



# Investing in rural youth

Using Peer Education as a Youth Participation strategy



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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Sue Arwen  
Project Manager  
SHine SA

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Investing in Rural Youth was an initiative of SHine SA and the National Women's Health project and was funded by a Public Health Outcome Funding Agreement 2000/01 through the Department of Human Services. SHine SA, a metropolitan based organisation with a statewide mandate, implemented and coordinated the project and managed the funds.

This innovative project aimed to improve the health and wellbeing of young rural South Australians using peer education as a youth participation strategy. Spanning over 19 months, the project was split into the following four stages:

- Development of a training manual
- Training rural workers
- Provision of grants and support of peer education projects
- Showcase conference.

One of the unique features of this project was the management and support framework developed to successfully manage this rural project from a metropolitan location.

Some of the project's achievements include:

- a two-day training program was attended by 192 rural workers held in eleven rural areas across all seven rural regions of South Australia
- the publication of a comprehensive training manual on peer education as a youth participation strategy, distributed to all rural workers who participated in training
- funding for thirteen peer education projects which were supported by three SHine SA project workers
- evidence of collaboration, networking and mentoring in rural areas as a result of the peer education projects
- evidence of improved youth health and wellbeing, especially in terms of self-esteem and confidence of young people involved in the peer education projects
- evidence of sustainability in many regions through continuation of peer education programs, increased involvement of young people in an advisory capacity, policy change, planning of rural services and worker education
- the showcase conference *Youth Lets Shine Together* held in Whyalla 2002, with nine of the projects represented and a total of 117 young people and workers attending.
- strengthened relationships between SHine SA and rural workers.

## INTRODUCTION

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Peer education is an effective strategy to implement youth participation in organisations. Often young people are more willing to learn from someone that they can identify with and whose values, beliefs and life experiences are similar to their own. Peer education is a method of turning 'negative' aspects of peer pressure into a positive force, based upon safety, empowerment, information and flexibility. It involves the acquisition of knowledge, as well as the skills necessary to disseminate knowledge amongst peers. In practical terms, peer education takes a group of young people, who are willingly participating in a process of learning. It involves working together to try to solve issues of common and individual concern within their community or cultural group. Peer education can demonstrate to the whole community the positive and central role that young people have in creating change in their community.

The aim of the Investing in Rural Youth project was to improve the health and wellbeing of young rural South Australians through promoting peer education as a youth participation strategy. Through the provision of relevant localised training, adequate resources and support, the project's goal was to build the capacity of workers in rural regions to deliver peer education programs and encourage youth participation within their organisations. This report is a comprehensive overview of the project.

Although SHine SA is the lead sexual health agency and provides sexual health services, education and information to South Australians, the project had a broader scope. It looked at the general health and wellbeing young people in the context of the issues that are important in their lives. Of course, this includes, but is not exclusive to sexual health. The peer education program was developed so that it was flexible enough to allow young people and rural workers to address issues that were pertinent to their communities.

The report has been informed by information and evaluation from all those involved in the project, including:

- the SHine SA project team
- workers participating in the training
- workers who received funding for peer education projects
- young people trained as peer educators.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

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SHine SA is a metropolitan based service with a statewide mandate for improving the sexual health of South Australians. The organisation has three primary health care teams and each is responsible for two to three rural regions. SHine SA has three Primary Health Care Teams (PHCT) and a Professional Education and Resources team (PERT). Each PHCT is responsible for two or three rural regions and the PERT operates statewide. SHine SA reaches these regions through:

- building the capacity of rural workers to provide a high level of sexual health services
- supporting locally based projects/interventions
- the provision of professional education courses/workshops
- supporting workers in rural communities
- provision of information and phone/mail access to an extensive library and resource service

The Investing in Rural Youth project was a significant SHine SA initiative for regional development. It evolved from recommendations of the WRAPT Project (Woman's Rural Access Project and Training) June 2000. The WRAPT project used peer education as a youth participation strategy and provided a flexible and effective way of working with young rural people.

Additional research into peer education, the effectiveness of other rural projects and dialogue with rural workers ensured that the development of the Investing in Rural Youth project was informed by current best practice, proven success stories and recommendations from the field. Hence the project was developed based on what was seen to be the most effective way for a metropolitan based service to initiate and manage a totally rural based project.

Some of the findings that informed the design of this project were:

- The need for regular contact with project workers and practical support as required
- Provision of locally based training that was relevant to that community
- Development of strategies that were relevant for rural communities based on their own knowledge and experience
- Importance of understanding that rural workers have the multiple roles within their employment and community
- Acknowledging the difficulties in sometimes accessing resources
- Appreciating the barriers that distance can create and finding solutions.

The Investing in Rural Youth Framework (see Appendix 1) was developed from this research.

### Project aim

This project aimed to improve the health and wellbeing of young people in rural South Australia by building the capacity of rural workers to implement effective peer education programs and encourage rural agencies to make sustainable policy and work practice changes by adopting youth participation in their workplace.

