

INTERVENTION IS VITAL – *The Age* 31/8

Neurosurgeon Professor Jeffrey Rosenfeld has highlighted the appalling impact of rising youth violence (“Young men’s mindlessness starts at home: surgeon”, *The Age*, 31/8). While need for action to address this problem is clear, there are a range of strategies needed in addition to Dr Rosenfeld’s call for improved parenting skills.

Unfortunately the family unit may not be a stable or positive influence in the lives of many young people. Entrenched intergenerational poverty and unemployment, family violence, poor educational attainment and drug and alcohol use are all factors that correlate to youth offending.

Our work with disadvantaged youth in Melbourne’s northern and western suburbs shows that a broad range of strategies are needed to create pathways that lead away from violence and towards protective factors such as education, work and social inclusion.

It is also important to remember that according to Victoria Police statistics for 2007/2008, young people are over-represented in property offences but are under-represented in crimes of violence, drugs and other offending. However violent offences increase by the late teens.

Intervention before the age of eighteen is vital, and will need a multi-disciplinary approach. In addition to improved parenting skills, strong community-based services supporting school retention, engagement and alternative recreational opportunities are effective counters to growing disengagement from accepted behavioural standards.

Melanie Raymond
Chair
Youth Projects Inc
Glenroy