

Persona Report: Representing diverse young people

VicHealth x Resilience Melbourne

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YLab is imagined by the Foundation for Young Australians

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1. Background

What is YLab?

YLab a social business being incubated within the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) - we put young people at the centre of systemic change, by equipping them to work with organisations on big complex social problems or youth engagement challenges.

FYA is a national non-profit organisation that exists for all young people and focussed on preparing young people for the future of work and social change. You many have come across FYA's New Work Order research series - a series of 5 reports looking at how 3 major drivers of change (automation, collaboration and flexible working) will impact on young people into the future.

FYA has 3 core goals:

1. To create opportunities for young people to learn skills for a changing world.
2. To back young people making a difference in community, industry and public life.
3. To transform the way government, industry and community sectors engage young people, so that young people can rethink the systems that shape the world.

Why we're involved in VicHealth's young people and resilience initiative?

FYA's [New Work Order](#) report series explores how a changing world of work will accelerate the creation of a new type of employee of the future. Consider these shifts and the future of work:

- **Automation:** 70% of young people are currently training or studying for jobs that will be radically affected by technology in the future.
- **Globalisation:** Jobs are becoming increasingly global, with 11% of service jobs likely to be provided from overseas but also new opportunities emerging for the virtual global worker.
- **Flexibility:** The way we work is becoming increasingly flexible, with the average 15 year old predicted to have 17 jobs over 5 different careers throughout their lifetime - often juggling multiple jobs at one time and working from home, cafes, and coworking spaces.

For young people, these shifts are making it harder to find both entry level jobs and stable full-time employment. The impact of this is significant: 1 in 3 young Australians are un or under-employed, and on average it takes them 4.7 years to transition from fulltime education to fulltime employment. This means young people are facing growing volatility and uncertainty in their lives, which is a major risk to their mental wellbeing. VicHealth's Bright Futures (2015) publication shows that "two-thirds of 18-24 year olds have experienced a personal stressor related to mental health and wellbeing" (p.8) and have identified "this rising bar" (ie an increasingly competitive jobs market) as a key megatrend with the potential to impact on youth

mental wellbeing. Resilient Melbourne Strategy (2016) also identified “unemployment, particularly among young people” as one of the stresses impacting the future resilience of Melbourne.

Given this alignment in focus and purpose, YLab, Resilient Melbourne, and VicHealth are proposing a collective impact framework to bring together their complementary networks, expertise, and approaches to work alongside young people to develop and understand what activities will support young people’s resilience whilst transitioning to meaningful employment.

The first step of YLab’s engagement in the collective impact framework was through the development of a series of personas that aim to represent diverse voices of young people on the topic of resilience and employment. This report outlines the importance of personas, the process of persona development for this project and the outcomes.

2. Methodology

Personas

YLab is committed to facilitating a diverse and representative range of voices from young people in decision-making spaces, which is an approach that reflects the diversity within Victoria.

Personas aim to accommodate this goal through the provision of a range of different kinds of young people that the collective impact is likely to interact with. They are also a reflection of some of the co-design processes implemented by YLab, where the service/product user is involved in the development of the final product. The young people involved in the project are assumed to influence the direction of the outcomes by having a seat at the table and having a variety of views represented.

In some cases personas are developed using empathy mapping techniques, however in the case of this project, personas were developed through the thematic amalgamation and extraction of interviews with young people. The personas developed are to be used when thinking of the appropriateness and applicability of ideas proposed by VicHealth, Resilience Melbourne and YLab. They are intended to be used throughout the project development including the Resilience Value Realisation (RVR) Workshops, youth engagement activities, and evaluation processes.