### Project objectives and strategies

The four key objectives were to:

- Increase the competence and confidence of workers in rural areas to develop peer education and youth participation programs
- Increase the capacity and responsiveness of rural services to the needs of young people and to build youth partnerships
- Improve accessibility to services for young people to enhance their health and wellbeing
- Build the capacity of young people to access information, services and resources to make healthy lifestyle choices

The research findings dictated many of the project's strategies, including appointing project workers to support and mentor rural workers, providing locally based training and supporting resources,

encouraging communities to determine what peer education projects were required in their region and networking and collaborating with agencies to strengthen partnerships in rural regions were vital for its success. For more details see Appendix 2: Investing in Rural Youth Project Plan.

### **The project team**

A member of SHine SA's management team acted as project manager for the project and seconded one community health worker from each of SHine SA's three primary health care teams (PHCT) to become project workers on the Investing in Rural Youth project team. Each project worker was responsible for training, networking, and supporting rural workers in the regions serviced by their PHCT.

The decision to utilise SHine SA staff as project workers, rather than employing rural workers, was based on a number of factors including:

- building strong relationships between permanent SHine SA staff and rural workers and agencies that would be sustainable after the life of the project
- ongoing access to permanent SHine SA staff for 'training and support' after the life of the project would encourage rural workers to continue using peer education and other youth participation strategies
- using SHine SA staff was a more effective use of finances, management and resources, as they were already employed by SHine SA
- project workers outside of the region assume no knowledge of the local community, therefore rural workers (funding recipients) can direct their own projects and the development of strategies based on local issues
- there was sufficient funding in the budget for country travel to enable practical support to be given when needed.

### **Steering group**

The steering group met approximately every two months to provide input into the development of the project and advise on promotion and dissemination of information and evaluation. The group also provided valuable support to the project manager throughout the life of the project.

The steering group included representation from:

- Young rural people
- National Women's Health program
- SHine SA
- FAYS
- Rural Health Youth Agencies
- DHS Country Division.

### **Promoting the project**

A crucial aspect of the project's acceptance, ongoing support and success was the promotion and dissemination of information to rural agencies/organisations, management and workers. A number of strategies were used including:

- speaking at senior level management groups
- attending rural networks
- steering group members informing other workers and groups
- printing regular updates in *Sexual Health Headlines*
- publication and dissemination of a newsletter to rural agencies a newsletter at points during the project
- contacting existing rural contacts
- use of media and radio.

The value of this approach can be seen in the number of rural workers supported by agencies to attend the training program. Significant interest was shown in the project by media, with a number of interviews given to local radio, rural newspapers and *The Advertiser*.

### **Developing the training manual**

Developing a resource was one of the strategies identified to support workers and increase their competence and confidence in delivering peer education programs. So in collaboration and consultation with other SHine SA staff, the project team developed the *Investing in Rural Youth: Using Peer Education as a Youth Participation strategy* manual. The manual was designed as a tool to assist workers in rural areas deliver peer education programs by working in partnership with young people to improve their health and wellbeing. It introduces the concept of youth participation and is a practical guide to the recruitment, training and support of young people as peer educators.

### **Designing and implementing the training program**

The project plan included training sessions in the seven rural regions in South Australia, with a minimum of 10 workers trained in each region. Training was open to government, non-government and voluntary organisations. To achieve these outcomes the project team developed the two-day training program that was supported by the manual. There were tangible links between the resource, worker learning and practical field work. A key theme of the training was collaboration. The program is discussed in more detail in the next section.

### **Funding and supporting peer education projects**

Rural workers who attended training were encouraged to identify peer education health promotion projects that were relevant to their community and using a collaborative approach, apply for funding. A project worker was designated to each funded project to support rural workers develop, implement and evaluate their peer education projects.

### **Celebrating at the Conference**

The *Youth Lets Shine Together Conference* was held at Whyalla on 13 November 2002. The conference was an opportunity to celebrate the Investing in Rural Youth project and for the funded projects to showcase their peer education projects to other young people and workers interested in youth participation.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluation occurred at three levels throughout the project. Information was gathered from:

- workers participating in the training and peer education projects
- young people trained as peer educators
- young people as recipients of the peer education program.

See Appendix 3: Investing in Rural Youth Evaluation Plan for an outline of the methods of data collection for evaluating for these three groups.

## TRAINING RURAL WORKERS

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The Investing in Rural Youth project offered training workshops in youth participation and peer education. Training was provided in 11 rural locations across all seven rural regions of South Australia to maximise access for rural workers. Local training increased networking, partnership opportunities and enabled discussion relevant to the area.

