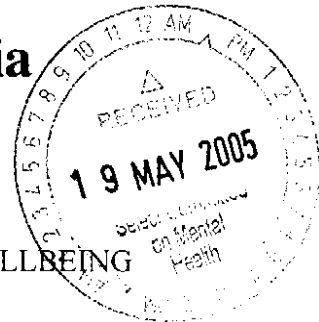


# Mental Health Foundation of Australia



## Embrace the Future

### YOUNG AUSTRALIANS' MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2005

**Board of Directors**

Professor Graham Burrows, AO, KCSJ,  
MD, DSc, Chairman  
Russell Jones, Secretary  
Jack Harty, Treasurer  
Professor Robert Goldney  
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Committee**

Professor Graham Burrows, AO, KCSJ,  
MD, DSc, Chairman  
Carole Crean, Patron  
Dr Neil Coventry  
Jim Goodin  
Megan McQueenie  
Jan Smith  
Dr Robb Stanley  
Professor Bruce Tonge

**Supporting Organisations**

Alzheimer's Association Australia  
Australian Medical Association  
Australian National Association for  
Mental Health  
Australian Red Cross  
Australian Federation of Deaf Societies  
Council on the Ageing (Australia)  
East West Centre  
Family Services Australia Ltd.  
Federation of Australian Jewish  
Welfare Societies  
Mental Health Council of Australia  
National Council YMCA of Australia  
Pharmaceutical Society of Australia  
Royal Australian & New Zealand  
College of Psychiatrists  
Royal Australian College of General  
Practitioners  
Salvation Army Eastern & PNG  
Salvation Army Southern  
Society of St. Vincent De Paul  
The Mission of St. James & St. John  
Uniting Church Social Responsibility  
& Justice Committee  
World Psychiatric Association  
World Federation for Mental Health

**Committee Secretary**

Senate Select Committee on Mental Health  
Department of the Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary,

As chairman of the "Embrace the Future" (Young Australians Mental Health & WellBeing) Steering Committee, I am grateful for the opportunity to present our submission to the Senate Select Committee.

The "Embrace the Future" prevention project is attached including the agenda, overview and requirements. We believe that our approach is unique for reasons detailed in the body of our submission.

The Mental Health Foundation submits the project and the three elements of its agenda for a mental wellbeing promotion and education strategy for all young people.

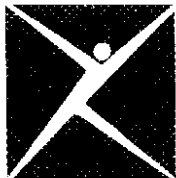
With respect to mental illness the project is a prevention and early intervention strategy.

**Agenda**

1. Community awareness programs to inform and to educate for attitudinal change towards valuing the mental wellbeing of young people.
2. Training for self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience in children aged 8-13.
3. Establishment of a national mental health database.

The submission is relevant to items "F" and "I" of your terms of reference:

- F** "the special needs of groups such as children, adolescents, the aged, Indigenous Australians, the socially and geographically isolated and of people with complex and co-morbid conditions and drug and alcohol dependence"



# Mental Health Foundation of Australia

## Embrace the Future

### YOUNG AUSTRALIANS' MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

I “the adequacy of **education in de-stigmatising mental illness** and disorders and in providing support service information to people affected by mental illness and their families and carers”

Our steering committee includes pre-eminent experts in the field of child and adolescent mental health:

([http://www.embracethefuture.org.au/Steering\\_Committee.htm](http://www.embracethefuture.org.au/Steering_Committee.htm)).

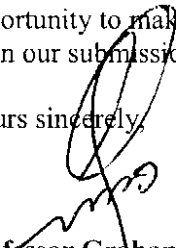
The rationale for our approach is the reduction of risk factors contributing to mental health problems in the 8 to 13 year age group rather than the 15-24 year age group for whom 75% of mental health problems have already become manifest. A more complete accounting of these risk factors can be found at [http://www.embracethefuture.org.au/Facts/Risk\\_Factors.htm](http://www.embracethefuture.org.au/Facts/Risk_Factors.htm).

The research and evidence indicates the effectiveness of promotion and prevention programs and we commend the implementation of the strategies outlined in our project.

