

## *What have young people from the mainstream said about "wellbeing"?*



Young people in the mainstream groups ranked similar domains to other groups, where Family was seen as most important, health and community were ranked rather low, and money and material assets ranked lowest. Some included their best friend as part of their concept of ‘family’, and playing with parents and siblings was deemed important for family life. When asked about things that got in the way of a good life, these were mostly viewed as obstacles to family cohesion— “Break-up between your parents and stuff”; “Fights between your parents and siblings”. Echoing a sentiment that the Aboriginal group expressed, one stated that “family members that are not well” could get in the way of wellbeing which could “affect a kid’s mental health quite a bit”. The group was quick to conceive a “best friend” as a person “you can always rely on”, while still reserving the measure of belonging to a wider network of friends, and repeatedly mentioned the importance of being accepted for your individuality— of not trying to follow divergent trends or cliques. The logic of this consensus was neatly summarised by one: “Everyone tries to be themselves and who they are instead of not being who they aren’t because then everyone knows them for who they’re not”. Certain technologies emerged as important for friendships— ‘iPods’, ‘Skype’ and ‘texting’ – and these were particularly valued for friends who had moved away. The transition of moving from primary school to high school was considered daunting and exciting; a time when: “All your friends you’ve known since kindy are all going to go in different directions [and] you may not even know them after”. The group’s response to pets being considered as ‘friends’ differed from other groups by causing a division about whether pets were friends or merely property. School was strongly associated with friends and family, being the place through which ambition and development was nurtured by families, and the meeting place for friendship networks. A “good education” was considered part of a ‘healthy lifestyle’, and sports featured as a productive part of that education. Stress for this group was particularly related to pressures



of achieving at school, and particularly homework. Stress was also related to doing extra exams; NAPLAN was mentioned, as were issues such as bullying. While this group was conversant with bullying issues (having attended ‘anti-bullying’ classes— which may also reflect their ethical narratives of ‘individuality’), most admitted to having zero contact with bullies. However, one spoke of being stressed or nervous about premonitions of being attacked on the way to school— since viewing something about this *threat* as part of their ‘anti-bullying’ class. In common with most other groups, responses to money and material assets indicated that this was not considered a crucial component of wellbeing, and a theme of ‘money doesn’t buy you happiness’ was generally subscribed to. An interesting notion that emerged strongly from the group was the prospect of gaining a sense of wellbeing by enacting an ethical code—with several young people promoting a sympathetic and charitable approach to wealth distribution:

“Because if you give away money you'll feel happy that you did that. You'll make other people feel happy [and] if someone becomes rich then they give it to everybody somehow”.

This was an unprompted aspect of the interview. For this group ‘health’ was conceived as the prevention of sickness, which would inhibit your ability to play, and mental health was discussed in relation to depression and anxiety, and as an obstacle to feeling good about yourself: “Because if you don't feel good about yourself you can get really depressed which isn't really good for your health”. Playing and having imaginative fun was something the group wished they had more time to do, with one respondent predicting he might be a businessman in the future (because he was good at maths) while admitted to being far more excited about his imaginary future as a superhero, which he could enact that afternoon.