### Training goal, aims and expected outcomes

Goal: To develop the capacity of rural workers to improve the health and wellbeing of young people in local communities

Aim	Expected outcomes
To increase workers knowledge of youth participation and the benefits for the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>increased knowledge of the principles of youth participation</li> <li>increased understanding of the benefits of youth participation</li> <li>increased awareness of a range of youth participation strategies</li> </ul>
To increase workers knowledge and skills in Peer Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>increased knowledge of the value of using peer education as strategy for youth participation</li> <li>increased skills to develop and implement a peer education strategy</li> </ul>
To encourage commitment and collaboration between regional workers to address the health and wellbeing issues of young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an understanding of the health and wellbeing issues for young people in their regional area</li> <li>increased understanding of the benefits of working collaboratively</li> <li>demonstrated a commitment to advocate for youth participation strategies within their rural areas</li> </ul>

### Training program

To achieve the goal and aims above a two-day training program was developed which included the following topics:

#### Day 1

- Pre-evaluation
- Introduction to the Investing in Rural Youth Project
- Young people's reality (setting the scene and values exercise)
- Youth participation (definition, principles, getting it happening, roadblocks)
- Peer Education (setting the scene, rationale, experiences including guest speaker)

#### Day 2

- Getting started (brainstorm and discussion, initial planning, recruitment and selection, training, supporting peer educators, evaluations)
- Scenarios
- Planning a peer education project (barriers/dilemmas, solutions, feedback)
- Learning Styles Discussion
- Designing a program outline (initial sessions, subsequent sessions, final session, evaluation, celebrations)
- Designing a session (beginnings, middles and ends)
- Resources available
- Post-evaluation

## Attendance

Attendance was high and training was provided free of charge (only the cost of travel and accommodation costs for those living in the surrounding areas needed to be covered by agencies). The training workshops, which attracted rural workers from government, non government and volunteer agencies, were held in 11 locations with the 192 participants in total attending, as outlined below. Each participant also received an *Investing in Rural Youth: Using Peer Education as a Youth Participation strategy* manual.

Region	Location	No. attended
Riverland	Berri	31
Wakefield	Maitland	9
Wakefield	Tanunda	23
Mid North	Port Pirie	21
Hills Mallee & Southern	Victor Harbor	15
Hills Mallee & Southern	Murray Bridge	21
Northern & Far Western	Whyalla	16
Northern & Far Western	Cober Pedy	8
South East	Mt Gambier	22
Eyre	Port Linclon	11
Eyre	Ceduna	15
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>192</b>

## Evaluation strategy

A pre- and post-workshop impact evaluation method was used to ascertain participants' knowledge and the effectiveness of the training. See Appendix 4: Training Questionnaires for a copy of the forms used in the training workshops. Each session was also evaluated to determine the effectiveness of the process used.

## PEER EDUCATION PROJECTS

A key element to the Investing in Rural Youth project was the provision of funding for peer education projects, giving selected rural workers the opportunity to gain practical experience in peer education, thus building upon the theoretical knowledge they had already obtained from the training workshops.

### Funding

Project funding of \$5000 per region was available exclusively to rural workers who attended the training workshops on youth participation and peer education. Preference was given to projects demonstrating a collaborative approach and ones that would contribute to the growth of youth participation in the region. The grant money was not available for salaries for paid workers or capital costs.

### Selection

A panel of five from the steering group met in Port Pirie to access each application. This included young people, the project manager and representatives from agencies and DHS. The panel assessed the applications according to whether they met the following criteria:

- Is the target group 12 – 25 years?
- Is the identified peer education strategy really peer education?
- Is there evidence of partnerships?
- Is there a supporting letter from management?
- Will this project contribute to ongoing youth participation?
- Is there a similar application for the same region?
- Is this a new or existing project?

Below is a summary of the peer education projects that were selected:

Project name	Organisation	Town and region	Young people at start	No. finish
Positive Education for Youth (PEFY)	South East Women's Emergency Services Inc	Mt Gambier, South East	13	9
CHAMPS	Murray Bridge Community Health Service	Murray Bridge, Hills/Mallee	14	14
YAC-RAP	Adelaide Hills Community Health Service	Mt Barker, Hills/Mallee	16	16
Anti-bullying & harrassment	Victor Harbour High School	Victor Harbour, Hills/Mallee	19	19
Treat yourself with respect	Roxby Downs Area School Andamooka	Roxby Downs, Northern & Far Western	6 12	4 -
ATSI youth as positive role models	Ceduna Youth Centre	Ceduna, Eyre	Money returned	
Violence is not OK	West Coast Youth Service	Port Lincoln, Eyre	12	12
Investing in Rural Youth	Child and Youth Mental Health	Ceduna, Eyre	0	0
Young parents	Barossa High School	Angaston, Wakefield	Money returned	
STAR Girls Group	Clare High & Burra Area Schools	Clare and Burra, Wakefield	20	16
JAG 4 Youth by Youth	Rocky River Health Service	Gladstone and Jamestown, Mid North	20	18

SMILE	Uniting Care, Port Pirie Central Mission	Port Pirie, Mid North	10	7
Stop, Think and Act	IDSC	Berri, Riverland	27	16
Brothers in Arms	RivSkills Inc	Berri, Riverland	11	4

Of the 23 applications received, 14 proposals were selected, but two returned their funding prior to commencement due to internal issues and one project was not successfully completed.

### Retention rates

As can be seen from the above table, retention of peer educators varied with each peer education project. The highest rates recorded often came from school-based projects, where the workers had access to the peer educators as part of a school program. For more details (and explanations) see the individual project descriptions below.

### Project descriptions

The availability of funding made it possible for rural workers to develop and implement peer education/ health promotion projects. Below is a description of each project, including the goal, a brief summary and the outcomes achieved.