Our major achievements so far include developing the above website, development of a youth reference council, promoting mental wellbeing through the endorsement of Crown Princess Mary of Denmark at a highly successful event in Sydney, initiation of the mapping of youth mental health services in Australia and forging partnerships with other stakeholders. Our future objective is to implement our agenda as stated and further enhance our website as a mental wellbeing resource.

On behalf of the “Embrace the Future” Steering Committee, I would welcome the opportunity to make representation to the Senate Select Committee to further elaborate upon our submission.

Yours sincerely,

  
**Professor Graham Burrows AO KCSJ**  
**BSc, MB, ChB, DPM, MD, FRANZCP, FRCPsych,**  
**MRACMA, DipMHithSc(Clinical Hypnosis), FACHAM, DSc**

Professor/Director  
Department of Psychiatry  
The University of Melbourne  
Level 10, Lance Townsend Building  
Austin Health, Austin Hospital

Email: [graham.burrows@austin.org.au](mailto:graham.burrows@austin.org.au)  
Email: [mental.health@aph.gov.au](mailto:mental.health@aph.gov.au)

Encl.

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**MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA**

**Submission from the**  
**Mental Health Foundation of Australia**

Committee Secretary  
Senate Select Committee on Mental Health  
Department of the Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia

# Embrace the Future

## Development of Mental Health & Wellbeing For Young Australians

### **Vision Statement**

A healthier, happier and friendlier society for all

### **Mission Statement**

Engage the community to actively promote partnerships to facilitate change and provide opportunities for health and wellbeing for young people

### **Commitment**

To educate for - health promotion  
early intervention  
illness promotion

*An initiative of the Mental Health Foundation of Australia*

*Mental Health Foundation of Australia  
270 Church Street  
Richmond 3121  
03 9427 0407  
mentalh@mira.net*

**[www.embracethefuture.org.au](http://www.embracethefuture.org.au)**

## **Recommendations**

**Embrace the Future** aims to engage the community by actively promoting partnerships to facilitate change and improved opportunities for health and wellbeing for young people.

**Embrace the Future** is committed to early intervention and prevention strategies to equip young people with capacity to deal with life stresses and strains as they move into adulthood.

We have developed three elements of a national agenda to begin to address identified needs. As such the "Embrace the Future" Steering Committee submits the following recommendations to the Select Committee on Mental Health:

**Recommendation 1.**

**Community awareness programs to inform, and to educate for attitudinal change towards valuing the mental wellbeing of young people.**

**Recommendation 2.**

**Training for self esteem, self confidence and resilience in children aged 8-13**

**Recommendation 3.**

**Establishment of a National Mental Health database.**

This program is committed to early intervention and prevention strategies to equip young people with the capacity to deal with life stresses and strains as they move into adulthood.

Experts in mental health have identified that, there are gaps within services for children and young people. The lack of health promotion and illness prevention services for the development of self esteem, self confidence and resilience are of particular concern. There is still a resistance in the community to accepting mental wellbeing as a legitimate health issue.

The Mental Health Foundation of Australia has consistently been the progenitor of social action to address community mental health issues has been responsible since 1984 for successive federal governments mental health reform projects. (See appendix)

To ensure the long term sustainability of Australia's health and wellbeing, adequate resources need to be allocated for the development of self esteem, resilience and confidence in children, targeting children in the 8 -13 years age group.

This age group has been identified as a strategy to improve the mental wellbeing of adolescents as it is both prior to the onset of hormonal changes in adolescence and to transition from primary to secondary school, both periods are significant in developmental stress factors for adolescent youth.

Late primary school is a good delivery point as there is a consistency of teacher access and at this level parents are quite involved with school programs and student activities.

Although each of these program elements can stand alone as individual projects, there is an increased advantage in delivering them in conjunction with each other, particularly elements 1 and 2.

## **Recommendation 1.**

### **Community awareness programs to inform, and to educate for attitudinal change towards valuing the mental wellbeing of young people.**

A general media campaign similar to the Life Be In It campaigns is proposed to educate parents, teachers, the broader community and young people about the stresses of life, in particular for young people. The campaign will educate for a better community response and will promote the learning of coping mechanisms. It will also highlight resources available to support the community in their mental wellbeing.