Process

YLab Associates were presented with findings from the Bright Futures report and research on young people and resilience by VicHealth on 14th February 2018. Following this presentation, stronger resilience was outlined as the product of positive mental well-being and positive social relationships. Using these findings, interview questions were constructed to reflect responses from the following areas:

- Social connections
- Mental wellness
- Resilience
- Work
- Living

A copy of the interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

Interviews were conducted with a total of 16 participants (aged between 16 and 27) through face-face conversations, phone calls and digital chat conversations. Responses were recorded and coded for emerging themes from the responses. Given that the interviewers were also young people and had existing relationships with the interviewees, the conversations (although not recorded word-for-word) were reported to be in-depth on most occasions.

3. Results

A summary of five personas formed for the purposes of this project are presented below, with further detail in the following pages.

Summary

Timothy

Background: Architecture, Masters student



- **Social Connections:** Friends from high school and university, family and community.
- **Mental Wellness:** Has had experience with mental health issues.
- **Resilience:** Believes it means to be comfortable and adaptable to changing circumstances.
- **Work:** Studies full-time, works casually, doesn't feel prepared for the future.

Aahad

Background: STEM Student, with interest in engineering



- **Social Connections:** Mostly high school friends and online community.
- **Mental Wellness:** Believes it is anything to do with the mind, including feelings and illnesses.
- **Resilience:** Perceives it as strength and demonstrated through actions.
- **Work:** Studies in VCE year 11 full-time, hopes and has faith that universities will prepare him for work.

Alison

Background: Physiotherapist



- **Social Connections:** Mostly university friends and family.
- **Mental Wellness:** Mental health is mostly about support and services.
- **Resilience:** Believes it is about perseverance, learning and doing better next time around.
- **Work:** Works full-time as a physiotherapist, previously done odd jobs. Feels that university only does half the preparation.

Samrawit

Background: Studied Sound Engineer and performs music



- **Social Connections:** Mostly people in music and creative industry.
- **Mental Wellness:** Mental health is a taboo subject for many family descending from Africa
- **Resilience:** Believes it is about going forward and not giving up.
- **Work:** Works on freelance/part-time basis performing music and as sound engineer at events.

Holly

Background: Studied Commerce, interest in youth work, works as freelance Researcher



- **Social Connections:** Friends from previous work, housemates.
- **Mental Wellness:** Has family who suffer from the mental illness and aware of the issue.
- **Resilience:** It about getting on with the problem.
- **Work:** Works as a freelance researcher and tutor at a university.

Persona 1



Timothy

Occupational interest: Architecture
Education background: Studying Masters

“For me resilience as an individual is to be comfortable with you are as a person, but being able to adaptor be flexible during changing circumstances”

Demographics

- Male
- 23
- Australian-born Vietnamese
- Living in Western suburbs of Victoria

Social Connections

- Oldest in a Vietnamese family of 5 and lives with parents.
- Mostly hangs out with high schools friends.
- During the semester, hangs out with university friends more often.
- Uses family as connection to cultural roots.
- Common social places include: cafes at uni, bar or restaurant.
- Common social activities: Eating and drinking, and occasional road trips.
- Says technology control levels of anonymity and has changed how people interact. Also thinks technology is a source of some mental health issues.

Mental Wellness

- Has had mental health experiences - has high expectations of self and perceived family expectations.
- Believes mental health issues are “self-inflicted” for himself, but unsure if it’s natural or environmentally influenced for others.
- Maintains regular mental wellness by reassuring himself.
- Common individual activities: listening to music, gaming and walking the dog.
- Wishes had more time to learn a practical hobby.

Resilience

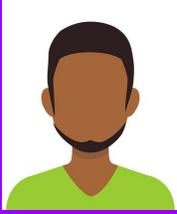
- Thinks being resilient means actively doing something to overcome problems faced rather than complain.
- To cope with difficulties, Timothy does something comforting or takes a break to get in a better mindset.
- Has family and friends for support, but approaches professionals when necessary.
- Thinks one of the biggest challenges in developing a resilient environment is housing affordability.

Work and Study

- Studies full-time and works casually in hospitality.
- Expects potential job to provide training plus experience and would like the job to align with own values and to be flexible.

