

Wheatbelt Youth Summit

‘Us and Our Community’ Project

Project Overview

Regional Development Australia (RDA) Wheatbelt’s ‘Wheatbelt Youth Leadership Development’ (WYLD) Network is a youth led initiative targeted at young people aged 12 to 25 years, based in the Wheatbelt region. The group aims to have representatives from each of the 43 Shires of the Wheatbelt and presents with two clear objectives:

- To inspire Wheatbelt young people to be actively involved in their communities while promoting positive behaviour
- To bridge the gap for regional young people by providing opportunities for growth and development

The group has recently been appointed as the Regional Advisory Committee for the Commissioner for Children and Young People Michelle Scott. This is a fantastic opportunity for young people of this region to have a voice and actively work towards providing solutions to issues impacting on Wheatbelt youth.

As an investment in our young people and the future of our region, RDA Wheatbelt hosted, in partnership with Cunderdin Agricultural College, a Youth Summit for Wheatbelt young people aged 12 to 20 years. On 23 September 2011, Wheatbelt upper school students were invited to come together at the Cunderdin Agricultural College site for a dynamic capacity building opportunity. The summit provided a forum to discuss issues affecting youth, identify solutions and innovative approaches, and give young people strategies to deliver youth initiatives in their own communities.

A component of Youth Biz was the ‘Us and Our Community’ Dream Tank. This was a time for young people to voice their opinions and give input on the issues that our community leaders are faced with every day. Young people are the future of our region, yet they are rarely given the opportunity to discuss issues that they feel are important.

The Dream Tank was very informal yet an innovative brainstorming session that was planned and implemented by the WYLD Network and it encouraged networking and rapport building amongst the participants. Young people were spreading the word about what it is like to be ‘Us and Our Community’.

The Dream Tank was set up to be what the young people imagined a ‘Dream Tank’ would look like. When they walked into the Youth Summit, helium balloons were floating around in the room everywhere they looked. Each balloon had a pocket dangling from a string at head level with a question on it. The idea was that when young people entered the ‘Dream Tank’ they would pluck a balloon and provide their comments in response to the question attached on a piece of paper and place it in the pocket. There was also a ‘Dream Tank Challenge’ where young people had to find the pockets with the prizes inside.



The young people were so eager to take part in the activity that a few of the helium balloons were popped. This was a fantastic learning activity for the young people who were on the planning committee for the 'Dream Tank' as they had to come up with another way for the Dream Tank to be successfully facilitated with little time to prepare. They were able to decide on an alternative set up that was just as fun, interactive and ideal for the environment. Instead of all of the pockets hanging from balloons, they were placed in the 'Dream Tank' all over the floor.

Young participants walked around and read the questions and answered the questions that best suited them. Multiple young people gave input on the same question and chatted about the questions to bounce their ideas around. The objective was to spread and grow each person's ideas, and it worked very well.

In addition to this, a panel of distinguished guests, including State and Federal members of parliament, was set up on the stage area and young people were given the opportunity to ask them questions about anything they wanted to ask. We arranged youth mentor Dave Gunter to facilitate this session and young people were actually very interested in asking questions of the panel.

The 'Us and Our Community' project also allowed for young people to participate in a number of capacity building workshops of their choice to broaden their knowledge of what opportunities are available to them from within and around their communities.



'Us and Our Community' Objectives

- To raise awareness of youth issues and themes in a regional context
- To provide an opportunity for young people to come together, network and share inter-community information
- To provide an opportunity for young people to build capacity through the Summit activities including inspirational speakers, personal development workshops and sharing their perspectives on how to improve the region and their communities
- To provide an opportunity for the young people to learn what is available to them in their community in the way of support services
- To provide an opportunity for youth to participate in and acknowledge their role as young people and future leaders within their communities
- To provide an opportunity for youth to identify regional issues relating to young people, possible solutions and suggestions for improved engagement and youth opportunities
- To promote a positive image of young people from regional WA
- To provide youth stakeholders with an opportunity to link with and engage young people

Questions and Advice Provided by Young People:

Below is an overview of the responses provided by the young people who participated in the Dream Tank activity:

Community

What sort of things do young people want help to organise in your community?

- More opportunities to dance
- Events like the Summit where we can meet each other
- Big combined school balls
- Outside Cinemas – we need more community events so that people from different towns can socialise – but then no one goes
- Bus services or train services so we can see our friends

Have you been on a Committee? What sort of Committee?

