

# Submission to the Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee Inquiry into the State Education System in Victoria

October 2023



## **Acknowledgement of Country**

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we live, learn and work. We pay respects to Elders past and present and recognise their continuous connection to Country.

## **About Odyssey House Victoria**

Odyssey House Victoria has been in operation since 1979 and is a state-wide, specialist treatment organisation dedicated to improving the lives of individuals who experience significant or long-term problems from alcohol and other drug use.

## **About Youth Support & Advocacy Services (YSAS)**

YSAS is a community service organisation offering a range of programs and services that are designed specifically to meet the needs of young people (10 to 25 years of age) who are at risk of experiencing substance use related harm, difficulties with mental health and criminal justice system involvement.

## **About Centre for Social and Emotional Development, Deakin University**

SEED conducts world-leading research on the developmental origins on mental health and related issues such as substance use problems and aggression.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

We welcome the opportunity to provide this submission to the Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee Inquiry into the State Education System in Victoria.

We recognise the significant issues currently experienced in the education system including the decline in student learning outcomes, school refusal and behaviour issues.

Our submission focuses on the Terms of Reference 3, specifically the state of student wellbeing, student disengagement and disparities correlated with geography and socio-economic disadvantage. Our focus in this submission is on the northwestern suburbs of greater Melbourne, particularly Melton as an example of areas of high need and socioeconomic disadvantage.

## **2. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

- a) In addition to supporting general school wellbeing, the Victorian Government should make a modest long-term investment by funding specialist school programs which target behavioural concerns, substance use issues and co-occurring mental health concerns in at-risk young people.
- b) The Victorian Government should provide ongoing funding to successful intervention programs that have proven benefits for young people at risk, such as Odyssey House Victoria's Building Resilience via Advocacy, Counselling and Education (BRACE) program, and the YSAS Youth Support Service (YSS) programs.
- c) The Victorian Government should identify schools with high needs across metropolitan Melbourne and regional and remote Victoria, and then scale up effective, targeted interventions to provide additional support to the wellbeing programs currently in schools. The focus would be on young people at risk of or already disengaging from school.

## **3. WHAT THE CURRENT PROBLEM IS**

Wellbeing teams, currently employed in the Victorian education system; provide support to many young people. They go some way to addressing issues of disengagement in school and other wellbeing and mental health challenges. However, a lot of young people in the public school system face overwhelming challenges to their education which can lead to a lifetime of disadvantage. These young people face intersecting difficulties and are at high risk for alcohol and other drug use (AOD), vaping, escalating family conflict, self-harm, and suicide,

bullying, school refusal and disengagement, social withdrawal, homelessness, and multiple other harms which continue to resonate throughout their lives.<sup>1 2</sup>

Student wellbeing has become more challenging since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and those effects continue to be expressed across the student community. School attendance rates for Victorian schools declined substantially in 2022. This is very concerning as attendance is linked with academic outcomes, school completion rates and wellbeing.<sup>3</sup>

COVID-19 disproportionately affects those most disadvantaged in our community, including children and young people. It has magnified pre-existing, longstanding access and equity barriers and at-risk young people are falling through the gaps and being suspended from or disengaging from school or escalating harmful behaviours.<sup>4</sup>

Populations including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people, especially the asylum seeker population, and the LGBTIQ+ community may experience additional marginalisation, discrimination, isolation, and stigma.<sup>5</sup> These experiences can have significant implications on young people's experiences of schooling and their education outcomes, as well as presenting challenges for behaviour management by school staff, and poorer learning outcomes in classes.

Additional and specialised supports are required to adequately support young people with complex and intersecting challenges to reengage young people or to keep them engaged in education, and to support teachers and other staff.

