2007; Vromen 2003). This has been reflected in the nature of associations that are attractive to young people. There has been a

diversification of the kinds of civic organisations that young people participate in, including youth-led organisations such as the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, Oaktree and SeedMob, youth-specific advocacy organisations such as the Centre for Multicultural Youth, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network and Koorie Youth Council, as well as 'hybrids' such as the Foundation for Young Australians. A range of intermediary organisations support young people's civic engagements, enabling young people to set agendas, advise, lead and co-create initiatives and policy responses in a wide range of areas from research to service provision. These exist on a spectrum from 'managed' to 'autonomous' (Coleman 2008; Collin 2015) but nevertheless continue to evolve in relation to young people's preferences and perspectives.

As Bennett (2012: 22) argues, 'The interesting difference in today's participation landscape is that widespread social fragmentation has produced individuation as the modal social condition in postindustrial democracies, particularly among younger generations'. Different theorists have variously described this individuated political subjectivity amongst youth as a new biography of citizenship (Vinken 2005: 155); as 'DIY citizenship' (Harris 1999; Harris 2005; Harris and Roose 2014), or as a form of 'self-actualising' citizenship (Bennett 2003: 3), meaning citizenship paths that are defined through individually expressive personal action frames and transient, issue-based engagements (Bennett 2012: 20). Bang (2004: 18) characterises these new kinds of political actors as 'everyday makers', meaning those who are less engaged with the state and other formal sites of traditional citizenship activity and more focused on creating local networks and enacting change in ways that are 'individualistic, more project oriented, more 'on' and 'off' and 'hit' and 'run' ... more pleasure oriented and more fun-seeking'. As Jeffrey and Dyson (2016) argue, a personalised form of pre-figurative politics may play a role in this citizenship activity: that is, efforts to model a better future in the present by 'being the change you want' (Jeffrey and Dyson, 2016). In this framework, political action is not about change 'as a horizon event but as the cumulative precipitate of action in the present' (Jeffrey and Dyson 2016).

Such fluid, often unstructured, localised, immediate and personally relevant forms of political participation are particularly evident amongst youth who do not fit the profile of either the seriously disengaged or the highly involved activist. For example, Harris and Wyn (2008) have found that the 'excluded middle' of the majority of young Australians who are neither activist nor apathetic enact forms of participation shaped by local social and peer connections and resources and expressed in everyday, informal ways. Vromen and Collin (2010) draw on Bang's concept of 'everyday makers' to investigate 'ordinary youth' who are engaged in individualized or micro-participation stimulated by local interests. They argue that 'young people see the greatest potential in everyday issues-based, localized and youth-led processes that are culturally relevant and integrated into young people's lives' (Vromen and Collin 2010: 109). Some research suggests that this kind of everyday, ad hoc engagement is especially important to marginalised youth, as they may struggle to have their voices heard in more formal political spaces (Smith et al. 2005; Roker 2008; O'Toole and Gale 2009).

Participation Strategies of Marginalised and Minoritised Youth

Capturing the ways that everyday youth cultural and social life shapes citizenship may be especially important in understanding participatory strategies of those who are marginalised from mainstream politics. For example, Harris and Wyn's (2010) research has highlighted that young women have higher levels of concern regarding social and political issues, and are more politically active, broadly defined, but also feel more excluded from conventional modes of participation, and hence may seek alternative strategies. Young people's own intimate networks of friends and family take on a special importance in cultivating connections, engagement, opportunities for deliberation and development of competencies. As Roker (2008) notes, young people become civically engaged primarily through family and friends. Informal friendship networks are particularly important sources of support for CALD youth in establishing participation (Khoo 2009). Young people's preference for political discussion within personal networks and spaces of trust and belonging is also evident. Yeung et al. (2012: 77) note how discussion in personal familial and social networks can articulate into 'citizen communication networks' where young people connect more widely, debate, and take action on social and political issues.

