

Western Bulldogs Fresh Program

576 Barkly Street, West Footscray, Vic, 3012

Established in 2004, the Fresh Program is a *community education service* provided by the Western Bulldogs Football Club, delivered since 2011 in partnership with Victoria University (VU). Provided for 15-20 year-olds who have experienced difficulties with mainstream education and are disengaged or at risk of becoming disconnected from education, the program offers another opportunity to complete secondary vocational qualifications in a *friendly, flexible, supportive and just environment*. Through *relevant, engaging* programs and *hands-on learning* students complete the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). In 2013, 45 students are enrolled in a senior secondary program.

How this program works

Fresh aims to *empower* young people and build their *social capacities* through academic, personal and vocational learning as the *foundation for sustainable change in their lives*. There is a strong focus on students' development of relationships, trust, resilience, emotional intelligence, skills and networking for learning and work. The Student Charter, negotiated Program Norms and Restorative Practice guide students and staff to maintain a safe and positive community based on *rights, respect, collaboration* and *personal accountability*. As an *adult learning environment*, Fresh has no bells, uniforms or homerooms. Students attend on and off-campus activities according to their timetables and are expected to take responsibility for their attendance, learning, behaviour and use of information and communication technologies.

The Fresh VCAL focuses on development of Literacy, Numeracy, Personal Development and Work Related skills. These subjects and a choice of Vocational Education and Training (VET) Certificate courses are complemented by voluntary Community Service to enhance students' career development and skills for managing their careers. Students may also take electives such as Drawing, Mosaic and Martial Arts and participate in sports, camps and arts workshops. Staff provide strong support to students' *learning, career planning and personal matters* through casework, food relief, referrals, advocacy and transition support. As students are enrolled at VU, they have access to VU study spaces, WiFi internet, library, cafes, gym, aquatic and sports centres, clubs, housing and counselling services, student diary and discounts using their student ID card. Fresh continues to support students in their first year out of the program through phone contact and linking them with community agencies as needed.

Outcomes

Positive outcomes, indicating the success of this program, include: students' re-engagement, enjoyment of learning, positive attitudes and outlook, access to further education, training and employment pathways and strong community networks:

Credentialed attainment: In 2009-11, all students either partially (average 87% of each cohort) or fully completed the VCAL (a total of 18 young people).

Individual student achievements: Graduates report having a changed view of themselves, their world and positive futures. One said, *Fresh made me open my eyes and realise the world*. A young mother who had *struggled to find a place* in education graduated with Intermediate VCAL and pursued her goal of becoming an interpreter by studying the Diploma of Auslan.

Destinations and pathways: On average, 50% of Fresh graduates go on to further study and 28% take up employment, including 14% in apprenticeships (2009-11).

Health and well-being: Students access health and wellbeing resources through nutrition, sexual health, recreation and physical activity programs. Odyssey House (a local community organisation) provides an outreach worker to provide drug and alcohol education.

Civic/community participation: Student projects include: building a community garden and organising activities for residents of the Footscray Lions Club retirement village; repairing and donating bikes to charity; camps that include a community service task for each student.

Productive partnerships: Partners include government, non-government, youth, community and business organisations. Programs include: Nexans Olex Work Education with the Western Bulldogs ; The Fresh Apprentice program and mentoring with Stolthaven Terminals; arts and multimedia projects provided by Odyssey House, Brunswick Youth Services and Footscray Community Art Centre; Scope Young Ambassadors Program, that promotes understanding and communicating with people with disabilities; Qenos Financial Literacy; camps and cyber workshops with local, state and Federal Police.

External recognition: Fresh was awarded a Telstra Foundation Everyone Connected grant to establish the cyber-safety program, 'What's Your Online Status?' (2012).

Why this program is successful

Students identify feeling *comfortable, learning by doing, discovering and testing capabilities*, positive relationships with the whole *Fresh family* and *opportunities* that make for *favourite memories* like learning to sail and *exciting* new directions such as starting a traineeship. Graduates identify the *new environment*, peers and teachers being *more understanding with respect going both ways* and being able to *manage your own learning as more encouraging, motivating* and helping them to find *direction* for their futures.

Want to know more?

<http://www.learningchoices.org.au/programs/860/Western-Bulldogs-Fresh-Program.php>
<http://www.westernbulldogs.com.au/community/fresh>

Sources of information

Fresh Program Student Outcomes Report provided by Fresh, 2013

Fresh (2013) Student Handbook

Western Bulldogs (2013) Website <http://www.westernbulldogs.com.au/community/fresh> (accessed 2/8/13)

Please note, where possible and appropriate, we have adopted the language and terminology used by the program sources (*italic fonts*) and referred to the most recent publically available information.

This vignette was developed in 2013 by [The Victoria Institute for Education, Diversity and Lifelong Learning](#) (part of the Australian Government's Collaborative Research Network) for the project *Putting the jigsaw together: innovative learning engagement programs in Australia* and supported by the [Ian Potter Foundation](#).