#### **4. WHAT SCHOOLS CURRENTLY DO**

We welcome the Government's commitment to improving school community wellbeing through the substantial investments of over \$215 million in the last four years towards student mental health and wellbeing.<sup>6</sup> This has seen an enhancement of school community wellbeing, particularly through the introduction of a Mental Health Practitioner in each

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<sup>1</sup> Heerde, J.A., Bailey, J.A., Toumbourou, J.W., Rowland, B., Catalano, R.F. (2022) Adolescent antecedents of young adult homelessness: A cross-national path analysis. *Prevention Science*. 23, 85-95.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-021-01267-y>

<sup>2</sup> Kelly, A. B., Munnings, A., Zhao, X., Rowland, B., Laurens, K. R., Campbell, M., Williams, J., Bailey, J.A., Killingly, C., Abimanyi-Ochom, J., Kremer, P., & Toumbourou, J. W. (2023). Polydrug use in Australian 12-14 year olds from 2006 to 2017: an examination of drug use profiles, emotional control problems, and family relationship characteristics. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 75(1), 2174705.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00049530.2023.2174705>

<sup>3</sup> Allison, M.A., Attisha, E. and Council on School Health. (2019), The link between School Attendance and Good Health, *Pediatrics*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-3648>

<sup>4</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, (AIHW), (2021), COVID-19 and the impact on young people, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/covid-19-and-young-people>

<sup>5</sup> North West Melbourne Primary Health Network, (2018), Alcohol and Other Drugs Profile, <https://nwmpnhn.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/NWMPHN-Alcohol-and-Other-Drugs-Area-Profile-2019.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Department of Education, Victorian State Government, (2023), Schools Mental Health Menu, Victorian State Government, <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/mentalhealth/mental-health-menu/Pages/Menu.aspx?Redirect=1>

secondary school. Nevertheless, not every school has a full team of wellbeing support staff due to staffing shortages and challenges with recruitment, and the demand exceeds capacity in many areas.

Generalist wellbeing staff and secondary school teachers are not able to meet the needs of students with complex needs, particularly around co-occurring mental health and AOD use issues. Managing challenging behaviours of high-need students takes a considerable amount of teachers' time. This can impact on their ability to teach the rest of the class. There is a connection between a student's emotional behavioural and social challenges and their academic outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

## **5. WHAT WORKS**

Targeted interventions that deliver programs to young people in the school environment have been found effective in increasing their access to specialised wellbeing and mental health information and services. Odyssey House Victoria has worked in Victorian public and community schools in the west and broader metropolitan Melbourne for over 15 years, with Building Resilience programs. The youth workers initially focussed on alternative education settings such as Community Schools through philanthropic funding, before using an embedded services model more recently within seven schools and providing support to over 260 at risk young people and their families.

Youth workers are professionals who build and maintain relationships with young people and provide counselling, outreach, family therapy and interventions as well as advocating for the young people and identifying and connecting them with other services. Most traditional services or programs offering additional wellbeing support to students, are located externally, and operate independently to schools. Students are required to be highly motivated to travel to these services, which can hinder student engagement with them. Onsite presence ensures services are accessible for students and enhances their likelihood of attending and engaging with them.

The BRACE program is an example of an embedded service which offers trauma-informed, student focused care, that is delivered through immediacy of response to high-risk youth at schools, or by outreach to students and their families. It is flexible in its approach to meeting the needs of young people even when their engagement with school is very weak.

### **A. Building Resilience via Advocacy, Counselling and Education (Brace) Program**

#### ***Program Description***

In-school supports, like the BRACE program, locate specialist AOD/Mental health youth workers on site. They provide developmentally appropriate, therapeutic interventions to young people and their families (as required), education through contributions to school curriculum, supported referrals and transport for other specialist assessments or appointments, and secondary consultation for and on behalf of the young person, their

family, their teachers, and the well-being support teams. Positive outcomes of programs such as BRACE were identified in the 2019 BRACE program evaluation report. They include reduced AOD use, improved mental health, emotional regulation, greater knowledge and practice of harm minimisation, school re-engagement, and improved behaviours in school.<sup>7</sup>

The BRACE program is a fixed-term, place based, initiative that is currently only receiving short-term funding through the Department of Industry, Science and Resources. The funding is not expected to be on-going. The BRACE program built upon several years of other pilot programs, that were funded through philanthropy. Such programs, once shown to be effective, should be scaled up in areas of need and provided with more sustainable funding. Our youth workers have expertise in identifying and addressing the factors that contribute to the social and emotional difficulties that each young person faces. The BRACE Program operates during the school term, as well as school holidays, and delivers assertive outreach to students who are suspended, unable to attend school or who disengage entirely.

