

## Handout 5B: The economy and its impact on mental health

Below you will find 8 clips from newspaper articles between 4 December 2008 and 5 February 2009. These are text only versions of the articles and are sourced to a number of Australian newspapers. At the end of this document you will find a list of websites and other resources that may be useful when further investigating your topic.

### Media articles

#### **Study finds employment is good for your health**

Author: By Nyssa Skilton Medical and Technology Reporter  
Publication: The Canberra Times, Page 10 (Wed 11 Feb 2009) Edition: CT

A job today helps keep the doctor away, a new study has found. The study, published today in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, finds unemployment has mental and physical impacts on 18 to 25-year-olds, especially when most other people are employed. Lead author Justin Scanlan, of the University of Sydney, said health impacts included depression and anxiety, stemming from low self-esteem, and lower physical activity.

"For a number of young people, being unemployed may be the trigger for an episode of depression or the development of an anxiety disorder," Mr Scanlan said. "For an otherwise healthy person, being unemployed is one of the greatest risk factors for poor health." Mr Scanlan said his study was of particular relevance in an economic climate with a looming high unemployment rate.

He said it was important to acknowledge that unemployment was a significant health risk and form interventions that addressed first and foremost the health of unemployed people. Australian economists expect last month's unemployment rate to have risen from 4.5 per cent to 4.7 per cent after 18,000 job losses. Some analysts expect unemployment rates to reach 6 per cent this year.

Mr Scanlan said high levels of unemployment could burden Australia's health systems. But he said because people who were unemployed were also often marginalised, an enormous amount of unmet or untreated ill health in the community was more likely. The study used results from a cross-sectional survey of about 250 unemployed 18 to 25-year-olds living in NSW.

Survey participants responded to a measure of disability online survey, which looked at the consequences of illness. Mr Scanlan said the link between unemployment and poor health created a vicious cycle. People who were psychologically unwell found it more difficult to obtain employment even in a strong labour market, he said.

Unemployment then might exacerbate the risk of developing a mental illness, which was often



highest during early adult years. But the study also found the consequences of being unemployed were better when economic conditions were worse. "Because more people will be unemployed, unemployed people will feel less to blame for their situation," Mr Scanlan said.

"So it helps give people a bit of a chin up when other people that they know are also unemployed."

### **Time to hold on tight**

Author: Jane Fynes-Clinton

Publisher: News Ltd

Publication: Courier Mail, Page 29 (Thu 5 Feb 2009) Keywords: mental (5)

Edition: 1 - First with the news

Section: Features

'It is important to remember what is normal'

TIMES are certainly tough. No matter the size of the Federal Government's rescue package or the breadth of the reform proposal, the economic news always seems to swing back to warnings of pain and suffering to come.

If we are told things are terrible for long enough, eventually it takes a toll on our emotional health.

The risk of widespread depression in the recession grows ever-higher.

The World Health Organisation has rung the warning bell. Britain's Conservative Party has claimed the financial crisis will increase mental health problems by 26 per cent by 2010. Australian experts have not yet put a number on it, but are equally worried.

David Alcorn, chairman of the Queensland branch of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatry, says the more stress a person encounters, the higher the risk of mental illness. Times of job losses, belt-tightening and increased expenses certainly bring stress.

Alcorn says it is not only those who lose their jobs who are affected: families worry too, as do those who have not been retrenched, who fear they might be next.

The acting chief executive officer of beyondblue, psychologist Clare Shann, says the alarmist language and worst-case scenario stories dominating media coverage are not helping people cope or find reasons to feel hopeful.

Sociologist and researcher at Griffith University's Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention, Dr Kiari Kolve, says studies show that in times of economic recession and depression, there is an increase in suicide.

A study in the US recently showed that since 1951, official suicide rates increased when employment rates went down.

But while Alcorn, Shann and Kolve all warn more people may face mental ill-health because of unstable economic times, they are also quick to point out that all is not gloom and doom.

