



Hair² heart

Health, Safety and Education
for the Hairdressing Industry

Final Report 2013

The assistance of the following people whose work and vision contributed greatly to the project outcomes, is gratefully acknowledged. They were, without exception, an incredibly knowledgeable and skilled group who gave up their time to share their learning and experiences.

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Sincere thanks to all of you.

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Summary

Hairdressers like working with people and become very experienced listeners who care about their clients and take a real interest in their lives. Most people are happy to share positive life thoughts and feelings with Hairdressers but they also discuss issues such as depression, grief, relationship issues, drugs and alcohol and domestic violence.

Research conducted by Southern Primary Health - Noarlunga established that Hairdressers on a daily basis hear a vast range of health and personal concerns from clients.

Hairdressers, particularly younger Hairdressers, reported emotions leading them to feel mentally overwhelmed and stressed after listening to a client's personal issues and health problems. They stated that they often felt that their training or life experience had not prepared them with the necessary coping skills for the complexity of issues they were being asked to face, or respond to.

By engaging Hairdressers in an educative program, the Hair2Heart project not only provided Hairdressers with the necessary skills and resilience required to reduce workplace stress and burnout, but also to provide appropriate responses and referral information for fellow workers and clients.

Using Hairdressing Salons as a health promotion setting also plays a pivotal role in improving mental health for those who do not seek traditional support services, linking them into regional mental health programs and counselling services.



This project focused on 3 discrete strategies:

- Professional Hairdressers education and training
- Work readiness for young people in High School settings
- Professional development with TAFE SA and Registered Training Organisations (RTO).

The Hair2Heart project was funded through SafeWork SA's OHSW Small Grants Program using funds designated for projects aimed at improving health and safety in South Australian workplaces. A total of \$26,230.00 was allocated to Southern Primary Health – Noarlunga who administered the project.

The following organisations played a crucial role in the development and implementation of the project:

- TAFE SA Noarlunga Campus
- Cemons Skill Centre
- SafeWork SA
- Southern Primary Health
- Community members from the local Hairdressing Industry.

The implementation of the Hair2Heart project, in conjunction with industry representation and support, resulted in the following outcomes:

- Design and delivery of a comprehensive mental health/wellbeing and communication skills training for employers and employees working in the Hairdressing Industry
- The development and distribution of practical user-friendly wallet health information cards for Hairdressers and their clients
- Provision of strategies for employers and employees in the Hairdressing Industry to protect themselves from stress and burn out in their work environment.



- Professional development for TAFE SA lecturers and Registered Training Organisations with the delivery of a unit of work designed to promote positive mental health among young people
- Inclusion of a module of work in the Australian Passport to Safety web-based workplace health and safety program for Year 10 students.

The success of the project indicates that long-term sustainable outcomes in health, safety and injury prevention can best be achieved through a collaborative agency approach; there is a strong commitment on behalf of the Industry to implement practical strategies that introduce and maintain long-term safe work practices.

“I have been passionate about how as a profession we really can make a difference to how someone feels; I know that I can turn their whole day around just by what I do.

Wouldn't it be fantastic to make a difference for a life-time and not just to the next the appointment?”

Shana Beard
Senior Stylist, Hair Magic Salon



Setting The Scene

Southern Primary Health - Noarlunga has a long history of working collaboratively and strategically to promote health and safety initiatives in community and workplace settings.

The major focus has been on working within workplace settings for the health, well-being and safety of employers and employees in the local small business sector. In all these initiatives there has been willingness by workplaces to engage with the health service; many of the initiatives have been driven by the businesses themselves as they grow to understand and experience the benefits of a healthy workforce.

The Hair2Heart project demonstrates the benefits of a health service making strong community connections. The unique role of Hairdressers and the close and trusting relationships they develop with their clients is particularly important when one considers South Australia's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy – 2010.

“Effective health promotion, prevention and early intervention strategies will play a key role in improving mental health across South Australia and reducing the prevalence and impact of mental health problems or illness. These strategies will target a range of settings, including families, schools and workplaces.”

Occupational Health, Safety & Welfare laws place legal obligations on all workplaces to maintain a safe working environment, whether those workplaces are large or very small. The Hairdressing Industry has few large operational businesses or franchises with the vast majority of Hairdressing



Salons being classed as small businesses. More than 98% of Australian hairdressing businesses employ less than 6 people.