- Doesn't believe that universities are preparing him for the future - feels as though opportunities have been limited and more emphasis is put on the paper than the knowledge gained.
- Will be disappointed and have a negative impact on his motivation and self-worth if he doesn't get his desired job because of the amount of time, money and energy has gone into building a foundation.

Persona 2



Aahad

Occupational interest: Engineering
Education background: Studying VCE Year 11

“Resilience...it’s like strength.”

Demographics

- Male
- 16
- Migrant to Australia, arrived 6 years ago
- Living in Northern suburbs of Victoria

Social Connections

- Oldest in family of 4.
- Mostly hangs out with high schools friends.
- Also has an online gaming community from different parts of the world.
- Common social places include: online, school, local town centre, CBD.
- Common social activities: Eating, watching movies, gaming, talking.
- Uses technology to talk to people all the time including strangers on gaming channels.
- Also involved with martial arts groups locally.

Mental Wellness

- Believes this is anything to do with the mental state - could be feelings or illnesses in the brain.
- Doesn’t often discuss mental health among friends except for the option of opening up between 11pm-1am (agreed upon dedicated time with friends).
- Exercises and plays games with friends to maintain mental wellness.
- Common individual activities: Play games and Maths.
- Wishes had more time to procrastinate less and get things done.

Resilience

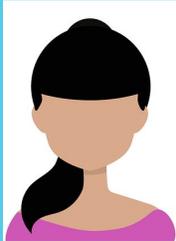
- Believes getting up and getting on with it is what it takes.
- To cope with difficulties, just to focus on work and avoid doing anything else.
- Accesses services regularly but finds it hard to navigate the bureaucracy or services for support. Feels as though, he just needs himself to cope.
- Doesn’t know how to approach resilience in the environment because of limited exposure and understanding.

Work and Study

- Studies full-time in a public school.
- Doesn’t work but has been looking for casual or part-time retail work.
- Expects potential job to be what he studied for or related to his educational pathway.
- Would be sad if didn’t get desired job but would keep trying and accept if it’s not possible - would continue to do other things to keep himself happy like playing games.
- May network to find work but doesn’t know how to.

- Hopes that universities will prepare him for the future. Thinks that they may be trying but isn't sure because hasn't had the experience yet.

Persona 3

	Occupational Interest: Physiotherapy Educational Background: Studied Doctorate of Physiotherapy	Demographics <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Female● 24● Migrant born, grew up in Australia● Living in inner-West of Melbourne
Alison	<i>“Resilience is sort of perseverance, pushing through, getting the job and just trying every time.”</i>	

Social Connections	Mental Wellness	Resilience
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Currently lives with family, and is the eldest in family of 4.● Mostly hangs out with family, sometimes friends from university and recently workmates.● Common social places include: cafes, restaurants and gym/parks.● Common social activities: sports, eating, gym.● Believes technology is disruptive; thinks it creates a false perception of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Believes mental illness and health is about being supported by people around you and sometimes requires services.● Says it’s a taboo topic among family and perceived as a disease or condition.● Is expressive about the subject depending on the social circle.● Common individual activities: Gym, Netflix and cooking.● Wish she had more with to spend with family and friends.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Says resilience is about recognizing inability to do something and then learning about it and doing it better next time.● Copes with difficulties by talking to people, meditating or having “me-time” for reflection.● Hasn’t accessed physical professional services before but has used wellness apps e.g. Smiling Mind.● Thinks resilience varies depending on the environment - more supportive workplace than home. Feels as though resilience comes from within more.

Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Currently works a generic 9am-5pm in a community health centre, previously worked odd jobs and as an intern.● Expects full-time work with benefits (i.e. leave and super), but also flexibility in role and environment.

- Before finding work, felt overwhelmed with 6 years of study so took 6 months to relax, be creative, watch TV, and reconnect with friends.
- For the first 6 months, wasn't too worried about the nature of work - interested in income more.
- Would keep looking for other opportunities if the job wasn't a right fit.
- Thinks that universities are too theory-based and practical components aren't realistic enough - has made her doubtful of her capabilities sometimes while at work.

