

## Hello everyone!

**Thank you** for your ongoing participation in the International Youth Development Study. We greatly value the time and effort you give to the study.

This year's newsletter will bring you up-to-date with IYDS activities and achievements and share some of our findings with you. We'd also like to highlight how your contribution has been making a difference.

### 2008 update

We have a busy year coming up ....

- This year we will continue surveying participants from the youngest group. Most of you are now in Year 11, although some are no longer at school.
- Also this year, some of you may be contacted so we can ask about parts of the survey in more detail - this will give us a richer understanding of what you think of your experiences and what is important to you.
- Some of the participating schools may also be contacted so that we can obtain a teacher's perspective about the school environment.
- We are no longer surveying students in Washington, however, the U.S. team is still analysing data we have already collected.

## how is your input making a difference?

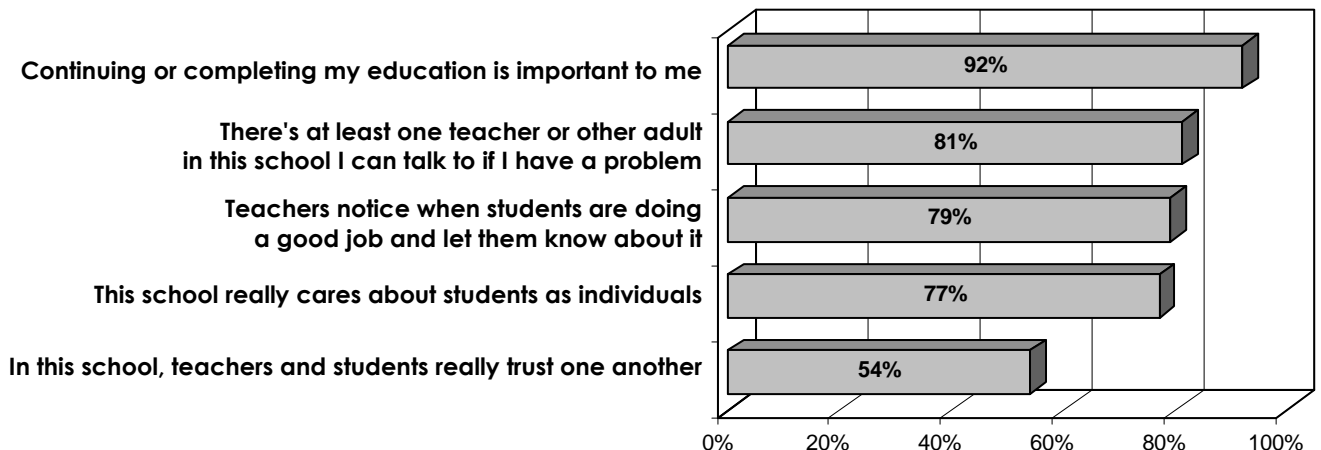
Sharing the findings of our research with the public through media coverage and public forums can lead to changes in community understanding and practice. This is a really important way to make sure that the things you have told us in the survey are put to good use and actually make a difference to the lives of young people.

\* In 2007 we held a forum for professionals working with young people about *Preventing Violence in Young People*. Results from the IYDS research were shared with over 400 professionals across Australia .

\* Recently, our research on antisocial behaviour among young people and the effects of school suspensions on students has been covered on radio and in newspapers. We hope this leads to discussion about discipline approaches.

\* Our principal investigator, John Toumbourou, has been in the news and current affairs over recent months talking about the issue of binge drinking and the negative impact on young people. Informing public debate is another important way in which our research can have a practical impact.