There is also evidence that the creation of spaces where 'ethics and aesthetics meet' (Stephenson 2010: 11) is especially valuable to minoritized youth. For example, research shows how young Muslims

in Australia and elsewhere are working within the domains of leisure, consumption and socio-religious peer communities, drawing upon creative skills and aesthetic expressions to articulate social concerns, engage publicly, achieve recognition and forge a sense of community and belonging (Harris and Roose 2014; Parker and Nilan 2013). These practices of political and civic socialisation and participation have mostly played out through local, informal initiatives, such as radio shows, fashion design groups, music and theatre activities, sporting events, blogs, and social media and web-based activities (Madkhul 2007: 27). Further, in multicultural contexts with emerging second and third generation migrant voices, we also see shifts away from a traditional focus on ethnic community representation and claim-making to less categorical forms of political identification and expression for younger people enabled by the multiplicity and fluidity of cultural identity. Relatedly, Lam's (2018) research on civic and political participation among Buddhist youth in Australia has found that collectively-oriented civic and political activities take the form of individualised forms of self-work, demonstrating the entwinement of individual and collective participation for these individuals.

Recognising the tensions and connections between individual responsibility and collective action is particularly important when considering the participation of marginalised youth, who may not share equal responsibility in a group setting due to differences in ethnicity, religion, age and socioeconomic status (Lam 2018: 855). This is made clear in research on migrant youth in Australia, for whom pressures to be 'socially engaged' overlook the challenges of settlement in a society which is not only new, but also characterised by a retreat from multiculturalism (Mansouri and Kirpitchenko 2016). Mansouri and Kirpitchenko (2016: 319-20) found that while young migrants of Pacific Islander, African and Arabic backgrounds expressed a strong desire for social engagement, experiences of racism and social exclusion, and formal practices labelling them as 'migrant', 'refugee' or 'CALD' had the effect of marginalising them further, preventing them from voicing their opinions outside their own ethno-cultural communities. Young migrants were also required to contribute to intergenerational care practices, and to balance this alongside giving back to Australian society (Mansouri and Kirpitchenko 2016: 317). Differences between individuals regarding country of origin, cultural group, migration and settlement journeys and support received in Australia further contribute to differences in the ability of individuals to fully participate in society.

The importance of recognizing the diversity of CALD youth needs and participatory practices has been raised in a Youth Policy submission by The Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship (OMAC) (2015: 4), which notes that young people from CALD backgrounds often feel that their voice is seldom heard by community leaders, government and mainstream media outlets. As OMAC (2015: 2) argues, recognising and facilitating participation among CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth is important for enhancing cross-cultural understanding and social cohesion, and second generation migrants play a particularly important role given their relatively higher levels of English language proficiency, educational attainment and social and economic mobility. Similarly, Mansouri and Kirpitchenko (2016: 320) contend that it is important to recognise and promote culturally-specific forms of engagement 'as part of an active citizenship model for migrant youth'.

In summary, studies of contemporary youth participation in conditions of cultural diversity and social change highlight the role of individualised practice, social life, youth cultures, and globalisation in young people's engagement in civic and political life today. In terms of supporting young people as citizens, many have argued that is what is required is a dual strategy that addresses both the marginalization of youth from formal politics and takes seriously their new forms of participatory practice. A critical issue that emerges from this literature is that the place of digital technology in young people's lives cannot be treated as a separate area or topic, but is deeply entwined with questions of participation and social cohesion.

Youth, Digital Life and Diversity

Internet Access and Digital Technology Use

Australian youth live fundamentally digital lives. They are routinely engaged in global and virtual culture and information flows and regularly participate in social and civic networks facilitated by the Internet and digital and mobile media. Like

other young people elsewhere, they live in an interconnected world and inhabit global cultures (Nayak and Kehily, 2008: 24), and their identities and cultural practices are strongly influenced by the global mediated spaces where they can exchange information and connect with other youth.

Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics on Household Use of Information Technology reveal the high level of internet use in households with young people, in relation to levels of access and devices used. While only 86% of households had home internet access in Australia from 2014-2015 and 2016-2017, 97% of households with children aged under 15 had access to the internet over the same time period. Households with children aged under 15 also reported nearly universal use of mobile phones to access the internet (99%), and a higher mean number of devices used to access the internet (7.8) compared to households without children aged under 15 (5.4) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018). On average, Australian teenagers spend 14.4 hours a week online (Office of the eSafety Commission 2021). 94% of Australian teenagers have mobile devices and use these primarily for entertainment, communication, and social media, and 78% of Australian teenagers have one or more social media accounts (Rhodes, 2017). YouTube, Instagram and Facebook are the platforms of choice for Australian Gen Zers (1991-2005) and Millennials (1976-1990), with use skewing away from Facebook and towards Instagram and TikTok for the younger cohort (Office of the eSafety Commissioner 2021; Roy Morgan, 2020).

For all young people, digital technology has become an indispensable part of everyday life, with internet access 'increasingly regarded as an essential service' for participation in education, employment, information, community services, organisation of finances, health and wellbeing, and connecting with family and friends (Thomas, Barraket, Wilson, Cook, Louie, Holcombe-James, Ewing, MacDonald 2018: 5). The implementation of the Australian Government Digital Transformation Strategy (DTS) (2018-2025) is a key illustration of this, as it sets out a series of changes to government services that will be transformed through digital technology. It affects all Australians, however, there are changes to services that will affect young people in particular. These include: changes to the delivery of education, welfare, vocational training, and employment services; the storage and accessibility of data; and the tracking of vocational training qualifications. Additionally, there are changes to services that may affect diverse young people depending on their circumstances, such as the provision of mental health services and online language translation services (Robards et al. 2019).

While young people's engagement with digital technology in many ways precedes the DTS, which is still in the early stages of rollout, a consideration of the DTS offers an opportunity to rethink the challenges and opportunities for young people in a time when engagement with digital technology is increasingly required of young people for full participation in virtually all spheres of life.

Diverse Young People's Experience of the Digital

Of key concern is that internet access is stratified, with younger, wealthier, more educated, employed and urban participants enjoying greater levels of digital inclusion (Thomas et al. 2018: 10). Research on digital engagement in rural Australia has found that those living in remote areas experience a 'double jeopardy of digital disadvantage', whereby inequalities that result from lack of access to digitally-mediated infrastructure are experienced alongside inequalities in education and work (Park 2016). A study of computer use among young people aged 6 to 17 in Western Australia also uncovered differences in the ways young people from higher and lower socio-economic status (SES) neighbourhoods used computers, with those from higher SES neighbourhoods more exposed to school computers, reading and vigorous physical exercise than those from lower SES backgrounds, who were more exposed to mobile phones, televisions and non-academic activities (Harris, Straker and Pollock 2017). As Harris et al. (2017) argue, these differences have the potential to shape future outcomes in academic achievement, employment and health for young people.

Australians who speak a language other than English also have higher levels of digital inclusion than the national average (Thomas et al. 2018: 16), however, Indigenous Australians and women experience lower levels of digital access and ability (2018: 14), as do those with a disability (2018: 15). There are also limitations in access for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, who tend to be underexposed due to issues of affordability. Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds may also have limited skills in using digital technologies, and may have greater vulnerability to bullying, exposure to harmful content, and online marketing (Alam and Imran 2015).

Increasing attention is being paid to the social and digital media experiences of Indigenous and CALD youth in Australia, particularly in relation to issues of social cohesion, resilience and belonging (Kennedy 2020; Carlson and Frazer 2018; Caluya et al. 2018; Harris and Johns 2020). Indigenous and CALD youth in Australia have reported widespread incidences of discrimination online. Research by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner (n.d.) has found that Muslims, asylum seekers, refugees, Asians, Africans and Jewish people are common targets of race-based content online. A study of social media usage among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people found that many participants experienced aggression, racism, accusations of non-Indigeneity and stereotyping on social media (Carlson and Frazer 2018). Kennedy's (2020) research into Indigenous young peoples' experiences of harmful content on social media has 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. Social media also exposes young Indigenous Australians to racism in ways that impact their 'offline' lives (Carlson and Frazer 2018: 4, 12; Kennedy, 2020), where they already report experiencing higher levels of racism than Indigenous people in older age groups (Markwick et al. 2019). Participants also expressed concerns about appropriation, the use of material without permission from Aboriginal people, and the spread of misinformation about Indigenous knowledges and beliefs (Carlson and Frazer 2018: 1, 11-12). This in some cases led participants to be more selective in the ways they identified themselves to others online, due to concerns about safety (2018: 4).

