

INTRODUCTION

The Albury Project is a proposed model aimed at providing a coordinated response to young people considered to be at risk and reducing both social and educational disadvantage. This proposal has emerged from initial conversations with a group of local services including Yes Unlimited, Westside Community Centre, headspace Albury Wodonga, Gateway Health, and Albury City Council and more recently discussions with the local High Schools, Albury Wodonga Health and Family and Community Services NSW (FACS). At a community forum in March 2018, Associate Professor David Mackenzie from Swinburne University presented the outcomes of The Geelong Project, where within three years of implementing the model, they have seen a 40% reduction in youth crisis presentations, 50% reduction in school disengagement and 20% reduction in early school leaving. Following the forum there has been significant interest in implementing the model locally and the key stakeholders mentioned above are currently exploring the feasibility and practicalities of implementing this model in Albury.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE MODEL

A Community of Schools and Services approach is a locally driven systems-based response to young people showing early indicators of risk. Embodying true early intervention, the approach pulls schools and services together in an integrated manner, proactively identifying young people requiring support before risk factors escalate or a crisis of some kind occurs. There are three key ways in which it achieves this:



- **Population Screening:** All students (years 7-12) of participating schools complete a Student Needs Survey (SNS) screening young people for early indicators known to correlate with social and educational disadvantage. The data collected through the SNS tiers young people into three categories of risk/need, which then determines the level of support received through the Albury Project Team.



- **Systematized Collaboration:** Participating schools and services become a single team, formally committing to responding to the young people identified through the SNS without the complex service navigation and 'bouncing' that often characterises informal arrangements. This involves interagency agreements, an overarching governance group, structured operational staff meetings and clearly articulated responsibilities for each stakeholder.



- **Data and Outcomes Focus:** The model is driven by a constant feedback loop of data and outcomes collected through the SNS. Not only does this data allow student needs to be tracked and responded to as it changes, but also allows for informed, higher level adjustments of the service system response.

PROGRESS SO FAR

So far the Albury Project Team includes Albury High, James Fallon High, Murray High, Yes Unlimited, Westside Community Centre, Albury City Council, headspace Albury-Wodonga, and Albury Wodonga Community Mental Health, who have begun to meet regularly to progress a six months period of research and development. David Mackenzie has committed to ongoing support for the project, providing high-level expertise, access to the learning's and structures used in the Geelong Project and support with lobbying and advocacy. FACS NSW has indicated a strong interest in the potential of the model granting up to \$20k seed funding to support this research and development phase. Yes Unlimited has begun an internal realignment of its counselling and early intervention services gearing them towards the potential rollout of the Albury Project. Other members of The Albury Project Team have expressed a commitment of resourcing or operational support pending further exploration of the details.

NEXT STEPS

From here The Albury Project Team will be consulting with key people involved in the rollout in Geelong, relevant government departments, other services that may have a role in the project and the wider community exploring the following questions:

- Who are the key stakeholders at different levels that need to be involved and consulted with?
- How do different parts of service system fit into The Albury Project?
- What does a sustainable funding model look like for The Albury Project?
- What are the operational details and logistics we need to understand before starting?
- What would be an achievable starting point and implementation plan for a rollout?

From these early stage conversations it would appear that there is a unanimous commitment to implementing an approach that brings together schools and services in a united front for young people experiencing disadvantage. The strong evidence base of the Community of Schools and Services Approach, its verified outcomes and the scope for locally driven innovation has seen the community quickly get on board to support this work. We look forward to continuing this discussion in moving towards a system that is quick to respond, easy to navigate and most of importantly gives young people the best shot at becoming happy, healthy and contributing adults.



The Albury Project

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