## **B. The Youth Support Service (YSS) in Wyndam Central College and Tarneit Senior College.**

### ***Program Description***

The Youth Support Service (YSS)' is an effective program that contributes to addressing antisocial behaviour within school communities and keeping young people who are at risk of disengaging from education connected. The YSS is currently funded from the Department of Justice and Community Safety to reduce the risk of youth crime in Victoria by supporting young people becoming involved in antisocial behaviour and attracting police contact to change direction and engage more positively with their families and communities.

The YSS focus not only on crime prevention but also address emerging mental health and AOD problems and improving the health and safety of school communities. YSS intervenes as early as possible by connecting with at-risk young people aged 10-18 to address the risk factors that contribute to young people to losing pro-social connections and adopting antisocial attitudes and behaviours. It does this through offering assertive outreach in and outside of school, family support and resilience building programs that promote positive development and personal accountability.

## **6. OUTCOMES OF TARGETED PROGRAMS**

- Both the BRACE and the YSS programs have been evaluated through independent Universities.

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<sup>7</sup> Odyssey House Victoria, (2019), *Odyssey House: Building Resilience in Schools: An Evaluation Report, Final Report*, August 2019, <https://odyssey.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/6.2-BRICS-Evaluation-Report.pdf>

- Evidence of the success of the BRACE program has been documented in an evaluation provided by Victorian University in August 2019 [BRICS-Evaluation-Report.pdf](#).
- Evaluations by Swinburne University's Centre for Forensic Behavioural Sciences and KPMG have reported that YSS is successful in diverting 'at risk' young people from engaging in antisocial behaviour and preventing them from further engagement with the justice system.
- The embedded school approach, which includes capacity to outreach and follow up on students who are not attending, overcomes the problem of the young person needing to be at school to receive school-based services. Thus, delivering services to most at risk.
- The BRACE program additionally offers recreational and pro-social activities, including drumming and hip-hop classes. There is a youth drug and alcohol education program, a student camping program for at-risk young people, and specialised professional development, education, and training for secondary school staff.
- The BRACE program provides support to families and can help engage other support services to assist the families and the student with a range of intersectional supports.
- The BRACE program is designed to not only target at-risk individuals, but to have an impact on the school community more broadly as it is suitable for all students but specifically designed for those students experiencing multiple issues that existing school-based wellbeing staff are unable to effectively assist. These students can get the support they need without being singled out from the mainstream student population.
- Most school-based programs only operated within the school; however, the BRACE program has capacity to do outreach and engage other community programs and family, particularly when supporting those refusing to attend school.
- The BRACE program adopts a strength-based approach to assist students manage the various stresses they experience whether at school, home or in the community.
- It encourages rapid skills development in areas including peer resistance training, normative education, harm reduction with AOD and help seeking and supporting friends.
- A highly targeted initiative will support at risk young people who are, or at risk of being disengaged from education, as a known protective factor for long term wellbeing and social and economic participation.

- Specialist youth AOD workers create a conduit to better communication, amplifying the young person’s voice while actively engaging the family and the school. This form of intervention proves to be cost effective and achieves major improvements, including re-engaging students with school, enhancing family supports, improving learning outcomes, and reducing/preventing harmful AOD use prior to adulthood.
- Investing resources in keeping young people engaged and in school has long term benefits and savings as it improves their future outcomes in further education, employment, and increased incomes.
- Maintaining engagement of at-risk students in their schooling reduces risk of a range of adverse outcomes including reductions in involvement with justice and drug and alcohol use.<sup>8</sup>
- With appropriate, long-term funding, adolescents with higher risk factors can make positive behavioural changes that change the trajectory of their life and reduce the need for intervention in their future.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- This submission makes the case for a modest investment in specialist school-embedded programs which target behavioural concerns, substance use issues and co-occurring mental health concerns in at-risk young people. Embedding services within school wellbeing teams has been proven to effectively maintain engagement of these students and contributes to improved learning outcomes and teacher support.
- The Victorian Government should provide ongoing funding to successful intervention programs that have proven benefits for young people at risk, such as the Odyssey House Victoria’s Building Resilience via Advocacy, Counselling and Education (BRACE) program, and the YSAS Youth Support Service (YSS) programs.
- The Victorian Government should identify schools with high needs across metropolitan Melbourne and regional and remote Victoria, and then scale up effective, targeted interventions to provide additional support to the wellbeing programs currently in schools. The focus would be on young people at risk of or already disengaging from school.
- Initiatives such as the Odyssey House BRACE program have been successful, however, they are difficult to sustain through philanthropic funding or short term government

