



**Open Family Australia**  
...knows the street.

## **Frankston businesses collaborate to assist local at-risk youth**

The City of Frankston has a new community outreach program to combat the rise in youth homelessness, crime and alcohol and drug related abuse for troubled youth in the region.

A development committee made up of concerned local business owners approached Open Family Australia in 2008 to establish the program to assist at-risk and homeless youth aged 12-25 in Frankston.

Together with generous support from St John of God, the committee has since raised enough money to employ two Open Family Outreach Workers for its first year, who will provide youth on the streets with advice and referrals to help them reconnect with the community.

The program will commence in February and is based on Open Family Australia's internationally recognised Community Ownership Model, whereby community members are encouraged to accept responsibility for providing support and infrastructure to the more vulnerable in society.

In 2007 Open Family Australia introduced a similar program in the City of Wyndham with huge success. Like Frankston, Wyndham has recently experienced a surge in population, and with it, increased problems associated with at-risk youth.

Andrew Cross, Managing Director at Jeff Wignall Ford, is a key instigator behind bringing the program to Frankston. He heard of the success in Wyndham from the Principal Dealer at Westpoint Ford in Werribee and was eager to adopt the model in Frankston.

"Andrew was impressed by the results achieved in Werribee and by the unrelenting commitment of local businesses to help provide a real solution for at-risk youth in their community," Sue Renkin, CEO of Open Family Australia said.

"There is a need for a service as unique as this that actively seeks out and supports at-risk youth in the region. The Committee chose Open Family Australia as we are able to work out of hours and provide long term unconditional support to help young people address their issues and start to reconnect with their community."

While the Frankston program is currently funded for 2010, the committee is appealing for more local businesses to donate extra funds so that the initiative can fully address youth issues in the area and to keep it running beyond 2010.

Businesses or community groups in the City of Frankston who would like to support the program should contact Open Family Australia on 03 8698 6700.

### **About Open Family:**

Open Family Australia provides Outreach services and support to young people at-risk between the ages of 12 and 25 years. Established for nearly 30 years, Open Family Australia has been working with some of Australia's most marginalised youth, providing support programs and linking them into the services they need. - copy ends -

For more information or interviews, please contact

Zoe Lane on (03) 9522 9906 or [zoe.lane@communicado.com.au](mailto:zoe.lane@communicado.com.au)