

# The Dunn and Lewis Youth Foundation

## Harm Prevention Strategy 2009



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### **Mission**

*'Youth living life free from harm'*

## Overview

Our Foundation has evolved from extensive consultation with youth groups, communities and governments, to fill a void that can be an overwhelming obstacle to many of today's young people.

Through a combination of life skill workshops, social inclusion, education and health services, we offer programs to young people that:

- Engages a diverse social mix of young people
- Is sustainable over time
- Contributes to individual and community capacity building
- Establishes lifelong learning and education
- Imparts a healthy lifestyle and wellbeing

Program outcomes will make positive contributions to young people's lives by:

- Providing a safe, healthy and positive environment at times when young people may be vulnerable to harmful and anti-social behaviour.
- Combating drug, alcohol and other physical abuse by young people
- Provide health services and advice to young people to reduce the risk of self harm and harmful behaviours
- Engage young people in education, providing learning skills for life
- Encourage young people to participate in society and their local communities
- Provide positive role models reinforcing the importance of self esteem
- Provide an environment to recover from trauma and grief which lead to harmful behaviours and risk taking
- Provide and promote recreational alternative environments to prevent young people falling into risk taking and harmful behaviours.

## **Background**

The Dunn & Lewis Youth Development Foundation was established in 2003, its primary purpose is to address the fundamental needs of young people in the prevention and control of harmful behaviours.

The 2002 Bali Bombings which killed 2 local boys and injured another devastated a community, and young people went down a path of self destruction, drug and alcohol abuse, self harm, isolation, depression and threats of suicide. No one was there; to help; counsel; guidance.

It took a group of young people's initiative to change the direction of harmful behaviours and organise a dance party 'a celebration of life' where 400 attended. They raised funds for a memorial, not a stone, but a living memorial where young people could go and feel comfortable and seek help when needed. This was a true call for help from our young people.

Extensive research was undertaken with surveys, public meetings and community consultation and a new model for harm prevention in all areas for young people has evolved. The importance of this model has been the involvement of youth in creating their own solutions to continuous harmful behaviours.

A unique concept for a multipurpose Memorial complex was developed, to prevent and control harmful behaviours. This concept will provide social activities and sports in a casual, non judgmental environment where prominent community members (Police, Youth Workers, Church Leaders, Social Workers, and Mental Health specialists) can interact with young people on their turf daily, for up to 18 hours per day.

Youth have ownership of the complex as they have designed and assisted in the construction works, working side by side, as mates. They feel comfortable in attending activities and programs or just chilling out with somewhere to go.

We actively promote cultural diversity amongst the young people who attend the complex regardless of their religion, culture, sexuality, families or beliefs. When working with young people we take the responsibility to ensure our practices are respectful of their culture; inclusive, consultative and decision making is shared; sensitive to their needs and beliefs; understanding of their needs and behaviours; with communication that is non-discriminatory and free of bias, stereotyping, racism and prejudice.

Mentors, Health workers and high standing community members have built trust with young people identifying their needs and steering them into programs and activities or services to assist in resolving harmful behaviours.

The complex will attract a wider audience from those with needs. These people will contribute financially to the commercial activities thus the whole community will assist to resolve issues of harmful behaviours in providing funds to operate programs and activities for youth. In addition it

will provide social inclusion for the whole community, allowing young people to mix with all generations to learn skills and develop an understanding and appreciation for each other.

By providing and engaging young people in this model, it has:

- Reduced the number of young people on the streets
- Reduced harmful behaviours
- Reduced substance abuse – drug and alcohol
- Reduced the risk of suicide
- Decreased isolation which leads to self harm

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## **The Programs & Activities**

Research has proven that harmful behaviours may have began due to one incident but left untreated becomes a chain reaction through all aspects of young person's life. As time goes on the young person begins to suffer isolation, depression, disengagement from education and the community which leads to self harm, drugs, alcohol and suicide.

To address just one of a young person's issues either social, personal or education does not fix the problem, it only masks it until another incident occurs and the young person is isolated again.

The Dunn & Lewis case manages the young person through all aspects of their lives through different programs in education, life skills, health services and support, to reduce the risk of harmful behaviours.

## **Social Inclusion**

Two key aspects of organised physical activity (sports and programs) is that they reduce boredom in youth and decrease the amount of unsupervised activity. Preventing and reducing boredom is important due to its reported links with depression.

