

School-myki Pilot Project Report: Key Findings and Recommendations

A Research Project by WEstjustice, Monique Hurley, 2018.

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Summary

WEstjustice has a long history of advocating for law reform in areas which impact on the many vulnerable young people in the Western Region. One area in particular that has received considerable focus recently is the impact of costly travel on young people who need, and want, to get to school. In 2016, the WEstjustice Fare Go Report drew a spotlight to this issue, followed by the WEstjustice Couch Surfing Limbo Report in 2017.

An education is not only a basic right, but attendance at school is also required by law in Australia. Yet the cost of public transport makes it very difficult for many young people to exercise this right and comply with the law. Ironically, the desire to comply with compulsory education requirements can often result in non-compliant travel. Non-compliant travel can lead to fines and a number of secondary issues such as increased debt, poor health and social, psychological and emotional issues.

This project has provided a new approach to dealing with this issue. By providing access to free public transport, in many cases, school attendance increased, stress decreased, access to wellbeing services increased, non-compliant travel decreased, and children felt safer.

The findings in this small project evidence the need for a state-wide initiative to introduce free public transport for vulnerable young people.

Recommendations

1. *Creation of a free and accessible pathway of travel for vulnerable young people*

The Victorian government requires children under the age of 18 to attend school. The Victorian government should therefore provide a free and accessible pathway of travel for vulnerable young people experiencing disadvantage.

2. *The school wellbeing teams are well-placed to determine which students meet the criteria*

School wellbeing teams generally have a good understanding of students' issues. These staff are therefore well placed to determine which students meet the criteria to access free public transport.

3. Complex administrative procedures need reforming

Public Transport Victoria (PTV) should review its website functionality and administrative procedures to make it easier for schools, support services and not-for-profit organisations to interact with their systems to purchase, register and top up myki cards.

4. Consideration of more support for vulnerable young people in schools

The Victorian government should consider increased support and funding for school wellbeing teams, who perform an invaluable, and increasingly important, function in schools.

Background to the project

Following the launch of the Couch Surfing Limbo report by Shorna Moore and subsequent research conducted by the Public Transport Ombudsman, the Schools-myki Pilot Project (**the project**) was established. The project involved trialing a solution to the problem of couch surfing high school students in the City of Wyndham receiving public transport fines due to inability to pay for travel.

The project ran for six months, from March 2018 to August 2018, and involved over 40 students in four participating secondary schools in the Wyndham region. Students were given access to funded public transport through the provision of myki cards by the schools' wellbeing teams. The project encouraged students to engage with wellbeing teams and access additional support and services. Outcomes from the project were universally positive and are discussed in further detail below in the Key Findings.

The Problem

Cycles of disadvantage

Socio-economic disadvantage has a significant impact on educational opportunity. Differences in educational outcomes are compounded by differences in access to educational services.¹ Disadvantaged students attend fewer hours of early childhood education, have lower attendance at school and are more likely to leave school early.²

Education is one of the major levers required to break cycles of disadvantage.³ Some young people cannot access an education because they cannot get to school. They cannot get to school because they do not have access to transport other than public transport. Public transport costs money. Due to socio-economic disadvantage, many students do not have the means by which to pay.⁴ And so the cycle continues.

Ensuring that all young people have a free and accessible pathway of travel to school so that they participate and engage with the education system is a practical and affordable first step.

¹ Stephen Lamb, Jen Jackson, Anne Walstab and Shuyan Huo, *Educational opportunity in Australia 2015: Who succeeds and who misses out*, Centre for International Research on Education Systems (Melbourne: Mitchell Institute, 2015), p 7.

² See generally, *ibid.*

³ Teach for Australia, *Breaking the Cycle: A snapshot of educational disadvantage in Australia, why teaching and school leadership matters and how you can help break the cycle*, Teach for Australia website (18 April 2017) <teachforaustralia.org/2017/04/18/breaking-the-cycle/>.

⁴ Shorna Moore, *Couch Surfing Limbo: Legal, Policy and Service Gaps affecting Young Couch Surfers and Couch Providers in the West* (Melbourne: WEstjustice, 2017), p 50.

Traveling to and from school costs money

Every Victorian school student must pay for access to public transport regardless of their socio-economic status. Young people enrolled in Victorian schools are eligible for reduced fares on a Victorian Student Pass.