It is important to remember what is normal: it is normal to feel upset when a job is lost; it is normal to feel worried about the family's welfare when debt grows; it is normal to feel sad and unimportant if things go bad.

Shann points out that just because someone loses their job, it doesn't mean they are certain to become depressed or anxious. Just because times are tight or even overwhelming financially and emotionally, it doesn't mean people are out of options.

Psychology tells us that while people feel they have the ability to make choices in some area of life, they are more likely to find ways to cope. Some even see a sudden change of circumstance as an opportunity to pursue something new.

Most people are resilient. Most people will hang on and ride out this storm. And for having been through this, the community as a whole will become more resilient.

Global market research group TNS found a fortnight ago that Australians were more optimistic about the financial crisis than most -- in fact more than people in the US, France or the UK. And even though most of the Australians surveyed believed we would eventually have to endure an economic depression, they thought it would not be particularly long-lived.

People want help to ride this out and mental health experts say that is a sign of a society looking after itself.

Just before Christmas, beyondblue produced a booklet in response to public requests for information. Titled Taking Care of Yourself after Retrenchment or Financial Loss, it was taken up quicker than any other publication beyondblue had produced. In the first two days of its release, 5000 requests for it were lodged and demand has not let up.

All mental health professionals say it is important to ask for emotional and financial help early if things are becoming hard to handle. They say we need to reach out to one another through this.

Help is out there. It is just a matter of asking for it.

And while this period hurts, is worrying and the uncertainty of what lies ahead is disturbing, it is worth remembering that we are not alone. We are all, one way or another, in this pickle together.

The pendulum will swing back to good and prosperous times, just as it has before. We just have to hold on.

### **Where to get help**

13Health: 1343 2584

Lifeline: 131 114, [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800, [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)

beyondblue: 1300 224 636 [www.ybblue.com.au](http://www.ybblue.com.au)

## PM sees 'rising tide' of jobless

Author: KATE HANNON Publisher: News Ltd

Publication: The Mercury, Hobart, Page 4 (Tue 27 Jan 2009) Keywords: mental (1)

Edition: 1 -

AUSTRALIA is facing a "rising tide of unemployment" in 2009 as the impact of the global financial crisis deepens, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd warns.

The Government is so concerned it has called a meeting of not-for-profit welfare and community groups today to discuss how the sector will handle increasing demand for its services.

Groups want the Government to commit at least \$300 million in extra funding to provide emergency relief such as cash handouts for food and bills, and shelter.

Australian Council of Social Service president Lin Hatfield-Dodds said demand for frontline services had doubled in the past few months as the effects of the global crisis had begun to bite locally.

During an Australia Day speech in Canberra yesterday, Mr Rudd said the crisis was not of Australia's making but was the result of unrestrained greed, encouraged by an ideology of unfettered markets.

"But now we face the living consequences here at home of this unrestrained greed abroad," he said.

The "rising tide of unemployment that last year inundated America and Europe and China now laps on our shores as well," he said.

Employment and Social Inclusion Minister Julia Gillard will meet community sector groups including ACOSS, the Salvation Army, Mission Australia and Catholic Social Services in Sydney today.

Ms Gillard said the meeting would tap into the best thinking from the sector on what should be done to help people in distress.

"So I will be having that discussion for the purpose of seeing what people think is already happening and is likely to happen in terms of unemployment, housing, mental stress on members of the community," Ms Gillard said.

Ms Hatfield-Dodds said an Access Economics report last November showed about 80,000 people who had sought assistance were turned away by welfare groups during 2006-07 because of a lack of funding for services.

"What we do know in the community sector is we've already seen demand for our services doubling," she said.

The demand in the past couple of months had involved requests for emergency relief for people unable to buy food or pay their bills.

## Help at hand to cope with work blues

Author: Ian Royall

Publisher: News Ltd

Publication: Herald Sun, Page 21 (Tue 16 Dec 2008) Keywords: mental (1)

Edition: 1 - FIRST Section: NEWS

A NATIONAL campaign will be launched today to help anyone struggling to cope with the economic gloom or job loss.