In addition, without with guidance of organised programs, young people who have or are experiencing harm in their lives may replicate the situations in order to prevent boredom and experience stimulation, hurting others or themselves, as shown by numerous criminal studies (Morris, Sallybanks & Willis, 2003). Spiralling from this can be a range of other issues that aggravate harm, including substance abuse and isolation by disconnecting from families, friends and society.

Harmful behaviours are significant and complex issues which affect individuals, families, communities and our broader society. Our physical activity programs are socially inclusive as they are designed to focus on belongingness, which is what some people do not currently feel society offers them.

## **Social Inclusion programs**

### **Body-boarders Club**

Forty local youth aged 12 to 18 compete once a month in surf competitions. To improve their skills they practice every day from daylight before school and after school to dusk, they also spend many hours' video-making and editing the tapes. These films are then shown at different community events.

This is a social inclusion project which provides the opportunities for young males and females to engage in an activity together, building self esteem and the ability to form meaningful relationships and coping with the responsibilities and commitments attached to relationships.

Young people are mentored by older and professional surfers building on essential life skills that deal with real and relevant issues and include:

- Nutrition and health – Each competition event provides a healthy breakfast & lunch in order for the young people to stay focussed and energetic for the surf.
- substance abuse 'it's not cool to use drugs and alcohol and surf'
- Sexual issues and abuse
- Emotional and physical abuse including self harm
- Impulse and anger control
- Conflict resolution and communication skills

By young people participating in this project it gives many of them their first membership to a club or organisation. This provides a sense of belonging increases their self esteem; reduces the risk of isolation; keeps them off the streets; reduces drug and alcohol abuse and self harm.

### ***Memorial Complex***

The Memorial Complex has been developed by young people representing a place they have ownership with and where they can seek help in a non threatening way. It will provide social activities in a non judgmental environment and the opportunities for young people to interact with prominent community members, Police, Youth workers, Church Leaders, Medical Professionals and Mental workers creating strong trusting social relationships. It will provide information, support and knowledge to young people on where they can go to, to seek advice when considering harmful behaviours.

It will engage youth participants at the complex with the wider community and different generations. Involving the community members and seniors directly with youth in their community, it will allow for social inclusion, building bridges and passing on skills between generations.

The complex will provide a place for young people to go and remove them from the streets, abusing family and personal relationships, which leads them to substance abuse, self harm and harmful behaviours.

### ***Court Sports – Indoor Soccer – Basketball – All Team Sports***

These programmes aim specifically to work with young people, their families and mentors to promote interest and engagement in sports as a harm-prevention measure. The programmes are multi-faceted and centre on forming positive bonds for young people.

The main objective of these programs is to provide and promote different sport as alternative environments to help prevent young people from falling into the problem of self harm, suicide, isolation, depression, abusive relationships and harmful behaviours on the streets.

Individual and team sports with mentors build on life skills and deal with real and relevant issues including:

- nutrition and healthy lifestyles
- substance abuse – drug and alcohol
- emotional and physical abuse including self harm
- impulse and anger control
- conflict resolution
- communication skills
- decision making and problem solving skills
- self esteem and confidence building
- making positive choices in life
- cultural development and awareness
- job readiness
- personal and community engagement skills

Key objectives are to build leadership, team building and interpersonal skills; rules and their role in life skills development; and the benefits of activity, wellbeing and responsibility. It will allow young people to identify skills they would like to develop and instil learning as an enjoyable and enriching experience through sport.

This programme is a benefit to young people and the whole community, keeping youth off the streets. It is proven that young people involved in sport are less likely to smoke, less likely to engage in drug and alcohol abuse, self harm and criminal behaviour.

### ***Gymnastics***

Purpose built gymnastics facilities will engage young people across the whole of the South Coast region in the sport of Gymnastics. This is an individual sport and will build strong character, self esteem and confidence in young people, who will be able to demonstrate their own individual talents. This sport allows young people to increase their fitness, reducing the risks of obesity, eating disorders, smoking, drug and alcohol use.

### ***Bowling Alley***

The bowling alley will provide an area for the community to engage with young people for social inclusion and reconnecting youth with older people. Many of these community members will not have previously engaged with the youth participants so it will bring great opportunities to both parties.

Key objective will be the engagement of youth with the wider community and involving community members directly with young people in our community.

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### **Educational**

Education provides skilling for life that reduces the risk of harmful behaviours by young people. The Foundation implements educational programs, activities and projects which engage young people at a time when they begin to identify themselves as an individual with personal and social responsibilities. These transitions can present significant challenges in their life leading to harmful behaviours.