People working in small business and those who are self-employed are recognised as a vulnerable group in terms of health and safety. Therefore, it is important that health and safety programs are developed and implemented in areas identified as being 'at risk.'

"This is a fantastic idea. I am very interested in learning new skills to improve my service. To have the skills to cope with sensitive situations will be amazing."

Kimberly
Salon Manager



Research

The research, 'Exploring the Burden of Clients' Expectations on Hairdressers', carried out by Southern Primary Health - Noarlunga, established that Hairdressers on a daily basis hear a vast range of health and personal concerns from their clients.

It is clear that Hairdressers often need to show incredibly strong communication and people skills, and increasingly Hairdressers provide a 'space' for members of the community to talk about their personal and health issues.

This study used a questionnaire survey to explore the role that Hairdressers play in providing client support beyond the traditional role of a Hairdresser, and the associated impact that this increased burden may have on the Hairdressers' health and wellbeing.

A simple one page questionnaire was mailed to Hairdressing Salons in the Onkaparinga region. Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide a contact number for a more detailed telephone interview to offer further insights. Questionnaires were distributed to 135 Hairdressing Salons. In total, 67 Hairdressers from 44 Salons responded to the questionnaire, providing a remarkable insight into the rewarding, yet complex nature of their work.



The results of this research indicated:

- Hairdressing Salons constitute a setting where clients confide in Hairdressers about a wide range of issues, the most common being personal health, depression, grief and loss, family violence and relationships
- Hairdressers find themselves playing the role of an 'incidental counsellor', leading them to often feel burdened, upset, stressed and mentally overwhelmed after listening to a client's problems
- Younger or new Hairdressers often felt that their training or life experience had not prepared them with the necessary skills for the complexity of issues they were being asked to face or advise on
- Many Hairdressers thought it was not always easy to find suitable information to help their clients, and that if there was support from the health service they would access services and use available resources
- Many Hairdressers suggested that further training for Hairdressers in coping with and addressing clients' problems would be beneficial
- Hairdressers noted that it would be beneficial for Hair and Beauty training providers to include a module on interpersonal relationships and the 'incidental counsellor' role within their course curriculum.

"I feel that it would be of great assistance to Hairdressers and to clients if there was further training available to Hairdressers to learn how to cope and deal with these problems."

Renee
Hairdresser



Early Steps

To advance the project concept an initial Project Steering Committee made up of Southern Primary Health workers and local Hairdressers was formed. It was through early consultation amongst Industry members themselves that the project title, Hair2Heart was created.

It became apparent that for the Hair2Heart project to be developed and implemented, funding from an external agency was essential. An application for funding to the SafeWork SA OHSW Small Grants program was submitted. All members of the Steering Committee were actively involved in working collaboratively in the design of this funding proposal.

The role of the Committee was to give advice on project implementation, facilitate a forum for addressing emergent project issues and to provide overall support for the project. The diversity of membership ensured input and consultation of employers and employees from the Hairdressing Industry and Hairdressing Training Organisations.

While waiting on the outcomes of the funding application to SafeWork SA, Australian Red Cross Basic First Aid, Workplace Level 1 workshops were offered to Hairdressers working in Salons in the City of Onkaparinga.



In total three separate workshops were held with 65 participants.

These workshops were designed with the role of Hairdressers in mind covering a wide range of emergency situations that Hairdressers could be faced with in the community and within their work environments.

The Project Steering Committee comprised representatives from the following agencies and organisations:

Tess Byrnes
Southern Primary Health

Teresa Barter
Southern Primary Health

Ross Verschoor
Southern Adelaide Local Health Network

Lynn James
TAFE SA, Noarlunga Campus

Steve Parker
Southern Primary Health

Marian Rich
Southern Primary Health

Ann Young
Southern Primary Health

Meegan
Brotherton
SafeWork SA

Amber-lee Hunt
Vanilla Vibe, Christies Beach

Sherryn Hume
Hair Machine, Regent Arcade

Justine Sulda
Vanilla Vibe, Christies Beach

Shana Beard
Hair Magic, Colonnades

Debbie Flanagan
Cemons Skills Centre

“I am excited to be involved in this project. I strongly feel that as this industry is of a younger generation we need them to have some kind of understanding of the issues they will face, and have the knowledge to help their clients correctly.”

