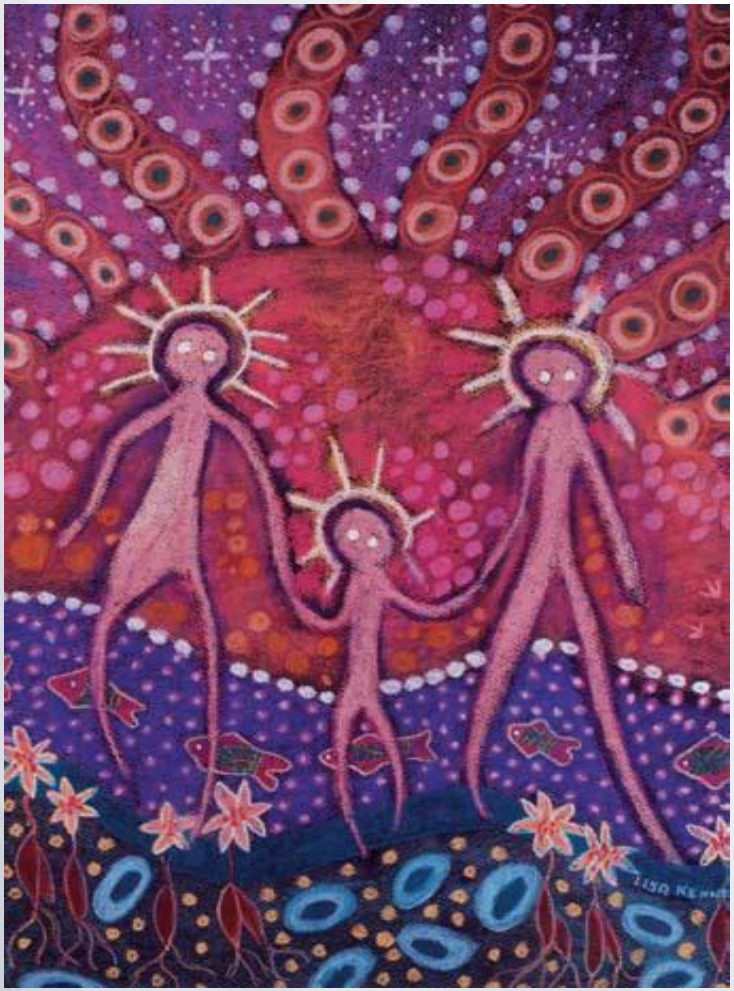


Oral health outreach clinic for young people experiencing homelessness

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No conflicts of interest to declare



Artwork: Going Home by Lisa Kennedy

Acknowledgement of Country

Presentation overview

- Youth homelessness in Victoria, Australia
- The Young People's Health Service (YPHS)
- Oral Health Outreach Clinic program

Youth Homelessness in Victoria, Australia

16,384 young people (15-24 years) sought help from a homeless service in Victoria in 2024-25





72% were not enrolled in any form of schooling



Nationally 65% were assigned female at birth, and 35% were assigned male



Reasons for homelessness are many and varied



66% had at least one experience of:

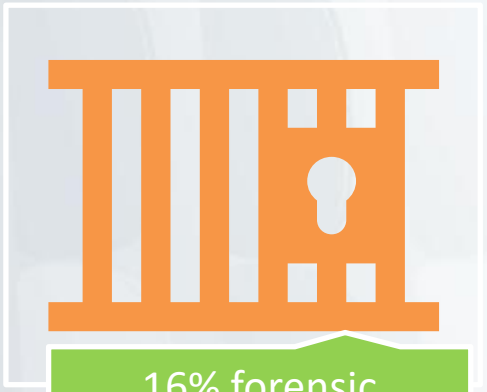
- Family and domestic violence
- Current mental health issue
- Problematic drug or alcohol use

[Specialist homelessness services annual report 2024–25, Children and young people receiving support alone - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare]

