

Embargoed until 2pm Tuesday 16 April 2013

**Research Report Launch:
Me, Myself and I: Identity and meaning for vulnerable young people**

The Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS), Australian Catholic University, will today launch this report which presents the findings from the *Identity and Meaning for Vulnerable Young People* project.

Ms Debbie Noble-Carr, Research Associate at ICPS, interviewed 24 young people in Canberra about the role and potency of concepts such as identity and a search for meaning in their lives.

“We found that identity and meaning issues are powerful, central and inter-related concepts in the lives of vulnerable young people,” Ms Noble-Carr said.

“These young people developed their identity and meaning from their life experiences and relationships. Common experiences included trauma and loss, compounded by instability and a lack of caring connections. It was these experiences which helped them to formulate ideas of who they are, who they want to be, how they feel about the world around them and what they perceive to be their place in it.”

The research found that young people are able to attain a more positive sense of self and meaning when they are supported to build connections with the world around them. Central to this is the ability to develop genuine caring connections with others.

“Through young people caring for others, or others caring for them; young people began to be able to care about themselves,” Ms Noble-Carr said.

Pivotal factors to young people developing a positive sense of self, purpose and meaning in life included: positive caring connections with others, opportunities to participate in meaningful activities and contribute to their communities, being acknowledged for being good at something, finding a sense of belonging to a place or group, and developing hope for the future.

“There are clear implications for support services,” Ms Noble-Carr said. “Young people want support workers to listen and connect with them as people. Services should build and maintain linkages between young people and the other important individuals and groups in their lives. They need to provide or facilitate connections to those pivotal factors that support young people to develop a positive sense of self.”

The Institute of Child Protection Studies carries out high quality research, evaluation and professional development to enhance outcomes for children, young people and families; and is a nationally recognised centre of research excellence in the area of child, youth and family welfare. For more information about ICPS, visit www.acu.edu.au/icps.

See also the attached report for more information.

Ends

For media comment: Contact Professor Morag McArthur, Director of the Institute of Child Protection Studies, on 0412 593 080.

Notes to editors:

- Australian Catholic University (ACU) is a publicly funded university, open to all. It has six campuses – in Brisbane, Melbourne, North Sydney, Strathfield, Canberra and Ballarat.
- Completing a degree at ACU involves learning to think critically and be guided by social justice principles. We give our students the skills to bring about change in their community, profession and industry.
- The University focuses on the delivery of quality programs in specialist areas including education, liberal arts, business, nursing and allied health, social sciences, theology and philosophy and visual and performing arts.
- For more information, visit www.acu.edu.au