## What you told us about school in 2007 .. Percentage of students who said YES



# Significant recent findings

## School Suspensions:

### *increase likelihood of further problem behaviour*

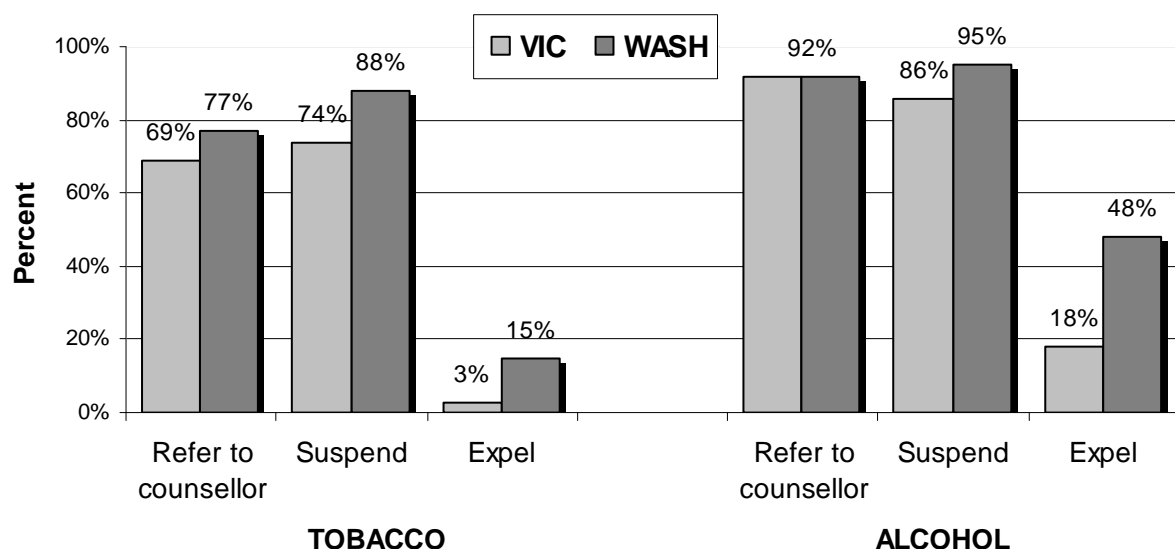
- The IYDS has found that rates of student problem behaviour such as substance use, theft, and physical assault are similar in Victoria & Washington; however, young people in Washington experience harsher consequences for this behaviour (eg. school suspensions and arrests).
- Data from the IYDS has shown that school suspensions increase the likelihood of future problem behaviour, even after taking into account a whole range of other important factors (for example: family environment, peer relationships, academic performance, etc).
- This finding is important as it raises the question as to whether the practice of school suspension may in some cases actually increase the likelihood of future problematic behaviour for students, and therefore ultimately for the broader school community.
- Further investigation : We need to think about ways suspensions are used and whether alternatives to suspension are needed for dealing with problematic behaviour. We are meeting with schools and education policy makers to discuss the findings and examine what

## School drug policies

### *school, parent and student perspectives*

- One of the areas we are investigating in the IYDS is how schools handle incidents of drug and alcohol use and how they develop and communicate drug policies.
- We have found that Washington schools are much more likely than Victorian schools to use relatively harsh punishments such as expulsion and calling the police when dealing with drug related incidents.
- Further investigation : One area we will be looking at further is whether these harsher punishments lead to less drug use in and out of school and better student outcomes.

The graph below shows the percentage of schools reporting their response to drug policy violations in Victoria, Aus and Washington State, U.S.



# Puberty and substance use

- The consequences of young people using substances can be serious, for example there is evidence that early alcohol use is linked to later mental health and social problems.
- Findings from the IYDS have shown that there are some links between pubertal development and substance use: it appears that young people who enter puberty early are more likely to have higher levels of substance use.
- The study also found that friends' use of substances at the stage of mid-late puberty has the greatest influence on whether young people drink alcohol, smoke or use cannabis.
- This finding underlines the importance of peer influence on recreational substance use in the early teens.

