

# RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

## Success in Mental illness Prevention

**Sharyn McGee and Associate Professor Meg Smith from the School of Social Sciences and Dr Gabrielle Gwyther from the Social Justice & Social Change Research Group are collaborating with the Richmond Fellowship of NSW to evaluate the effectiveness of a new community-based support and prevention strategy for mental health problems. The research has been funded by the Richmond Fellowship.**

'The Richmond Fellowship Young Peoples' Outreach Program (Y-POP) provides early intervention to young people with mental illness in the hope of providing practical and emotional support to them before they reach crisis point' says Ms McGee. 'Y-POP is run in conjunction with the Western Sydney Area Health Service and Headspace Mount Druitt and assists young people aged between 16 and 24 who are experiencing emerging symptoms of mental illness. The program focuses on early intervention, care co-ordination, maintaining family relationships and practical support skills such as assistance with housing and employment, in order to enhance skills development and the young person's ability to function day to day. This research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of Y-POP in an innovative way that seeks input directly from Y-POP users, rather than from the traditional perspective of mental health care providers and practitioners.'

The research team will combine traditional data collection and psychological testing tools with alternative research methods such as narrative mapping of young peoples' views through focus groups and journal writing. This information will allow the team to explore the impact of the Y-POP program from the perspective of young people, their families and youth workers. The study also aims to train Richmond Fellowship program workers in the innovative research techniques in order to increase



their capacity to develop ongoing processes of everyday program evaluation and reflection. Recent funding announcement from NSW Government will allow an extension of this research to evaluate other Y-POP sites in Penrith, Blacktown and Parramatta.

This project will result in recommendations that will allow the Richmond Fellowship to enhance the Y-POP program and assess the potential of the scheme to be rolled out to other health services in NSW and Australia. This will lead to improved mental health care services and save the lives of young people at risk of serious mental illness.

**Project Title:** Evaluation of Richmond Fellowship Young Persons Outreach Program (Y-POP)

**Funding has been set at:** \$9,980

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**November 2010**