Social determinants of health



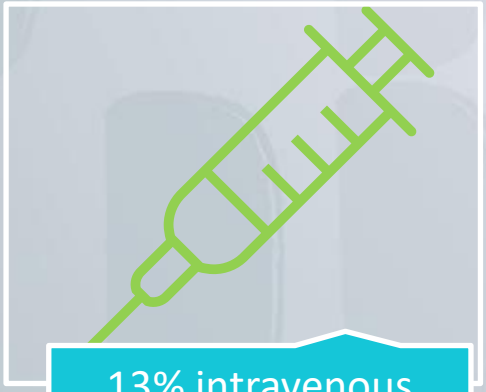
77% missed school



16% forensic involvement



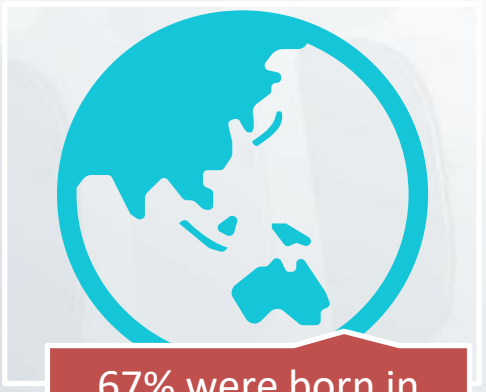
30% child protection



13% intravenous drug use



56% use alcohol or other drugs



67% were born in Australia

Tominc BL, Francis KL, Sawyer SM, Heerde JA, O'Neill J, Henning D. Immunization Coverage in Young People Experiencing Homelessness and the Impact of a Nurse-led Program. *Journal of Primary Care & Community Health*. 2023;14. doi:10.1177/21501319231204581

The Young People's Health Service



Established in 1991 following Burdekin Report (1989) for 15-24 year olds who are experiencing, or at risk of homelessness

Co-located with Melbourne City Mission Frontyard Youth Services

Part of Royal Children's Hospital Department of Adolescent Medicine

Drop-in clinic and outreach to youth refuges, secondary consultation – free and confidential

EFT 2.2 Nurse Practitioner, 0.4 Clinical Nurse Consultant, 0.5 Outreach nurse, 0.6 adolescent medicine trainees, 0.6 admin

Consults usually include…



HEEEADSSS-I Assessment

- Home
- Education
- Employment
- Eating/exercise
- Activities
- Drugs, smoking/vaping, alcohol
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Sleep
- Suicidality/mental health
- Immunisations

YPHS & Holstep Health

- YPHS partnered with Holstep Health to run oral health clinics each school holidays from Jan 2024 – April 2025
- Used "Smile Squad" infrastructure to place oral health therapists and equipment in the YPHS clinic rooms
- Provided 145 consults over 43 days
- Clinician-driven through community connections and local champions



What we knew about oral health in young people experiencing homelessness before..

Young people that we saw (and didn't see) at YPHS often asking for help with dental issues

Storman et al. (2019) Queensland – a sample of young people (n=112) who attended an outreach oral health service at a homelessness service had double the average number of decayed, missing, and filled teeth compared to young people in the general population

Goddard et al. (2023) South Australia – linked administrative homelessness and health data found that those having contact with homelessness services at ages 16–17 were three times more likely to present to the emergency department for an oral health concern compared with those with no contact, at ages 18-19 years.

YPHS & Holstep Health

Evaluation / QA study

- A retrospective audit of 40 young people aged 14-24 years who attended the oral health outreach clinic (OHOC)

Aims:



To understand the need for an OHOC for young people experiencing homelessness



Describe the follow-up attendance



Assess young people's satisfaction with the service

Results of audit (n=40)

Outcome	Result	Finding
Prevalence of poor oral health habits and social behaviours that impact oral health	• 67.5% brush their teeth <2 times per day • 30% use alcohol heavily • 56.4% use drugs other than alcohol	Some risks of dental disease are modifiable, and many intersect with other challenges associated with homelessness
Clinical examination findings	• The median number of teeth affected by current or past dental caries was 5 (IQR 1-10), almost double national average • 80% had gingivitis • 70% had dental caries	Young people experiencing homelessness have acute oral health concerns and risks of future dental disease
Recommended follow-up	• 95% recommended to have follow-up such as restorations (70%) and extractions (42.5%)	

Results of audit (n=40)