This program positions strategies for mental wellbeing and capacity building at a young age. It is unique in that it focuses on life skills delivery in general and is not targeted only at students at risk. An early introduction to mental health principles helps in the elimination of later stigma and is currently topical to issues of student obesity, bullying and self-injurious behaviours.

## **Recommendation 2.**

### **Training for self esteem, self confidence and resilience in children aged 8-13**

This is an education program developed by mental health professionals targeted at middle to late primary school aged children. The program is intended for delivery in school communities but will be adaptable for use in the broader community, for example scouts. This will be a generic program with specific modules added for special needs groups such as aboriginal, cultural and disabled groups.

The education program will include the teaching of:

- recognising life stressors
- responding to community attitudes
- coping strategies
- personal and social life skills
- the value of positive relationships as resources (mentoring)
- accessing available support resources

To support the program's sustainability undergraduate courses for teachers will be developed.

The project is both a service delivery and research based project aimed at providing data for a longitudinal study of the effects of health and wellbeing training for young people in their capacity for dealing with life stresses.

## **Recommendation 3.**

### **Establishment of a National Mental Health database**

This would be the first national mental health database differing from states databases by collecting or linking available data in an accessible, user friendly and affordable format, providing the whole Australian picture for the provision of mental health programs across all sectors.

Data would initially include health and wellbeing data, health promotion and illness prevention data in addition to that on morbidity data at a later time.

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# **Embrace the Future**

## **Young Australians Mental Health & Wellbeing**

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### **Patron's Message**

"I was invited by the Mental Health Foundation of Australia to be the inaugural patron of its initiative – Embrace the Future, Mental Health and Wellbeing for Young Australians. As an educator I am passionate for young people to have the opportunity and support so that they can reach their potential. Strong mental health is imperative to enhance their quality of life now and as they move into adulthood.

I have been fortunate to have the involvement of strong ambassadors for young people – Cherie Blair QC in support of the initiative in 2003, and now HRH Crown Princess Mary will launch the Embrace the Future national awareness campaign.

We as a community need to show our commitment to achieving this – an investment in our younger generation today will ensure a stronger community tomorrow."

Carole Crean

### **Chairman's Message**

"Business, sporting, cultural and community leaders have an important role to play in helping shape the dreams and aspirations of Australia's youth. Their advocacy and involvement in this program will be vital for assisting young people along the pathways to fulfilling their goals, with positive self image as the first step."

Professor Graham Burrows AO KCSJ MD DSc

### **HRH Crown Princess Mary**

"Young people are our future, their wellbeing is crucial for their future, our future, the future of our countries. I commend this program to you for your support."



# **Embrace the Future**

## **Young Australians Mental Health & Wellbeing**

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### **Introduction:**

Embrace the Future is a program that encourages the development of strong self esteem, self confidence and resilience in young Australians - effective strategies for dealing with their challenges in life. A strength of the program is its collaborative approach - with young people for young people and with governments, the community and the private sector. The program is an investment in a strong society to complement other social capital policy.

### **Vision**

A healthier, happier and friendlier society for all

### **Mission**

Engage the community to actively promote partnerships to facilitate change and provide opportunities for health and wellbeing for young people

### **Commitment**

To educate for health promotion, early intervention and illness promotion

### **History**

Embrace the Future - Young Australians' Mental Health and Wellbeing program is an initiative of the Mental Health Foundation of Australia. The program was initially announced at the World Federation for Mental Health 2003 Biennial Congress hosted by the Foundation in February 2003 in Melbourne. The program has been possible as a result of an initiative by its patron, Ms. Carole Crean who organised a highly successful fundraising luncheon in Melbourne attended by Ms. Cherie Booth QC, wife of the British Prime Minister, and very prominent Australians at which, in excess of \$100,000 was raised in April 2003.

## Background

The Mental Health Foundation of Australia is committed to promote development of health promotion and illness prevention activity for health and wellbeing in communities, which have not received attention previously because of political imperatives to address the lack of appropriate services available to people with a mental illness. This work is being addressed. If an appropriate level of attention is not paid to addressing problems before they occur we will continue for generations to address expensive problems in societal terms rather than providing relatively inexpensive solutions to preventing the problems occurring.