- No (9)
- Yes, the YAC (Youth Advisory Council) (3)
- I would but don't know how to get involved

What is your dream for your community in ten years time?

- To be clean
- To have access to more shops
- Nothing to change
- Everyone to get along and be in harmony
- Fast food!



- Cool retirement village – I will be old by then!

Where will you be in ten years?

- Here still (3)
- Perth (6)
- Travelling

What is there to do in your community for young people?

- Sport
- Swimming at the pool
- Skate park
- Youth group
- Events sometimes
- If you don't do sport ... not much
- Helping on the farm

What stops you from being involved in organising things in your community?

- Not knowing who to go to and when to do it
- Parents
- Not being able to get there to do it (car) (3)
- I want to be involved but don't always get the chance (2)
- I don't have the skills/don't know how

What would encourage you to be involved in organising things in your community?

- A treat
- A reward
- Being asked!
- Organising something that I am interested in

What could we do to make new families feel more welcome?

- Give them some money to get settled
- Say hello and invite them to join groups and stuff
- A free swimming pool pass for a year. Everyone hangs out there and they will get to know people
- Give them some information about the community. A welcome pack.

What do you imagine the "Future Wheatbelt" will look like?

- It will be very messy
- High density suburbia
- Huge hydroponic crop centre
- Like Perth and probably joined up to it but I hope not. I like living in the country.
- Not many people on the farm but heaps moving from Perth for cheap homes
- Passenger trains between communities, lots of people and heaps more shops and businesses
- It will be boring. Everyone will stay home to work and shop and no one will see each other
- Solar powered, self-sufficient communities that grow everything they need.

How can information from young people be better used in your community?

- It would make our town more youth friendly
- We have fresh ideas – they could make things different and better!

How could we support older community members better?

- Have decent health services in more communities



- Have seminars
- Build more aged care housing
- Involve them in more social activities instead of throwing them in a home away from their community
- By showing a little more respect
- Helping them to cross the road and carry shopping
- By listening and learning from them

What is special about your town/community?

- Bruce Rock has a really friendly community
- My town has great community spirit
- I don't know exactly what is so special about my community but I love it
- There is nothing special about my community, it is empty and I live here because my family does
- I love the space. People who say it is boring need to open their eyes

Do you find anything boring about the Wheatbelt?

- Lack of social events
- Communities fail to provide activities for youth to do
- I find nothing boring about my community
- There is not enough entertainment here
- Yes, my friends live so far away and we cannot socialise outside of school because of this
- We need more social events
- Not enough facilities... of any sort
- I find the isolation very lonely and boring
- The emptiness
- There is heaps to do here. It is not boring. People just need to get out of their comfort zone.
- No, I love the space
- No, the Wheatbelt is amazing and that is why we live here

What does your community need to be a better place for young people?

- Entertainment (6)
- Transport (15)
- Fast food (3)

What would make a good souvenir to represent the Wheatbelt? Be creative!

- A sample of a crop
- Wild flowers
- Something made from local wool
- Cowboy hat
- Steer and horns
- Gum nut
- A belt made of Wheat (plastic)
- A voucher for a holiday – it would get people to come back
- A cow on a tractor
- Hot pockets

What is your community lacking for young people?

- Not much



- An awesome state of the art youth centre
- Hungry Jacks
- Fast food

What shops or entertainment do we need in the Wheatbelt?

- A cinema
- Movies
- Game shops
- Water parks
- Places for youth to hang that are not youth centres (youth specific cafes and shops)

How can Wheatbelt young people from different communities socialise and network better?

- Facebook
- Transport (6)
- More events

How do you find out about stuff that's happening in your community?

- By going to the community centre. They always know what is going on.
- The newspaper
- The community notice board
- Letters to my parents
- School chaplain
- Facebook (3)

If you could make one wish to help make your town a better place, what would it be?

- A good school that would let us stay in our own town to complete school
- Money as our community is poor. I wish I could help.
- More doctors! (6)
- It is really hard to get into the doctors when you are sick. We need more doctors in our Communities.
- Kick out the bad influences
- Have more variety of sport in my town
- I wish we had access to better resources
- I wish there were more places to dance around here
- More grant opportunities
- Everyone would benefit if we had access to more grants and people who knew how to get them
- Hospitals that have the equipment and can actually help you

If you could invent something really simple to help people with everyday living what would it be?

- A machine to diagnose health problems and issue cures

Finish this sentence "Wouldn't it be cool if"

- We didn't have to drive for so long to get to places
- We had Hungry Jacks
- We had a Wheatbelt Water Park

Do you think opportunities for young people are well promoted in the Wheatbelt?

