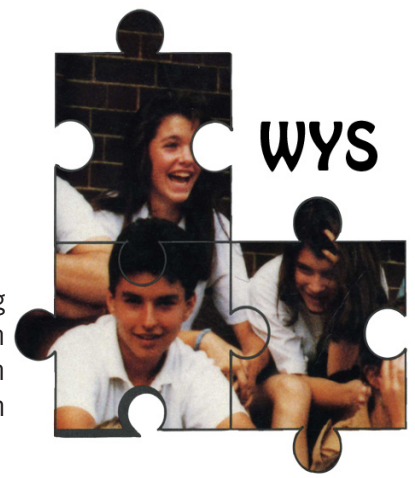


# The Youth Issues Newsletter

Number 1



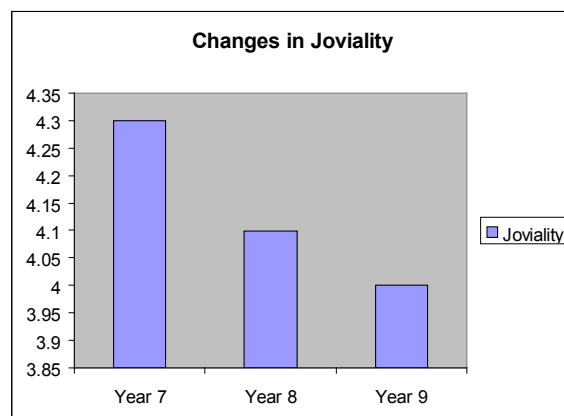
More than 700 Year 10 students in the Wollongong Catholic Diocese have been participating in surveys on Youth Issues since 2003 when the students were in Year 7. The project is coordinated by researchers from the University of Wollongong.

Students have been surveyed each year and information has been collected on their social, emotional, and academic development over this time. We acknowledge the support of the Australian Research Council and The Wollongong Catholic Diocese, and we thank the students, teachers and school principals for their participation and cooperation.

The information provided below is based on results taken when the students were in Year 9.

## *Feelings about the self*

We have been tracking how students feel not only about themselves, but also their general emotional states. Since Year 7 there have, on average, been slight declines in Joviality and slight increases in Sadness across the total group of over 700. They are not large changes and there is no need for any concern. They probably reflect the many different and challenging issues that today's young people have to deal with. The graph below shows the changes in Joviality across time.



We have been conducting an intervention which is designed to help some of you get more of what you want in life. We obtained some interesting results. First, young people such as yourself tend to value family and/or friendship above most other things (e.g., money). Second, much conflict between classmates is probably avoidable. Adolescents usually don't intend to insult another person, argue, or get into a fight. Yet this is exactly what often happens. The students we worked with showed a willingness to learn new ways of dealing with conflict. They discovered that disagreements were inevitable, but that they could choose how effectively they responded to the disagreement. The power was in their hands! Most of the students chose to act in a way that improves their lives, rather than harms them. They learnt how to build friendships, rather than getting stuck in unnecessary fights. Our students were surprised at how relatively easy this is.