There is an urgent need at this time for both formal and informal support mechanisms and young people need to be made aware that they are not alone.

The Foundation provides a natural habitat for mentoring, counselling and role modelling in small teams. We work with students to target negative attitudes helping them to identify and moderate their existing negative behaviours – such as dropping out, drug and alcohol abuse, self harm and low self esteem – which often leads to disengagement, disconnection and entrenched self harm and harmful behaviours.

Our environment embraces a culture of diversity and inclusion, thereby encouraging each young person to achieve their full potential.

#### **Educational programs**

Current programs are in flexible learning environments, there is no pressure to keep up with or compete against any other student. All students are mentored and caseload managed through individual pathways on educational and personal needs. Programs are changed depending on the participants needs.

Via Registered Training Organisations and TAFE NSW the Foundation provides the opportunities for 'at risk' young people to participate in Cert II courses. These youths would not necessarily have the opportunities to engage in these courses due to their backgrounds.

### ***Live Your Best Life***

Young people who participate in this course have the opportunities to work on a community magazine in a work place environment, practicing work place ethics working to obtain accreditation in Cert II in Skills for Work & Training. Students gather community information, compile, publish and distribute a magazine to thousands of residents. This program has proven to give the young person self confidence, a feeling of self worth, a sense of achievement and reduces harmful behaviours associated with isolation and depression.

### ***Cert II in Skills for Work & Training***

This course is an introduction to the work force through flexible learning with our onsite TAFE teacher. Students work at their own abilities alleviating anxiety, depression and behavioural problems in young people who have significant harm risk factors due to previous poor educational outcomes.

### ***Automotive Vehicle Services***

The Foundation has supplied a vehicle young people work on under the supervision of a Qualified Mechanic and RTO, which can be entered into car shows to demonstrate their abilities. When young people are educated, selecting their career paths via experience, they have a visual achievement that is acknowledged by the wider community. This gives them a great feeling of achievement which improves their self esteem and confidants and reduces harmful, abusive behaviours, self harm and risks of suicide.

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## **Mental Health & Wellbeing**

Protective factors for emotional and mental health include those which promote strong social and personal relationships. Developing personal skills and enhancing emotional resilience at any life stage are fundamental aspects of mental health promotion. There are many settings (in schools, employment, society) in which building resilience and personal skills can, and should, be encouraged.

Resilience is not static. It consists of a dynamic range of personal characteristics, experiences and relationships that provide protection in the face of stress. These features include how young people look at the world and their place in it and their esteem and personal skills. Their abilities for making and sustaining relationships with other people are particularly important.

The reasons for self-harm, suicidal thoughts and suicide are complex and person-specific. Many young people experience suicidal thoughts in any one year and these may lead some young people to harm themselves or complete suicide.

Young people should feel able and have the life skills to open up about their feelings and problems and seek help and advice. Tackling the stigma associated with mental health and emotional problems will contribute to this. Accessible help and support to cope with emotional distress and adverse life events – unmanaged debt, unemployment, relationship breakdown, bereavement and loss – is also needed and other areas such as tackling substance misuse, improving life chances (employment and educational attainment) are important considerations for suicide and self harm prevention

### **Mental Health & Wellbeing programs**

Our Foundation runs a variety of highly responsive programs that cater to the individuals crisis needs. Certainly, young people that are dealing with harm often experience life as a series of crisis's. Our focus is on helping young people identify harm and facilitating their inner resources to prevent it now and into the future. But to do this we also need to deal with the crisis 'now'.

It is important to recognise that some young people have difficulty attending programs and activities that would help them because the negative behaviours in their lives are stronger. Poor sleep patterns, excessive internet usage and gaming, poor eating and exercise habits, substance abuse, and homelessness – on top of strong emotions and at times despair – make it relevant to run programs that are highly responsive to what is occurring right now/today/last night.

Where more adaptive young people could attend educational programs and fit in, the young people coming to our programs sometimes attempt to resolve the inner conflict in their lives, because this is more pertinent than work or education. They may raise issues that would be considered highly inappropriate in other educational and training settings such as disclosing abuse or discussing their 'cutting' (self harm) honestly and openly.

Group work is fundamentally important because young people often dislike accessing services where there may be any social portrayal that something is 'wrong' with them individually, yet as they find their place within the group they are able to open and receive acceptance and encouragement from their peers and their facilitators. Our programs are an important part of the Foundation in that they can provide both an entry point and a continuous contact point for young people. We are continuously looking for methods and resources to develop on and improve our program delivery and content.