A half yearly pass costs \$310 and a yearly pass costs \$594. During the life span of this project, if aged 17 or 18, a young person was required carry government-issued proof of age identification (**ID**) or proof of another concession entitlement (such as a PTV School Student ID card).

Previously, school-issued student cards were not accepted as valid proof of age. This meant families had to purchase a PTV School Student ID card, which cost \$9.00. If the young person needed to purchase a passport photo for the ID card, this cost a further \$16.95.

It has, however, recently been announced by Minister for Public Transport, Melissa Horne, that from term 1 in 2019, school students will be able to use their PTV-approved school identification card to get concession travel on public transport.⁵

Many young people cannot pay for public transport

Most young people under the age of 18 do not have any income, cannot drive, and yet must attend school.⁶ As a result, they are often dependent on their parents or guardians to help pay for public transport. These challenges are compounded if a young person is experiencing family violence, couch surfing and/or has parents who are unable or unwilling to give them money for public transport.

Further complications arise due to the exposed risk of travelling without a valid ticket and incurring an infringement for non-compliant travel. Public transport fines are one of the most common legal issues experienced by young people.⁷ The exposed risk of getting fines can cause young people stress and may deter them from travelling on public transport and attending school.⁸

Benefits of getting young people to school

Educational benefits

The benefits of completing Year 12 and gaining a school certificate or equivalent have been well documented,⁹ Year 12 attainment is regarded as an important measure of the development of a platform of individual skills and knowledge needed for further study and participation in the workforce.¹⁰

⁵ Minister for Public Transport, *Cheaper And Easier Public Transport Travel For Students* (13 December 2018) <www.premier.vic.gov.au/cheaper-and-easier-public-transport-travel-for-students/>.

⁶ Su Robertson, *Fare Go: Myki, Transport Poverty and Access to Education in Melbourne's West* (Melbourne: WEstjustice, 2016) p 10.

⁷ Moore, *Couch Surfing Limbo*, p 50.

⁸ *Ibid* p 53.

⁹ See, eg, Stephen Lamb and Phillip McKenzie, *Patterns of success and failure in the transition from school to work in Australia* (Australian Council for Educational Research: 2001); Stephen Lamb and Kate Mason, *How young people are faring 2009* (Melbourne: Foundation for Young Australians, 2009); Clive Belfield and Henry Levin, *The price we pay: economic and social consequences of inadequate education* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2008).

¹⁰ Lamb, Jackson, Walstab and Huo, *Educational opportunity in Australia 2015: Who succeeds and who misses out*.

Employment benefits

Completing Year 12 increases a young person's likelihood of continuing with further study and entering the workforce.¹¹ Young people who do not complete school are more likely to experience unemployment.¹² Those who do find work are more likely to obtain jobs in a narrow field of occupations.¹³ They are more likely to earn lower wages, by as much as 10% for each year of non-attainment.¹⁴ They are also more likely to be dependent on social security support.¹⁵

Changing economy

While Australia's resource-rich economy has achieved 26 years of continuous economic growth, the economy will need to draw heavily on broader sources of wealth, including knowledge and technology-based industries (that will require Year 12 attainment and often further study) in the future.¹⁶ As a result, Year 12 attainment is becoming increasingly important.

Social benefits

Enabling young people to travel to school means that they are more likely to remain in school, develop stronger social bonds and friendships. It also gives them the chance to take advantage of sporting and other opportunities available through most Victorian schools.¹⁷ Students who feel disconnected from school often become alienated or disaffected, struggle to succeed and place themselves at risk.¹⁸ Research repeatedly demonstrates a strong correlation between disengagement from school and the slippery slope into dysfunctional behavior, truancy and crime.¹⁹ Put simply, failure to complete high school can make transgression to antisocial behavior and criminal activity more likely.²⁰

Wellbeing benefits

School can serve as a safe haven for many young people experiencing family violence or otherwise turbulent home lives. Once at school, young people have the opportunity to access the various wellbeing services now available within the school environment.

Most student support services comprise a broad range of professionals including psychologists, speech pathologists and social workers. These providers work as part of an integrated wellbeing team within schools (or networks of schools) offering place-based services and warm referrals in an integrated setting.²¹

¹¹ Access Economics, *The economic benefit of increased participation in education and training* (Sydney: Dusseldorp Skills Forum and Business Council of Australia, 2005).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Andrew Leigh, "Returns to education in Australia" 3 *Economic Papers - Economic Society Of Australia* 233 (2008).

