



# 2008 LIFE AWARDS

IN RECOGNITION OF THOSE WHO HAVE MADE AN OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO SUICIDE PREVENTION WITHIN AUSTRALIA

Aussie Optimism is an evidence-based mental health promotion program aimed at reducing the development of internalising disorders such as depression and anxiety in primary school-age children.

The program has been rolled out to more than 240 schools in Western Australia, involving more than one thousand teachers and over thirteen thousand students; it has been recently been extended into other states, including Brisbane, where teachers in twenty schools have been trained.

Teachers receive training in the program, plus the resources required to implement it.

Aussie Optimism consists of three classroom-based programs and another self-directed program for parents and families.

***Positive Thinking Skills***, for children aged 8-10 years, focuses on assisting students to identify and link their thoughts and feelings, and develop positive ways of thinking.

It teaches children strategies for facing their fears, to help them become resilient, happy, active participants in life.

***Social Life Skills***, for students aged 10-12 years, teaches children to regulate their feelings, communicate effectively and solve social problems.

***Optimistic Thinking Skills*** teaches students aged 11-13 years optimistic ways of coping. Children are shown how to look for evidence and to challenge negative thoughts about themselves.

Finally, ***Parents and Families*** includes information, cartoons, tips and activities, and a CD-ROM, to help parents and families work together to navigate the sometimes tricky journey of raising an adolescent.

The program has received a wealth of positive feedback, showing substantial improvements in social and emotional wellbeing, and a lower incidence of health risk behaviours.

By employing teachers rather than external staff, and being delivered at the class level, rather than singling out students perceived to be at risk, the program offers a sustainable and universal approach to suicide prevention.