The initiative of the Foundation **Embrace the Future Young, Australian's Mental Health and Wellbeing** was established primarily to support children and young adults to achieve positive mental health. In initially addressing health promotion activities for young people it is apparent that Australia needs to provide inexpensive solutions for the problems of transition for children to adolescence by "fitting them out" with tools for their growth of self esteem, self confidence and resilience.

The project we propose for the long term benefit of Australians is the establishment of a community education and training project to assist children aged 8-13 years delivered through schools and community programs; and to develop a broad based community awareness program through electronic media; and to have the community welcome the project as a major investment in our future social capital. Additionally the Foundation believes that the establishment of a national database for the provision of easily accessible mental health resource information for the general community, clinicians, researchers and the like is long overdue having first been proposed by this Foundation more than 20 years ago in 1984.

Current projects for early intervention and prevention in mental health are in place to assist adolescents and youth already experiencing mental health problems rather than preventing problems by providing earlier training.

It is the intention of the Foundation to actively promote other areas of health promotion and illness prevention not currently being addressed – these include self esteem, self confidence and resilience training for children from early childhood.

There is a need to provide an innovative fun program for children from 8-13 years which provides games based training in the skills and information tools for their support through the transition from childhood to adolescence; transition from primary school to secondary school; the challenges and negative influences in life; to deal with problems and stressors as they arise rather than allowing multiplication and resulting health problems; and, to assist them in seeking early assistance from appropriate sources when needed.

## **So what have we achieved so far**

Strong Steering Committee:

Professor Graham Burrows, AO KCSJ, MD, DSc, Chairman

Carole Crean, Patron

|                       |            |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Megan McQueenie       | Megan Dale |
| Dr. Neil Coventry     | Jan Smith  |
| Dr. Robb Stanley      | Jim Goodin |
| Professor Bruce Tonge |            |

Youth Reference Council established

The Youth Reference Council comprises young people representing students, the corporate sector, health, law and education professions and the media. The opinions, suggestions and experience of members of Council comprise an integral part of the program.

|                  |                   |                    |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Andrew Apostola  | Daniel Bolotin    | Kerryn Eccleston   |
| Hilary Fisher    | Vi Khieu          | Elisabeth Pohlmann |
| Stephanie Rennie | Rachael Schofield | Rebecca Sirianni   |
| Nichole Sullivan | Timothy Stutt     | Marion Webb        |

Development of website

[www.embracethefuture.org.au](http://www.embracethefuture.org.au)

Pilot strategies in Victoria

- Self esteem development through horse riding program with Riding for the Disabled
- Graffiti reduction through mural painting program
- Get Movin program - physical activity for young mums
- Photo exhibitions
- Schools website competition
- Youth forums
- National radio program for understanding mental health
- Battle of the Bands competition
- Short Film competition

Survey for mapping of existing programs and services for mental health prevention and illness prevention is progressing.

Launch of national awareness campaign at luncheon with HRH Crown Princess Mary of Denmark

## The future

### **National Agenda**

- **Community awareness programs to inform, and to educate for positive mental health for young people.**
- **Resourcing, educating and training for self esteem, self confidence and resilience in children**
- **Establishment of a National Mental Health database.**

### **Strategies to Support the National Agenda**

Development of an ambassador and role model program to de-stigmatise mental illness and promote mental wellbeing.

Promotion of the participation by young people at all levels of planning, direction promotion and delivery.

Development of the youth friendly and youth driven communications strategy.

Establishment of collaborative partnerships to support effective and successful programs and then ensure their sustainability.

## **AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

A media campaign to educate parents, teachers, the broader community and young people about the stresses of life, in particular for young people.

The campaign will educate the community to value mental wellbeing and help breakdown the stigmas currently associated with mental health.

The campaign will educate for a better community response, promote the learning of coping mechanisms & highlight resources available to support each of us in our mental wellbeing.

Strategies:

- A two pronged campaign aimed at adults, teachers and parents, the other at young people.
- A media campaign combining television and radio community announcements, children's chat shows, adult magazine and chat shows.
- Establishment of partnerships with children's television sector for ongoing inclusion of materials promoting self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience.
- Expressions of support and understanding by Australian icons.
- Schools based awareness program aimed at children and teachers.
- A campaign aimed at unions, employers and professional associations for promotion of good mental health training and practice.