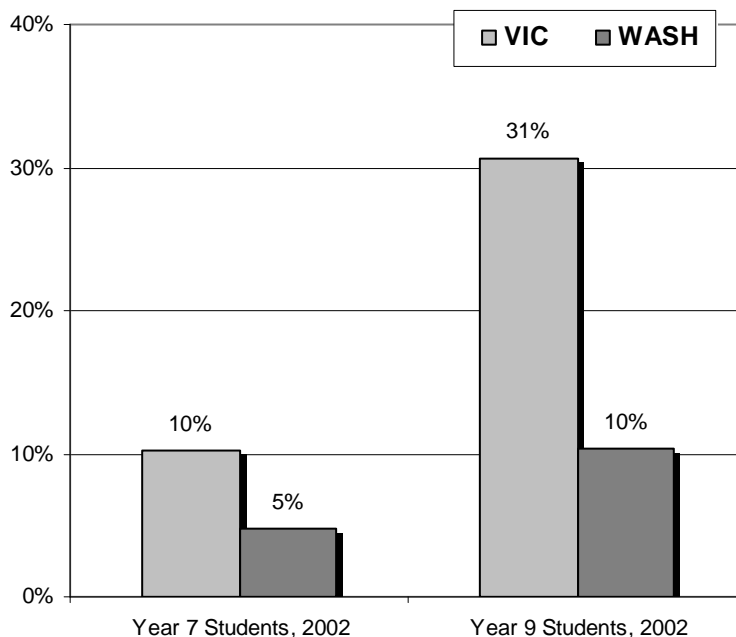


## Binge drinking in Victoria & Washington

- Findings from the IYDS have shown that students in Victoria have higher rates of binge alcohol use than those in Washington State. The rate of reported binge drinking is two times higher in year 7 and 3 times higher in year 9 for students in Vic.
- This finding is interesting given that alcohol policies in the U.S. focus on abstinence whereas here in Australia the focus is on safe use.

Continued followup of the IYDS participants will enable us to look at the long term implications of differences in early alcohol use in the two states.

Percentage of students reporting having had '5 or more alcoholic drinks in a row' in the past 2 weeks



## IYDS achievements during the past year ...

- The IYDS was awarded a grant from the Australian Research Council to re-survey our youngest group this year and again in 2010. Our key question in this research is how school discipline affects student behaviour, wellbeing and educational progress.
- We were also awarded a government grant to carry out further analysis on our existing data. We will be using the information collected from student and school surveys to look at the things that influence the use of tobacco and marijuana in young people. We will also be investigating the short and long term consequences of using tobacco and marijuana.



## Where are you now?

Last year 89% of our youngest group completed the survey. Of this group: 95% were attending school in Victoria, 2.8% were not at school, 1.5% were at school interstate and 0.5% were overseas.

**We still want to keep in touch. If you move or change schools, or are planning to in the near future, please contact us as soon as possible.**

You can contact us toll-free on 1800 200 141 or e-mail us at [internationalyouth.developmentstudy@rch.org.au](mailto:internationalyouth.developmentstudy@rch.org.au)

## Things you should know ...

### How many years will this project continue?

The project has funding to survey our youngest group this year and again in the first year after secondary school (2010). We will also continue to analyse data and publicise findings and information from the project through the media, our website, scientific journals and public forums.

### When will the survey be happening again?

We will be surveying the youngest group in terms 3 and 4 this year, and then again in 2010.

### What if I change schools, leave school or move?

We hope to survey all participants in our youngest cohort – whether or not they are attending school and no matter where they are living. If you change or leave school, please contact us as soon as possible.

## To find out more about the IYDS including :

- latest news
- latest research
- recent articles and publications

## GO TO OUR WEBSITE!

[www.rch.org.au/iyds](http://www.rch.org.au/iyds)

## how to contact us

International Youth Development Study  
Centre for Adolescent Health,  
2 Gatehouse Street,  
Parkville, 3052

Telephone 1800 200 141 (toll free)

Email [internationalyouth.developmentstudy@rch.org.au](mailto:internationalyouth.developmentstudy@rch.org.au)

Website [www.rch.org.au/iyds](http://www.rch.org.au/iyds)