Amber-lee Hunt
Salon Manager, Vanilla Vibe Hair Salon



Hairdresser Education & Training Workshops

Hairdressers from 124 Salons within the City of Onkaparinga attended two 3 hour workshops entitled 'Looking after yourself and your clients'.

The workshops, especially designed and delivered by Primary Health Care Nurses from Southern Primary Health in conjunction with local Hairdressers' expertise, provided comprehensive mental health and communication skills training and practical resources to support Hairdressers & their clients. (See [Appendix A](#)).

The response was excellent with a total of 38 Hairdressers attending the two workshops. Twenty TAFE SA Hairdressing students and their lecturers from the Noarlunga Campus were also in attendance. The workshops were well advertised. Prior to these workshops individual

"By being involved in this project I hope to be able to give those people with bad life experiences a positive outlook on life and help guide them through difficult times or, at least point them in the right direction.

I feel that by completing this project it will not only benefit my clients but also be very rewarding to me."

Sherryn Hume
Hair Machine, Regent Arcade



letters, personal invitations and flyers advertising the sessions were distributed to each worksite.

To encourage participation, industry incentives were offered. Participants were presented with a “goodie basket” containing a range of personal products, tea and coffee sachets and chocolates.

Hairdressing Salons who were unable to attend received a complete set of workshop resources for use within their salons. These resources included two wallet information cards; one designed with information relating to accessing Southern Primary Health services and the second listing a range of emergency services contact numbers.

The same program was also provided to sixteen Hairdressing students at the TAFE SA City Campus and fourteen students from the Carrick Institute at follow up workshops.

The Industry itself clearly embraced the concept of the workshops and many Hairdressers confirmed the fact that this education is clearly needed. They appreciated the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills and be provided with specific education and training to develop responses and coping strategies to protect themselves against becoming overwhelmed and stressed from listening to a client’s personal and health issues.

This was evidenced by 19 Hairdressers from 13 Salons participating in the follow up 14 hour Mental Health First Aid Training.

Mental Health First Aid is the help given to someone developing a mental health problem or in a mental health crisis. The training does not make someone an expert in mental health or qualify them to counsel others. It provides the participant with a basic knowledge of how to effectively assist someone who is struggling with a current mental health crisis and how to guide them in the right direction to gain professional assistance. This could be a family member, neighbour, a fellow worker, client or community member.



[View the Hair2Heart “Looking After Yourself and Your Clients” Powerpoint presentation](#)



connecting you with health services

Remember, we are here to help you.

If you or someone you know needs help, phone or visit your local health service listed below where a trained health professional will be able to speak with you and respond to your needs.

- GP Plus Super Clinic Noarlunga **8164 9111**
- Seaford **8392 4500**
- Morphett Vale **8325 8100**
- Southern Women's **8384 9555**
- GP Plus Health Care Centre Aldinga **8557 9500**

Southern Primary Health Services

Counselling can assist you to talk through the difficulties you may face in your life. At some point many of us need help to work through problems such as:

- > Depression, anxiety and stress
- > Family problems and relationship issues
- > Loss and grief
- > Parenting issues
- > Sexual assault and child abuse
- > Drugs and alcohol
- > Managing aggression

Alcohol & Drug Information Service..... **1300 131 340**

Telephone counselling service for people with drug and alcohol problems and their family and friends [24/7]

Beyond Blue **1300 224 636**

Provides information about depression to consumers and carers <http://www.beyondblue.org.au/index.aspx?>

Crisis Care **13 16 11**

Telephone counselling and practical help for individuals and families in any type of crisis [24/7]

Domestic Violence & Aboriginal Family Gateway Service **1800 800 098**

A telephone assessment, counselling and referral service for victims of domestic violence [24/7]

Emergency Mental Health Triage Service **131 465**

For immediate assistance in a mental health emergency [24/7]

Gambling Helpline **1800 060 757**

A telephone counselling service that assists problem gamblers and their families [24/7]

Health Direct - after hours GP helpline . **1800 022 222**

Fast and simple expert advice about any health issue provided by a Registered Nurse [24/7]