20% of Australian CALD youth have experienced harassment, discrimination or bullying online, and those who are politically active are more likely to report these experiences (Caluya et al. 2018:5; see also Rice et al. 2016; and it is noteworthy that the real figure is likely higher as racism is known to be seriously under-reported). This finding perhaps helps to explain why participants in this study were also less likely to engage in political groups and forums online, than they were to use the Internet to find out information about political parties, elections and social and political issues (2018: 6). Research on CALD youth experiences of digital citizenship has also found that length of settlement affected digital access more than ethnic difference, with newly arrived migrants, refugees and asylum seekers having less access than more established migrant communities, who had similar levels of access to young Australians in general (Caluya et al. 2018: 4). This increases the likelihood of further entrenching inequalities, given that the Internet is an important resource for young people to build bridging social capital (Putnam 2000; Wellman, Haase, Witte and Hampton 2001). The study also identified a significant digital divide between newly arrived CALD parents and their children, with parents often relying heavily on their children for assistance in learning to use online and digital technologies. While differences in digital capacity between CALD youth and their parents could result in intergenerational tensions, they also surfaced parents' needs in relation to Internet and digital technology usage (Caluya 2018: 6, 28).

Research on the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CALD youth also problematizes the assumption that young people are uniformly proficient in the use of digital technologies. Indeed, a 'celebratory' discourse wherein young people are described as 'digital natives' glosses over more persistent differences in access to high quality devices and technological literacies that facilitate social advancement and academic achievement (Van Dijk 2006; Sartori 2016). As Rowsell, Morrell and Alvermann (2017: 159) note, while trends in ownership of mobile devices do not vary significantly along ethnic, racial and socio-economic lines, most school assignments cannot be completed easily using a smartphone. In other words, 'It is certainly not the case that all young people are necessarily tech-savvy or that they are tech-savvy in the same ways and to the same degree' (2017: 161).

Regulation of Young People's Digital Lives

At the same time that young people are challenged by these inequalities, their use of digital technology has been subject to high levels of scrutiny and top-down intervention, at the micro, meso and macro levels. While parents and guardians often serve as the 'gatekeepers' for technology use among school-aged children, providing and/or restricting access to devices, the education system and government are also heavily implicated in shaping young people's use of digital technologies. From the use of digital 'smartboards' and online learning platforms, to anti cyber-bullying programs and more recently, mobile phone bans[4], the

4 In June 2019, the state of Victoria implemented a mobile phone ban in primary schools, with schools in South Australia, New South Wales following suit in the following months.

school environment has become a key site for debates about young people's 'misuse' of digital technology, and their vulnerability to risks such as online predation. The Australian Government has invested heavily into online safety (including counter-terrorism) initiatives, and into developing training resources for educators, communities, corporations, peak sporting organisations, libraries, 'eSafety Providers' and mental health, law enforcement and social workers to promote online safety for young people through the Office of the eSafety Commissioner. Among the issues identified by the eSafety Commissioner are: image-based abuse, cyberbullying, the protection of personal data, unwanted contact, 'digital reputation', online scams and identity theft, illegal and harmful content, 'sextortion', and balancing time online.

These and other measures governing young people's use of online and digital technologies have drawn critique from researchers and other commentators. Third, Collin, Walsh and Black (2019: 222) observe that amidst the plethora of initiatives developed to keep young people safe in the 'digital realm', issues of youth wellbeing and resilience are ciphered through the narrow frame of 'online safety' in ways that often reflect a 'control' paradigm' whereby adults seek to protect, contain and corral young people into acceptable modes of digital practice. Third et al. (2019: 24) point out that efforts to monitor, regulate and control young people's digital practices rest on the presumption that young people need 'the right forms of guidance' from adults and key institutions to become responsible, resilient and technology-literate citizens. These scholars argue that when common approaches to diverse young people's experiences of the digital focus unduly on their potentially risky use of technologies, this may foreclose the radically transformative potential of digital technology to open up new vistas for youth participation (Livingstone and Third 2017: 658; Third and Collin 2016).

