



**GROW WELL
LIVE WELL**

Connection is the Key

YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING IN PALMERSTON

REPORT SNAPSHOT

A collaboration project of Grow Well Live Well,
Palmerston's Collective Impact initiative



Acknowledgment of country

Grow Well Live Well acknowledges the Larrakia people as the traditional owners and custodians of Palmerston.

We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. It always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

Improving young people's wellbeing in Palmerston project

Grow Well Live Well (GWLW) brings the Palmerston community and local services together to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

This project emerged from the GWLW Youth Wellbeing Action Group (YWAG), that works towards improving the wellbeing of young people in Palmerston (a key action area identified in the GWLW Community Action Plan). This Action Group connected community members, the GWLW Backbone Team, and the service system to understand what is needed to improve outcomes in young people's wellbeing in Palmerston and to develop and implement strategies for positive change.

The GWLW Action Group led a three-year community research project that brings together the perspectives of Palmerston's young people with service networks and a review of the existing literature.

GWLW Action Group includes community members working with NT PHN (Primary Health Network), Somerville Community Services, the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet Youth Program Coordinator, Save the Children, Australian Red Cross NT, Team Health and headspace Darwin and supported by the GWLW Backbone Team.

The project wanted to understand two questions:

- What helps young people sustain their social and emotional wellbeing?
- How can young people's social and emotional wellbeing be strengthened in palmerston?

We explored what risks young people's wellbeing and what protects their wellbeing. We learnt what the barriers are to getting support in Palmerston and what helps young people get the help they need when they need it.

This research provides evidence needed to inform positive change and improvement in youth mental health and wellbeing in Palmerston.

Grow Well Live Well's Youth Wellbeing Action Group has built a community knowledge base from 2019 - 2021 to understand how the Palmerston community and services can better protect young people's wellbeing.

We have learnt that connection is the key! From a positive connection to identity, family, school and community, through to a sense of belonging and trust in our social systems, young people need safe, supportive and consistent connections.

This research compares the perspectives of:

133 YOUNG PEOPLE 

38 SERVICE NETWORK REPRESENTATIVES 

32 COMMUNITY MEMBERS 

50 RESEARCH PAPERS 



Palmerston College student.

“ Keeping active is healthy for the brain and body. It trains your mind and strengthens your muscles. ”





How can we work together to improve young people's wellbeing in Palmerston? What we heard...

STRENGTHEN SUPPORT AND CONNECTION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Support from family, friends and social groups (sport, interest, activities) is most protective for young people to have good wellbeing. Young people need access and connections to mentors and community leaders that can link them to the people and support they need.

REDUCE SCHOOL RELATED STRESS

Young people identify the main risk to their social and emotional wellbeing is school related stress and worry.

BUILD TRUST AND CONNECTION BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE AND SERVICES

Young people and families need easy access to consistent services that are non-judgemental, culturally safe, flexible and trauma-informed.



WHAT PROTECTS YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING?

- A strong sense of 'who you are' (identity) and feeling confident and valued as a person.
- A sense of meaning (or spirituality) and connection to culture.
- A supportive family that strives to meet their social and emotional needs.
- A safe home with consistent access to good food, shelter and comfort.
- A network of positive friendships.
- Being able to connect with nature and Country through meaningful outdoor activities.
- Access to technology and the online world for information, inspiration and connection.
- Access to community facilities and youth-friendly activities, events and spaces where connections take place.
- Supportive schools and school-based programs that value young people, their families and community and work with their strengths.
- A community that recognises young peoples' strengths and links them to adult role models, mentors and leaders.
- Positive opportunities for the future including knowing that they will have a home, safety, healthy relationships and access to education and employment.

WHAT RISKS YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING?

- Feelings of self-doubt, not belonging, a lack of confidence, insecurity and being overwhelmed.
- Struggling with meaning or purpose in life.
- Family violence, addiction and unsafe homes.
- Ongoing exposure to 'haters', bullying (in person and online) and negativity about young people in Palmerston.
- School related stress such as pressure around grades, balancing school with working, caring responsibilities and family issues, and difficult relationships with teachers and other staff.
- The negative aspects of the online world (social media and gaming) including celebrity culture and body image, harassment, and bullying.
- A sense of hopelessness and fear about ongoing community and society issues such as crime, violence and poverty.
- Worries about the future including a lack of trust in social systems (such as services, government and the media) and global issues such as climate change and Covid-19.



“ Music holds memories and gets you in touch with your feelings. ”

Youth survey participant (74% of young people surveyed said music made them feel good about themselves).

WHAT HELPS YOUNG PEOPLE ACCESS SUPPORT?

- Being able to express their feelings and having trust and confidence in their family and friends to be there when they ask for help.
- Having supportive friends who are there for them and will listen to their worries.
- Having a family with the skills, knowledge and willingness to help them get formal support.
- Supportive schools where they feel safe, included and encouraged to turn to staff for help.
- Easy access to consistent, reliable, and relatable services that are non-judgemental, culturally safe and inclusive.
- Easy and quick access to a flexible, trauma-informed, well-trained, youth focused mental health service system with coordinated, multidisciplinary specialist teams when needed.
- Services that acknowledge and support the role of family and community in their work with young people and are inclusive of family and community in their practice (and are culturally and linguistically diverse).
- Access to generalist/non-labelling youth spaces with staff/mentors who have experienced similar life issues and circumstances and will 'be there' for young people.
- A non-judgemental community and society, where there is no shame or stigma associated with mental health problems.



“The best thing about being young now is the potential and opportunities. Just need trust and access to those opportunities. They are there but just not always in reach. Even though people think it is, they might not realise or trust when we say there's barriers in the way. Or even perceived barriers.”

“If I don't feel respected then I won't go back, I won't ask for help from that person again.”

Youth discussion group participants.

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO SEEKING SUPPORT?

- Stigma about mental health problems including fear of labelling and being judged negatively.
- Not being able to find the right words to express themselves (emotions in particular).
- Feeling no-one will be able to help them, that the problems are too big, or that they don't want to worry others.
- Distrust of the service system, including thinking that things could get worse for their family or community.
- Experiencing discrimination, a lack of respect or understanding.
- Not knowing how to access supports, frustration with waitlists and a lack of services.
- A feeling of hopelessness related to community and social issues including crime, violence, climate change, poverty and discrimination.
- Under-resourcing of mental health services and an overstretched, crisis-driven service system.



Help build stronger connections in Palmerston

Palmerston's young people have called for community action:

“If you want to help, get this message out to the world. Please... if this is happening to me, how many other kids/teens are experiencing the same thing?”

This research was undertaken by the Grow Well Live Well Youth Wellbeing Action Group in collaboration with researcher, Gretchen Ennis (usefulprojects.org). Artworks by students from Palmerston College and Driver Primary School.

Download the full report at www.gwlw.org.au

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