¹⁵ Lamb, Jackson, Walstab and Huo, *Educational opportunity in Australia 2015: Who succeeds and who misses out*, p 41.

¹⁶ David Gonski et al, *Through Growth to Achievement: The Report of The Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools* (2008), pp 3-4.

¹⁷ Robertson, *Fare Go: Myki, Transport Poverty and Access to Education in Melbourne's West*.

¹⁸ Lamb, Jackson, Walstab and Huo, *Educational opportunity in Australia 2015: Who succeeds and who misses out*.

¹⁹ See, eg, Quentin Beresford and Paul Omaji, *Rites of passage: Aboriginal youth, crime and justice* (South Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1996).

²⁰ Bruce Chapman et al, *Unemployment duration, schooling and property crime*, Centre for Economic Policy Research, Research School of Economics (Canberra: Australian National University, 2002).

²¹ See Department of Education, *Student Support Services* (30 August 2018) Department of Education website <www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/Pages/sss.aspx>.

The Department of Education has long recognised the value of onsite health services. The equity funding model provides additional funding targeted at students who face more barriers to success than their peers. School Principals have a broad discretion as to how they spend these funds. For example, it may be used to employ relevant support staff (such as Koori engagement officers, psychologists, youth workers and school lawyers) or implement programs (such as hands on learning and trauma informed practices).

Programs purchased with the equity funding are intended to assist students who are socially and economically disadvantaged and/or have learning needs. The funding is calculated based on:

- the student, their family and community characteristics such as the occupation of the parents;
- the student's disability and medical requirements; and
- whether English is a second language.²²

In addition, the Department of Education facilitates the Secondary School Nursing Program and the Doctors in Secondary Schools Program. These services intend to provide health promotion, advice and care to the students most in need.

Health benefits

There is also a clear link between access to education and improved health outcomes. For example, education can lead to improved health outcomes through:

- knowledge formation and cognitive development, which help impact positive decisions and behaviours related to health;
- development of social networks and access to information and services
- association with healthy behaviours such as lower rates of smoking, lower rates of obesity and higher rates of preventative service use; and
- relationship with employment, increased income and resulting increased access to health care and health insurance.²³

Approaches and their limitations

The current Victorian public transport framework offers reduced fares to school students. While this is similar to the schemes that exist in South Australia and Western Australia,²⁴ other states provide *free* public transport to school students who meet certain criteria.

In NSW and London, students can apply for *free* public transport to and from school. To be eligible, they need to be enrolled full time in a recognised school and live too far away to walk.²⁵

²² Victorian Auditor-General, *Additional School Costs for Families Appendix A: Victorian school funding explained* (Melbourne: Victorian Government Printer, 2015).

²³ Deloitte Access Economics, *The socio-economic benefits of investing in the prevention of early school leaving* (Deloitte: 2012), p 5.

²⁴ Public Transport Authority of WA, Who is eligible for Student SmartRider? Transperth website <www.transperth.wa.gov.au/smartrider/types-of-smartrider/student-smartrider>; Government of South Australia, Concession Cards, Adelaide Metro website (7 September 2018) <www.adelaidemetro.com.au/Tickets-fares/Concession-Cards#student>.

²⁵ New South Wales Government, Who's eligible for a school travel pass? Transport for New South Wales (2016) <apps.transport.nsw.gov.au/ssts/#/whosEligible#scrollTarget3>; UK Government, Free School Transport, GOV.UK website <www.gov.uk/free-school-transport>.

In the Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Queensland, students can apply for free public transport if they meet similar criteria and the student or their parent or guardian have a recognised concession card (for example, a Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card or Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card).²⁶

One limitation of these approaches is that they only enable young people to travel to and from school. As a result, this does not have the ancillary benefits of providing a way for young people to leave situations of family violence and find a safe place to sleep. It also fails to facilitate travel to and from support services that are available outside of school.

Some schemes also have specific and restrictive requirements. For example, in Queensland, a parent can only register one address as the principal place of residence from where the student can catch public transport.²⁷ Therefore, if the young person is couch surfing with relatives or friends, transport assistance is not available from those addresses.