#### Positive Education For Youth (PEFY)

South East Women's Emergency Service

**Project goal:** To empower young people to make informed decisions about sexual health, therefore lowering the teenage pregnancy rate, building self-esteem and developing friendship networks.

**Summary:** The steering group included workers from the South East Women's Emergency Services, Lutheran Community Care (JPET), Family and Youth Services, Women's Health Services and Drug and Alcohol Counseling Services. They met to plan an effective peer education program aimed at lowering the unplanned pregnancy rate in their area.

Advertising for recruitment was done through local media, word of mouth, worker networks and schools. Young people were invited to attend an information night to find out more and provide facilitators with information to help them plan an effective project. The group began with 13 participants, but four dropped out due to personal circumstances. The nine young people who remained consisted of seven girls and two boys between the ages of 13 and 18, most of whom were still at school.

The project offered the group an extensive peer education package, with 11 sessions covering areas such as:

- team building
- defining peer education
- self-esteem and relationships
- men's and women's health
- mental health
- drugs and alcohol.

The program looked at how this information could be used to educate their peers.

**Outcomes:** Through the training and beyond the life-span of the project the young people have been instrumental in promoting health promotion to other young people including:

- letters to the editor to challenge negative media representation of young people
- radio interviews about the project
- health information stalls in local malls
- a float in the Christmas parade
- peer education training within schools.

The group has also designed a identifiable logo which has been printed on jumpers for all involved, as well as a wallet sized booklets with information about what to do if a friend is drunk, you are feeling like crap or you think you might be pregnant.

Facilitators are currently looking into other ways in which young people can be more involved within their services, especially in groups were young people are participants. They have also applied for a grant to do another peer education project to involve more young people.

## CHAMPS

Murray Bridge Community Health Service

**Project goal:** To recruit and train 10-15 young people in the Murray Lands region in peer education, sexual health promotion and relationship skills and provide a forum for them to communicate their knowledge and develop their skills.

**Summary:** In this project 14 young women from an indigenous background attended a three-day camp, with workshops facilitated by a range of agencies including COPE (Centre of Personal Education) , DASC, Tryptich Design, SHine SA and a local hairdressing salon. The program covered issues such as:

- drugs and alcohol
- cultural issues
- leadership
- communication
- relationships
- visual arts
- techno dancing
- personal grooming.

Feedback indicated that the camp was a positive and valuable experience, as can be seen from these comments:

*It helped people to change their life as well as mine.*

*I want to teach others the things I learnt here.*

*I want to use the skills to help me become what I want to be.*

**Outcomes:** The peer education training led to the development of a diary that contains artwork, poems and stories from the young people in relation to the topic areas. Young people also had the opportunity to be involved in an annual event called Chicken Soup, a youth music and health promotion event run by young people for young people.

As a result of the training young people have sought help and made links with relevant services that they met through the camp. Another camp was organised soon after this one for young Aboriginal men and was equally successful. These positive outcomes have encouraged workers to look at running peer education and leaderships camps three times per year; one each for girls, boys and young adults.

## YAC-RAP

Adelaide Community Health Service

**Project goal:** To recruit and train 10-15 young people in the Adelaide Hills in peer education, sexual health promotion and relationship skills and provide a forum for them to communicate their knowledge and develop their skills.

**Summary:** YAC-RAP, in collaboration with Job Placement Employment and Training and Adelaide Hills Community Health Service, ran a peer education camp for rural isolate young people at risk. Over two days they participated in training and discussion about peer education, sexual health, relationships, communication, drug, alcohol and leadership skills. These topics were mixed up with a range of recreation activities. Training sessions were provided by guest speakers from JPET, Adelaide Hills

Community Health, DASC, COPE and SHine SA. Sixteen young people attended the camp from Mt Pleasant, Birdwood, Mt Barker and Lobethal areas.

Feedback indicated that the camp was a positive and valuable experience:  
*If people come to me there will now be a good chance that I'll know how to react.  
 I will stand up for what I believe is just, and not be afraid to tell people about these issues and stand up for what I believe in.  
 As a career I want to work with youth so this is a starting point to help me with this.  
 There are so many ways I can use these skills later on and even now.  
 I found it very useful and the fact that there was no pressure was really good. The activities were really fun and enjoyable. It was good to see everyone getting along.  
 The people, freedom and the respect we received and the information were great.  
 Thank you very much for letting me partake in such a wonderful, carefree experience.*

**Outcomes:** The peer education training led to the development of a diary that contains artwork, poems and stories from the young people in relation to the topic areas. Young people also had the opportunity to be involved in an annual event called Chicken Soup, a youth music and health promotion event run by young people for young people.

After the camp a few young people have participated in the local youth forum. Some have gone onto be involved in other peer education projects or youth participation initiatives. One of the participating schools has offered kids help line peer education training for their student. There have been continuous requests for another camp and nearly all participants were keen to be involved in any further peer education projects.

Other outcomes include young people seeking help and making links with relevant services that they met through the camp. On the completion of this project the coordinators were successful in applying for a grant to do a 'mini' investing in rural youth project in their region.

