**Place Based Community Strengthening Forum**

The **"Place Based Community Strengthening Forum"** was successfully held at the Camperdown Golf Club on Wednesday 9th October 2013. The theme for the Forum aimed to explore best practice applied and research methods that strengthened the health and wellbeing of communities tackling issues of disadvantage across the Barwon South West Region. A selection of Deakin researcher’s academic learning’s and regional place based development approaches were showcased at the Forum. The Forum was well attended by over 80 participants across a spectrum of health professionals and managers in community health services and local government as well as Deakin researchers and educators across the region.

**Dr Fiona Reidy** (Director Health and Wellbeing, G21 Regional Alliance) presented the Forum’s Keynote address:  **“G21’s Addressing Disadvantage Taskforce”** providing an extensive and informative overview of G21’s recent policy platform to address disadvantage in the Geelong Region.

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**Forum Presentation summaries:**

**“Whittington Works”**

“Whittington Works “was developed as part of the Whittington Community Renewal project as a targeted approach to enhance employment opportunities for Whittington residents. The City of Greater Geelong in partnership with sixteen local organisations from the employment, training and education sectors joined forces to provide education and training opportunities in Whittington.

Presenter: Mr Mark Farrugia (Senior Facilitator, Whittington Works)

mfarrugia@geelongcity.vic.gov.au

**"Great South Coast Year 12 or Equivalent Attainment Project"**

This project aims to address the issue of poor school educational attainment rates in the Great South Coast. The project has implemented a framework involving facilitation of research, engagement, partnership and commitment building to enable new ways of working together and doing things differently.

Presenters: Ms Vicki Mason (Chair of the Strengthening our Communities Pillar & Director of Community Development, Warrnambool City Council), Ms Toni Jenkins (Executive Officer, South West LLEN)

vmason@warrnambool.vic.gov.au eo@swllen.net.au

**“Disrupting inter-generational cycles of place-based disadvantage”**

International examples were presented showing where different states and regions have successfully reduced poverty through a planned program. Responses to the SW Alliance Delphi study were presented to argue that reducing place-based disadvantage is a regional priority. The prevention science approach was outlined and it was argued that the approach provides the basis for effectively reducing inter-generational cycles of place-based disadvantage.

Presenter: Professor John Toumbourou (Chair in Health Psychology, Deakin University)

John.toumbourou@deakin.edu.au

**Marketplace presentations:**

Selections of best practice place based strengthening projects occurring across the region were showcased as small and interactive group discussions in a ‘marketplace’ format. Workshop participants had a choice of attending three out of seven sessions to be run concurrently over three twenty minute sessions:

1. **Foodskil\_A Community Food Social Enterprise** based in Norlane, Geelong aims to offer affordable quality fresh food to local residents as well as a space for the community to come together and make connections with a wider world. (Ms Katharine Drummond-Gillett, General Manager Foodskill)

katharined@workskil.com.au

1. **Heywood Food Access Project** aims to increase access to fresh food for families with young children in Heywood by strengthening local partnerships, developing gardening skills and participation in the Heywood Food Swap “hub”

(Ms Jo Brown, Manager Health and Wellbeing: SGGPCP)

joanne.brown@wdhs.net

1. **Get Amongst It** was held on the Warrnambool Civic Green with activities designed to inform people with a dual diagnosis (mental illness and substance use) about established resources in their community to engage with to maintain optimal health and wellness. Activities focus was on healthy eating, social and physical activities as well as healthy connectedness with their community.

(Ms Jillian Reid, Integrated Wellness Coordinator, South West Healthcare)

jreid@swh.net.au

1. **Heywood Men’s Shed** seeks to address three key determinants within the community – social connection, freedom from violence and discrimination and access to economic resources. The aims of Heywood Men’s Shed are to decrease social isolation of Heywood residents as well as address long term employment and local youth disengagement. (Ms Carolyn Millard, Acting Director Primary Care, Heywood Rural health Service) cmillard@swarh.vic.gov

1. **Merino Healthy Community Initiative** aims to enhance the health and wellbeing of the small rural community of Merino in remote Western Victoria by providing a supportive environment for residents to access affordable fresh food and increase physical activity. The project also aims to empower and increase the resilience of the community to work together identifying and addressing local needs. (Ms Lindy Stuchbery, Health Promotion Officer, Heywood Rural Health)

lstuchbery@swarh.vic.gov.au

1. **South West Healthy Kids** project in partnership with the communities of West Warrnambool, Port Fairy, Koroit, Macarthur, Hawkesdale and Mortlake, set out to build a local picture of factors contributing to poor eating and activity habits in children and use this information to design a community based initiative to address rising trends in childhood obesity. (Ms Catherine Loria, Quality/Health Promotion Manager Primary & Community Services South West Healthcare; Ms Lisa Mcleod, Manager Community & Policy, Warrnambool City Council) Cloria@swh.vic.gov.au lmcleod@warrnambool.vic.gov.au
2. **Building Bridges between Gordon TAFE and Deakin University** works to build bridges between staff and students at The Gordon and Deakin University in Geelong in order to strengthen the pathway from the Diploma of Community Services to the Degree in Social Work. (Mr Peter Barnes, Course Coordinator, Gordon TAFE; Ms Norah Hosken, Lecture School of Social Work, Deakin University) p.barnes@gordontafe.edu.au n.hosken@deakin.edu.au