### ***Young Parents Support Group***

This is an identified need in the community where young parents had limited support, knowledge, skills and social inclusion to assist them with their new babies and toddlers. The program for this group is driven by the needs and preferences of the parents.

The group meets once a week for a 3 hours period and activities and education are provided. Referral is a strong part of the program and most weeks professionals from a variety of community services (women's health, the baby health nurse, health education officers, solicitors, financial counsellors and so forth) attend to provide education and support.

This has meant that young parents with Post Natal Depression are seen despite any inability to attend appointments (because of being too young to drive or what they see as prohibitive costs). In relation to driving, as some of the young mums have recently gotten their licence, the program brought in a mechanic to go over car safety and how to prevent older cars from being unsafe. Again the high responsiveness of our programs means we have established a group where the parents can feel free to come and say what they need.

This can be related to basic survival matters such as food, accommodation and domestic violence. Linking in and networking with other young parents is another important part of the program. Education needs addressed include child development, attachment parenting emotional regulations and parents as educators.

A nutritious lunch is prepared and served every week to encourage healthy eating by the mothers and ensure they are eating. They are often provided with 'gifts' that include grocery or cleaning items. The program is supported by Mission Australia's Community Services arm and DOCS are able to be involved with the parents as per requirements.

This program reduces isolation for young mothers, allows communication with their peer group and provides life skills in motherhood in a non-judgmental environment. These outcomes reduce the risk of self harm, depression and harmful behaviours towards infants.

### ***Getting It Together***

It is identified that many family issues especially abuse of all kinds have a terrible impact on some young people's lives. The Foundation's psychologist designed and implements a project 'getting it together'.

The program focuses on young people that are at risk of self harm through abuse, isolation and family breakdown or who are facing life obstacles preventing them from being able to focus on themselves and their vocational needs and wants. The participants meet in small groups and the program provides them with an opportunity to really explore and consider their future desires outside the mounting demands to 'just get some job'.

Most of these young people express or show difficulty in holding down education or work because of harm that is within their past and/or present. They may be at a point where other adults have 'given up' trying to help them.

They undertake many activities with a content of education, life skilling, mental health, risk and harmful behaviours, wellbeing and lifestyles. Family issues can present significant challenges to mental health of young people and this project assists young people to deal with these challenges while establishing them within a strong peer support group.

### ***Sexual Health Program***

A sexual health program is delivered at the local High School for students. This program has been developed by the Foundation's psychologist to engage students in discussing appropriate sexual health behaviour from their perspective.

There is a strong educational component in identifying risks such as sexual disease infection and abuse, but also coming up with their own ideas as to how they and their peers could resolve the harmful behaviours.

This is an innovative program that was identified by NSW Health as having a unique capability to tap into the resources of young people and facilitate them to find the answers for removing themselves from sexual harm in the way they felt was right and best.

### ***Study Tours***

The Dunn & Lewis Foundation has had the opportunity to visit Northern Ireland, Omagh and Belfast to work with harm prevention organisations to gain information, advice and programs for our Foundation. Northern Ireland for decades has dealt with self harm and harmful behaviours for young people following the conflicts in their country.

Good relationships have been developed between Gayle Dunn and the organisations in North Ireland and continue to grow. Future years will see transferring of programs for young people and staff between organisations for better outcomes for young people who are affected by harmful behaviours.

### ***Trauma Retreat – The Future***

The Dunn & Lewis Foundation will develop in future years a Trauma Retreat for young people. This will be a specialist facility for treatment of trauma, grief and pain suffered by young people in their daily lives.

This facility will offer counselling, education and specialist medical treatment for young people who would otherwise be a risk of harmful behaviours, self harm, suicide, depression or isolation.

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## **RESEARCH**

Good mental and emotional health in children and young people is a positive indicator of future well being of the adults they become. The ability to form meaningful relationships and coping with the responsibilities of adulthood depends largely on experiences gained during childhood and youth.

There is robust evidence that schools which promote all aspects of health can positively influence mental health in young people. Anti-bullying schemes can have significant long term impacts on potential depression and suicidal behaviours and training in the acquisition of life and social skills

have been proven effective in improving self-esteem, and in developing better coping mechanisms when faced with transitions in education or families.

Anxiety, depression and behavioural problems in young people are significant risk factors for poor educational outcomes, poor physical health, poor social skills and suicidal behaviours. Young people with mental health problems are strongly predictive of poor mental health in later life. Ensuring young people receive appropriate support can help overcome any long term difficulties.

