



# Try, Test and Learn Fund

Initiative: *Dependence to Independence – Innovating peer-to-peer mentoring and support*

Location: New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland

## What are we trying to achieve?

To identify the success factors in a peer mentoring approach to assisting disengaged young people to overcome barriers, through addressing their need for emotional healing, and assisting them to develop the life skills necessary to re-engage in education or find work.

## What is *Dependence to Independence*?

Participants attend workshops and support meetings, led and supported by peers with similar life experiences, and overseen by qualified professionals and support adults. They discuss life skills - including communication, social and emotional skills, self-control and resilience. A group counselling approach enables participants to address adverse childhood experiences and improve wellbeing and behaviour.

Participants receive referrals to support services they need to improve their personal circumstances and to access education and/or employment.

Dependence to Independence offers participants a pathway to become youth leaders through leadership and facilitation skills training. Former participants can go on to become peer mentors, and help deliver workshops and support meetings for the next groups of at-risk young people.

The project also supports a collaborative inquiry, led by some participants, examining the key success factors of this approach. This inquiry will develop a framework that could be used by other programs interested in adopting a similar approach to supporting at-risk young people.

## What does the evidence tell us?

- Young unemployed people face a variety of barriers to further education and employment.
- If nothing changes, 42 per cent of 16-21 year olds currently receiving Youth Allowance (other) or Disability Support Pension with mental health as the primary condition will be receiving income support payments in 10 years, and 33 per cent will be receiving income support payments in 20 years.

## How is this initiative new and innovative?

Through the collaborative inquiry into the Youth Insearch peer mentoring approach, Dependence to Independence is building the evidence base on what works to help at-risk young people onto a pathway towards education and work.

Using insights from the Priority Investment Approach, the \$96.1 million Try, Test and Learn Fund is gathering evidence on new or innovative approaches to addressing barriers to work.

The Try, Test and Learn Fund will help achieve the objectives of welfare reform—that is, to develop a modern welfare system that increases the capacity of individuals, reduces the risk of welfare dependency and maintains a strong welfare safety net.

### Fast facts

**Priority group:** At-risk young people

**Participant numbers:** 250

**Locations:** NSW: New England and North West, Central West, Illawarra, Hunter Valley, Central Coast, Blacktown. VIC: Gippsland, Inner, South East, Western Melbourne, Shepparton. QLD: Wide Bay, Maranoa, Darling Downs, Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba.

**Trial period:** 23 months

**Total funding:** \$1.09 million

**Service provider:** Youth Insearch

**Potential future saving:** If around 10 per cent of participants move off income support because of this project, the savings to the welfare system are likely to outweigh the costs of the project.