

THE WODONGA PROJECT

# Reducing youth homelessness – building better mental health

The Wodonga Project is a partnership of 14 organisations working together to deliver coordinated early intervention strategies to reduce youth homelessness, mental ill health and school disengagement.

The Wodonga Project is an evidenced based, cost-effective initiative that employs a collective impact approach by working collaboratively with schools, the broader service system and community to improve outcomes for young people and their families.

The project is based on the Community of Schools and Service Model (CoSS) which in Geelong demonstrated a reduction in youth homelessness by 40% and school disengagement by 50%.

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Wodonga Project is a key initiative identified through the Ovens Murray Regional Partnership **Wodonga Youth Mental Health Deep Dive** (2020) which identified homelessness and risk of homelessness as key barriers to mental health service access and treatment. The project forms part of the Wodonga Council Youth Strategy and the Wodonga Youth Homelessness Strategy.

The success of the project is built on key pillars:

- The employment of a school based specialised early intervention team.
- The systematic assessment of every student for key risk factors using the Australian Index of Adolescent Development.
- The provision and coordination of the right services for the student and their family as early as possible.

## GOVERNMENT ASK

\$2.19m initial 3 years  
+ \$730k p.a. operational

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Available by request:

- The Wodonga Project Briefing Paper
- The Geelong Project Interim Report 2016–2017
- Ministerial Brief: Implementing Inquiry Recommendation 19 (Upstream Australia)

## OMRP CONTACT

ovens.murray.partnership@rdv.vic.gov.au

## WHAT IT WILL ACHIEVE

This project will create:

- 5.8 ongoing jobs (team leader, 4.2 youth and family intervention specialists)
- net benefit of 5:1.

As a regional location with significant pockets of high socioeconomic disadvantage and the highest level of 'mental stress' incidents reported to DET by local schools, Wodonga is a high priority location for place-based investment to improve outcomes for vulnerable young people.

The Wodonga Project directly delivers on five of the recommendations in the report on the Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria (6, 7, 14, 16, and 19). Specifically, Recommendation 19 is that *"the Victoria Government provide funding and support for the expansion of initiatives linked to the Community of Schools and Service model, with a minimum expansion to seven pilot sites that will include four metropolitan sites and three regional sites"*. Wodonga is one of the seven sites identified by the overarching CoSS architects, Upstream Australia.

## PROJECT OWNER

Junction Support Services, in partnership with (13 organisations):

1. Wodonga Snr Secondary College and Wodonga Middle Years College (including Flying Fruit Fly Circus School and Choice Learning Space)
2. North East Flexible Learning Network
3. North East Local Learning and Employment Network (NELLEN)
4. Wodonga TAFE
5. Gateway Health
6. headspace Albury Wodonga
7. Upper Murray Family Care
8. Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service
9. Business Wodonga
10. Wodonga Council
11. Victorian Department of Education (DET)
12. Victoria Police
13. Department of Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)



## THE WODONGA PROJECT WILL PROVIDE

### 40% REDUCTION

presentations to youth homelessness service system.

### 20% REDUCTION

early school leaving.

### 50% REDUCTION

school disengagement at participating schools.

## REDUCTION IN CRISIS REFERRALS

to mental health and community support services.

*Based on  
The Geelong Project*

The project also meets 3 of the recommendations within the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (6, 15, and 17).