

Welcome to the special edition on wellbeing and the prevention of violence in young people. This edition is special in two ways. It is the first edition since the name change of the *Australian Guidance and Counselling Association* (AGCA) to the new name of *Australian Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools* (APAC). Second, this edition has been supported by the Flinders Centre for Student Wellbeing & the Prevention of Violence (SWAPv; <http://www.flinders.edu.au/ehl/swapv/>), which draws together a number of major streams of research being undertaken within Flinders University, situated in Adelaide, South Australia. The Centre also calls upon the expertise of staff members in other parts of the faculty and across the university, in collaboration with national and international researchers and colleagues. The work of the Centre focuses on research that spans the fields of mental health and wellbeing, and violence prevention, primarily in education settings. The Centre is dedicated to making a difference to the wellbeing of young people's lives, focusing on promoting mental health and preventing violence in educational settings. The Centre represents the multiple research, consultancy, professional learning and higher degree research supervision interests of its members, and is broadly inclusive of a rich and varied mix of approaches to undertaking research in the particular fields that provide the foci of the Centre.

Since the establishment of the Centre, an important focus has been consolidating the research output of the members of the Centre. In this regard the Centre has benefitted from close collaborations in various research projects from key researchers in Western Australia (Professor Donna Cross), South Australia (Dr Barbara Spears) and Queensland (Professor Marilyn Campbell). These researchers have also established the Australian Universities AntiBullying Research Alliance (AUARA), which has a particular focus on advocacy and policy matters pertaining to wellbeing and violence prevention. This special edition of the *Australian Journal of Guidance & Counselling* under the editorship of Professor Marilyn Campbell offers an important opportunity to further research collaboration and policy advocacy in this field. The Directors of SWAPv would like to thank Professor Campbell for her mentoring and support in enabling the publication of this exciting special edition devoted to the field of wellbeing and the prevention of violence.

Mental health is a national and international priority (see special edition of *The Psychology of Education Review*, edited by Humphrey and Qualter, 2013). For example, in the Australian context, the Council of Australian Government's National Action Plan for Mental Health 2006–2011 (COAG, 2010) and the recent Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform 2012–2022 (COAG, 2012) identified promotion, prevention and early intervention for positive mental health as essential actions for governments and organisations to undertake. National evaluations of KidsMatter Mental Health have been undertaken in Australia, highlighting the delivery of effectiveness of school-based mental health interventions (Slee et al., 2009; Slee et al., 2013). The matter of violence prevention is of concern for governments, policy makers, health care professionals and educators around the world. Benbenishty and Astor (2008), in an extensive review of the international research,

made a strong call for action, drawing attention to the issue of violence and particularly violence as it is enacted in schools around the world. They proposed a heuristic model that nested violence within systems, including the school, neighbourhood, family, culture, and the social and political climate of the country. The seven papers in this special edition make a unique contribution to the corpus of our practical and theoretical understanding of wellbeing and violence prevention in educational settings.

The paper by Leanne Lester, Tracy Waters, and Donna Cross presents the findings of a large-scale study exploring students' sense of connectedness and its temporal relationship with mental health indicators, including depression and anxiety, during the vulnerable transition time from primary to secondary. Their analysis identifies the protective effect of connectedness in reducing negative mental health outcomes, pointing the way to school-based interventions. Leigh Burrow's single case study also focuses on interventions in a school setting. Leigh highlights the significance of mindfulness and therapeutic storytelling as significant therapeutic aids in helping a young primary school child gain important insight into self management. Interestingly, Leigh's study also points to the significant role of the child's peer group as part of the change process. The research by Grace Skrzypiec involved the vulnerable population of young offenders in our society. It highlights the meaningful insight that young offenders have into their criminal activity, and importantly, stresses the need for listening to young people's 'voice' as a policy implication for the delivery of criminal justice. Helen Askeff-Williams and Rosalind Murray-Harvey's article goes to the heart of the medium of educational reform in identifying educators as pivotal to the process of change in educational systems. Drawing on the findings from a large-scale, 2-year national evaluation of Kidsmatter Early Childhood mental health program, the role of professional learning for advancing young children's positive mental health was clearly identified and elaborated upon. The paper by Kevin Glasheen, Marilyn Campbell, and Ian Shochet highlights the divide between 'digital immigrants' (school counsellors) and 'digital natives' (students) in examining the reluctance of school counsellors to utilise online counselling. Importantly, the researchers have identified the resources and skills and issues that school counsellors believe they need before utilising such a resource. The review of the literature by Julie McMillan and Jane Jarvis regarding children with disabilities and their vulnerability in terms of mental health is extremely timely. The review examines the importance of universal and targeted interventions for meeting the mental health needs of a particularly vulnerable sector of the population, and is invaluable for identifying schools as sites for the delivery of such interventions. The research reported by Helen Askeff-Williams, Carmel Cefai, and Francis Fabri involving Maltese primary and secondary school students clearly identifies the need to nuance school-based interventions to address school bullying in relation to identifiable groups — for example, bullies and victims engaging in the behaviour. Importantly, their research points to the need for multidisciplinary approaches for such school-based interventions.

As a special edition supported by the vision of the editor of the journal (Professor Marilyn Campbell) these seven articles provide invaluable insight into the range of methodologies (qualitative, quantitative, mixed method) that can be creatively employed to provide insight for practitioners, researchers and policy makers into

matters pertaining to mental health and violence prevention in our schools and communities. The demonstrable rigour and thoughtful analysis underpinning all of the papers provides evidence-based surety in advancing the science of understanding how best to promote the wellbeing and mental health needs of the most vulnerable in our community.

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