## **Year 8 Peer Educators, Anti-bullying and Harassment**

Victor Harbor High School

**Project goal:** To address issues of peer pressure and their relationship to bullying and harassment within the school community.

**Summary:** The project was primarily organised and coordinated by the school counsellor and Chaplin who then invited any year 8 student who wanted to be involved. The peer education group consisted of 19 young men and women who participated in 10 training sessions. The training incorporated:

- 'getting to know you' activities and group establishment
- defining peer education
- exploration of bullying and harassment
- what do you do if you are bullied or harassed
- communication and decision making skills.

During the training a booklet was developed to support the project. The booklet is called *All you need to know about bullying and harassment* and contains information about what it is, where it can occur, what can you do about it, steps you can take, what is a bully and are you a bully. The group also developed a video. The booklet and video were used in the peer education sessions that the Peer Educators ran in year 7 classes at the local primary school. Additional funding was received from other schools to do a second print run of booklets for distribution. They have also received requests from interstate schools.

**Outcomes:** The peer education project has provided opportunities for young people to be involved in a range of other projects and policy development within the school, including participation in the review of the bullying and harassment policy. The Peer

Educators were also involved in a radio interview about youth participation and peer education and presented at the health promoting schools conference.

The young people found the project to be a valuable opportunity to learn about:

- public speaking
- building confidence
- participating in making a video
- guidance in career paths.

The students expressed that they would like to see more peer education projects happen in the future so that other young people are provided with the same opportunities.

### **Let's talk about sex**

Roxby Downs Area School

**Project goal:** To involve the youth of Roxby Downs and Andamooka in projects aimed at educating their peers and produce a product which could be supplied to people and organisations for use with youth to inform them about the various messages that the group deemed important.

**Summary:** This project in Roxby Downs and Andamooka was auspiced by the Roxby Downs Area School, with key agency support from Roxby Downs Community Health Service.

This project was unique amongst the Investing in Rural Youth projects, in that there was already an established personal development project operating in the area, auspiced through Whyalla Community Health Service. This was the HOPE Project.

The first meeting of the Project Worker with the Investing in Rural Youth Project Working Party in Roxby and Andamooka resulted in an agreement that once the HOPE Project had run its course, the same young people would then be supported to be Peer Educators by the funds from this project. This meant that financial resources could focus on skills development and educational resources for the young people. The established groups were operating separately in Roxby and Andamooka and it was agreed that this project would operate in the same way.

Further discussions at the second meeting involved the seven young people from Roxby and 11 young people from Andamooka, with some creative outcomes. However, lack of identified worker time meant that follow-up on supporting their ideas, such as painting health messages on tanks on the side of the road near Port Augusta or getting an artist to help the young people work up the young people's artwork for public exhibition did not occur.

Once it became clear that the staff of the two key agencies were unable to invest the time required to give the personal attention to the young people the Project Worker negotiated with the HOPE Project Worker for the school to receive the surplus HOPE funds so that adult community volunteers could be paid to support the this project.

**Outcomes:** Both key agencies were based in Roxby Downs. This made it easier for the workers to support the group in Roxby. The Roxby group of five young people successfully produced a series of artworks about sexual health, which were scanned and reproduced on CD-ROM and distributed around the school community. A video of their artwork and the young people speaking about their experiences was shown at the *Whyalla Youth SHine Together Conference*.

The Andamooka project was geographically isolated and therefore had less support. The young people intended to produce a pamphlet on the pros and cons of the various illicit drugs that were coming into the community and run discussion groups with other young people about inter-generational conflict issues. However, the young

people quickly lost focus when they did not receive the level of support required for a number of reasons, therefore these outcomes did not eventuate.

### **Violence is not OK**

West Coast Youth Service

**Project goal:** To provide young people with strategies to respond appropriately to violence in their community.

**Summary:** The project in Port Lincoln was initiated by the West Coast Youth Service. It was difficult to establish the Initial Working Party to guide the project and support the key rural worker because there were not many youth workers in the region who had the time to carry out these responsibilities.

Once the project was up and running, significant commitment and support to the project was lost after a worker from Anglican Community Services moved elsewhere. This left the rural worker with one main option, which was to work with a group within the auspices of the Port Lincoln High School, in association with the counsellor.

The topic of violence had already been identified by the West Coast Youth Service and so the energy and commitment of the group was sought on the basis of this topic. When the program first started, the topic was a barrier to recruiting young people - it was not seen as a 'cool' topic. The move to a school was a good solution under the circumstances, as the support from the school made recruiting much easier.

The project was entitled 'Violence is not OK'. The mixed group of middle-senior school young people underwent a special personal development and discussion program in school time at the TAFE Campus. The external environment served to increase their sense of status and gave gravity to the topic they were exploring.

**Outcomes:** Once trained, some of the young people also helped lead discussions and presentations in the school setting in association with the school counsellor. Young people in the program have made referrals to the Youth Service and there is evidence that discussion on violence issues are entering into the school curriculum program. The group of about 12 young people also made a presentation about the Cycle of Violence Model at the *Youth SHine the Light Conference* in Whyalla.

This project generated interest in the Aboriginal Women's Health and Family and Youth Services in Port Lincoln, and the experience of the two workers involved will therefore be called upon again.