Beyondblue, the national depression initiative, is releasing a booklet to help people beat the financial blues. Beyondblue chairman Jeff Kennett said the economic downturn had hit countless families.

"Adapting to adversity and change can be difficult, but there is help and support available," he said. "There's no shame in asking for help -- everyone needs a helping hand occasionally."

Mr Kennett said he had to cope with change when he was voted out as premier in 1999 and had to find something else to do.

"I wasn't happy about that. I had 23 years in Parliament and seven years as premier," he said. The free 24-page guide gives tips on budgeting, health, where to get help and how to take care of the family.

Mr Kennett said that even thrifty, diligent and cautious people had been dealt a financial blow beyond their control.

Beyondblue clinical adviser Assoc Prof Michael Baigent said the economic impact was likely to strike home early next year.

"We do know that stressful events can contribute to mental illness," he said. But many people would not be affected at all and would cope.

Some middle managers who were used to being in control could be at risk of suffering anxiety or depression if they were suddenly laid off, Assoc Prof Baigent said.

The guide will be made available to companies upon request and 100 copies sent to every state and federal MP nationwide.

Mr Kennett said taking early measures could prevent bigger problems down the track. Tips in the booklet include talking to the family without frightening the children.

"News is coming from all directions, from the Prime Minister down, and he keeps telling us how tough it's going to be," Mr Kennett said. "Sure, it's realistic but you have to give people hope."

The booklet can be downloaded or ordered from the [beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au) website, or by calling the beyondblue info line on 1300 22 4636.



## Cash woes now hitting home front

Author: Claire Heaney

Publisher: News Ltd

Publication: Herald Sun, Page 78 (Thu 30 Oct 2008) Keywords: mental (1)

Edition: 1 - FIRST Section: BUSINESS

SMALL business operators say worries about cash flow are spilling into their home lives.

A massive 94 per cent of businesses polled in a new survey said they were stressed out about cash.

And half of those conceded that they did not know where to turn to for some relief.

The National Australia Bank's Small and Medium Enterprise Cash Flow Study also revealed that as many as 56 per cent of small business owners had taken a pay cut to help balance the books.

NAB Business Banking state general manager Kevin Potter urged small businesses to seek advice sooner rather than later.

He said seeking support would help keep finances in control and stress to a minimum.

"This study has found almost half the SMEs across Victoria do not have access to help or support in managing their cash flow," Mr Potter said.

"This stress is not only damaging to the mental health of the person and their family, but also has a long-term impact on the longevity of their business," he said.

The survey found that less than 30 per cent of respondents would speak to their bank manager if they encountered problems.

That compared with 39 per cent that would turn to a family member.

Mr Potter said it was essential SMEs had a professional support network.

"SMEs do not have the safety buffer enjoyed by many large organisations during tight economic times," he said.

"The key trigger points for stress this study has identified include chasing payments from late or non-paying customers, sorting out taxes at the end of the year and being hit by unexpected bills."

He noted that while these in themselves were not surprising, they took a cumulative toll.

"And this toll is great, with future profitability on the line as four out of 10 Victorian SMEs report that cash flow problems put stress on their relationships with customers and suppliers," he said.

"Two-thirds of Victorian SMEs have refused credit to late paying customers.

"There are also proactive and preventative options available for SME owners and managers, rather than refusing credit after the fact."

These include:

**STREAMLINING** any business banking online to make it easier to manage, and using customer payment methods such as EFTPOS, BPAY and Direct Debit for easier access to cleared funds.

**CONSIDER** borrowing against business sales invoices rather than fixed assets to ensure their financing facility will grow as fast as their business.

**WHEN** it comes to confronting late-paying customers. SMEs are often reliant on a small customer base and therefore reluctant to confront late payers. Taking measures to better manage cash flow and becoming familiar with the banking solutions may help.

