



Young Mums Rock!

PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH BY YOUNG MUMS FOR YOUNG MUMS

About Women's Health West

Women's Health West aims to improve the health, wellbeing and safety of all women across Melbourne's Western Metropolitan Region. One way we do this is by undertaking research which increases our knowledge and understanding of women's experiences and needs and identifies ways we can help to improve women's health.

About Young Mums Rock!

"As a young mother, you feel like you're doing it on your own."

Young Mums Rock! is an action research project that aims to promote the mental health of young mothers living in Melton. The project works with young mothers and service providers to develop a greater understanding of the social and cultural factors that impact on their health and supports the young mothers to identify and undertake actions to promote the mental health and wellbeing of young mums.

Young mums are the experts

Young Mums Rock! recognises that young mums have experiences, information and ways of doing things that can be shared with each other. The project aims to find ways to increase interaction amongst young mums and build relationships with service providers.

Through a series of workshops with young mothers who were part of an existing parenting group, we were able to explore fun and friendly ways in which we could do this.

Involving service providers

We have had great support for the project from local services including Djerriwarrh Community Health Services, Melton Shire Council and other local and regional health and social services. The project is exploring service providers' understandings of the issues relating to young mums' mental health, and ways to bring young mothers and service providers together to promote mothers' wellbeing, and to support community action.

What did the workshops achieve?

"Being able to help people – I contributed something to the community."

Young mums worked with service providers to host an event day and produce a brochure. The 'Young Mums Rock' day enabled young mothers to meet service providers, obtain health information, take part in fun activities and make connections with each other. It was also the launch of the Young Mums Rock! brochure, which aimed to reach out to isolated young mothers, and educate services and the community about the realities of young mothers' lives.

Broadening the project focus

In a second phase of the project, the focus was widened to work with a diversity of mothers from a range of communities in the Melton area and beyond. This included a follow-up event on International Women's Day 2006, which also allowed mothers to connect with each other, obtain health information, meet service providers and have an enjoyable day out.

It included an exhibition, 'Tears of Joy, Tears of Frustration', of art produced through a series of workshops with existing mothers groups, including groups for Indigenous, Spanish-speaking, Macedonian, young, single and same-sex mothers, and a group for women who have experienced mental illness.

Project resources

The exhibition and various resources from the project are published on Women's Health West's website at www.whwest.org.au. Other resources include the Young Mums Rock brochure, a detailed exhibition catalogue and a fridge magnet listing local services.

Online resources include a series of Action Resource Sheets, summarising methods used in the project, including action research, promoting women's health, advocacy and women-centred story-telling. These are intended for ongoing use by women in the community, service providers and others in the ongoing effort to promote women's mental health and wellbeing.

For more information on the project visit www.whwest.org.au or contact researcher Joy Free on (03) 9689 9588 or joy@whwest.org.au.