



Caring for the future growing up today

720 ABC Perth Bright Young Reviewers 2011 AWESOME Festival

AWESOME Arts Australia Ltd

The 720 ABC Perth Bright Young Reviewers was a partnership project between AWESOME arts and media partner 720 ABC Perth. The reviewers were a group of eight young people from all over Perth who attended the AWESOME Festival (contemporary arts festival for young people and families in WA) for a full day behind-the-scenes tour, guided by AWESOME and 720 ABC Perth staff. After their tours, they were given a deadline to deliver their written reviews to 720 ABC Perth to be published on its website.

The young people involved were Maddie Walker, Anna Cook, Kiara Morris, Emily Felstead, Oliver Morrison, Rohan James, Jack Higgins and Sofie Kerr.

Deciding

AWESOME chose to involve young people in this project because their views and ideas around contemporary arts activities are not as well documented (especially in the public sphere) as adults'. Given that the festival is for young people and families, AWESOME thought it was important to involve young people in the reviewing the Awesome Festival's program and events.



2011 AWESOME Festival event
Photo supplied: AWESOME Arts

The aim was to develop a clearer picture of what is interesting, engaging and enjoyable for the Festival's audience and to present reviews in a different voice that would engage audiences on a deeper level and inform future programming decisions. It was also to offer a group of young people a memorable and once-in-a-lifetime arts experience.

Young people were invited to tell AWESOME and 720 ABC Perth why they'd make a great festival reviewer. Eight respondents were selected to be reviewers and were involved in the project through attending the festival day tour and evaluating the works they saw/participated in, and delivering their written reviews of the festival.



ABC's Bright Young Reviewers

Photo supplied: AWESOME Arts

Selection processes, dates, times and methods of communication were chosen that would support the young people's involvement. Awesome and the ABC also took into consideration the experience and time that was needed to facilitate the young people's participation and ensure the project was realistic and achievable.

Preparing

In preparing to work with young people, AWESOME and 720 ABC Perth considered any special needs the young people and their parents/guardians might have. Specific release forms were created for this project that made parents aware of their children's involvement in the project and how their contributions would be used in the future. AWESOME ensured that there were regular breaks throughout the day, that the young participants had access to water, sunscreen, toilets and phones so their experience was comfortable and within their physical capabilities.

Full schedules were sent to the participants and their parents, so they knew what was involved and could ask questions ahead of the project.

AWESOME staff have Working With Children Checks and significant experience in working with young people. When organising the Festival, organisers selected artists that had experience in workshops with children and interactive arts.

A call-out for participants was made through 720 ABC Perth radio. Entrants were asked to say in 25 words why they would make a great arts reviewer. The final participants were selected through a written application so that strong writers or those with an interest in the arts or creative flair would be identified through the selection process. A mix of boys and girls between the ages of 8-12 were chosen because this is AWESOME's target audience group and children of this age are able to write critically and analytically.

The tour of the festival included a mix of different arts forms, different venues and opportunities for the young reviewers to interact with artists of varying cultural backgrounds.



2011 AWESOME Festival event Photo supplied: AWESOME Arts

Doing it

In order that the young participants felt supported in writing their reviews, 720 ABC Perth created an information sheet with tips for good writing, in particular writing reviews. It was written in a way that explained the process in age-appropriate language.

The participants were given the option of bringing their parents with them on the tour. Most of the young people attended alone, however some parents joined for the duration of the tour, and some left once their children were comfortable and starting to settle in.

AWESOME and 720 ABC Perth communicated with the children via their parents and sent staff maps, info sheets and schedules well ahead of the tour day. At the end of the tour, the young people were told when their reviews would be needed and the best ways for them to submit them. It was important to communicate with the parents to give them all the information about what was needed for their child to participate, and important to communicate directly with the young people so that they had a sense of ownership around the project. All reviews were submitted on time.

The participants all said that the experience was very rewarding, as did their parents. The experience was specially tailored for the young participants - 720 ABC Perth created special media passes for them to wear around the tour and they were able to

interview the artists and see some behind-the-scenes action. After their reviews were published, several local papers where the young people live wrote stories about their involvement in the project, and the participants and parents said that this was particularly exciting for them.

Following up

The reviews were published online and the link sent through to the participants and their parents, thanking them for their involvement. Further media opportunities were discussed with some participants. Positive feedback was given to the participants, encouraging them to continue with their interest in the arts and writing.

The participants provided verbal feedback on the activities at the end of the tour, by phone afterwards and through their written reviews. The feedback on the AWESOME Festival was varied and reflected a wide variety of personal tastes. Interestingly, there was not one event in the festival program that every child loved or hated.

AWESOME and 720 ABC Perth felt this project was extremely successful in providing a kids-eye-view of the festival, and was a creative way to engage audiences and hear reviews from a different voice. It was also a fantastic way to celebrate the young people involved and their ideas and insights around their arts experiences.



2011 AWESOME Festival event
Photo supplied: AWESOME Arts

For more information about this participation example contact Tegan Thorogood at Awesome Arts 9328 9666