Persona 4

<p>Samrawit</p> 	<p>Occupational Interest: Music</p> <p>Educational Background: Studied Bachelor of Sound Engineering</p> <p><i>"I am all about RESILIENCE with a CAPITAL 'R', I got lost and still trying to find my way"</i></p>	<p>Demographics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Female ● 29 ● Migrant born, grew up in Australia ● Lived most of her youth in detention ● Living in Northern Suburbs of Melbourne
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<p>Social Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Currently lives with friends in shared house. ● Even if she feels lost now and then, hangs out with friends whom she knows in the music industry. ● Common social places include: various music venues, cinemas, parks. ● Common social activities: play music, recording and conceptualisation, walking, drinking wine. ● Believes technology is disruptive; she thinks there is too much information out there and hard to concentrate or know which one is good/relevant. ● She likes seeing people that she connects with on a regular basis, seeing familiar faces is important. 	<p>Mental Wellness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Believes mental illness exists and finds it hard to understand unless one experiences it. ● She feels she is in general has been abandoned by her family and not well supported in Australia. ● Says it's a taboo topic among African descent families and friends perceived as a sign of weakness. ● She finds mental illness one of the biggest challenge in the music industry. she often works alone and feels lonely. ● Wish she have more time to swim, read and learn more. ● Believes one of the factors which is stress inducing is house affordability. She is finding she is getting pushed further and 	<p>Resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describes resilience as having a strong mind which comes mostly from your environment and experiences. ● Says resilience is all about not giving up. She thinks the person she is today is from standing up against all the odds. ● Coping mechanism through hard times is via writing music, singing or venting her frustration to friends and at times just drinking. ● Hasn't accessed physical professional services instead prefers to work out things within herself and within her friendship group. ● Believes that the environment she lives in not kind towards her and her friends. ● Finds it hard to navigate services and walk the
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	<p>further out into the suburbs.</p>	<p>street at times due to 'casual' racism and other social challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● She doesn't believe Melbourne is resilient enough and recommends more should be done. ● She is very disappointed about the marriage postal survey idea, the cost and the stress it induced on her friends. She believes the money should have been used to solve other problems our society is facing.
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Work

- Currently working on her own music label in collaboration with other artists, which takes up a lot of her time.
- She doesn't want a full time job and instead wants to pursue music fully. Believes there is a better chance of her making a bigger impact through music than working full time. She wants a workplace that matches her personality and aligns with her values. She finds this to be one of the challenging things.
- After finishing study she felt betrayed by the Universities and couldn't land her dream job. The courses provided at Uni she believes doesn't match with real industry experience. She tried a few other venues and gave up on being hired by someone and she is working towards other dreams.
- She still doesn't have full time job and she think that it is a hassle to do so.
- She tries to put some efforts in to changing the way things are when the opportunity exists but find it hard to navigate the system.

Persona 5

<p>Holly</p> 	<p>Occupational Interest: Youth Work</p> <p>Educational Background: Studied Honors in Commerce</p> <p><i>“Getting back up, when ‘sh**t the fan’, just getting on with it.”</i></p>	<p>Demographics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Female● 24● Australian● Living in Northern Suburbs of Melbourne
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<p>Social Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Currently lives in a shared house.● Mostly close friends group. Preferred one-on-one catching up.● Common social places include: cafes, restaurants mostly in the Melbourne CBD.● Common social activities: watch music performance gigs, attend talk shows, eating out.● Believes technology is safe.● People she hangs out with are switched on with important issues.	<p>Mental Wellness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Believes mental illness is prevalent in society, especially in young people.● She understands there is variations in mental illness and has experience in her past with family members.● Her family and friends openly talk about mental illness.● She has been introduced to mental health service providers at younger age through family and doesn't find it hard to navigate these services.	<p>Resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Says resilience is all about getting on with it.● In general she feels Melbourne is good place to live in .● Copes with difficulties through fully engaging with work.● Uses psychologist on regular basis.● Thinks resilience varies depending on the environment - more supportive workplace than home.● Feels as though resilience comes from within more.
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<p>Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Works as a freelance researcher, university tutor.● Wants to be involved in the youth sector.● Finds it easy to find jobs . She thinks all it takes it to have good knowledge of people and the industry.● If she can't find a job she will be open to moving overseas to pursue further opportunities.

