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How does campus accommodation impact on the mental wellbeing of students?



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

The Challenge

In 2016:

- 65% of uni students experienced of high levels psychological distress
- 35% had thoughts of suicide or self-harm

(survey undertaken by NUS & Headspace 2016)

1250 beds = 438 residents contemplating.....



Case for change

Why is mental wellbeing important to university accommodation?

“Health promoting universities and colleges transform the health and sustainability of our current and future societies, strengthen communities and contribute to the wellbeing of people places and the planet” (Okangan Charter 2015)

A wellbeing focus pays off

- **Improved educational attainment**
(Gutman, 2012; NICE, 2008; NICE, 2009)
- **Healthier lifestyles including reduced smoking and drinking**
Boehm, 2012; Lyubomirsky et al, 2005b; Deacon et al, 2009)
- **More pro-social**
(SCMH, 2009; Coid, 2006)
- **Associated with reductions in mental ill health and suicide**
(Teismann et al, 2018; Fergusson, D et al, 2015; Keyes et al, 2010; Lyubomirsky et al, 2005; Koivumaa-Honkanen et al., 2001)



Definition...

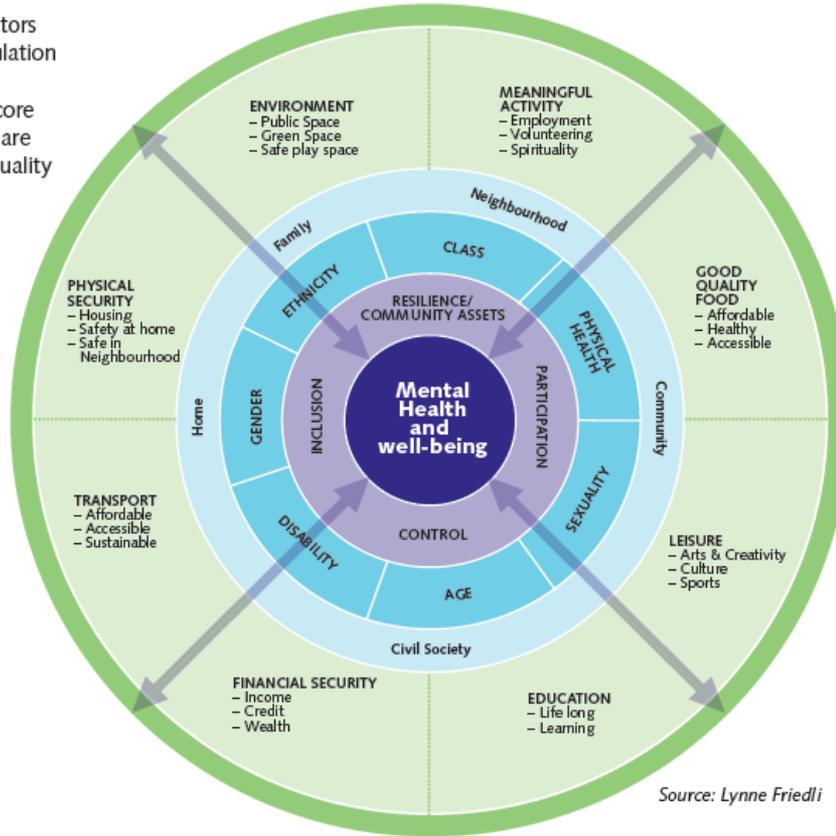
Mental wellbeing “...is a dynamic state, in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others, and contribute to their community. It is enhanced when an individual is able to fulfil their personal and social goals and achieve a sense of purpose in society.”

Foresight Report 2008



Figure 2.2: A dynamic model of mental well-being for assessing mental well-being impact

The four protective factors are influenced by population characteristics, wider determinants and the core economy. All of which are influenced by levels equality and social justice.



