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New report reveals money not the best predictor of happiness

A new report commissioned by Jesuit Social Services shows that health, individual choice, local community, and family relationships are better predictors of happiness and satisfaction than income.

['Life Satisfaction and Happiness'](#), a new research report undertaken on behalf of Jesuit Social Services by Professor Tony Vinson and Dr Matthew Ericson, was launched in Melbourne. The authors undertook extensive analysis of responses given by 1400 Australian to the most recent published World Values Survey. In launching the report, Professor Vinson noted the key findings, "the most influential factors for the happiness and life satisfaction of Australians are their level of health, the amount of choice and control that they have over their life, whether they are married or not, the extent to which they see themselves as a part of a local community, and how much they trust their family. In depth analysis of the World Values Survey responses has shown these factors to be better predictors than an income."

Speaking at the launch, Julie Edwards, CEO of Jesuit Social Services said, "The findings of this research are relevant to policy makers and practitioners in the human services field as well as the wider community. Building individual capacity, family relationships, and community cohesion are likely to be the most effective ways to increase happiness within Australian society."

Reflecting on implications of this research for current public policy development, Ms Edwards noted, "this report provides another justification for major reforms such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Clearly, the benefits of the NDIS are likely to be more extensive than the health and welfare benefits outlined by the Productivity Commission. With its focus on individual empowerment and community inclusiveness, the NDIS has the potential to greatly increase the happiness and life satisfaction of over 4 million Australian's with a disability who stand to benefit from the scheme."

Professor Vinson notes other conclusions that could be drawn from the research, "It highlights the importance of family relationships to happiness and life satisfaction and supports policies that seek to strengthen family relationships. It also has some interesting implications for contemporary discourse on the role and nature of family and marriage. People in legalised marriages were more likely to report higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction than individuals in other marriage-like relationships."

Ms Edwards noted the relevance of the research for Jesuit Social Services' own work, "We work with vulnerable individuals and disadvantaged communities delivering a range of services. The findings of this research align closely with how we work with its focus on building the capacity of individuals, families, and the communities in which we work."

Jesuit Social Services is a not-for-profit organisation which works to build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged young people, families and communities.

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