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impact leadership



For a while there, she's your hero. Your role model. Your mentor.

But then you start to look around a bit, and find that there are even cooler people out there than your mum.

Role models, and more importantly, mentors, are a bit thin on the ground at the moment. We have a national mentor health issue.

No, really. Look around and pick who you would - realistically - want today's kids to look up to.

If you thought Michael Clarke... then thanks for taking the time out from googling naked+photo+lara, and keep thinking. If you thought AC/DC - good work but they're a band, and so don't actually count. Actors, musicians, business people... they all blur into one uninspirational blob, don't they?

And if you thought Hilary Clinton or Michelle Obama, then imagine someone sitting beside you snapping their fingers in front of your face and kindly draw your focus OUT of the patriotic dream of another country. It's - dare I say it - 'unAustralian.'

And no, headstrong career-minded power-broking mothers, realistically your kids won't look up to Julia Gillard. No one does. Not until she's dead, or at least until her political career is dead, because we only bask in posthumous political glory. We're a bit smug that way. Aren't we, Kevin Rudd?

So it's little wonder Aussie kids end up looking to footballers for role models. But we can do better than that dodgy bunch of blokes, can't we?

Can we?

Parents are usually way too busy to mentor anyone's kids but their own. Women are having children later, so grandparents are often not around by the time kids are old enough to explore their immense knowledge and experience. Today's world automatically links 'father figure' with 'charged with abusing children' so goodbye to the guiding hand of the nice man next door.

So they turn to celebrities. And it's a little bit sad.

Footy players are on the TV news every night, on loads of shows before and after games and during the week, they're on twitter and Facebook and Youtube, they're talked about and bet on and admired... and the most easily accessible role model/ mentor types available to today's kids.

And they don't all swear like sailors, enjoy urinating in public bars, have drug addictions, or gambling addictions, and they don't all require a club-supplied minder when they go out. The late Jim Stynes proved himself exemplary as both role model and mentor, a man as great at giving as he was at playing, especially with his work holding forums for young people.

But he was one of few men like that.

We need people closer to home for kids to look up to. We need not to provide, but to BE mentors to go to for advice, for help, to work out what to do, and when to do it, how to do it and where to do it... and, more importantly, what not to do, and when not to do it, how not to do it and where not to do it... because the more we do that, the better equipped today's kids will be to deal with the problems plaguing us today - depression... job dissatisfaction... drugs and drinking...

Late last month, Ballarat hosted an event similar to the work of Stynes. It's what's known as an [Impact Student Leadership](#) conference. It's where primary school kids get together and learn how to be leaders and make their actions positively impact on the people around them.

In the words of one Lal Lal Primary School student, an eight year old, 'it kind of, like, teaches you to, like, start up games and organise, like, events and stuff like that.'

And that's, like, kind of what we need.