The Solution

These problems can be solved by the introduction of free public transport for vulnerable young people through the provision of free myki cards accessible through school wellbeing teams.

The project

Members of the school wellbeing teams provided myki cards to eligible students for a period of time (usually one month) at no cost to the student.

To be eligible, students needed to:

- be enrolled in one of the participating schools;
- be experiencing unstable housing (for example, be couch surfing, experiencing family violence, be sleeping rough, etc) and/or have limited access to money;
- be engaged with a school wellbeing program; and:
 - engage with a member of the wellbeing team on a regular basis; and
 - present the myki card at each appointment.
- have exclusive use of the myki card (eg, the student was not permitted to share or sell the card and was required to report immediately if the card was lost or stolen).

In order to continue participating in the project, students were required to report back to the wellbeing team each month to review their circumstances and to determine if they required ongoing assistance. If so, they would receive a “top-up” on the myki card. This had a secondary benefit of ensuring that the students regularly engaged, and received, any necessary support.

²⁶ ACT Government, Student transport program, Access Canberra website (13 November 2018) <www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a_id/1246/~/student-transport-program#!tabs-2>; Tasmanian Government, Student Travel, Department of State Growth (Transport) website <www.transport.tas.gov.au/passenger/student_travel>.

²⁷ Queensland Government, School Transport Access Scheme, Translink website (April 2017) <translink.com.au/sites/default/files/assets/resources/travel-information/network-information/school/school-transport-assistance-scheme.pdf>.

The project was delivered in collaboration with four schools. These schools were selected on the basis that there was a pre-existing relationship with WEstjustice (the project lead) through the School Lawyer Program.²⁸

Why Wyndham?

The Wyndham region was selected due to the increasingly high rates of family violence, youth homelessness and the dependency of young people on public transport.

By way of illustration, in 2018, the City of Wyndham in Melbourne's Western suburbs reported the fifth highest number of family violence incidents of all Victorian municipalities. Between the years ending 2014 and 2018, the number of family violence incidents in Wyndham increased by 21%.²⁹ This increase is considered higher than in Victoria (17%) and the North West Metro area (20%) during the same period.³⁰ To add to this, in 2016, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that there were 730 homeless people in Wyndham.³¹ This was up 76.3% from 2011, with over one third of those 730 people aged under 18.³²

How was it funded?

The project was funded with \$37,487.50 from Wyndham City Council and \$12,500 from public transport service providers – Metro Trains, Yarra Trams, BusVic and Transdev.

Project outcomes

The intended project outcomes were as follows:

1. Allow youth in unstable housing to escape family violence and move between houses to find somewhere safe to sleep.
2. Assist vulnerable young people to effectively and compliantly engage with public-transport.
3. Build local knowledge and capacity in relation to how best to assist young couch surfers and youth experiencing family violence.
4. Build the capacity of schools and wellbeing officers to support couch surfers and youth experiencing family violence.
5. Create a new pathway of compliance for young couch surfers and youth experiencing family violence who do not have access to income and rely on public transport to travel to and from school.
6. Improve local knowledge of the challenges faced by young couch surfers and youth escaping family violence.
7. Reduce barriers for couch surfers and youth experiencing family violence to attend and engage with their school as a gateway to accessing education and services.
8. Help identify gaps in service funding (for example, youth access to family violence funding can be inhibited when provided to parents).

Methodology

The project materials were derived from the following sources:

- A literature review of relevant materials

²⁸ For more information on the School Lawyers program, see the WEstjustice website <www.westjustice.org.au/community-development-and-law-reform>.

²⁹ Crime Statistics Agency, *Family incidents for year ending 30 June 2018* (2018).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness* (2016).

³² Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Customised report* (2018).

- Surveys of the following research subjects:
 - members of the participating school wellbeing teams;
 - principals of the participating schools;
 - service providers who received referrals as a result of the project;
 - members of the project's Steering Committee;
 - student participants in the project aged over 18.
- Analysis of data collected throughout the project, including:
 - intake forms; and
 - monthly reports, with members of school wellbeing teams asked to provide data mapping the progress of each participating student by reference to their school attendance and the number of new fines received.

Survey limitations

Due to the limits of this project and ethical considerations, a decision was made not to survey young people aged under 18. Instead, the impact of the project and information regarding the young people's participation in the project was collected from other sources.

