

South Hedland Youth Changemaking Program – First Nations Youth Volunteering

Background - Town Team Movement – <https://www.townteammovement.com/>

The South Hedland Youth Changemaking Program set out to reimagine and give opportunities for positive outcomes when a deep and meaningful connection to place is provided through volunteering, where young people are given responsibility and empowered to improve the very problems they identify are impacting negatively on the social and cultural capital of their own community.

Approach taken - Town Team Movement

Town Team Movement joined up with Follow the Dream (Polly Farmer Foundation); Spinifex Hill Studios; the Town of Port Hedland; the RAC; Julyardi Aboriginal Corporation; Kariyarra Aboriginal Corporation; Youth Involvement Council and Volunteering WA to work with local First Nations peoples to create an iterative, collaborative process to co-design and co-create a central public space that people love and feel connected to. The result was the South Hedland Youth Changemaking Program which has become the how-to success guide in First Nations student community engagement and volunteering.

The Town Team Movement and the project team facilitated the ideation, co-design, and co-creation sessions to educate and support young people to design and create the public space improvements along Wise Terrace. This approach connected and mobilised groups of young people to contribute to the project and provided a platform and opportunities to showcase their work and contributions.



Outcomes for inclusive volunteering

Upon finishing the project, the student participants acknowledged their key learnings which included a stronger sense of belonging and connection with public space and civic action, a stronger connection with their peers and a sense of achievement and pride in completing the task to such a

high standard. Throughout the process, the young people also learned about leadership, teamwork and the benefits of volunteering and creating an even place for their community.

Some advice for Volunteer Involving Organisations includes:

- Go in with ideas and energy - but do not go in with preconceived or predetermined outcomes in mind.
- Make allowance for resources to visit, spend time, build genuine connections and relationships in the community.
- Bringing First Nations culture into the public realm is critically important.
- Consider an approach that provides end to end engagement.
- Acknowledge & Act - Let everyone know that their time and ideas are valued through a curated approach, celebrating results, and expanding on successful outcomes.

Quotes from volunteers/organisations

'This project has inspired me as it made me get out and do something and make the community come together.' Student, South Hedland

"The project has definitely inspired me to try new things because me personally, I'm not quite a social person so this project has encouraged me to go out and try new things." Student, South Hedland.

'It was authentic collaboration, the students were truly involved, their voice was heard, and they were part of the project from the very beginning to end and still are - most see their work every day when they walk through' - Jessica Albers, Follow the Dream

KEY LEARNINGS FOR VIOs

The key learnings from the Town Teams project are informed by the project placemaking, co design and co creation values and principles, which include:

- ***Trusting your community to be the key decision makers and equal collaborators because the user are experts in their own experience.***
- ***Share power and provide opportunities to celebrate cultural heritage, diversity, and pride.***
- ***Build the capacity by developing the skills and confidence in young people to be leaders in creating a connected and authentic public space.***
- ***Prioritise relationships.***