### **Background**

Community awareness programs do not currently exist to assist children with development of skills and strategies to promote emotional and mental health and wellbeing.

The Mental Health Foundation of Australia has consistently lead the community in developing health promotion and illness prevention community awareness programs – in collaboration with other organisations.

A robust community awareness program is required currently to educate children, young people, parents and other family members, teachers and the broader community. Partnerships for the growth of community awareness of the societal benefits of development of resilience, self-confidence and self-esteem in childhood are needed. The community will value provision of strong life long strategies for health and wellbeing before stress, anxiety and related disorders develop and require expensive, and often inaccessible treatment options rather than relatively inexpensive options and full community involvement in prevention.

A community awareness campaign is needed to influence community attitude towards support for education to train children in the development of resilience, self-esteem and self-confidence, (initially this would provide support for the 8-13 year old training program)

Further training will need to be focused on groups currently at risk of developing further mental health problems including anxious children; disengaged young people leading to truancy, homelessness and substance abuse; young people with developmental delays and other disabilities; isolated children such as those with sensory impairment for example deafness.

## ***Rationale***

"Community Awareness Campaign (CAP). ...designed principally around the use of mass media with...supplementary educational materials. ...Positive benefits include an increase in public awareness and improved attitudes to mental health...strong support for continuation...and a high level of demand for...materials ...that provided information about mental health and illness.....Collaborative steps being taken with the media industry to strengthen its role in...mental health promotion..." ***National Mental Health Report 2002***

## TRAINING FOR POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING in CHILDREN AGED 8-13

To ensure the long term sustainability of Australia's health and wellbeing adequate resources need to be allocated for the development of self-esteem, resilience and confidence in children.

We propose an education program developed by mental health professionals targeted at middle to late primary school aged children (8-13 year olds). The program is intended for delivery in school communities but will be adaptable for use in the broader community, for example scouts. This will be a generic program with specific modules added for special needs groups such as aboriginal, cultural and disability groups.

Targeting this age group has been identified as a strategy to improve the mental wellbeing of adolescents as it is both prior to the onset of hormonal changes in adolescence and to the transition from primary to secondary school; both periods are significant in developmental stress factors for adolescent youth.

The program is intended to be holistic in nature, looking at the young person's whole life and environs and the people involved like parents, role models, teachers, and peers.

The education program will include the teaching of:

- Recognising life stressors
- Responding to community attitudes
- Coping strategies
- Personal and social life skills
- The value of positive relationships as resources (mentoring)
- Accessing available support systems & structures

Training is aimed at **prevention** of mental health problems and associated social problems related to life stressors in adolescence and adulthood by "**inoculating**" children with strategies for positive mental health practice.

The project is both a service delivery and research based project aimed at providing data for a **longitudinal study** of the effects of health and wellbeing training for young people in their capacity for dealing with life stresses.

The training provided by Mental Health Foundation of Australia and our partners will assist children:

- Through the transition period from childhood to adolescence; from the security and connectedness of primary school to the pressures and relative anonymity of secondary school;
- Through the onset of adolescent hormonal changes leading to development of their sexual and social identity
- Through the problems and stressors of "growing up" **as they arise** rather than allowing them to multiply and become problematic
- To appreciate and handle the challenges and negative influences of their peers
- To seek early assistance from appropriate sources when needed

The training will:

- Utilise a fun and innovative program delivery
- Focus on prevention and early intervention

The program will ensure the provision of:

- Appropriately qualified teachers, through undergraduate courses
- Specialist training for existing teachers, parents and careers and other professionals dealing with children

To support the program's sustainability undergraduate courses for teachers will be developed.

The program is intended for delivery in school communities but will be adaptable for use in the broader community. This will be a generic program with specific modules added for special needs groups such as aboriginal, cultural and disabled groups.

Special programs will need to be developed for the population of children and young people with special needs, such as geographic and social isolation and children whose parents are suffering illness or are unable to provide appropriate care for other reasons.

The initial pilot occurring over 3 years will form the basis of a **23-year longitudinal study** with follow-ups at 5, 10, & 20 years. This is aimed at measuring the effect of the training in middle and late adulthood where suicide and dementia issues are currently at world wide epidemic levels and increasing.

