

Breakthrough arts program reduces petrol sniffing in remote SA

APY Lands Project sees substance misuse down by 80%

A unique arts-based project devised and conducted by Carclew Youth Arts, and supported by the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation (AER), has had a significant impact in reducing substance misuse and increasing positive participation among young people in South Australia's Anangu Pintjatjantjara Yankunytjatjara (APY Lands).

The three-year Project, which used arts-based workshops as a peer educational tool, has seen substance misuse among participants drop by 80%.

Furthermore, by the end of the Project 94% of participants were engaged in education, employment or training – an increase of 240%.

“These are truly wonderful outcomes,” said Lee-Ann Tjunypa Buckskin, APY Lands Project Director.

“The Project has turned people’s lives around in the most dramatic fashion. From having no hope and seeing no future, these young people have the confidence and motivation to live their lives – they are making plans.”

“But the project hasn’t just seen excellent individual outcomes, it has helped to bring the entire community closer together by forming new links between young people and their Elders.”

Eighteen young people, aged between 15-25, from Ernabella and Amata took part in the APY Lands Project which saw a team of highly qualified arts practitioners deliver 69 workshops involving nine schools and five communities.

The collaborative workshops covered song writing and recording, film and video, contemporary dance, digital media and social networking communications.

Participants were encouraged to use these activities to explore their sense of belonging and contemporary social issues, including vulnerability, petrol sniffing, dangerous drinking, loneliness and health.

AER Chairman Scott Wilson believes that the APY Lands Project is a groundbreaking program which has enabled positive and sustainable changes in the lives of young Indigenous people and broader communities within the APY Lands.

“AER is delighted to have supported the APY Lands Project for the last three years. This project focuses on education, health and wellbeing and offers a range of cultural and artistic development opportunities for young Indigenous people, enabling them to explore their talents and interests. It is our hope that that these young people utilise the skills and lessons learned in their everyday lives and share it with others in their community.”

Workshop outcomes were often presented and celebrated at community gatherings. Local Anangu Elders were also encouraged to participate and become mentors, sharing their knowledge and experience from their culture and generating positive and on-going interaction.

“The program was created to address the boredom, low self-esteem and low confidence which leads to petrol sniffing, while also developing the participants’ leadership abilities and giving them real knowledge and skills that can be transferred across industries as well as opening doors for them as practising artists locally, state-wide and nationally,” Lee-Ann said.

One of the key reasons the APY Lands Project has been so successful is that it was developed and managed by an Indigenous director, and was rolled out in full consultation with the communities to ensure that the project was culturally appropriate and relevant.

Carclew is now exploring a number of opportunities to ensure the outcomes generated by the APY Lands Project are maintained, particularly in the areas of film-making and music.

Major funding for the APY Lands Project came from the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation which allocated \$550,000 to this project (and \$300,000 for evaluation of their two supported projects).

Carclew Youth Arts would also like to thank the following groups for their support and guidance – The Department for Families and Communities, Technical and Further Education SA, and Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia.

Video clips from the APY Lands project can be viewed on the AER website here:

<http://aerf.com.au/youth/APYLandsProject.aspx>

Real People – Real Benefits

Case Study (M1)

Nineteen at the start of the project, M1 was struggling with long-term deep depression which had almost taken his life.

The project reengaged M1 and he became a key contributor.

With blossoming self-esteem, he no longer sniffs petrol. He has also enrolled in TAFE, plays in a band and has been employed by the local Council.

Case Study (FA)

When she joined the APY Project, FA was 16 and heavily involved in petrol sniffing. Over the course of the project she stopped sniffing and returned to school more regularly. She’s now working towards her SACE.

FA has discussed a move to Adelaide to undertake a beautician’s course with TAFE.

Program participants are available for interview

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Alcohol Education & Rehabilitation Foundation (AER): The Alcohol Education & Rehabilitation Foundation (AER) is a unique, independent, not-for-profit organisation with a goal to *change the way we drink*. AER collaborates with grass-roots community organisations, all levels of government, police, researchers and the private sector to turn evidence-based research on alcohol and solvent misuse into practical, real-life solutions. Since its inception in 2001, AER has invested over \$100 million in Prevention, Public Education, Workforce Development, and Treatment & Rehabilitation projects, underpinned by innovative research. Our dedication to creating a safer and healthier Australia sees AER forming new partnerships and alliances with like-minded organisations, with a focus on youth and Indigenous issues. Looking forward, AER will continue its unwavering commitment to changing Australia's drinking culture to one of safety and responsibility. For further information: www.aerf.com.au