Kids Helpline..... **1800 551 800**

Free, anonymous, telephone and online counselling service specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25 [24/7]

Legal Help Line **1300 366 424**

A free legal advice telephone service [Mon - Fri 9:00am - 4:30pm]

Lifeline Australia **13 11 14**

Lifeline connects people with care by providing telephone support in suicide prevention and mental health issues [24/7]

Men's Line **1800 789 978**

A telephone and online support and information service for men [24/7]

Information Resource Card Development

An integral part of the Hair2Heart project was the development and distribution of practical, user friendly wallet information cards aimed at raising awareness amongst Hairdressers and their clients of the broad range of local health and support services available in the community.

The resources, entitled 'Hair2Heart – Your quick guide to local health services' and 'Hair2Heart – Your quick guide to support services' were designed in close collaboration with local Hairdressers in terms of ease of use, suitability, size, colour and most importantly, information provided.

A total of 6,000 of each information card was printed and distributed initially to participants from Salons attending the educational training. Other Salons in the South who were unable to attend the workshops received the resources by post after being personally contacted by the Project Coordinator.

Hairdressers provide the information cards to their clients in a variety of ways. Some Salons promote and display the cards in the reception area allowing clients to choose from the special business card holder provided by Southern Primary Health. Other Salons prefer to provide the information discretely to clients when they feel the need arises.



The value of the wallet information cards is evidenced by the positive feedback from Hairdressers and the increased presentations for counselling services e.g. depression and anxiety at GP Plus sites.

These resources ensure that Hairdressers have the necessary information to support them and their fellow workers in responding to client issues and concerns. As a result, their clients receive appropriate support and information and feel positive about the Salon and the services they have received.

“Being a Hairdresser can be emotionally draining, so offering them some tools to cope with the emotional demands the job holds would be fantastic. All salons should have access to brochures with referral contact phone numbers for their clients.”

Susan
Hairdresser



Workshop Evaluation

In order to evaluate the success and effectiveness of the workshops an evaluation questionnaire was developed.

Participants were asked for their general perceptions of the effectiveness of the workshops in terms of the key information provided and the relevance to their profession. They were also asked whether they felt that following the workshops there had been improvements in knowledge and procedures, and sustainable safe systems of work in their individual Salons.

The questionnaire also sought feedback on the usefulness of the health promotion resources provided at the workshops

These resources included two wallet information cards; one designed with information relating to access to local health services and the second listing a range of emergency services contact numbers.

Questionnaires were mailed with an accompanying cover letter and a reply paid envelope so as to maximise the response. A summary of the responses was compiled in relation to the key objectives (See [Appendix B](#)).



Work Readiness For Young People

To further safeguard the health and wellbeing of potential young workers in the Hairdressing Industry, a module of work was developed for inclusion on the Australian Passport to Safety web-based health and safety program.

This self-paced learning and test program is directed at young people in High School who are about to enter the workforce for the first time, whether for work experience, work placement, part time or full time work. The program provides crucial information about health, safety and welfare at work.

The program provides a unique learning environment for students, challenging them on a broad range of health and safety issues in the workplace – in this case the Hairdressing Salon.

Successful participants are awarded a Passport to Safety certificate that can be attached to resumes to demonstrate their basic awareness of workplace health and safety.

“We listen, we don’t judge and we make them feel good. But, how do we help ourselves not fall off the edge, how do we support the younger volatile, inexperienced Hairdresser?”

Shana Beard
Senior Stylist, Hair Magic



By completing the program a prospective young worker can demonstrate to a potential employer a basic level OHSW knowledge as well as a commitment to safety at work. This can be a highly sought after attribute by employers when considering employing a young person.

To be attractive to student users the interactive module includes a five minute video specifically aimed at the youth market, featuring a young male and female apprentice, their journey into the Hairdressing Industry and their experiences at work.

The online module contains an extensive student tutorial showing the two young apprentice Hairdressers carrying out their day to day activities in a workplace environment. The module also includes a testing system which encourages the student to work through a series of questions and review on-line materials to reinforce topics they may not be familiar with, until they achieve a 100% pass.

If an incorrect answer is chosen, the student is presented with further information to read and is re-tested.