### **Investing in Rural Youth**

Child and Youth Mental Health

**Project goal:** To give young people in the community the skills to feel confident in displaying appropriate behaviour and to be able to communicate in a socially acceptable way.

**Summary:** The project in Ceduna was initiated Child and Youth Mental Health, with involvement from Ceduna District Health Services, Ceduna Youth Centre Coordinator, Senior Youth Worker at Family and Youth Services and Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Services. Also invited to participate were two SAPOL representatives and two Aboriginal Community Constables.

The project was developed to look at communication and conflict resolution with young Aboriginal people attending the youth centre (an Aboriginal service) to address issues such as:

- bullying and harassment

- working effectively with schools and police
- communicating needs effectively
- developing effective relationships.

Initial planning of the project was enthusiastic and explored some exciting potential outcomes. Barriers and solutions were identified and a time line was developed. Promotion options, supporting young people and the working group and the lead up to the first recruitment night were all discussed in detail. Arrangements for the working group to meet regularly to finalise details of each part of the project as it came closer were made.

The working party membership changed some initial members, and not all initial members were attending. This discontinuity resulted in an inconsistent grasp of what the project was about and what it would require from the workers involved.

Initial approaches to young people in the community and efforts to get groups of young people together were not successful. Key workers from support agencies found that over time other demands took priority. No formal negotiation had taken place between the Ceduna Youth Service, SHine SA and the key support agencies on the committee regarding making time allowances for workers so that they could accommodate the extra work in their busy schedules. Over time, efforts to generate the project became a lower priority, given the initial set-backs.

There was a communication breakdown for various reasons, which lasted for several months between the Project Worker at SHine SA and Ceduna Youth Centre which made supporting this project difficult. Eventually there were positive discussions regarding solving the problem of the initial set-backs, but further attempts to communicate got no response. It was only at the time of the reminder that the report needed to be in, that the actual outcomes of the project were clarified. The funding for this project was returned.

Outcomes: This project was not a success.

### **STAR Girls Group**

Clare High & Burra Area Schools

**Project goal:** To increase the self esteem of young women from Clare High School and Burra Area School by participating in a True Colours program followed by a camp which would enable them to participate in a youth participation project of their choice.

**Summary:** Female students, age 13-15 years, who were in the STAR (students at risk) group at Clare High and Burra Area School were selected to participate in a True Colours program. The STAR group has the following objectives:

- to provide a forum for discussion and activities that support positive self esteem
- to provide a positive group environment with which girls can identify
- to help develop stronger support network for individual members
- to undertake projects which provide opportunities for success within the school community and raise the profile of the group.

The project has been supported by the Mid North Rural SA Division of General Practice, Wakefield Regional Health Service and DASC.

As the focus of the project was peer education relating to sexuality, the topics used from the *True Colours* manual included health, sexuality, self-esteem and assertiveness, goal setting, team-work and decision-making. Resources from the Mind Matters package were also used.

The two groups trained separately on their own campus, but came together for the camp in Adelaide. The focus of the camp was team building. Activities included a visit to town using public transport, visiting youth services and a training session at the

School of the Future to learn how to create a video on computer. Through their visits they gathered material and information to use in their peer education project.

The Peer Educators from Clare High continued on with the peer education project, deciding upon a week that focused on safe sex at their school. The HPE curriculum for years 7 and 8 was used as a guide to develop a number of activities to promote safe sex. The activities included an art competition, lunchtime activities in the yard, guest speakers and class visits to the community room, which was set up as a 'sexual health' resource room. Activities focused on assertiveness and information about safe sex and a video was made of the week's activities.

**Outcomes:** Through the involvement of the Division of General Practice, groups were able to talk to doctors in an informal setting, resulting in a greater understanding of youth health issues and more young people feeling confident to use the doctors in the local area. The whole school was educated and the counsellor has passed new information onto other workers. They have seen the impact that the peer education approach to safe sex has had within the school. In addition, the project has increased staff's knowledge about SHine SA and has helped set the groundwork for the *share* project in 2003.

The Peer Educators involved in the project have gained maturity and have a more balanced approach towards emotional and physical relationships. Three students from Burra Area School continued on with the project after the camp and conducted a sexuality education session with year 6 to 9 girls. They also surveyed students on how they would feel about receiving information from their peers.

### **JAG 4 Youth by Youth**

Rocky River Health Service

**Project goal:** For young people in the Northern Areas Council region to have the skills to strengthen, improve and build their capacity for addressing mental health and wellbeing issues.

**Summary:** Eighteen young people from Gladstone and Jamestown High Schools took part and completed an eight-week training program held at the Gladstone Youth Centre. The planning of the project was driven through the identified needs of young people: a need to develop stronger partnerships and participation between young people, community members and the health service and this project helped in the process.

A steering committee, which included two young people, was formed to develop the 'JAG 4 Youth by Youth' peer education program that consisted of eight sessions, each two hours in duration. A folder was developed for both the young people and professionals involved so that handouts from the weekly sessions could be filed for future reference. Key agencies were consulted for their support, which enabled a collaborative working relationship between a range of agencies to ensure the success of the project. Key topics covered in the training included communication, sexual and reproductive health, drugs and alcohol, the law and skills needed to be a peer educator. Throughout the sessions the group was asked to consider what health messages they would like to get out to their community. An event was held where key stakeholders, facilitators and parents were invited to be part of the celebration to mark the end of the training component of the project.

