

Lore Law Project – Perth

The total number of Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal Peoples participating in the Law Society of Western Australia's Francis Burt Law Education Programme (the FBLEP) in the average year is less than 1 per cent of total participants. With the high rates of engagement of Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal Peoples with the WA justice system the FBLEP determined that it had a responsibility to better engage with this audience.

Overview

The Lore Law Project originated from a consultation with Aboriginal communities (252 young people and Elders in 27 group consultations) about a project to better engage with Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal peoples about their legal rights and responsibilities. Importantly, the consultations included young Aboriginal people with direct experience of the criminal justice system through the Banksia Hill Detention Centre. As a result of the desire to spread service delivery beyond the metro region, both regional and metro-based consultations were held. The project first commenced in April 2012 and is nearing its final stages of development prior to implementation.

From the outset of the project the FBLEP identified the need for Aboriginal peoples, representatives from Aboriginal organisations and representatives from organisations working with Aboriginal communities to oversee and be involved in the planning, development and implementation of the project, as these are the project's key stakeholders.

The project is intended to provide a means through which Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal communities can present and voice the local lore/law matters of interest and/or concern to them. In turn, this creates an opportunity for local stakeholders such as the police, the judiciary, the legal profession and relevant support services to engage with Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal communities through a two-way engagement process.

In the short term, the project aims to establish interest and relationships on lore/law issues amongst Aboriginal youth and in Aboriginal communities across Western Australia. In the long term, these relationships will inform the development of a framework from which the Indigenous Youth Leadership Team (IYLT), with the support of the Law Society and the Steering Group, can create and develop future lore/law projects.

Project development

The IYLT, are a core element of the project as they are responsible for directly consulting and engaging with Aboriginal youth, Aboriginal communities and local justice related stakeholders. They will facilitate discussions around local lore/law

issues of significance and/or concern to the local Aboriginal youth and will work with the local youth to create short films focused on a local lore/law issue of significance and/or concern from the youth's perspective. The IYLT consists of young people who have previously worked on a series of youth to youth engagement processes and have the skills to facilitate the above processes. Their networks will form the basis of the first delivery pilot sites and will ensure the Project is invited by the community and culturally appropriate when engaging with Aboriginal youth in those communities. The IYLT is supported by a project facilitator, who also reports in to the Steering Group (made up of the projects stakeholders) and the project owner, the Law Society of WA.

After much discussion and research, the chosen methodology is one which uses a youth to youth focus for consultation. In choosing a process to facilitate a youth to youth focus, using familiar and engaging tools were deemed critical for soliciting open conversation, buy-in, storytelling and raising awareness. The Project utilises digital technology for storytelling, allowing Aboriginal youth in various communities to create screen-based stories (i.e. short films) about either local traditional Aboriginal lore or Australian law matters of significance and/or concern to them. The process of filming, using the camera as the conduit for interaction, is seen as an excellent tool to break down barriers and inspire positive interactions and engagement with the Project and local justice related stakeholders.

This methodology also provides training and upskilling in film production, and empowerment to control their own stories and messages for young people to participate and interact around the lore/law topic. We are also upskilling of IYLT team in project management, project implementation, advocacy skills, marketing/fund raising skills, business plan development, evaluation and assessment, and providing mentoring opportunities. We pay all of our team for their involvement in the project, and as the local community engagement process is transferrable and can be applied to any issue of interest and/or concern, we anticipate that it will lead to further employment opportunities.

The IYLT will first present the project and a pilot film to the Steering Group, the FBLEP Advisory Committee and the Law Society Council with the aim of having the project proposal approved and signed-off. From that point onwards the Law Society, with input from the project team, will facilitate sessions with the IYLT to promote and advocate the project to stakeholders. This ensures wider community participation and buy-in so the project does not develop in isolation, whilst also gaining project ambassadors from stakeholders in the wider community to support the project's sustainability. Inherent in that process is the raising of funds to deliver the project across Western Australia.

The project has also considered risk management and has arranged public liability and indemnity insurance and workers' compensation insurance, implemented

requirements for Working With Children checks, designed consent forms for parents and guardians, established a confidentiality process to manage the sensitive and serious issues being discussed with youth, and created a clear review and approval process for the ideas generated and filmed by youth.

Lessons learnt

- Meaningful stakeholder engagement is vital to establishing stakeholder relationships and networks
- Meaningful stakeholder engagement takes a long time and the focus of engagement needs to be long term not short term

Next steps

The project team discussed what could be done differently in the future and determined it would have been valuable to get funders and/or financial support to contribute earlier in the project as it is hard to retain the IYLT members when there is no money, or very little money, available.