Key findings

The project was a success, with 42 students accessing the program through their school wellbeing team. The key findings are as follows:

1. Young people want to attend school

Lack of affordable transportation is a frequently cited barrier to regular school attendance.³³ This project has shown that many vulnerable young people want to attend school and will attend school if they are given a free and accessible pathway of travel.

Simply put by one student participant in the project: "it made me have one less thing to stress about when I had so much going on at home and school".

2. Increased attendance at school

All members of the school wellbeing teams surveyed agreed that the provision of myki card helped vulnerable young people attend school. Data collected by the schools during the project showed that the majority of students who participated in the project increased their attendance rate and many attendance rates remained consistent throughout the project.

Some significantly outstanding results were recorded by one school, with increased attendance reaching as high as to 32%

A school wellbeing team provided the following example of how the project and the availability of a free myki card impacted on a student's increased attendance at school:

A student came to the attention of the school wellbeing team in April, when their attendance started to decrease. In talking with the student, it was identified that they had experienced past family violence and that the family home was not a supportive

³³ See, eg, Alameda County Public Health Department, *Getting on Board for Health: A Health Impact Assessment of Bus Funding and Access* (San Francisco: Alameda County Public Health Department, 2013); David Sapp & Jeremy Blasi, *Counterproductive and Wasteful: Los Angeles' Daytime Curfew Pushes Students Away From School and Diverts Resources Away From Real Community Safety* (Los Angeles: ACLU of Southern California, 2012).

one. The student was thinking about leaving home and school. They met with the career pathways leading teacher to discuss their options. The student was linked in with an apprenticeship alongside completing his studies at school. The student reported that they would not have been able to attend their apprenticeship course (located in the city) if they didn't have the myki card. The student's school attendance improved, and the family is accessing support via Childfirst services.

Another school wellbeing team provided the following illustration of how a young person experiencing family violence used the myki card to access different accommodation options as well as attend school:

At the beginning of 2018, a student was kicked out of home and forced to link in with a housing access point in Wyndham. Due to limited accommodation options, the student lived in a hotel for 4 months... After being linked in with the Myki program, student's confidence in catching public transport increased, attendance increased and overall reported mental health increased due to the support. Student felt extremely supported by the school and increased motivation to complete Year 12.

The student participant surveys confirmed these results. Of the four surveyed, two said that before participating in the project, they attended school on average 1 to 2 days per week. The two other students said that they attended 3 to 4 days per week.

During the program, the students confirmed increased attendance, with three students reporting that they attended school 3 to 4 days per week on average and one student reporting that they were able to attend school 5 days per week while participating in the project.

3. Young people will travel compliantly on public transport when equipped to do so

The students who participated in the project reported that they travelled compliantly and 'touched on' with their myki card each time they used public transport.

All student participants surveyed indicated that they could not afford to put money on their myki cards. One participant noted that they "couldn't always pay for it so [they] wouldn't tap on and stressed that [they] would be caught". Another explained that putting money on their myki card "depended on when [their] mum was feeling mentally well and [they] could ask her for money without creating conflict".

4. No new fines

Throughout the project, there were no reported incidents of non-compliant travel. All members of school wellbeing teams surveyed confirmed that the provision of the myki cards helped young people avoid incurring fines for travelling without a valid ticket.

The surveyed students confirmed that they did not receive any new fines while participating in the project. Of the four student participants surveyed, two said that an Authorised Officer checked their myki card once or twice while the student was participating in the project.

5. No negative interactions with public transport authorities

No students reported having negative interactions with public transport authorities while participating in the project. This was confirmed by the surveys. In addition, no students indicated that they encountered any problems using public transport. This was a significant

result in light of the fact that some students interacted with Authorised Officers during the project.

6. *Young people feel better about travelling on public transport*

All student participants surveyed either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that:

- they felt more positive about using public transport when they had the myki card;
- having the myki card made it less stressful for them to travel to and from school; and
- the myki card made them feel more positive about interacting with Authorised Officers and bus drivers.

These results were confirmed by a school counsellor, who reported that the students participating in the project “have all reported feeling more confident and positive about using the public transport system. It has given them a sense of security in an otherwise unstable situation they find themselves in”.

Another school found that “students have reported a decrease in feelings of anxiety and stress while on public transport due to having a valid ticket and eliminating the risk of getting into trouble for not having one”.