**PUT** together a good cash-flow forecast. A cash-flow forecast is a key diagnostic tool for the health of a business. Without one, getting your business cash-flow right is almost impossible.

**COMMUNICATE** from day one. Constant communication is the crucial first step to improving debtor days and the best way of getting a bill paid on time.

### **Hard times spark violence**

Author: Holly Ife

Publisher: News Ltd

Publication: Herald Sun, Page 13 (Wed 29 Oct 2008) Keywords: mental (1)

Edition: 1 - FIRST Section: NEWS

**MORE** than four out of five family violence cases also involve mental illness, financial hardship, alcohol abuse or housing difficulties, according to a new report.

Anglicare's Journeys to Safety report, released today, includes Victoria Police statistics showing a 7 per cent increase in domestic violence in the past 12 months -- a 20 per cent leap since 2004-05.

According to the charity, almost a quarter of all assaults recorded by Victoria Police were family violence-related.

Anglicare Victoria CEO Ray Cleary said family violence incidents could further increase as the global financial crisis puts pressure on already struggling families.

"It is clearly contributing," Dr Cleary said. "I wouldn't think it was the exclusive cause but we know from our research that families are feeling increasing financial stress, which has now become a sense of hopelessness.

"This adds to frustration, anger, and sometimes violence."

Dr Cleary said children with aggressive parents were more likely to grow up using violence, but he said society was also to blame for the spike in violence within the home, and called for more responsible promotion of alcohol.



## Health problems revealed for kids in jobless families

Author: Stephen Lunn, Social affairs writer

Publisher: News Ltd

Publication: The Australian, Page 9 (Wed 24 Sep 2008) Keywords: mental (2)

Edition: 1 - All-round Country

Section: Local

ONE in seven Australian children live in jobless families, leaving them at greater risk of physical and mental health problems than other kids.

Of the 543,000 children living in jobless families, many are from one-parent households.

More than half (51 per cent) of the children in one-parent families do not live with an employed parent, compared with just 6 per cent of children in two-parent families.

Despite improvements since 1996, a report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to be published today notes that Australia still has the second-highest percentage of children living in jobless families in the developed world.

“(This is) largely due to the relatively high rate of one-parent households in Australia and the high rate of joblessness among this group,” the AIHW report -- Making Progress; The health, development and wellbeing of Australia's children -- says.

The stronger labour market over the past decade had polarised families into haves and have-nots, it says.

“As the employment rate of individuals has fallen and an increasing number of families have two working parents, joblessness has become more concentrated within some households.

“Jobless households are disproportionately likely to be reliant on welfare, have low incomes and experience financial stress, and members of these households report worse physical and mental health and lower life satisfaction than members of households where someone is employed.”

Intergenerational welfare dependency was another concern, the report notes.

Indigenous children are most at risk, with 42 per cent living in jobless families in 2006, nearly three times the rate of other children, though the rate for both groups has fallen since 1996.

“One of the key barriers to work for jobless parents is their low levels of education,” says Gregor Macfie, acting chief executive of the Australian Council of Social Service.

“Over 60 per cent of jobless sole parents currently on income support have a Year 10 education or less.

“Governments can improve the job prospects of jobless parents by investing more in education and training.”



The AIHW report finds that more than 95,000 15- to 19-year-olds, 7 per cent of the total, were neither employed nor studying, leaving them set to fall behind their peers in terms of participation in society.

The report does find some significant improvements in children's health and wellbeing, including a 30 per cent drop in mortality rates, although the under-5 mortality rate still ranks in the bottom third of the OECD.

“Teenage smoking rates have halved (from 2001 to 2007) to around one in 10 persons for 14- to 19-year-olds, (and) risky alcohol intake and illicit drug use have also reduced,” it says.

But 6 per cent of primary school students were obese, and a further 17 per cent were overweight.

Social Inclusion Minister Julia Gillard last night said the AIHW report “shows there has been very little improvement in the number of jobless households in this country despite the strong economic conditions”.