In much the same way that discourses of youth citizenship frame young people as 'citizens-in-the-making' who must be socialised and managed through policy to develop good civic and political proclivities, Third and Collin (2016: 45) argue that the thrust of much 'digital citizenship' discourse and policy has been to keep young people away from dangerous, risky and subversive practices, and to channel them towards performing a responsible, restrained and disciplined form of citizenship. Consequently, the challenge of re-imagining young people's digital participation involves finding ways to work with and alongside youth to rethink the generative possibilities of digital citizenship for young people (Third and Collin 2016).

New Opportunities for Digital Participation

Therefore, alternative approaches to digital citizenship are being proposed. As a number of scholars and practitioners observe, it is important to reconsider the ways citizenship is being transformed through young people's engagement with digital technology (Third and Collin 2016). In other words, while understandings of citizenship in the form of rights, duties, obligations and participation (Marshall 1950) have a long history predating the so-called 'digital revolution', technological advancements have created new opportunities for youth civic and political participation to occur in ways that were not previously possible (Johns 2014). Many have advanced the notion of 'digital citizenship' to consider the implications and possibilities for re-conceptualising citizenship and building capacity among young people in relation to their immersion in digital technology (see Isin and Rupert (2015), McCosker, Vivienne and Johns (2016), Third and Collin (2016), Harris and Johns (2020).

While there is considerable debate about the extent to which the Internet has changed young people's citizenship in terms of political participation (see, for example, Castells, 2007; Livingstone et al. 2007; Vromen 2008; Xenos and Bennett, 2007; Bessant 2014), much of this to date has focused on the use of the Internet by political parties or civics education programmes attempting to attract youth, or its role in new activism. For example, digital media has enabled new forms of networked youth activism (Beck and Levy 2013). We also see the emergence of other kinds of networked communities of struggle that also provide space for political expression and social belongings for young people, albeit in much more defensive and destructive ways. The growth of online hate groups and right wing extremism are some examples of this more problematic expression of digital participatory practice (see Harris and Johns 2020).

In addition to this kind of research on how the digital shapes more organised forms of youth politics, there is also work on the importance of the Internet and digital media to 'ordinary' young people as a space of everyday participation (see Coleman 2006: 258). For many 'ordinary' youth, the Internet and digital media are valued as informal places for having a say in the public sphere — a mundane participatory act — because

self-expression and sociality are its guiding principles. Young people are driving new social-media-based forms of political engagement and are more likely than other age groups to engage in such activities (Vromen et al. 2016). Furthermore, there is a strong positive relationship between young people's social media use and political engagement (Xenos et al. 2014; Vromen et al. 2015). As Harris and Johns (2020) note, media theorists have highlighted the role of the Internet in lowering boundaries to youth participation in democratic processes (Coleman et al. 2005), expanding 'public space' (Papacharissi 2009) and shaping more inclusive public spheres. The affordances of digital media, while unequally distributed, have enabled youth inclusion and engagement in a range of civic and social networks in unprecedented ways, and social networking sites in particular have been found to promote youth belonging and social and community connectedness (Collin 2008; Karhilly et al. 2011: 7).

This may be particularly relevant to youth who face exclusion from other more formal mechanisms for civic and political expression. Research on the use of digital technology and social media among CALD, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth and mainstream youth has begun to surface a range of activities that indicate both the enhancement of traditional forms of participation, and the generation of new yet equally productive modes of civic and political participation, resilience and wellbeing. For example, research on young Indigenous Australians' use of social media has found that it offers an invaluable way to express identities, connect with others across vast distances, organise political action, search for employment, find lost family and friends, and seek help in times of need (Carlson and Frazer 2018: 1).