### **Rationale**

"Funding research for young people and children's mental health and wellbeing has not been readily available. The demoralising effects of pilot programs set up on one off grants not sustained with ongoing funding despite demonstrated effectiveness should not be underestimated. There is growing concern about the wastage of mental health dollars on short-term projects for which ongoing funding has not been allocated.

Currently, we do not devote sufficient resources to meet the existing demand for services. However, in the future, the costs of providing mental health care will increase substantially. This will be due to increased demand by those who do not currently use services and those who now receive grossly inadequate services. Changing population patterns of illness will also place greater pressure on demand. As the rates of illness continue to increase in younger persons (and if these young persons are not treated adequately), direct treatment, associated disability and unemployment costs will also increase". ***Mental Health Coordinating Council NSW 2004.***

"The costs of purchasing new pharmaceuticals (to be imported), and the need to establish broad population-based disease prevention strategies, will add new costs to the mental health budget. New pressures on the mental health system will emerge. These are already evident as a consequence of the direct negative impact on Australian families, and particularly young children, of the ongoing threats of domestic and international terrorism, the stress of war and continued drought conditions. Due to our prior lack of investment in effective community-based care, service innovation, biomedical research and population-based psychological or social prevention strategies, we are not well placed to meet new demands. Sadly, there has been a lack of national uptake of more effective service systems, particularly world-leading and Australian-developed prevention, early intervention and specialised treatment forms. For over a decade, we have failed to support initiatives designed to increase workforce professionalism or redistribute workforces to meet population needs. We have only just commenced investments aimed at changing community attitudes about the importance of mental health problems". ***'OUT OF HOSPITAL, OUT OF MIND!' A Report Detailing Mental Health Services in Australia in 2002 and Community Priorities for National Mental Health Policy for 2003-2008 Mental Health Council of Australia,***



## ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH DATABASE

This would be the first National Mental Health database differing from states databases by collecting or linking available data in an accessible, user friendly and affordable format, providing the whole Australian picture for the provision of mental health programs.

Data would initially include health and wellbeing data, health promotion and illness prevention data in addition to that on morbidity data at a later time.

### **Background**

The 1984 national consultative research conducted by the Mental Health Foundation of Australia (MHFA) & Australian National Association for Mental Health provided the background material for successive federal governments to work towards the establishment of the First National Strategy on Mental Health. The 1984 and subsequent research highlighted the need for a national database for mental health for provision of morbidity data, health promotion and illness prevention.

*Two successive national strategies spanning 10 years have failed to deliver. The national mental health database is still not established. Mental health morbidity data is variously provided by each state in individual databases – expensive replication of infrastructure, using slightly differing data collection in each rendering it with less than optimum availability of access and application for the sector.*

Development of a program commenced but was shelved due to lack of adequate funding. The program (previously known as VIEW 21 – Vision of Information Enhanced Wellbeing into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century) brought together five major health NGO silos, the Heart Foundation, the National Stroke Foundation, International Diabetes Institute, Mental Health Foundation of Australia and Cancer Society of Australia, aimed at providing seamless information via telephony (web) information through encrypted secure sites. With appropriate levels of community training and support, health information can be highly accessible, highly affordable and at reduced cost for delivery.

MHFA has commenced the renewal of this program with wider application through the Partnerships in Health Promotion consortium, in which it is the lead organisation in training for stress, anxiety and depression among the constituencies of the partner organisations; The Smith Family, Society of St. Vincent De Paul, Victorian Relief Committee, Alzheimer's Australia, Australian Red Cross, International Diabetes Institute, National Stroke Foundation, ACTU and others.

MHFA has provided the beginnings of the national database by developing, through partnerships with a range of NGO and government stakeholders, a database for the promotion of mental health and wellbeing, initially for young Australians. This work has begun with the establishment of the Embrace the Future Young Australians' Mental Health and Wellbeing Project (Embrace the Future) website and database.

The Embrace the Future initial survey of agencies providing illness prevention programs for adolescents throughout Australia, has been conducted with a view to:

- Assessing the programs and gaps in mental health provision
- Establishing collaborative networks of existing agencies, with a view to the
- Provision of services where gaps exist – particularly in rural and other marginalised areas.