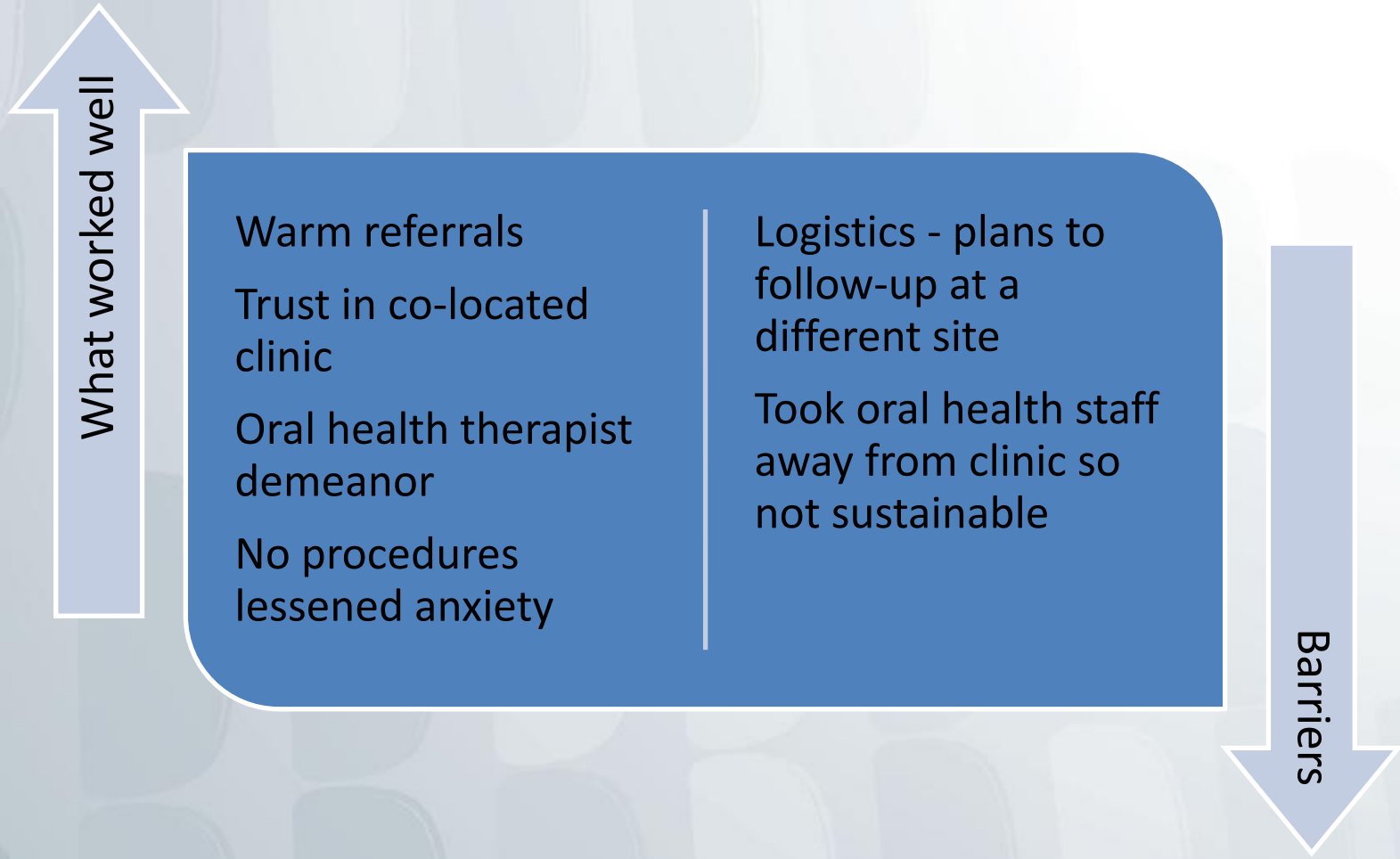
Outcome	Result	Finding
Follow-up attendance at the Community Health Centre	• 37% were known to have attended a follow-up appointment • 50% of appointments made were attended	Reinforces the importance of low barrier care – attendance was higher at the drop-in co-located clinic
Patient satisfaction	• All patients were either "Satisfied" (8%) or "Very Satisfied" (92%) with their care	

"Amazing manner and such kind people. I didn't feel judged or scrutinised which is important! Thank you!"

"Very nice and explained what I had to get done which i'm happy about"

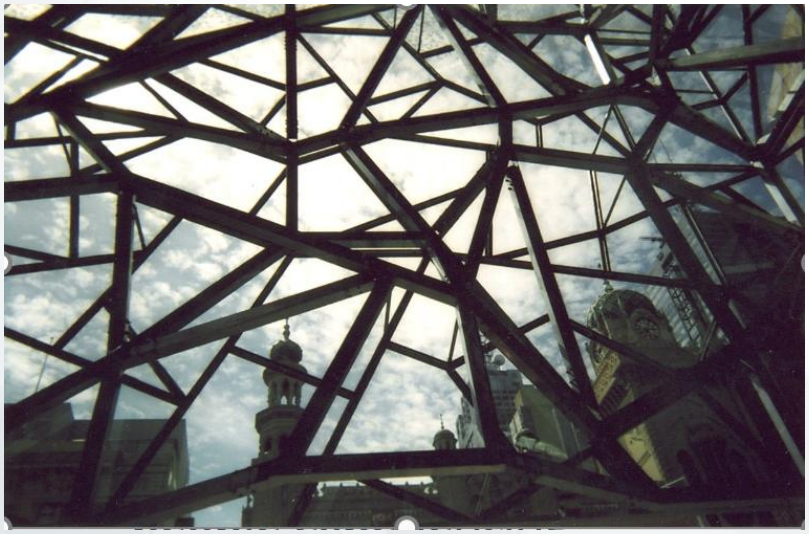
Thank-you to all young people who participated and those that gave feedback

Reflections



Summary

- Youth homelessness impacts access to preventative health care
- YPHS and Holstep Health demonstrated an oral health outreach clinic model that can reach young people with dental needs



YPHS Photovoice project 2005



YPHS Photovoice project 2005

Questions?

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