Adolescence is a time when young people begin to identify themselves as an individual with personal and social responsibilities, develop committed relationships and begin entering the world of work. These transitions can present significant challenges to mental health and the prevalence of mental health problems and mental disorders peaks in this age group.

There is a need for both formal and informal support mechanisms and young people need to be made aware that they are not alone and the problems they are experiencing are common.

#### References

Morris, L., Sallybanks, J., & Willis, K. (2003). Sport, physical activity and antisocial behaviour in youth. Research and Public Policy Series, 49, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.

## **Testimonials**

### **Leading Edge Telecom Ulladulla (Telstra Dealer)**

Our business has had the benefit to work with the Dunn & Lewis Youth Development Foundation in offering 'at risk' young people the opportunity of work experience in a retail mobile communications environment. The first young person who came to our business has proven to be a real asset to our operations.

We acknowledge that this young person had not completed his school certificate at school, however through the guidance and case management by Dunn & Lewis, to assist him to sort out his problems and concerns he has become a valuable part of our business and gained full time employment. Dunn & Lewis continues to follow up on his progress and he is outstanding success of their programs. He has been removed from hanging on the streets and harmful behaviours and is on a path to a successful career in communications, which was his chosen field when he was in the early years of high school he has told me.

**Garry White**

**Partner**

**Leading Edge Telecom Ulladulla**

**Contact Details (02) 44555100**

I work as a volunteer at the Dunn & Lewis Youth Development Foundation, 4 days per week for the past 7 months, when I first start attending the young people were withdrawn and very self conscience and never made eye contact. Now 7 months later I'm amazed at the turn around they have made in such a short time, the confidence they now show is remarkable, their out looking for work or enrolling back into school or Tafe and making plans for the future. Most of them still drop in for a chat or talk about a problem they may need a hand with, which we are quite happy to help with if we can, if we are unable to help we refer them to someone who can.

Denise Riddell

0424652731

**Sally Wallace  
249 The Park Drive  
Sanctuary Point NSW 2540**

24th September 2009

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Sally Wallace. I am a TAFE Outreach teacher currently working at the Dunn and Lewis facility.

Through Dunn and Lewis TAFE is providing students with courses in Access to Work and Training (9070, 9071 & 9072) as well as academic support for a range of other courses and enterprises.

This process uses a flexible delivery model where students attend as they wish or as they require support. They are also able to access my support via telephone and on-line.

The programme is in its infancy but with up to nine students attending on a Thursday afternoon and a greater number accessing on-line support — and with two or more new students enrolling every week, this programme is ensuring that young people develop a sense of hope and achievement.

That several students have commenced work experience or begun the process of accessing further training/education is evidence of the efficacy of this Dunn and Lewis/TAFE partnership which actively works in the area of harm-prevention by developing self-esteem, a sense of future and enjoyment of life.

Yours faithfully



Sally Wallace.

**DENNIS C CHUGG**  
**"JYNDARRA"**  
**31 ANGLERS PARADE**  
**FISHERMANS PARADISE 2539**

To Whom it May Concern

It is with pleasure I present this Testimonial for the Dunn & Lewis Foundation.

My name is Dennis Chugg and I am an active member of the community who has been involved in primary, secondary and tertiary education for the majority of my working life.

During my time as Managing Director of the Illawarra ITec, I became actively involved in the preparation of specific programmes for dis-advantaged youth, which included homeless and indigenous participants.

Over the past few years I have served on the executive of the Milton/Ulladulla Cancer Outpatients Appeal and continue to serve on its Board.

I became interested in the programmes being offered by Dunn & Lewis to disadvantaged and traumatised youth after meeting with Gail Dunn, the founding member of the Foundation.

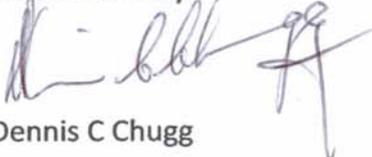
I was most impressed with the dedicated team of professional people she has gathered together to create programs for the participants with an individualised pathway compiled to meet their needs.

The work of the Foundation is totally focused on harm prevention and in giving the participants hope and a means to a more stimulating and fruitful life.

The outcomes that I have observed so far certainly demonstrate that the "vision" and application of the Foundation's programmes, is well founded.

I have no hesitation in recommending the work of the Foundation to you.

Yours faithfully



Dennis C Chugg