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<sup>8</sup> Hancock, K. J & Zubrick, S. R., Telethon Kids Institute, University of Western Australia for the Commissioner of Children and Young People WA (2015), Children and young people at risk of disengagement from school, <https://www.cyp.wa.gov.au/media/1422/report-education-children-at-risk-of-disengaging-from-school-literature-review.pdf>

support. Programs such as these need to be funded on an on-going basis to have long term impacts in schools and the community. It would provide continued expertise and support to stretched school wellbeing staff, improve student outcomes and retention, and decrease the stigma of AOD within school communities.

- YSS is an effective program that contributes to addressing antisocial behaviour within school communities and keeping young people who are at risk of disengaging from education connected. It is currently funded from the Department of Justice and Community Safety. YSS is successful in diverting 'at risk' young people from engaging in antisocial behaviour and preventing them from further engagement with the justice system. Where identified, such programs should be expanded to other areas.
- Specialist interventions, including drug and alcohol counselling, case management support and drug education, should be delivered by specialised AOD services rather than making them an additional responsibility placed on school teaching and wellbeing staff. AOD education is technical and evidence-based and thus AOD services are best placed to keep up to date, and to be doing this sort of work in schools.

## 8. WHAT SCHOOLS SAY ABOUT THESE PROGRAMS

The following accounts were written by staff at schools where the BRACE program is operating. The testimonials describe the services provided by BRACE and the outcomes.

### ***Student Wellbeing and PSD Team Leader, Lakeview Senior College:***

*“The BRACE program provides secondary consultation to teaching staff on the signs and symptoms of AOD use and misuse, ways to create a supportive and inclusive classroom environment, and how to intervene effectively when a student presents with AOD related issues in class.*

*The BRACE program provides students with support to address the underlying issues that may be contributing to their AOD use. This can help to improve their mental health and emotional wellbeing, which can lead to a number of positive outcomes, such as:*

- Reduced AOD use
- Improved self-esteem
- Increased motivation and engagement in school
- Improved relationships with family and friends

*The BRACE program improves student learning outcomes and wellbeing:*

- ***Counselling:*** *The BRACE program provides counselling to students who are struggling with AOD use, mental health issues, or other challenges. This counselling can help students to develop coping skills, improve their self-esteem, and make positive changes in their lives.*
- ***Family support:*** *The BRACE program also provides support to families of students who are struggling with AOD use. This support can help families to understand the issue, develop coping strategies, and provide support to their child.*
- ***School-wide initiatives:*** *The BRACE program also works with schools to implement school-wide initiatives to prevent AOD use and promote healthy student development. These initiatives can include things like drug education programs, and positive behaviour support programs.”*

### ***Wellbeing Team Leader, Staughton College:***

*“The BRACE program supports student learning outcomes and wellbeing by providing both onsite counselling and out-reach to our at-risk students.”*

### ***Wellbeing Team Leader, Tarneit Secondary College:***

*“The BRACE program has supported students that are dysregulated, marginalised and from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. By providing these students with strategies to better regulate their emotions with healthy coping skills, the students and furthermore the community has benefitted from this experience. The BRACE program effectively collaborates*

*with all members of the school including students, staff and parents, ensuring that collaborative practise for better outcomes is being achieved.*

*By providing treatment to young people impacted by substance use and building on their coping skills, the overall culture and community of the college has significantly improved. This includes within the classroom and within the yard at break times. The students have been able to sustain better relationships with their teachers and reduce anti-social behaviour.*

*By providing counselling, group counselling and outreach to severely at-risk students, the BRACE program has impacted many students to remain engaged in school and have better outcomes.”*

