



MINISTER FOR HEALTH CONGRATULATES YOUTH PROJECTS FOR 25 YEARS COMMUNITY SERVICE

25 November, 2009

The Minister for Health, the Hon Daniel Andrews today congratulated Youth Projects on 25 years of service to the community at a celebration held at Parliament House.

Youth Projects Chair, Melanie Raymond, said the organisation had been quietly changing lives for the better at a grass roots level for 25 years.

“We were, in fact, the first specialist youth alcohol and drug service in Melbourne and among the first HIV/Aids prevention programs in Melbourne; roles in which we continue to lead.”

Officially opened by the then Victorian Premier, the Hon John Cain, on August 25 1984, Youth Projects has grown significantly and now delivers employment, education and training and health and community services, taking an holistic approach to tackling homelessness and disadvantage in Melbourne.

This year, Youth Projects has assisted over 24,000 clients including alcohol and drug counselling in schools leading to an 80% reduction in harm.

“We do this on about 75 dollars per client per year,” Ms Raymond said.

“It’s a lot cheaper than a hospital bed or a prison cell but it is always challenging.”

Youth Projects also launched the documentary, *Underclass: Disadvantage in Melbourne and how we can change it*, at the Parliament House event.

“Underclass goes behind the job figures and looks at the problems of entrenched disadvantage and homelessness in Melbourne and what we are doing to tackle it,” Ms Raymond said.

“We know disadvantage is often inherited. Young people from long term welfare dependent families perform poorly on every educational and health measure and have increased rates of risky behaviour, offending and substance abuse.

“I would love to say that in 25 years there was almost no unemployment, that people’s mental health was better and that we were not seeing the ill-effects of substance abuse. Time will tell. But we will make a difference.”

ENDS

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