Examples of OHSW areas covered in the tutorial include:

- Interacting with clients
- Manual handling
- Chemical safety
- First Aid
- Electrical safety
- Safe work environment
- Workplace hazards
- Personal safety
- Use of social media.



Passport to Safety had 106 Australian schools enrolled in the program in 2011 and provided more than 18,000 Year 10 students with practical information on their rights and responsibilities regarding workplace safety.



[View the Passport to Safety video
"A Cut Above"](#)



Professional Development with TAFE SA & Registered Training Organisations

During the course of the project extensive consultations occurred with TAFE SA lecturers & Registered Training Organisation's educators regarding inclusion of a module within the Hair & Beauty curriculum on interpersonal relationships.

To further develop this concept workshops for TAFE SA and Registered Training Organisation's educators were held. This was seen as an important project implementation strategy as it would provide Hairdressing lecturers and trainers with the necessary skills to safeguard the many thousands of new and young workers entering the SA Hairdressing Industry over the coming years.

All participants received an electronic presentation resource which could be easily incorporated into their current training delivery.

In total 15 TAFE SA lecturers and Registered Training Organisation's educators attended the training workshops.

"Our students have gained an awareness of their natural knowledge and increased their confidence when dealing with clients with a cause for concern. We now discuss this matter together with our students often."

Marisa Kemp
Senior Trainer, Carrick Institute of Education

Keep safety at the heart of your workplace

Safe Work Week 2012

Marketing and Promotion

Southern Primary Health has demonstrated a willingness to share expertise and provide leadership by disseminating project outcomes at a state, national and international level in a wide variety of contexts. These include a National Mental Health Conference, SafeWork Week 2012, Passport to Safety Forum at SafeWork SA, WHO International Safe Communities web-sites as well as Southern Primary Health GP Plus sites.

During the course of the project a number of media opportunities to promote the Hair2Heart project have taken place. These included:

- Adelaide Advertiser article & Editorial
- Feature article - Southern Health News
- Southern Times Messenger
- Channel 9, ABC & Channel 7 evening news
- Channel 9 National Today Show panel discussion
- ABC Radio 'Drive Time' Talkback Show
- Triple M Talkback.



[View the SafeWork Week Powerpoint Presentation](#)



[View the Channel 9 News feature](#)



One of the strengths of the project is that it can easily be applied as a model to other SA Health or public health agencies. Following this promotion a number of SA and interstate health professionals have made contact seeking further details, including:

- Mental Health Team, Clare & Hills Inner Rural Network
- Northcott Safe Community - City of Sydney.

The Hair2Heart project outcomes are directly relevant to other occupations, all of whom are perfectly placed to provide appropriate responses and referral information, encouraging their clients to seek professional mental health counselling or medical attention. These include:

- Hospitality workers – Bartending and Gaming
- Personal trainers/Fitness instructors.



Reflections

The outcomes from the Hair2Heart project were many and varied. Clearly, this report and the needs identified by those involved in the Hairdressing Industry provide direction and thought for further action by a range of services and agencies should the environment be conducive to enable this to occur.

A project with this focus has the potential to encourage and empower both employers and employees to introduce practical strategies for overcoming the very real difficulties encountered by small business in addressing workplace health, safety and welfare issues.

One specific strategy to further benefit young people entering the workforce could be the development of similar trade specific modules for young people within Passport to Safety program.

Southern Primary Health will continue to provide free services offered to the community, including small business, on a broad range of topics including, counselling and group services around positive mental health.

The Hair2Heart project, initiated by Southern Primary Health, set out to engage members of the Hairdressing Industry. The project built on this by working directly alongside the Industry to improve health and safety standards in their workplaces.



The Project Steering Committee provided unending support and honest, realistic feedback to the project. As well as attending meetings they have been in constant contact with suggestions for improving the promotion and uptake of the project and the resource content. Their wonderful encouragement and guidance has been invaluable.

Perhaps the best way to sum up their care and the contribution they have made as a group is reflected in the following statement from Amber-lee, Manager of Vanilla Vibe Hairdressing Salon - “Everyone has hard times in their lives we are here to listen and tell you that things will be ok”.