**Outcomes:** As a result of the JAG 4 Youth by Youth project the trained young people have developed skills that strengthen and improve their ability to address the mental health and wellbeing issues of their peers in the Northern Areas Council region. The young people now have the skills to become leaders and peer educators within their community.

Interest from the local community is high and the group were asked to be involved in the FarmCog Festival and Jamestown show. They were also invited to address youth issues at a Youth Advisory Committee to the Northern Areas council.

JAG 4 Youth by Youth are now working with the health service and other key stakeholders to identify and address the top five issues affecting the health of their peers. A Youth Participation policy is being developed by the Rocky River Health service to ensure that young people have a voice and are listened to about their health concerns and how these could be addressed in a way that is respectful of young people's lives and experiences. A JAG 4 Youth by Youth program plan has been developed as a resource and is available on CD and or hard copy.

The highlight of the peer education project for some of the young people was presenting at the *Youth Lets SHine Together conference*, which celebrated young people's contribution to the Investing in Rural Youth projects across rural South Australia.

## SMILE

Uniting Care, Port Pirie Central Mission

**Project goal:** To raise awareness of issues faced by young people who are considering or have moved into independent living.

**Summary:** The group was made up of young people from within the Mid North region who had experienced issues of homelessness, as well as young people who wanted to gain more information about independent living. Eight young people completed an eight-week training program, which was held at a variety of venues within Port Pirie. The group was initially called Starting Out, but the name changed to SMILE (Supportive, Motivated, Independent, Lively Educators) as the young people wanted to have a name that identified the purpose of the group.

The group was involved in an initial planning session that generated a list of issues that they thought impacted on young peoples' developing independence. These issues were ranked in order of importance. Two group members then assisted in planning the program, locating venues and contacting local service providers to facilitate sessions on particular topics. Topics covered included:

- drugs and alcohol,
- teenage pregnancy,
- budgeting,
- accommodation,
- support services available
- Centrelink benefits.

Young people who were at school were able to be accredited to SACE units they were studying for their involvement in the program.

As a result of the training, the SMILE Peer Educators have gained more knowledge and understanding of issues faced by young people moving into independence and increased awareness of support services and resources available. Links were developed with local service providers, with opportunities for SMILE Peer Educators to disseminate the information they have learnt to other young people and the community. A SMILE logo was developed and printed on T-shirts to wear at public events as a promotional tool. Key tags and wallet cards with messages for young people about independence issues, including drug and alcohol use, safer sex and managing money have been produced and distributed in Port Pirie.

**Outcomes:** SMILE has designed a two-session workshop called *Independence - there's more to it than meets the eye* to be run with small groups in schools. The Peer Educators have promoted their project at various venues, including the Youth Sector Network,

Central Mission open day, Child Protection Week expo in Peterborough and the *Youth Lets SHine Together Conference* in Whyalla. The group has also been involved in Youth Participation training in Wakefield region, where they were asked to speak about their experiences within the project.

The most significant unexpected outcome has been the development of the project into an ongoing group. Many from SMILE have become involved in the planning and training of more Peer Educators this year by running workshops in schools. More workers have become involved in training young people and the continuation of the project has support from Uniting Care Port Pirie Central Mission. The project has been incorporated into the daily responsibilities of the workers involved and is regularly discussed within the organisation.

## Stop, Think and Act

### IDSC Options

**Project goal:** To bring youth, both with and without disabilities, together in a project that develops an understanding about appropriate behaviour, safety in relationships and the right to behave assertively.

**Summary:** This project aimed to provide an opportunity for students to come together and openly discuss and explore issues of personal safety and acquire the skills to develop and manage safe, positive relationships. It is acknowledged that the issues young people face within their relationships are the same regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

At the start of the project students from both Riverland Special School and Loxton High School were involved, but as the project progressed students from Loxton High withdrew due to study commitments. Sixteen students from Riverland Special School completed the project.

The students were involved in discussions and role plays using positive and negative situations, which helped to:

- recognise coercion and dangerous situations they might find themselves in
- understand their right not to comply in these situations
- understand the differences in appropriate and not appropriate touching
- develop the skills needed to take appropriate action when the need arose.

Through the involvement of the drama facilitator at the Riverland Youth Theatre, the students were able to identify the issues they felt important and how they wanted them to be addressed in the video that was produced through extra funding made available by Country Arts Board. The video, which will be distributed to schools, aims to create discussion about relationships and addresses issues of bullying, jealousy and dealing with life as it relates to young people with or without a disability. A teacher's guide will be developed to accompany the video, through the support of the Department of Education, Training and Employment.

A presentation of the video on school presentation night generated interest in the media, including coverage on television, articles in the local newspaper and a piece on ABC Radio. Being interviewed further empowered the young people involved and reinforced their self-worth.