***Student Wellbeing Counsellor, Gisborne Secondary College:***

*“The BRACE program helps support wellbeing teams by providing treatment to young people who are impacted by substance use. These young people are often some of the most at-risk students in schools, and by providing this counselling it helps these students stay engaged or re-engage at school, allows young people who present with behavioural issues to learn how to regulate themselves, improves their relationship within the school and the community and allows them to receive support for their mental health issues. These students can be difficult to engage, and often have a lot of trauma, and its important they have a safe person to speak to.”*

***Student Support Services Leader, Taylors Lakes Secondary College:***

*“The Brace program has been instrumental for our college. Our clinician has provided the support our young people need who are engaging with substance experimentation and through education and counselling. In addition, they have supported our young people who have been impacted by a significant person in their life who uses substances. Their expertise also extends to the work of the wellbeing team, providing education around substances and additional support services, and further, secondary consultation. The partnership we have created is very significant and the college hold great regard to the work of the BRACE clinician.”*

***Assistant Principal, Kurunjang Secondary College***

*“(The specialist Youth Worker) from Odyssey House has come in and taught the VPC students in the Life Skills class. This was done every Thursday for an hour.*

*The youth worker has allowed the students to have a conversation with him around the topics that were taught to the students toward the end of the session. This has left the students very informed about the topic that was being taught.*

*He was able to form positive relationships with all students and this allowed for students to feel comfortable about approaching him with their issues and concerns if they had any. This worked well as the VPC kids are mainly all at risk students and this gave them an avenue to use when discussing a concern."*

The following account was written by staff at a school where the YSS program is operating. The testimonial describes the services provided by YSS and the outcomes.

***Assistant Principal and Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Wyndam Central College***

*We would like to commend the team from YSAS for their engagement and dedication working with the identified students at Wyndham Central College. The team deliver an outreach program to our students encouraging engagement, pride and respect in themselves, their community, culture and heritage. This increases their confidence and their connection to school with the aim of decreasing the risk of offending.*

*The team has been working closely with individuals and small groups of students who have been identified as "At Risk" by EYOP, Youth Justice and the college to develop their engagement skills within the college and greater community. Students feel comfortable and supported by the YSAS team and will often bring friends across to meet the workers expanding the presence of the program to the students who most benefit from it.*

*The team works with the students to expand their self-worth, empowering them with the skills and ability to navigate their pathway in a more positive way and help other students as mentors and leaders within the school. This level of connection cannot be done by classroom teachers in their normal school programs. It is only achievable when specially trained youth workers can come to the school and work alongside teachers and students outside of their every-day programs.*

## 9. APPENDIX

### Young People and Melbourne's North West

- The outer northwestern suburbs of Melbourne which include Melton, Rockbank, Tarneit, Mickleham, are a fast-growing area with the highest population growth rates recorded in Greater Melbourne in 2021-2022.<sup>9</sup>
- In the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Melton, Hume, and Maribyrnong, all situated within the northwestern metropolitan Melbourne, more than 50% of resident's parents were born overseas, with the Brimbank LGA exceeding 70%.<sup>1</sup>
- In these LGA's a language other than English is spoken in more than 40% of the households.<sup>1</sup>
- According to City of Melton Community Profile, in 2021, 9.6% of 15 - 24 years olds were disengaged with employment & education. This is significantly higher than the Greater Melbourne average of 7.0%.<sup>10</sup>
- School retention and completion data from 2021 shows there is a higher proportion of school leavers (Year 10 or less) and a lower proportion of young people completing Year 12 or equivalent within the City of Melton, when compared to Greater Melbourne. In total, 25.8% of the population left school at Year 10 or below, and 57.7% went on to complete Year 12 or equivalent. This compares to 20.8% and 64.3% respectively for Greater Melbourne.<sup>2</sup>
- According to the most recent AOD treatment statistics, the average rate of treatment episodes pertaining to young people aged 0 – 19 years from 2018-19 to 2021-22 within the City of Melton (96.37 episodes per 100,000) is more than 2.5 times higher than the average for Greater Melbourne (36.12 episodes per 100,000).<sup>5</sup>
- The average rate of episodes specifically related to illicit drugs, in City of Melton for young people aged 0 – 19 years is 67.72 episodes per 100,000 in Melton when compared to 22.47 per 100,000 across Greater Melbourne.<sup>3</sup>
- Elevated treatment rates also apply to alcohol-related episodes. In Melton, the average rate 24.36 per 100,000, more than double the rate for Greater Melbourne (9.594 episodes per 100,000).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), (2023), *Regional population 2021-2022*, ABS, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population/latest-release#victoria>

