



*Caring for the future growing up today*

# National Youth Week 2011

## Department for Communities

National Youth Week is an annual celebration of youth that provides opportunities for young people 12 to 25 years of age to showcase their talents, be involved in creative activity and engage with issues of interest and concern to them. The Department for Communities coordinates National Youth Week in Western Australia and planning for National Youth Week 2011 began in September 2010. A National Youth Week Young People's Planning Committee was created at this time and concluded its work in April 2011.

### Deciding

The department decided that National Youth Week would have greater credibility with young people if it was youth led, had a higher profile and included more exciting events than previous years. It was recognised that young people needed to have ownership and be assured they were being listened to, supported and resourced to carry out their vision. For this reason greater responsibility was given to young people than in previous years to plan and run the major events and activities.

From the outset, the department had a clear intention to act on proposals made by the planning committee. The department was prepared to implement contingency plans to further develop and refine the proposals with the planning committee had they not been suitable. However, this was not required as the proposals were so strong and obtaining Ministerial approval was straightforward.



## Preparing

Careful planning was undertaken to ensure the department's commitment to young people was followed through. This was achieved by ensuring that key project elements such as funding, sponsorship and other supports were confirmed prior to establishing the planning committee and also by providing support to partner agencies to deliver youth-led events and activities.

Each year nominations are called for a young person to represent WA on the National Planning Group for National Youth Week. In 2011 an open invitation was made for young people to nominate as the National Youth Week 2011 Young Member for WA. The opportunity to be involved was promoted (both online and through word-of-mouth) in places where young people were already engaged. This included through the department's network of youth organisations and interested young people and Facebook.

All of the young people who expressed interest in being involved with National Youth Week, including nominees for the Young Member position, were then invited to form the planning committee. There were nine core members of the planning committee and 40 members in the wider planning group, all aged 17 to 25 years.

The planning committee developed their ideas in a series of three workshops. Workshops one and two focused on generating ideas for National Youth Week activities. In workshop three, three partner organisations became involved in separate projects:

- kickstART Youth Market (with Propel Youth Arts)
- Online film festival (with Student Edge)
- Hip Hop Festival (with Cultural Infusion).



Rocket constructed for National Youth Week kickstART Youth Market, Perth Cultural Centre. The workshops were lead by local artist Lewis Horne. (Photo: Department for Communities)

At this time individual young people also took responsibility for specific promotion and event management elements of the National Youth Week activities, including:

- social media engagement through Facebook and Twitter
- coordination of the film competition moderation
- management of design concepts for the arts market
- event management for the arts market
- event management of the film awards night
- general volunteering and promotional support roles.

The workshops were very successful in generating ideas and also in building rapport and cohesion among the young people.

## Doing it

Young adult staff members from the department facilitated the initial workshops, held at the Commissioner for Children and Young People's Our Space meeting room, to encourage a collegial and non-hierarchical approach to initial planning.

Planning group members led discussion and decided on roles and responsibilities.

Staff remained true to the principle that this was a youth-led process. Behind the scenes they negotiated contract and grant agreements, monitored progress and ensured the needs of sponsors and funding agencies were met. However artistic direction, content of arts and hip hop workshops and the nature of the events were all decided by the young people in conjunction with the partner agencies.



Members of National Youth Week Young People's Planning Committee, Hip Hop Festival Grand Finale, Perth Cultural Centre (Photo: Cultural Infusion)

Members of the planning group met regularly with the partner agencies to work on the specific events and met occasionally as a whole to share information about each project. The National Youth Week Facebook site provided a focal point for communication among the group to some extent, however, it was most effective in communicating with young people in the wider community about National Youth Week 2011 Activities.

The WA National Youth Week 2011 Young Member for WA played an important role as the main communication link between the

department's staff and the young people, passing on information received by email, phone and text from staff to the relevant people and likewise for their responses.

Planning committee members maintained active involvement through to the staging of events, including full participation in the Hip Hop Festival and kickstART Youth Market. Given that National Youth Week is all about having fun it wasn't hard to ensure the young people enjoyed the experience. The activities themselves were intrinsically rewarding, however, it was still important to ensure that fun networking opportunities and plenty of good food were provided at the workshops.

Many members who were students found their involvement in Youth Week to be useful in their studies. Further opportunities arose for some students, such as the volunteer social media managers who were invited to attend a youth social media seminar in Sydney.

## Following up

It was important that the young people's time, effort and contributions were acknowledged. This was done through verbal feedback from the department staff who worked alongside the committee, thanking members for their involvement and crediting them with the success of National Youth Week 2011. The Minister for Youth also wrote individually to members of the planning group thanking them for their contribution. Key members were invited as guests of the department at the WA Youth Awards 2011.

Some members were involved in evaluating National Youth Week 2011 events and all were surveyed as part of the overall evaluation. All three projects were very well attended and were rated very positively in participant surveys.

The high level of involvement in the planning and implementation by young people is seen to have been integral to National Youth Week 2011's success. It was achieved by the department being willing to trust young people to come up with good ideas and take responsibility for bringing them to fruition. The support for the young people to do this from the partner agencies was also important. Young people found it successful and rewarding because they were listened to, their advice acted on and they were trusted to deliver.

kickstART Youth Market stallholders said:

*"I felt the day was very well organised and it was definitely beneficial to my business."*

*"It was such a great day and I would be definitely interested in doing it again next year."*

Young people who participated in the hip hop workshops and event said:

*"It was fun doing art and emceeing,"* Rikki, aged 11

*"It was dardy,"* Dean, aged 10

The Belmont Youth Centre said:

*"The program caused a lot of excitement within the young people...."*



Hip Hop Festival Grand Finale, Perth Cultural Centre (Photo: Cultural Infusion)

For more information about this participation example contact Director Children, Early Years, Youth and Families, Department for Communities Stuart Reid on (08) 6551 8325.