

MEDIA RELEASE

Schools vital for wellbeing of marginalised students

25 February 2016: Most students in the middle years of school report high levels of wellbeing, but marginalised students are more likely to report low levels of wellbeing, including lower levels of school satisfaction, teacher support, and parental interest in school, according to the latest Australian Child Wellbeing Project report, released in Canberra today.

For the quarter of young people who identify as marginalised – living with disability, experiencing material disadvantage, being from a culturally or linguistically diverse background, being Indigenous, living in a rural or remote area, or living in out-of-home care – school is one of several protective factors influencing wellbeing. Yet in-depth interviews with marginalised young people reveal that some have avoided school because their family had no money for food, while others recounted being teased at school for the way their uniform looked.

According to Dr Petra Lietz, a Principal Research Fellow at the Australian Council for Educational Research and co-author of the Australian Child Wellbeing Project report, schools play a crucial role in addressing the wellbeing of marginalised students.

“Students typically report higher levels of wellbeing when their experiences across domains like family networks, home environment, health and school reinforce each other,” Dr Lietz said. “Given that wellbeing is affected by a cluster of experiences, it is important that policies and services to address wellbeing are designed and coordinated across agencies and sectors.

“Findings from the Australian Child Wellbeing Project indicate that wellbeing for every student in school is associated with wellbeing in other domains, such as health or family for all students, but for marginalised students, a positive school experience is crucial. The good news is that some tangible things can be done to support well-being such as teachers believing in the success of all students, families having fun together, encouraging young people to be physically active and helping them to form strong bonds with others.”

About the Australian Child Wellbeing Project

Undertaken by a team of researchers at Flinders University, the University of New South Wales and the Australian Council for Educational Research, the Australian Child Wellbeing Project surveyed roughly 5500 young people aged eight to 14 years – in Years 4, 6 and 8 – from a representative sample of 180 schools across all Australian states and territories in the second half of 2014.

The study investigated young people’s experiences with their family, school, health, friends, communities and other important aspects of their lives.

The Australian Child Wellbeing Project was funded through an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant, with further support from the Commonwealth Departments of Education and Social Services, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, and the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The final report of the Australian Child Wellbeing Project is available at <http://australianchildwellbeing.com.au>

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