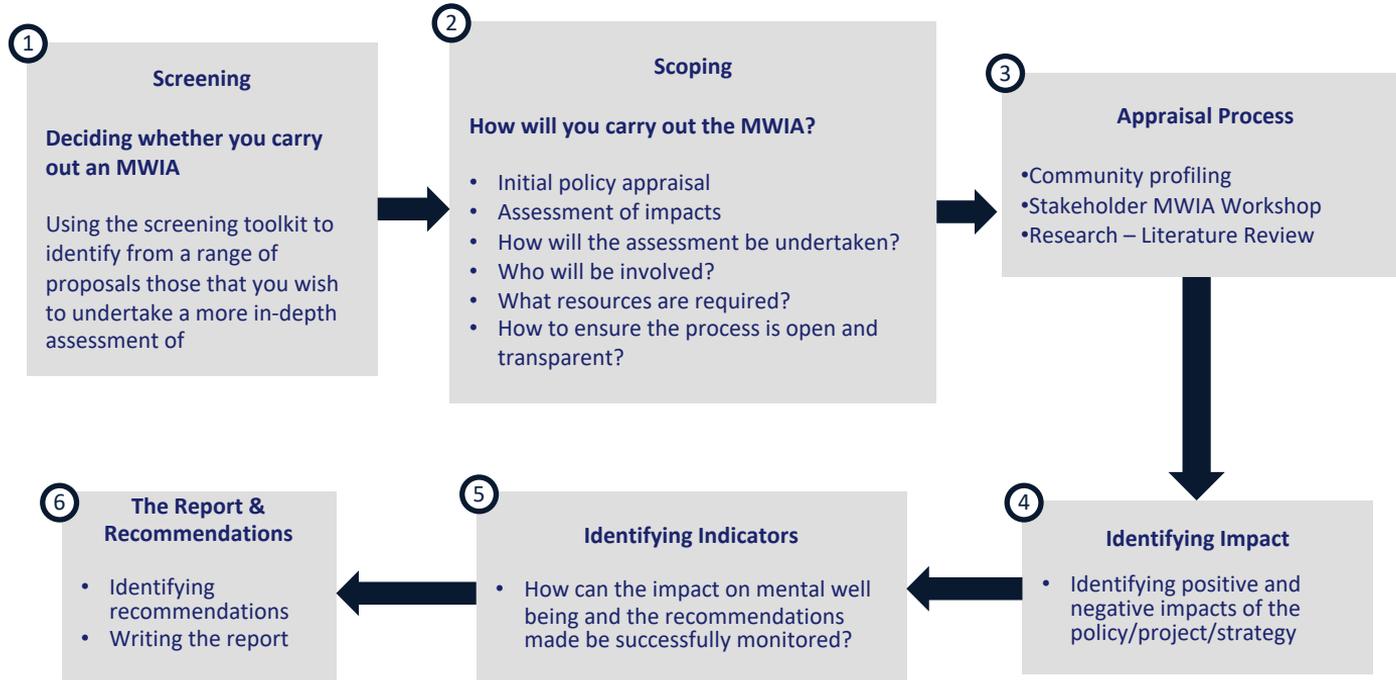
Source: Lynne Friedli

Guiding Principles

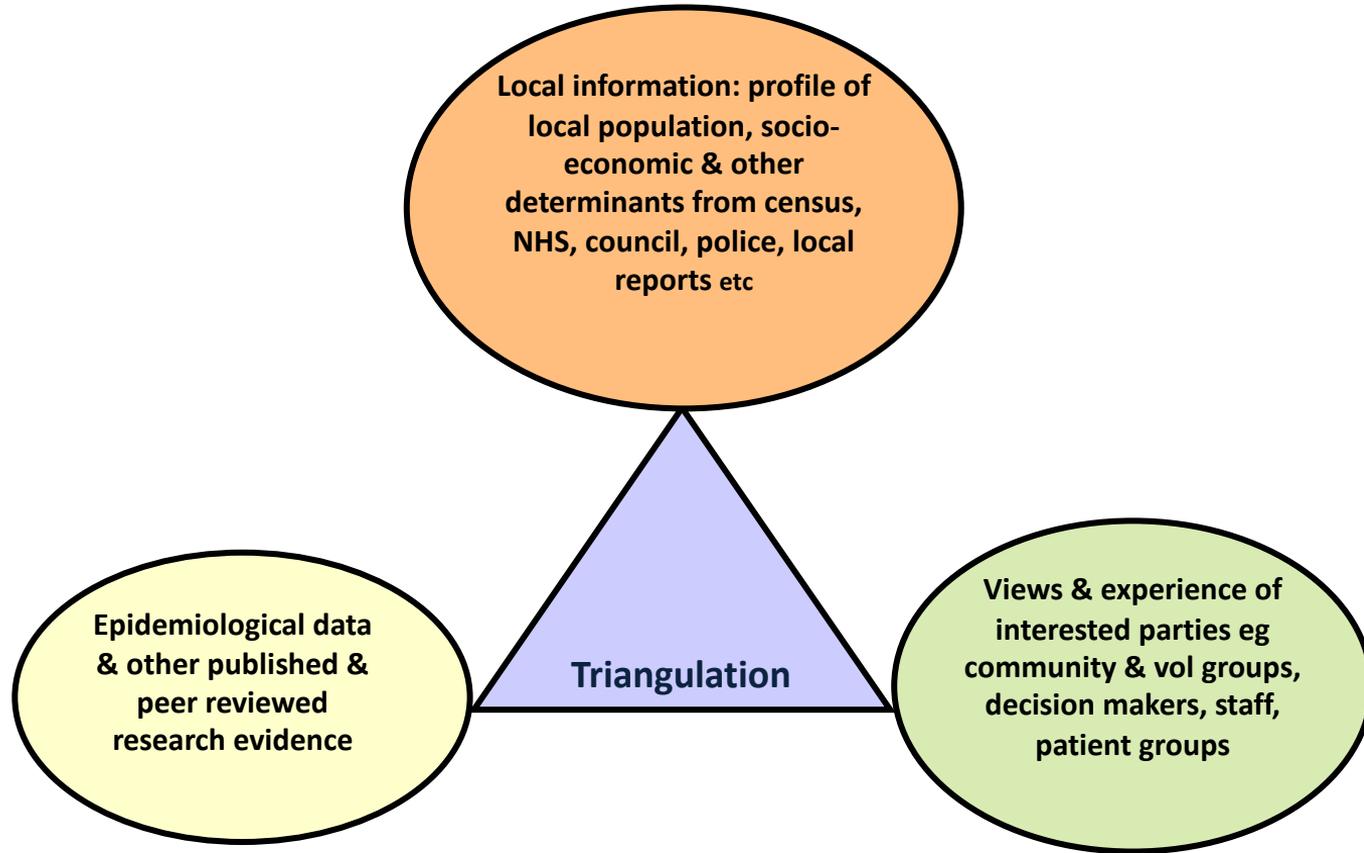
- Active Citizenship – Co-design
- Collective action
- Collaboration
- Leadership
- Transparency and accountability
- Innovation
- Equity and inclusion
- Intervene early – long-term view



