EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the relationship of well-being (happiness) with a variety of demographic and economic factors among Australian young people. On the basis of past research, important influences include gender, income, marital status and employment status. We analysed data from the Youth in Transition study, a longitudinal study of four nationally representative cohorts of young people. The cohorts were born in 1961, 1965, 1970 and 1975. We investigated the impact on well-being of gender, income, occupational status, employment status, marital status, the presence and number of children and residence. In addition, we examined changes over time, both ageing and cohort effects.

This report shows that for young Australians, employment, relationships and sufficient income are important for maintaining subjective well-being and happiness, with the influences of some of these factors being sensitive to age and cohort effects.

The key findings are as follows:

- women reported being happier than men, especially with interpersonal relationships;
- increasing income (and socioeconomic status) was associated with increasing levels of happiness;
- the unemployed were less happy than the employed by a large amount and there are indications that the negative influence of unemployment on well-being is strengthening;
- single people were less satisfied with their lives (in particular, home life) than people in de facto relationships or those who were married, with married people experiencing the most satisfaction;
- in general, people with children did not experience higher or lower levels of well-being than those without children at home;
- the relationship of well-being to living with parents was moderated by age.