



Caring for the future growing up today

Be Alcohol Aware Competition

Investing in Our Youth

Investing In Our Youth (IIOY) is a non-government organisation that aims to promote the healthy development of children and young people in the South West region of Western Australia.

The aim of the Be Alcohol Aware Competition was to draw on the creative and artistic skills of young people 12 to 17 years of age to promote awareness of the *National Health and Medical Research Council Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol* (2009). The guidelines are:

- For children and young people under 18 years of age, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.
- Parents and carers should be aware that children under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking and that, for this age group, not drinking alcohol is especially important.
- For young people aged 15 to 17 years, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible.¹



Winning poster from 12 – 14 age group, Mitchell Hough (12)

Young people were invited to use their creative and artistic skills to promote one or more of the guidelines through a YouTube video or poster entry.

¹ National Health and Medical Research Council 2009, *National Health and Medical Research Council Australian Guidelines to Reduce Risks to Reduce Health Risks* [website], viewed 4 April 2012, <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ds10>

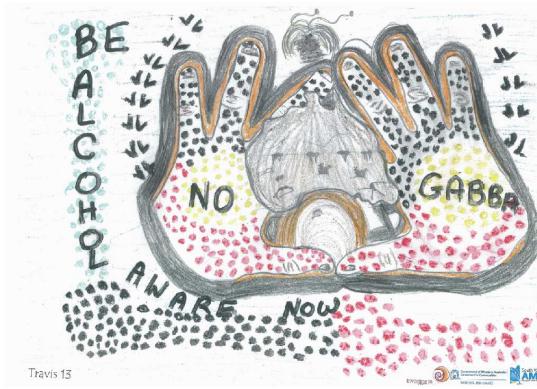


Deciding

IIOY wanted to involve young people in the project based on the Australian Youth Research Centre recommendation on the importance of a participatory approach when implementing health and wellbeing education to young people.²

The participation of young people provides many important benefits:

- Active participation enhances learning and positive development.
- Effective learning occurs when young people are recognised as active partners in the process.
- Through their participation, young people can be viewed as a resource rather than as recipients of an education experience.
- The results of young people's participation showcase their skill, expertise and knowledge, and the valuable perspective they are able to contribute to our community.³



Poster entry from Travis-Thorn Bell (13)

Preparing

To discuss the idea of the competition with young people, IIOY worked with an existing youth group, the City of Bunbury Youth Advisory Council (YAC). As described by IIOY:

"The consultation process was fairly organic. We first asked YAC members if they thought the idea of a competition would work and if young people would be interested. That led to a discussion around a number of details that included an appropriate prize pool, competition categories and promotion strategies."

Following this initial meeting, IIOY decided to promote the guidelines by running a competition and developed the details of the competition based on the recommendations of the YAC including the age categories, prize pool and promotion strategies.

² Gregg C 2012, *Be Alcohol Aware Evaluation Report March 2012* [website], viewed 5 April 2012, Investing in Our Youth Inc.

http://www.investinginyouth.com.au/_content/documents/Be%20Alcohol%20Aware/Be%20Alcohol%20Aware%20Project%20Evaluation, p.5

³ Ibid



At a subsequent meeting, IIOY presented a more formal proposal and YAC members gave their feedback resulting in some details being changed. At this meeting YAC members were also invited to judge the competition.

Doing it

Three competition age categories were created based on the recommendations of YAC:

- Free-hand poster for 12 to 14 year-olds and 15 to 17 year-olds.
- Computer-assisted poster for 12 to 14 year-olds and 15 to 17 year-olds.
- YouTube video for 12 to 17 year-olds.

The prize pool as recommended by YAC was a \$300 gift voucher for first prize, a \$200 gift voucher for second prize and a \$100 gift voucher for third prize.

With the age categories and prize pool for the competition determined, IIOY promoted the competition using methods recommended by YAC:

- Entry details were emailed to primary and secondary schools in the region.
- Entry details were emailed to the youth sector through the South West Youth Coordinating Network email data base.
- YAC promoted the competition on their Facebook page.
- The competition was promoted in the local regional newspaper, the South Western Times.

The entries received were of a very high standard, visually appealing and artistic. YAC representatives and a Noongar elder, who is also an artist, were invited to judge the entries. However, on the day, several representatives were unable to attend, so IIOY asked a second youth group to help with the judging.

In judging the entries, the young people were asked to deliberate on which entries best promoted the youth alcohol guidelines, as this was the purpose of the competition.

As well as first, second and third prize winners, other highly commended entries received a certificate through the mail. The winners were contacted by phone and then received official notification through the mail along with a certificate and prize vouchers.



Winner of the computer-assisted poster was Rebecca Brown

Following up

The achievements of the young people who won the competition were acknowledged and celebrated in a number of ways:

- As several students in Harvey had successful entries, the school held a formal presentation ceremony with the executive officer of IIOY attending.
- Several articles covering the winning entries appeared in local newspapers.
- All the posters that were entered in the competition were displayed at an IIOY Young People and Alcohol Seminar.
- The winning YouTube video by Jessica O'Donovan was posted to YouTube and can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Agjf8cm5xwI
- The posters and the YouTube video were also featured on the IIOY website.

Feedback was sought from several young people who participated in the competition by a phone interview. They reported that overall '*it was good*'. Suggestions for improvements included that:

- it may be better to run the competition earlier in the school year when generally students were not as busy.
- it would be more effective to put the information promoting the competition in a prominent place in the schools, rather than rely on teachers to pass information on about the competition.

Also, as there were no entries for the category of computer-assisted posters from young people aged 12 to 14 years, it was likely that this age group did not have the skills to compile computer-assisted posters. As such, IIOY decided they would not include this category again.