To expand the above initiatives in the development of a national mental health database we must address the following barriers:

- Lack of appropriate agreement with states to develop compatible databases
- Desire by states to retain ownership of individual states' data.
- Lack of adequate resources within any organisation to fund establishment of national database.
- Lack of federal government will to fully meet the recommendations of the first and second national mental health strategies in provision of information resource.

### **Rationale for a National Mental Health database**

"As there is no consistent collection of mental health data across the States and Territories, the application of a national policy approach has been limited, constraining mental health planning and making utilisation review and quality assurance of programs difficult.... Objectives: To develop a national mental health data strategy." *National Mental Health Policy 1992, Australian Health Ministers Conference*

"During the consultation processes it was found time and again that adequate information was not available in areas where decisions about mental health services were required. The lack of an adequate national data base and information system on mental health in Australia will continue to hinder the capacity to conduct meaningful policy research in the field of mental health...if all aspects of mental health are to be improved in Australia a national data base, and an information system which I planned and deliberate, relevant, reliable, understandable, comprehensive and flexible are an urgent requirement."

*"Mental Health Services in Australia: A National Consultative Study. A Report Prepared for the Federal Minister for Health, Dr. Neal Blewett," Australian National Association for Mental Health and the Mental Health Foundation of Australia, 1984*

Despite the Commonwealth funding the state and territories through Information Development agreements to support information system development and workforce training through the National Information Priorities and Strategies under the Second Mental Health Plan with a view to "*produce national data as a by-product*" *National Mental Health Report 2002*, such data is difficult to access, inflexible and outdated thus often irrelevant when accessible.

## **APPENDIX**

### **MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA**

The role of the Mental Health Foundation of Australia nationally is education for promotion of mental health, prevention of illness and related stigma. The Foundation was established in 1981 by mental health & business entrepreneurs to promote corporate and community awareness of mental health. It focusses on reform where and when necessary, and on promotion and extending mental health awareness into the broader community through collaborative work.

#### ***BOARD OF DIRECTORS***

The Board comprises representatives of the corporate, legal, pharmacy & mental health sectors.

Professor Graham Burrows AO KCSJ, MD. DSc., Chairman  
Russell Jones, Honorary Secretary  
Professor Bob. Goldney, South Australia  
Professor Geoff Riley, Western Australia

Jack Harty, Honorary Treasurer  
Graeme Redman, Victoria  
Brian Sully, Queensland

#### ***SOME MHFA INITIATIVES***

- A **National Policy on Mental Health** in 1992 through our **National Consultative Study of Mental Health Services** in 1984
- **National Depression Initiative 1999 (beyondblue)** through our **National Depression Awareness Campaign** launched in 1991; subsequent national & international depression conferences brought to Australia; and, a community, parliamentary and clinicians awareness campaign.
- **Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Inquiries into Mental Illness** requests from 1987-1990 and again through the **MHFA National Conference** in November 2003.
- **National Suicide Prevention Strategy** in part resulting from our **Quiet Crisis Campaign** in 1990 highlighting the rapid escalation of suicide in Australia.
- **Towards a Gentler Society** campaigns **addressing road rage and trauma, racism, bullying and domestic violence** which led to **ACTU Stress and Bullying in the Workplace** among other campaigns.
- **National organisations** such as **Mental Health Council of Australia, Schizophrenia Fellowship/SANE Alzheimers Australia, Eating Disorders Foundations, Anxiety Recovery Centre** which grew out of the support and establishment of their parent organisations and networks by the **Foundation** with its founding organisation the **Australian National Association for Mental Health** ,
- **National Mental Health Week** which MHFA & ANAMH began, and **World Mental Health Day**, established by the **World Federation for Mental Health** linking to Australia's Week.
- **Partnerships in Health Promotion** – a consortium of independent agencies such as **Australian Red Cross, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, The Smith Family, Alzheimer's Australia, National Stroke Foundation, International Diabetes Institute, the Mental Health Foundation of Australia** and others. By working together these organisations avoid duplication and address identified gaps in services in prevention of illness and promotion of health and wellbeing, without diminishing the value of current work of the member organisations. The first issues of joint concern for **PIHP** which has been actively engaged in training in **Depression Stress and Anxiety** and is currently developing a joint program on **nutrition**.