- Through school they are
- No (4)
- Sometimes through places like the CRC (Community Resource Centre)

What is your favourite town/community (anywhere) and why?



- Merredin. I don't live there but I hear there are heaps of things to do there
- Sydney. I have never been there but would love to go
- Canberra – snow
- Gold Coast because of all of the things to do
- Ayres Rock – I want to see the famous sights of our country
- Home

What activities would you like in your community?

- Movies
- Different sports like rowing, archery, etc.

What do you think about skate parks? Are they what young people want?

- Something other than just skate parks would be good
- Yes if you are into skating they are good
- Yes we want them (9)
- They are crap and I don't know why all of the towns have them
- No we don't want them (8)

Do you think young people have enough support in your community?

- Not really
- No, and we need support because everything is so far away

Do you use your Youth Centre?

- No because the wrong sort of people hang out there
- Yes
- No, we don't have one
- Yes it is great to have somewhere to go just for us
- No we don't even have one
- Yes because it gives me something different to do
- No because it is there for the kids who don't have good home

Why do you think young people move to the city from the Wheatbelt?

- Lower prices
- Because it gets them away from bad influences
- There is more to do in the city
- There are more jobs in the city
- Schools are better in the city
- It is the only way to be successful

What do you want in your community?

- Employment opportunities (7)
- Transport (2)

How can we get people to shop locally to help your community?

- No idea ... but it would help out our community
- Improve the stock variety and age
- Make it cheaper because Perth is much cheaper than here
- Competitive pricing
- Promote the stuff better locally and look after your customers

How can we promote the Wheatbelt better to attract visitors?

- Have more shops so there is something to come for



- Put more effort into advertising community events

Interests

Do you play sport out of school?

- Yes (19) (football, netball, tennis, cricket, hockey, archery)
- No (2)

Do you play a musical instrument? If so, what type of instrument?

- Yes, guitar. It would be great to have access to lessons
- Yes (7)
- No (6)

Would you be interested in starting your own business one day?

- Yes because there are not enough jobs to choose from here at the moment
- Yes to make more opportunities for other people as well as myself

What is at the top of your 'do before I die' list?

- Travel
- See the beach
- To help all of the poor kids who don't have clothes or anywhere to live
- Have a family and kids ... and this would be a good place to do it
- Get a good job
- Turn 100
- Be a race car driver
- Meet someone famous. No one ever comes here because we are too far away
- Sky diving
- Start my own business

What sort of artistic stuff are you interested in?

- Photography
- The Mona Lisa
- Drawing but there is nowhere to train in this
- Painting

Everyone has skills and things they are good at. Do you know what yours are and what would help with them?

- I am a great dancer but have not got any dancing classes around here
- I am good at playing the guitar but cannot get lessons here

Are there any adventures you would love to do (like horse riding, sky diving, etc.)?

- Go camping up north
- Go gliding
- I would love to surf
- White water rafting
- Bungee jumping
- Horse riding
- I would love to know what adventures are available here. I don't know what is here

What is your favourite town/community (anywhere) and why?

- Bruce Rock because it has a great community and everyone cares for you
- Nelson because it was a great active place for young people to grow up
- Green head because it has the luxury of country type living with shopping facilities really close



- Anywhere near the beach because you can do outside activities and it never gets boring
- Mandurah because I love the life hanging out at the beach

If you could invent something really simple to help people with everyday living what would it be?

- A machine that has the knowledge of understanding people's health and how to fix them

Do you plan to travel after you finish school or step straight into further education or employment?

- I will certainly travel
- I want to see the world so I plan to travel
- I want to travel the world ASAP!
- No, I just want to get back home to the farm. I miss home.

Would you go on a Wheatbelt Contiki type tour?

- Yes I definitely would
- Yes, I think it would be loads of fun
- Yes, it would be a cool way to learn about our area
- Hell yes!
- I would love to do something like this
- Maybe – depending on where we went in the Wheatbelt
- I have always wanted to travel around and see the Wheatbelt

Technology

How can we use technology to promote stuff to young people better?

- Get mobile carriers to send out groups to us with stuff we need to know
- Music
- Posters on websites

Have you got internet access at home?

- Yes (15)
- No (5)
- Hasn't everybody? How can you live without it?
- I would be totally devo if I didn't have internet at home

Health & Wellbeing

Have you ever been cyber bullied?

