

2024 Empower Program Evaluation: Key Findings

Between 2022 – 2024, Whittlesea Community Connections' Empower Program provided one-on-one support to 173 young people.

The need in Whittlesea



- The City of Whittlesea has a **higher-than-average level of youth disengagement**, compared with the rest of Victoria.
- **Only 10% of eligible young people** in North-Eastern Melbourne are referred to other existing support, offered by the Navigator Program.
- Young people in the City of Whittlesea experience **double the unemployment** rate of the broader municipality.

The Empower Program

- The program's Empower Youth Worker (EYW), provides **one-on-one support to young people** aged 12-25.
- With the EYW, young people create aspirational plans to work towards **educational, employment, health and social connectedness goals**.
- Young people are also referred to various services and opportunities and can attend Empower's 'Rainbow Group' and 'Young Women's Group'.

"The Empower program is an invaluable asset to the community. It bridges the gap of support that schools are often missing and aids as an extra support for many of our families that are finding it increasingly difficult to find appropriate supports within the community." – School staff.

Key takeaways:

- The Empower program **met its objectives** in providing individualised, strengths-based support to young people, reaching 173 participants between 2022-2024 (**collectively exceeding its funded target of 50 young people per year**).
- Most participants identified as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), with some identifying as LGBTQIA+ and First Nations.
- All participants surveyed found the support **'very helpful'**.
- **Schools and partner organisations value their long-term relationships with the program**; however, some evidence indicates that formalising partnerships may be beneficial.
- The program was found to be **value for money**, achieving a **lower cost per client than anticipated** (\$1,304) – a cost reduction of 7% per client.
- **Empower plays an essential role** in meeting part of the need among young people in Whittlesea. However, **additional unmet need remains** beyond the program's scope.

"I talked to one of the members and they helped me get a job, find a new school and [provided] support in all ways." - Participant.

"[We] talk and plan the goals I would like to achieve and actually putting it into practice by doing small steps at time" - Participant.

Key outcomes achieved

- Re-engagement in education
- Improved attitudes towards education
- Increased employment knowledge and skills
- Greater awareness of career pathways
- Improved mental health
- Increased sense of connection
- Increased awareness of available supports
- Increased self-esteem and sense of value.