[View Amber-Lee’s blog for her insights into the Hairdressing Industry](#)

1. Introduction – History of Hair2Heart project to date

2. Aim of the Program:

- To promote the emotional safety and well-being of Hairdressing professionals and the larger community.

3. Objectives of the Program:

- To increase the awareness and understanding of health promotion in the context of the Hairdressing Industry
- To build upon the confidence and skills of Hairdressing professionals so that they may appropriately respond to a client's health concerns
- To enhance the knowledge of Hairdressing professionals in order to provide clients with appropriate health information and referral to health services
- To support the well-being of Hairdressing professionals through provision of self-care education.

4. What Hairdressing Professionals do well:

The role of the Hairdresser in the well-being of their clients

- Rapport and engagement with clients
- Sound communicators
- Local knowledge of what is happening in the community
- Knowledge of what services are available
- Own life experiences
- Diverse client base
- Creative and innovative.

5. Emotional wellness in everyday life:

- Change and loss as part of everyday life
- How clients might present when struggling with life issues.

6. Introducing self-care:

“What works well for you”?

- Protective factors for emotional wellness
- Lifestyle awareness
- Managing stress
- How do I recognise when things aren't going so well for me and my work is impacted upon?

7. Strategies for you and your clients:

- Disclosure from client
- Listening skills
- Developing empathy
- Conveying care and concern
- Referral to services
- Confidentiality
- Debriefing with co-workers.

A workshop evaluation questionnaire was sent to each of the thirty eight participants at their place of work. Twenty four valid responses were returned. The questionnaire response rate was therefore 24 out of 38 [63%].

1. In general how would you rate the usefulness of the Hair2Heart ‘Looking after yourself and your clients’ workshop? (Please circle number)

Not useful		Quite useful			Very useful			Extremely useful	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

- Ten respondents rated the workshops’ usefulness to the Hairdressing profession as being Extremely useful with a score of 9 or 10
- Ten rated the workshop as being Very useful
- Four rated the workshop as being Quite useful
- No-one rated the workshop as being Not useful.

2. As a result of the Hair2Heart workshops do you feel more confident in:

Knowing what to say when a client confides in you?

(Yes | No)

- Twenty two respondents stated that as a result of the workshop they felt more confident in knowing what to say when a client confided in them
- Two stated no improvement in their confidence and that they already felt quite confident.

Knowing where you and your clients can get help and support locally?

(Yes | No)

- All twenty four participants felt that as a result of attending the workshop they felt more confident in knowing where they and their clients could get help and support locally.

3. Have you used the red and blue wallet information cards provided to you at the workshop?

(Yes | No)

- Twenty one respondents reported that they had used the red and blue wallet information cards provided to Salons at the workshop.

4. Do you believe the wallet information cards are useful for yourself or your staff in responding to your client’s concerns?

(Yes | No)

- All twenty four respondents stated that they had found/or would find the wallet information cards useful for themselves or their staff in responding to their client’s concerns.

5. As a result of the Hair2Heart workshops you attended have there been any occasions in your workplace when you have been able to respond more confidently to your client's concerns using the knowledge you have gained? (If so, please describe:)

Sample of qualitative questionnaire responses:

"A couple of clients have taken wallet information cards and as a Hairdresser it feels good to be able to provide useful information to help them personally."

"Yes, but it was a family member showing signs of depression with a gambling problem. I gave her the gambling help line number and the wallet information card. She rang the number and is currently getting help."

"I had a man come into the salon who openly told me he had been suffering with anxiety and depression and was finding it hard to cope with day to day life. He had seen a Doctor/GP and was prescribed meds. I recommended he also speak to someone and gave him both cards and he did follow through; said the woman he is seeing is FANTASTIC."

"One of my clients is now using many of the services at Southern Primary Health to help her manage the challenges of dealing with her son who is brain damaged and is an alcoholic. She has expressed to me that she feels like her life is back on track."

"I feel more confident referring clients, friends and family who need different services. I find it easier because it is free and people are much more interested."

"There have been a few situations where I have told people about the cards and what they are for. As a result several have taken them for their 'friends'."

"In general terms dealing with the public can be challenging. Attending the workshop and being a part of this project has been extremely beneficial. A good confidence booster."

"Yes, I have a lady that has cancer and being able to talk with her was of great help."