

CHP conference brief:

Learning and employment – making the link for young people at risk of homelessness

Session abstract:

Young people at risk of homelessness, and those who are homeless, often struggle to stay engaged in education or employment, making them highly vulnerable to social exclusion and long-term unemployment. This session explores why keeping young people connected is so important, and how to achieve it. Presenters Associate Professor David Mackenzie and David Wells draw on their experiences in the 'community of schools and services' [COSS] model, aka The Geelong Project and The Melbourne Academy (now Hester Hornbrook Academy) respectively, to explore:

- how early intervention can be accomplished systemically?
- the challenges and learnings from the Youth Foyer model, and its cost effectiveness
- how flexible education opportunities can improve homelessness outcomes?
- innovations and reforms need to achieve collaboration between the homelessness and education sectors

Date and time: 2:00pm to 3:10pm, Thursday 14 September

Venue: Condell Room

Presenters:

Associate Professor David Mackenzie, Swinburne Institute for Social Research
David Wells, General Manager – Early Years, Education and Employment, Melbourne City Mission

Associate Professor David Mackenzie, Swinburne Institute for Social Research

Associate Professor David Mackenzie has a strong record of research and development on issues associated with young people and youth policy and is widely recognised in Australia for his work on homelessness. From 1988 to 2003, he taught youth work undergraduates at RMIT. He is co-author of *Youth Homelessness: Early intervention and prevention* (1998) as well as many reports and papers. In 2005-

2007, David undertook the national evaluation of the HOME Advice program, which provides early intervention for families at-risk of homelessness.

In 2007-2008, David was one of the four Commissioners responsible for the National Youth Commission Inquiry into Youth Homelessness that tabled its report Australia's Homeless Youth in April 2008 and was influential on the development of the Federal Government White Paper, The Road Home.

David is the founder of Youth Development Australia Ltd (YDA), a not-for-profit charity which is a platform for innovative program development and policy change for young Australians. YDA operates Youthworx, a successful media training and production program for homeless and at-risk young people.

David is an integral part of The Geelong Project: A Community of Schools and Youth Services Model for Early Intervention.

Dave Wells, General Manager Early Years, Education and Employment, Melbourne City Mission

Dave Wells has an extensive range of experience in the community services sector, holding a number of leadership roles within the youth services and education portfolios. Working across a range of organisations in both NZ and Australia has provided Dave with significant exposure to community service models and practices. Dave is keenly aware of the important role education plays from day one of people's lives and throughout their journey. For this reason Dave is passionate about ensuring every individual receives a quality start and a solid education regardless of the situation they are born into, and whatever barriers they come up against.

As part of his role at Melbourne City Mission, Dave is the Principal of Melbourne City Mission's independent school, The Hester Hornbrook Academy. This school is part of a broad suite of education re-engagement programs that Melbourne City Mission delivers to young people who have multiple and complex barriers to education, including homelessness.