4. Persona Insights

Social Connections

Physical proximity to people dictated most of the personas' avenue for social connections. For example, families, 'sub-culture' friendship circles such as shared hobbies and interest, and share house living arrangements were some of the more commonly cited social connections.

Digital connections were also identified as significant social connections for some of the personas.

Mental Well-being

There was a recognition that stigma still exists in different communities about mental illness and health. However, the topic in conversation or through experience was not foreign to any of the young people interviewed. Older participants had a more elaborate understanding about the complexities associated with mental wellness. Families and social connection still play vital role in positive and negative outcomes of the understanding of the issue.

Resilience

Definition and interpretation of resilience varies from person to person. Most personas involved in the interviews described resilience as a learned skill stemming from their everyday experience. Various coping mechanisms used were mentioned depending on their understanding of the type of 'struggle'. Some of the personas pinpointed consulting with friends and psychologists as ways to cope, whilst others referred to engaging in 'destructive' activities such as working longer hours, drinking with friends, and at times just working things out on your own.

Work

The personas involved in these interviews had vastly different outlooks on jobs and job prospects. Some prefer to have a full-time job with all the benefits, whilst others want to figure out what jobs they want to do as they try different things. One of the concerns of the personas is that they believe there is a huge gap between 'real life' job expectations and the method of preparation by educational institutions. Some of the personas voiced the difficulty of getting the 'right information' and knowing the right people when it comes to finding jobs they want.

Living

The environment most of the personas living in is one of the key factors which shaped their perception of their resilience, resilience strategies, and understanding of mental illness. Most interviewees' living arrangements were either living with family members or in a shared house. Some identified the high cost of rent as one of the major factors which affects their resilience. Living arrangements were mentioned as something that had both positive and negative outcomes on their wellbeing.

Appendix A - Interview Questions

VicHealth and Resilience Melbourne - Persona creation/development

Purpose: Interview young people to collate information and create generalized personas

Interview questions

General information

Age:

Gender:

Background (family, culture, schooling):

Location (city, inner suburbs, outer suburbs, regional):

Can you describe your current living arrangements (e.g. share house, with family every day, with family but stay at friend's places a lot):

Work or study commitments:

Social Connections/Networks

Who do you hang out with regularly?

What kind of places do you use to meet?

How often?

What kind of activities do you do together?

What kind of community or friendship groups do you have?

And do you find that they align to your values?

Mental Well-being

What comes to your mind when you hear about mental illness?

How do you, your circle of friends and family/community perceive about mental illness?

How do you address mental illness in your day to day life or how do you support people around you?

Do you think the ever changing technological advancement and virtual lifestyle have influences how we connect with other people in our community?

Scenario : Let's say you finished Uni and hunting for a job.

1. What are your expectations of your potential job?
2. How do you spend your time while you are looking for what you want?
3. What if you can't find the job you are looking for and stuck in the job you were doing when you were in high school? How does that affect you mentally and emotionally? If you have a chance, how would you wanna solve the problem?
4. Do you think Universities we go to are preparing us for the 'future' ?

What do you do for yourself regularly that you enjoy?

What kind of things do you do for fun?

What do you wish you had more time in the day to do?

Resilience

What does resilience mean to you?

How do you think it's demonstrated?

What's your coping mechanisms in difficulties?

What kind of support services work best in your circumstances when you need them?

How resilient the environment you live in and if not what should be done?