

Increasing young people's access to economic resources

To promote mental health and wellbeing

What is mental health?

Mental health is the embodiment of social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. It provides individuals with the vitality necessary for active living, to achieve goals and to interact with one another in ways that are respectful and just.

How do these projects promote mental health?

These activities improve mental health and wellbeing by facilitating young people's access to education and economic resources.

What does access to economic resources mean?

- Access to work and meaningful engagement
- Access to education
- Access to adequate housing
- Access to adequate financial resources

What is the link between access to economic resources and mental health?

People with low education levels, low status occupations and low incomes have relatively poorer mental health than their high status and more affluent counterparts (WHO 2000).

How many people are missing out?

In 2000, one in every eight Australians lived in income poverty. If poverty is assessed after housing costs have been accounted for, one in five adults aged 25-44 years were living in poverty (Harding, Lloyd & Greenwell 2001).



One of the ways in which VicHealth promotes mental health and wellbeing is by supporting projects designed to increase young people's access to basic resources required for living.

Through these activities, young people are provided with opportunities to:

- Participate in community and group activities
- Build self-esteem and confidence
- Develop skills
- Increase levels of self-determination and control
- Increase access to education and employment

Young people who are supported, respected, valued and have access to basic resources do well at school, in work, with friends and have improved mental health.

"It's not just having this job, but everything else that comes from it. I work and get a pay packet, but that's not even close to what I get out of it." participant

Harding A, Lloyd R & Greenwell H 2001, *Financial Disadvantage in Australia 1990 to 2000: The Persistence of Poverty in a Decade of Growth*, The Smith Family, NSW.

Hartley R 1992, 'What Unemployment Means: Young People and their Families', *Family Matters*, Australian Institute of Family Studies no.33 pp.19-21.

World Health Organisation 2000, *Women's mental health: An Evidence Based Review*, Geneva, WHO.

“Paid work is seen as crucial in a practical sense because it provides essential income...it also has psychological benefits, provides a recognised role in society and contributes to a sense of personal and social identity.” (Hartley 1992)



Indigenous School-to-Work Project Shepparton

Young Indigenous Australians confront a range of barriers which prevent them from participating successfully in education and employment systems.

A partnership between the Indigenous community, industry leaders and 8 regional schools in the Mooroopna/Shepparton district is working to address this.

Local business and schools work together to create opportunities for young people to either remain in school or gain work experience to assist them to gain meaningful employment in their community.

The project is managed by Ganbina: Koorie Economic Employment Training Agency. Ganbina is a word from the Yorta Yorta language meaning to awake or arise.

Whitelion

Established in 1999, Whitelion provides support services for children and young people in the juvenile justice system, including a range of mentoring and employment programs.

One of the major strengths of Whitelion is its great ability to awaken the social responsibility within corporate and business partners. These partners provide opportunities for some of the most disadvantaged young people in the community.

Refugee Educational Partnership Project

This program supports the educational needs of Victoria's refugee students. Young refugee students and their families are supported through 'out-of-school' learning and homework programs, educational support in schools and by connecting with a strong network of local community organisations.

A partnership of organisations including Victorian Foundation of Survivors of Torture, VicHealth, Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, Department of Education, Department of Victorian Communities, Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs and private foundations have come together to design and implement this project.