<sup>10</sup> City of Melton, (2021), *Community Profile City of Melton Disengagement by age*, <https://profile.id.com.au/melton/disengagement-by-age#:~:text=In%202021%2C%209.6%25%20of%2015%20to%2024%20year,and%20education%2C%20compare%20to%207.0%25%20in%20Greater%20Melbourne.>

- Lower socio-economic areas such as Brimbank, Hume and Melton have proportionally higher rates of tobacco use and alcohol-related societal harms. These are related to and reinforces social disadvantage.<sup>3</sup>
- Within Melbourne’s western growth corridor Melton, Hume and Wyndam are projected to sustain rapid population growth, especially of young people. Consequently, AOD misuse is projected to become more problematic in these areas.<sup>4</sup>
- The use of e-cigarettes (vaping) is a prevalent concern across all schools and usage by young people is increasing every year. In 2018, less than one percent of 14-17-year-old Australians vaped, however, this figure jumped to 14% by March 2023.<sup>11</sup>
- The Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) uses factors such as employment, education and income to measure community disadvantage.<sup>12</sup>
- Brimbank, Melton and Hume have the highest levels of disadvantage in northwest Melbourne.<sup>6</sup>
- Socio-economic disadvantage manifests in the adolescent population through higher incidence of intergenerational disadvantage, family violence, child protection issues, anti-social behaviour, bullying and school disengagement.

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<sup>11</sup>Borys, S, (2023), *Over 3.5 million Australians aged 14 or over vape or smoke, new data has revealed*, ABC News, 2 June 2023, [Over 3.5 million Australians aged 14 or over vape or smoke, new data has revealed - ABC News](#)

<sup>12</sup> North West Melbourne Primary Health Network, (2021), *NWMPHN Health Needs Assessment November 2021*, [https://nwmpnh.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/NWMPHN-Health-Needs-Assessment-Summary\\_Public-Release.pdf](https://nwmpnh.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/NWMPHN-Health-Needs-Assessment-Summary_Public-Release.pdf)

## **About Odyssey House Victoria**

Odyssey House Victoria is a state-wide, specialist treatment organisation dedicated to improving the lives of individuals who experience significant or long-term problems from alcohol and other drug use. Odyssey House Victoria has a range of programs including AOD residential rehabilitation Services in Melbourne and in regional Victoria. It also delivers community programs including day rehabilitation, counselling, support and outreach across Melbourne, the Barwon and Hume regions, with services focused on parents and children as well as youth and families. Odyssey House Victoria provide accredited training and education programs as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), including Drink and Drug Driver Behaviour Change Programs.

## **About Youth Support & Advocacy Services (YSAS)**

YSAS is a community service organisation offering a range programs and services are designed specifically to meet the needs of young people (10 to 25 years of age) who are, or who are at risk of, experiencing substance use related harm, difficulties with mental health and criminal justice system involvement. YSAS practitioners are equipped to assist young people, families and communities experiencing serious problems, but also intervene as early as possible to prevent problems from escalating and becoming entrenched.

YSAS provides practical support and evidence-based clinical care through outreach and care co-ordination, residential programs and a range community-based services from sites across Victoria.

## **About Centre for Social and Emotional Development, Deakin University**

SEED conducts world-leading research on the developmental origins on mental health and related issues such as substance use problems and aggression. We bring together life-course, clinical and public health research and practice to:

- understand how our social and emotional development early in life impacts on our mental health and wellbeing across the lifespan
- advise on the most effective approaches to intervening at the earliest opportunities in troubled pathways
- engage systems for translating this knowledge broadly.