“The Government's Social Inclusion agenda is specifically aimed at addressing this issue -- pockets of disadvantage that continue to exist despite ongoing employment growth,” she said.

“The Government has asked the new Social Inclusion Board to examine evidence on the best ways to help jobless families and to assist Australia's most disadvantaged local communities.”

### **Why women are so glum**

Author: NADINE WILLIAMS Publisher: News Ltd

Publication: The Advertiser, Page 14 (Thu 28 Aug 2008) Keywords: health (2)

Edition: 1 - State

Section: News

HAPPINESS boils down to the rising cost of a loaf of bread.

Results from the latest Wellbeing Index show that inflation is impacting on women's health and wellbeing more than men.

This is because women better understand the prices of everyday goods and are finding it harder to make ends meet. For the first time since the index began seven years ago, the sexes have swapped places in the happiness stakes.

Our men are now happier than women, an “extremely significant” development which researchers say is tied into the steep rises in the cost of living.

Rises in petrol, interest rates and the weekly household food bills are to blame says Deakin University wellbeing researcher Professor Bob Cummins.

“What we are seeing here is a switch in the seven-year trend in the happiness stakes, which is really quite remarkable,” says Professor Cummins.



The index reveals a "very dramatic fall" in women's wellbeing, which he links to how threatened they feel by the rising Consumer Price Index.

Men, however, remain relatively content, because their wellbeing is highly linked to making money, says Professor Cummins.

But women's happiness is closely linked with "their ability to manage it".

The Reserve Bank aims to keep CPI under 3 per cent, but it went up by 4.5 per cent in 2007. In the first two quarters of this year, March and June, the CPI Index rose 4.5 per cent.

"The girls are the frontline buyers; they actually know the price of bread," Professor Cummins said.

"For the first time we have discovered that the CPI is an important determinant for wellbeing for Australians, but particularly for females."

The index, which surveys 2000 people, measures people's satisfaction with their health, relationships, safety, standard of living, community and future security.

## Websites

### Documents:

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McKee-Ryan, F. M., Song, Z., Wanberg, C. R., & Kinicki, A. J. (2005). Psychological and Physical Well-Being During Unemployment: A Meta-Analytic Study. Journal of Applied Psychology. Vol 90(1) Jan 2005, 53-76.

<http://pcbfaculty.ou.edu/classfiles/MGT%206273%20Organizational%20Behavior/Old%20Readings/McKee-Ryan%20et%20al%202005%20JAP.pdf>

Research Summary: Access to Economic Resources- VicHealth

[http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ProgramsandProjects/MentalHealthandWellBeing/Publications/Attachments/Access\\_to\\_economic\\_Final\\_Fact\\_sheet.ashx](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ProgramsandProjects/MentalHealthandWellBeing/Publications/Attachments/Access_to_economic_Final_Fact_sheet.ashx)

### National Links:

SANE Australia

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

beyondblue

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

The Black Dog Institute

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

The World Health Organisation  
[www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
[www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)

**State Based Links:**

The Mental Health Association – NSW  
[www.mentalhealth.asn.au/](http://www.mentalhealth.asn.au/)

The Centre for Mental Health- NSW  
[www.health.nsw.gov.au/policy/cmh/](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/policy/cmh/)

The Mental Health Association- QLD  
[www.mentalhealth.org.au](http://www.mentalhealth.org.au)

The Northern Territory Mental Health Coalition  
[www.ntcoss.org.au](http://www.ntcoss.org.au)

The Department of Health- Mental Health Unit SA  
[www.healthsa.gov.au/mentalhealth/](http://www.healthsa.gov.au/mentalhealth/)

Mental Health Western Australia  
[www.mental.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.mental.health.wa.gov.au)

The Mental Health Foundation of Australia- VIC  
[www.mentalhealthvic.org.au](http://www.mentalhealthvic.org.au)

The Mental Health Council of Tasmania  
[www.mhct.org.au](http://www.mhct.org.au)