Relatedly, Caluya et al. (2018: 4) have found that 'CALD young people are highly engaged in civic practices through digital technologies, participating across all key domains of citizenship: social, political, cultural and economic life'. The majority use the Internet to inform themselves about elections and party politics, and access information about their rights. Participants in this research also used social media to access information about social and political issues, and to sign online petitions. Other studies of CALD youth have found that they especially use social media to engage civically and politically; for example, Vromen et al. (2016: 522) have found that speaking a language other than English at home is a positive predictor of young Australians' political engagement on Facebook (see also Kenny 2016; Wyn et al. 2017). Digital practices have been found to increase diaspora communities' political agency in addressing inequality and exclusion from traditional political participation and civic engagement, especially for youth (Harris and Roose 2014; Georgiou 2014; Caluya et al. 2018).

The internet and social media also provide young people with alternative platforms for experimenting with civic and political identity, mobilising networks and creating national and international solidarities that reshape political structures, relations and communities locally and around the world (Johns 2014: 77). Digital interconnectedness has been found to increase young people's social capital, facilitate more diverse social networks, and create possibilities for increased intercultural engagement (Culver and Kerr 2014; Leurs and Ponzanesi 2011; Leurs 2015). Maintenance of connections and mobilisation are affordances which are especially relevant to Indigenous youth, as noted by Kennedy (2020), whose research shows the take up of social media for community building and activism in the context where 'geographical distance between individuals, family, and community is common amongst Indigenous peoples. This is particularly the case for young people who are encouraged to travel to attend schooling, university, and gain employment away from their home Country' (Kennedy 2020: 6).

Harris and Johns (2020) note, however, that there remains open debate about how online practices, communities and networks might produce or undermine social cohesion, engender or shift social attitudes, and the potential for the digital to support new kinds of publics or more inclusive and diverse communities versus the tendency for the online world to mirror the offline in its hierarchies and stratifications. They note, for example, that cyber-racism significantly undermines basic human rights and protections and the sense of belonging that participation in social media forums might otherwise encourage (Jakubowicz et al. 2017; Carlson and Fraser 2018), and draw attention to Dunn et al.'s (2012: 76) observation that complaints of Internet-based racism and vilification are growing (see also Kennedy, 2020). As noted above, 'there are concerns that youth are particularly exposed to racism within social media spaces' Caluya et al. (2018: 5).

Moreover, these findings about digital participation might be read against persistent inequalities in levels of digital access for certain CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, and the ongoing impacts of colonisation and dispossession that may indeed be amplified by social and digital media. Walker et al. (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 and social and emotional well-being outcomes', but serious inequities exist in relation to affordable access. Additionally, as Bessant (2016) observes, the promotion of the positive potentials of youth digital citizenship occurs in a political climate which often does not recognise technology-mediated political practices as valid forms of participation, and indeed, increasingly criminalises such practices. Bessant (2016: 924, 930) notes that since 9/11 in particular, Western governments have launched numerous 'anti-terror' legislations as defence strategies, in which activities such as DDoS[5] have come to be framed as 'terrorist' offences and treated as criminal and unlawful. While social and digital media may offer new opportunities for enhancing youth participation, there is a need to consider how different actors define participation and how this shapes both narratives about youth participation, and efforts to scale-up digital citizenship.

5 Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) is an example of digital protest whereby numerous computers inundate a particular site with traffic until it reaches capacity and can no longer process new requests. It typically does not pose a threat to information security (Sauter 2014)

Concluding Comments

This report has outlined the key issues and approaches emerging from a literature review on diverse young Australians and cohesion, participation and digital life. The Youth, Diversity and Wellbeing in a Digital Age research and program stream will build on this work, along with the findings of: Social Issues and Diverse Young Australians: A Review of Key Challenges and Young People's Concerns, on issues and concerns of young people, as well as the outcomes of the Living Labs workshops, to develop its research and program agenda. These combined resources for our work support a proactive, interconnected, strengths-based and capacity building approach to exploring issues of cohesion, participation, and social and civic 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 also seek to move away from interventions that focus on individual young people. We instead aim to pursue the opportunity to leverage the powerful factors of young people's peer and intergenerational relationships, emergent forms of social and civic connection, and new networks and communities in order to undertake youth-centred research and programming to enhance cohesion and participation for diverse young people in a digital age.

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