The 6 Stage Process of MWIA:



Collecting, analysing & interpreting information



At Risk Population Groups

- Young people
- International students
- Regional students
- Low SEP students
- Students with mental health issues



KOOLOOBONG VILLAGE

WIDER DETERMINANTS

Physical environment:

- +ve: High quality accommodation and communal spaces
- +ve: Set in beautiful surroundings with easy access to nature and green space

“There are a lot of common rooms, it helps with relationship making, in [my country] we do not have common rooms in apartments – here we are always in the living room.”

Financial Security:

- ve: Cost of accommodation
- ve: Debtors process
- +ve: Bills included

Transport:

- ve: Lack of parking
- +ve: Free shuttle bus
- +ve: Train station
- +ve: Bike share
- +ve: Car share



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CONTROL

+ve: Learning to be independent

+ve: Residence rules - a framework for communal living

+ve: Roommate agreements

-ve: Maintenance

“Knowing that I have a support system to fall back on makes it easier to feel that I have the ability to be in control of my studies and social life.”



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RESILIENCE

Emotional support

- +ve: Minimum of 1 student leader to 23 residents
- +ve: UoW counselling services
- +ve: 24 hour Crisis line
- +ve A community culture where residents look out for each other

“The student body can help out and notice and catch – we have ways of supporting people with mental health issues that you would not get if you were living in a rental unit.”

Healthy lifestyles

- ve: Food literacy/security issues
- ve: Drugs and Alcohol
- +ve: Live out Loud - daily events and activities designed to create ‘habits of happiness’
- +ve: Evidenced based Wheel of Wellbeing framework

“Random acts of kindness are really cool, just seeing that someone is taking time out of their day to be personal with you and recognising you”.



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RESILIENCE cont...

Safety

- +ve: Onity security system
- +ve: Student leader rounds
- +ve: UoW security & Safe Zone

“Its a safe environment that’s why my parents encouraged me to come back”



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PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

Practical support

+ve: All bills included

+ve: Maintenance service

+ve: Student leaders on duty 5pm – 9am

“Knowing that I have a support system to fall back on makes it easier to feel that I have the ability to be in control of my studies and social life.”

Social connections and sense of belonging

-ve: Social isolation

+ve: State of the art communal spaces to encourage social interaction

+ve: Extensive program of activities designed to create social connections in building and across the whole community

I feel like I can knock on anyone's door here at KBV”



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ACTION PLAN

Individual level

- Cooking classes – Feed yo’ self
- Financial literacy program
- Floor meetings (Micro community connections)
- Building & community events
- Residence rules communication (What and why)
- Culture specific events run by International student leaders



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ACTION PLAN

Residential Level

- Food bank
- Communal spaces
- Student leader to student ratio (1:23)
- Encouraged student leader applications from different cultures
- Cultural diversity training



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ACTION PLAN

Directorate level

- Reviewing incident management process
- Reviewing debtors process (to identify struggling students earlier)



Measuring Wellbeing

Objective measures:

- Implementation of action plan
- Number of activities
- Attendance at LoL program by at risk population group
- Reduction in Debtors
- Reduction in Break of contracts
- Reductions in critical incidents
- Use of communal spaces

Existing measures

- Satisfaction with student leaders
- Overall satisfaction with accommodation

64 item base line survey (largely subjective)

- WEMWBS
- Social isolation/connectedness
- Resilience
- Feeling safe and secure



Thank you