7. *Young people have been able to escape family violence*

The project helped vulnerable young people escape dangerous situations. One school highlighted that “some students were able to use their Myki in times of risk to access places to stay and emergency accommodation when unable to stay at home for various reasons.”

This was confirmed by the survey results, with 66.7% of the members of the school wellbeing teams stating that the provision of the myki card helped participants move between houses to find somewhere safe to sleep. This response was confirmed by participants, with 50% of students surveyed indicating that they used their myki card to leave home when it was unsafe.

8. *Increased capacity to address problems*

School wellbeing teams reported that they had increased capacity to assist vulnerable young people through the provision of an additional resource. All members of the school wellbeing teams surveyed agreed that the project built their capacity to support vulnerable youth, with one commenting that “[t]he myki program fulfilled a vital gap in supporting young people that the school was not able to facilitate with our own budgets and capacity.”

9. *Internal referrals*

School wellbeing teams serve as a referral point to an increasing amount of services that are available within schools. As part of the project, internal referrals were made to school counsellors, social workers, visiting psychologists, school nurses, school lawyers and GPs.

All members of the school wellbeing teams surveyed agreed that the provision of the myki card helped vulnerable youth to access services. The monthly appointments between the students and wellbeing team encouraged students to engage on an ongoing basis and address issues.

10. *External referrals*

As part of the project, school wellbeing teams facilitated external referrals to a number of support services including Orygen, Whitelion, Centrelink, Centre for Multicultural Youth, Melbourne City Mission, Headspace, Wyndham Uniting Care, Foundation House and Werribee Support and Housing.

Of the support services surveyed, all strongly agreed that the project helped vulnerable young people cope better with their underlying issues (for example, finding somewhere safe to sleep). In addition, all agreed (either strongly or somewhat) that the project helped vulnerable young people access services like theirs.

11. Wellbeing teams should administer myki cards

All student participants and wellbeing team members surveyed agreed that it was a good idea to be able to access the myki card through their school. This is because the school wellbeing teams “know the students situation best and can monitor [the use of the myki card]” and “it strengthens [their] bond with students to be able to support them in this way.”

While the administration of initiatives like this project place an increased demand on school wellbeing teams, there was overwhelmingly support for this initiative.

All members of the school wellbeing teams surveyed also agreed that the project should be extended and that the 6 month time period for the project was insufficient.

Recent announcements

Recently the Victorian Government announced a 12 month trial (**the trial**) involving access to free public transport for homeless, disadvantaged and otherwise vulnerable people. The trial will enable select organisations to purchase heavily discounted passes (\$10.75 for a weekly pass and \$38.85 monthly pass) and distribute them to clients experiencing significant disadvantage.³⁴

The trial has been extended to schools, which means the passes will be available to school wellbeing teams to distribute to vulnerable students.

Given that the new passes take a different, paper form to a conventional myki pass, there is, however, a risk of stigmatisation of young people travelling with this pass.

Conclusion

The project has been a practical and affordable way to help vulnerable young people travel to and from school. As explained by one student participant in the project: “it helped me so much and made me stress less”.

While the approaches taken in other jurisdictions, like in NSW and London, allow for school students to travel to and from school for free, this does not have the added benefit of enabling a young people to escape family violence by moving between houses to find somewhere safe to sleep.

³⁴ Benjamin Preiss, Free travel expanded for homeless and disadvantaged Victorians, *The Age* (online), 6 October 2018 <www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/free-travel-expanded-for-homeless-and-disadvantaged-victorians-20181005-p50825.html>.

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Further, working in collaboration with schools to facilitate this project and encouraging students to access their school's wellbeing teams to participate in the project has seen an increase in internal and external referrals to support services.

The Victorian government should consider creating a free and accessible pathway of travel for all school aged vulnerable young people.

Next steps

On 29 October 2018, Treasurer Tim Pallas and the Victorian government committed \$175,000 to funding an extended project across a larger number of schools for a full school year in the City of Wyndham.

The project Steering Committee, co-chaired by WEstjustice and the PTO, will oversee the extended project with the possibility of widening of the Steering Committee membership to include other relevant stakeholders.

Through this extended project, we will determine whether the findings of this small project can be replicated over a larger sample size and ultimately whether there is merit in rolling out the project in future to assist vulnerable students across Victoria.