- Yes (18)
- Yes and it is still happening
- It is really bad at the moment and the school wont do anything about it because it happens from home

Have you been bullied at school? If so, has this been resolved?

- No (3)
- Yes (16)
- Still not resolved (6)
- Bullying is a huge problem and the school doesn't do anything about it.

Do you drink alcohol?

- No (7)
- Yes (17)
- Older siblings mostly buy it for us (6)



- Parents buy alcohol for us (4)

Do you smoke?

- No (8)
- Yes (3)

What is something that young people would participate in to raise money?

- B&S (Bachelor & Spinsters) ball

Are you sexually active?

- Yes (5)

Have you ever been depressed?

- No responses

Who is your mentor / someone you look up to?

- My old boy. I want to farm like he does

Have you been offered drugs in your community?

- No (9)
- Yes (3)

Employment

Are there employment options in the Wheatbelt for you?

- Yes there are
- No there are not because there are not many businesses here
- No because I want to be more than a check out chick

What sort of job do you see yourself having?

- Police Officer
- It is hard to know what to do when I leave school because there are not many jobs to choose from in my town
- Working at the club cooking
- Working at IGA
- Shire – it is the best job available in town
- I.T.
- Hair Dresser (3)
- Make-up Artist (2)
- Mechanic (4)
- Producer or actor

After school, do you think you will find work in the Wheatbelt?

- Yes but the options will be really restricted
- Yes but I reckon it will be hard to find a good one
- No. I suggest we have access to more work experience opportunities
- No (7)
- Yes (3)

Are you interested in working in the health industry e.g. doctor, nurse, dental assistant, hospital cleaner, health promotion officer?

- No responses

Are you interested in working in the education industry e.g. a teacher, education assistant?

- No responses



Are you interested in working in the building industry? If so, what sort of job?

- No (3)
- Yes – a carpenter

Are you interested in working in the community services industry e.g. child care, youth work, social work?

- No but I would love to help in this area if I know where and how

Are you interested in working in the mechanical industry e.g. diesel mechanic, car mechanic?

- Yes as a diesel mechanic (5)
- No (4)

Have you got a part time job?

- No (16)
- No because there is nothing available
- Yes but I don't get paid

Do Mum and / or Dad work?

- No responses

Education & Supports

Do you plan to stay at school until the end of Year 12?

- Yes but I can't do it in my community which is going to be hard

Have you heard of the Youth Connections program?

- No (4)

What would be your ultimate work experience opportunity?

- Learning to be a pop singer
- Working on the mines
- Horse riding job
- A psychology experience in the actual job
- Childrens Services
- Anything besides what is in our town. Different work experience is hard to find

Are there educational options here in the Wheatbelt for you or will you need to move to complete the training you want?

- No, there is nothing here to help me when I leave my school
- There is enough here for what I wish to do
- I am moving already for more opportunities but it depends on what other people want to do
- I will need to leave my community and this is not something I ever wanted to do

Home & Family

What is something you would love to learn about or to develop skills to do that is not available in your community?

- Future schooling options for country kids
- How to make money easily
- I.T.
- Professional sportsman (motor bike)
- Commentator skills

What do you do to help around the house?



- No responses

Youth Summit

Have you enjoyed **Youth Biz**?

- Yes (13)
- Not really
- It was okay

Would you want to come to another Youth Summit?

- Yes (16)

What does “Us in our Community” mean to you?

- Being involved in community things
- Doing community work
- Telling people what we want in our community

Reporting Outcomes to the Commissioner

The ‘Dream Tank’ was a fantastic way to collect ideas from young people and they were very happy to be involved in telling what life is like from an ‘Us and Our Community’ perspective.

Members of the WYLD Team assisted to collate the information that was collected from the Dream Tank pockets and created for the Commissioner a collage of some of the quotes from the young people that they thought were important to promote. The group felt that it was important to try and capture the idea of the ‘Dream Tank’ in the creative display and used woven string, pockets from the activity and some balloons.

WYLD members acted as the Summit’s official photographers throughout the event and took some photos so that we would all have a visual diary of the event. They captured the spirit of the summit in their photos of people participating in different activities throughout the day.

Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt Inc. together with the WYLD Network would like to sincerely thank the Commissioner for Children and Young People Michelle Scott for her support for this project.

We feel that it was a very worthwhile activity and hope that you will find the feedback useful. We are looking into ways to implement some of their ‘advice’ to make the Wheatbelt a better place for young people to live and grow.

