

## Youth Connections Research Officer

### POSITION DESCRIPTION

<b>LOCATION:</b>	Based in Fitzroy with some travel to Frankston
<b>STATUS:</b>	This is a fixed term part-time (0.6EFT) contract until the end of December 2011, with the opportunity to extend this, subject to the continued availability of funding.
<b>SALARY:</b>	The salary range is 46,800 - \$52,000 p/a plus Superannuation. Attractive Salary packaging provisions are also available.
<b>REPORTING TO:</b>	<b>Research &amp; Policy Manager (Through School to Work)</b>

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### SUMMARY

The Youth Connections program in the Frankston Mornington Peninsula (FMP) region is managed by a partnership between the Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL) and Taskforce. This Position Description describes the conditions and expectations for the role of Research Officer attached to the program.

### ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

#### *Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL)*

Established during the Great Depression, the Brotherhood of St Laurence was the vision and creation of Fr Gerard Tucker, a man who combined his Christian faith with a fierce determination to end social injustice. The BSL has developed into an independent organisation with strong Anglican and community links. Today, we continue to fight for an Australia free of poverty. BSL is guided by principles of advocacy, innovation and sustainability and provides direct service provision to people in need, the development of social enterprises, research, and the development of policy solutions at both national and local levels.

The BSL focus on the four Life Stage Transitions and has identified a need to work not just to alleviate but to prevent poverty, focusing on those people at greatest risk at the four transition stages considered critical to their future well being:

- The early years - both at home and into school
- The years through school to work and further education
- The periods in and out of work - whether voluntary or involuntary
- Retirement and ageing

BSL expertise in the through school to work transition is based on a combination of our research experience, delivery of programs, such as Transition Project, PACTS (Parents As Career Transition

Support), Youth Pathways and the implementation of research strategies that provide support for vulnerable young people.

### *Taskforce Community Agency*

Since 1973 TaskForce has provided specialist support for people in need across Melbourne. The people who come to our services have experienced significant disadvantage and/or life-crises and as a result find it difficult to participate fully in society. Many are people who have a range of complex needs that cannot be dealt with quickly or uniformly. Our services meet the needs of young people, adults and families.

In the area of employment, TaskForce developed a program titled Working Edge, which focuses on breaking the cycle of unemployment. We achieve this through the provision of a number of employment and training based programs and initiatives that aim to link people into education, training or employment.

### **YOUTH CONNECTIONS**

Youth Connections is a Commonwealth funded national service designed to assist young people who are most at risk of disengaging from education or training and subsequently not making a successful transition to further study, training or work.

Youth Connections works with a spectrum of at risk youth, from those at risk of disengaging from school through to those who are severely disengaged from education, family and community. Service delivery will be flexible, seamless and tailored to the young person's personal situation and circumstances. It will aim to build their resilience, improve their personal skills and their wellbeing, by offering:

- flexible and tailored case management to young people who are disengaging or recently disengaged from school or who are severely disengaged
- youth focused activities for young people with the purpose of engaging severely disengaged youth

Youth Connections also has a role in strengthening services in the region, by assisting education providers and other organisations to build their own capacity to work with at risk young people.

The FMP Youth Connections Model is based on a client-centred approach where the young person's personal situation and the circumstances that affect their capacity to participate are taken into account. Our approach views young people as being surrounded by a network of interconnected factors such as family, peers, school, and the community, and uses the strengths of each factor to facilitate positive change. The approach is integral to young people's initial job capacity assessment and in the provision of ongoing assistance and support. Engaging in such a holistic approach with the individual focuses on positive outcomes such as:

- Enhanced family relations
- Positive and healthy peer relationships
- Decreased substance abuse
- Improvements in school or vocational performance
- Engagement in positive recreational outlets
- Development of natural support network of extended family, community and friends.

## **POSITION PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Youth Connections Research Officer role is to undertake the research and analysis of the Youth Connections service and make recommendations to ensure the continuous improvement of the service in the FMP region.

A key component of the Youth Connections service being delivered in the FMP region is developing a better understanding of youth disengagement from education and to use this to inform the program and the ways in which it is delivered.

The Research Officer will coordinate data collection processes for the Peninsula Youth Connections service delivery, undertake analysis of the service data and write reports for key stakeholders involved in the program on the findings.

A key strategy of the Youth Connections governance framework is the development of an Action Research Evaluation process inclusive of a Program Advisory Panel that will drive continual service improvement. The Program Advisory Panel will include key staff from all partnering agencies. The evaluation will focus on thematic projects to evaluate the effectiveness of the work with at risk young people, identify emerging gaps and challenges requiring changes to service delivery.

The findings will be important to improve the program and service delivery in the FMP region and will also make an important contribution to policy discussion about Youth Connections and youth education and employment policies more broadly.

## **KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES**

### **Project management and research of the FMP region Youth Connections evaluation, including:**

- Efficient and effective management, coordination and planning of the project under the direction of the Manager, Through School to Work in RPC
- Preparing the research proposal and ethics application for the project and ongoing monitoring of the ethical conduct of the research
- Conducting literature searches of existing policies and research relevant to the project
- Recruitment of interview participants and conducting interviews with them
- Analysis of policy documents, relevant research and qualitative and quantitative data
- Writing up the findings and communicating results
- Liaison with internal and external stakeholders on the project

### **Research and Policy**

- Proofread and provide feedback on other RPC publications as required
- Participate in relevant project advisory group meetings
- Participate as required in RPC processes including attendance at internal staff meetings, seminars and conferences
- Develop and undertake other discrete Youth Connections related work

## **Multiskilling**

- The Research Officer may be directed to carry out such duties as are within the limits of his/her skill, competence and training.

## **ORGANISATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS:**

Reports to: Research & Policy Manager (through school to work)

Supervises: Students and volunteers as required

Internal Liaisons: Research and Policy Managers  
RPC team  
Youth Connections Program Workers

External Liaisons: Project reference groups  
Research participants  
Consultancy/tender clients  
Local and community research partners  
DEEWR and DEECD

## **KEY SELECTION CRITERIA**

1. Tertiary qualifications in social sciences or equivalent experience (prefer honours degree or post-graduate qualifications).
2. Experience in research work and ability to undertake qualitative and quantitative research techniques and analysis
3. Experience in literature search, interviewing, data analysis and report writing
4. Excellent written and oral skills
5. Good interpersonal skills to communicate with people from a range of backgrounds
6. Strong administrative and organisational skills with the ability to work to short timelines
7. Proficiency in Microsoft Word, Excel and Powerpoint and ability to use research data software, such as SPSS and NVivo
8. Ability to work both within a team and autonomously
9. An understanding of, and sympathy with, the values and ideals of the BSL
10. Current Victorian driver's licence

## CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

- Conditions as per the BSL, ASU & SDA Enterprise Agreement.
- The position is a fractional (0.6 FTE) maximum term position to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2011. Consideration will be given to flexible arrangements for the selected applicant.
- Salary between \$46,800 - \$52,000 plus Superannuation. Attractive Salary packaging provisions are also available.
- The position will be based at head office in Fitzroy but will require some travel to Frankston office.
- It is a condition of employment that all staff take the responsibility to establish a safe and healthy work environment that is free from discrimination and harassment.
- All staff are expected to behave in accordance with the principles of the BSL Code of Ethical Behaviour.
- A Working with Children Check is required for all BSL staff.
- A three month probationary period applies.
- The Brotherhood of St. Laurence operates in a smoke free work environment.
- The Brotherhood of St. Laurence is an equal opportunity employer.

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*Manager's signature*

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*Incumbent's signature*

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*Date*