**Outcomes:** The project has helped 'breakdown' some of the fears, real or perceived, that the students from Riverland Special School felt about other schools and helped them recognise and acknowledge that they can control their reactions to situations. The project is currently ongoing with a community artist employed to develop a 3D poster that reinforces self-assertive behaviours and relationship issues.

The young people were unable to attend the *Youth Lets SHine Together Conference*, but made a video about their experiences with the project and this received a warm reception from the audience at the conference. When given the opportunity, young

people with disabilities have the ability to contribute to the issues that impact on all young people's lives – in the case of this project they chose issues around relationships and staying safe. They need to be congratulated for their wonderful effort.

## **Brothers in Arms**

RivSkills Inc

**Project goal:** To train indigenous and non-indigenous young men 15-21 years as peer educators to facilitate discussion sessions with young people at risk of leaving school.

**Summary:** Young people were recruited into the project who were seen as 'at risk' as a result of inappropriate behaviours, substance abuse, homelessness, lack of education and/or attendance and those from dysfunctional family backgrounds. Eleven young men, including 5 indigenous young people, started the training. Four young men completed the training, including two indigenous young people. All young men were JPET (Jobs Placement Education and Training) clients at RivSkills. Due to the diverse backgrounds and the challenges these young men were facing in their lives, and the commitment to family issues that arose for them during the training, the facilitators expected a high drop out rate.

The initial training phase of the project included information sessions on sexual health and relationships, budgeting, mental health and drug and alcohol issues. In addition, the young men took part in a number of fun activities, including Fit for Life activities, surfing school, volleyball and gym activities. For most of the young men this was the first time they had taken part in sessions like this. Each day also included a shared lunch wherever the activity was taking place. At the end of the training the young men went on a camp to further develop their skills.

As a result of the program those who finished training gained skills and experience in the following areas:

- time management
- conflict resolution
- team building
- leadership skills
- communications skills
- greater understanding of the judicial system
- what is involved in independent living.

With the help of the University of South Australia, a video was made of the project activities and this was presented at the *Youth Lets SHine Together Conference* in Whyalla.

**Outcomes:** The project helped to highlight the needs of young men in the Riverland area and the project received additional funding from the Riverland Men's Health Network. It also helped to strengthen collaborative relationships with Riverland Legal Service, DASC and Riverland Regional Health Service. The young men participated in the Riverland Regional Health Service 'Women Alive Day' by cooking healthy food during the day.

The young men involved were not the 'typical' young people that would come off the street into RivSkills. This project has provided them with the opportunity to access local agencies that they might never have known about previously and are now more aware of the services in the Riverland area that provide support to young people.

Even though the project did not continue past the initial training, RivSkills are keen to try again with another group of young men.

## YOUTH LETS SHINE TOGETHER CONFERENCE

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Over 115 young people and workers gathered to attend the *Youth Lets Shine Together Conference* in Whyalla on 13 November 2002. The conference was a celebration of peer education as a youth participation strategy in Indigenous and non-Indigenous South Australian communities and showcased the projects from the Investing in Rural Youth Project funded by the Department of Human Services.

We were honoured to have Roma Taylor, a Traditional Barnjarla Elder, deliver the official welcome with the keynote address being delivered by Stephen Blight, Director Office for Youth. But after the opening procedures, the day was very much influenced by the young people themselves. Addressing the audience on their experiences of youth participation were:

- Melissa Stewart, an active Youth Advisory Team member at SHine SA and a South Australian National Youth Week Representative
- Caras, a Peer Educator from Talking Realities program.

Following an overview of the Investing in Rural Youth Project and Investing in Aboriginal Youth Project by SHine staff, young people from the audience challenged our Master of Ceremonies, Rob Gerrie, believing that they could do his job as well or better than him! In the true spirit of youth participation, Rob handed over the role to young people and provided coordination, support and technical expertise. Shortly after that the role of video camera operator was also taken over. The young people took their roles seriously and did a great job. Many potential public speakers and leaders were obviously present that day.

The Investing in Rural Youth peer education projects presented at the conference included:

- JAG 4 Youth by Youth – Jamestown and Gladstone
- PEFY (Positive Education for Youth) – Mt Gambier
- SMILE (Supportive, Motivated, Independent, Lively Educators) – Port Pirie
- Brothers In Arms - Berri
- Violence Is Not OK – Port Lincoln
- YAC – RAP - Mount Barker
- CHAMPS - Murray Bridge.

Summaries of these projects can be found in the previous section. Members of a metropolitan-based peer education project, Talking Realities, were also invited to present at the conference. The young parenting project has an early intervention, prevention and education focus. It has outreached to regional South Australian parents, as well as helping teenage parents in Adelaide.

The day started at 1pm and was bursting with information, participation, fun, and culminated with disco dancing until 11 pm. For a more detailed outline of the day's events see Appendix 5: Conference Program.

Feedback from the conference was gathered using the 'chuck bucket' method, where questions were asked throughout the day and the answers were then screwed up and 'chucked' into a bucket on each table. It was a great way to get plenty of comments. The evaluation of the conference was very positive with the major learning, enlightenment and enjoyment indicated from both young people and workers occurring when they were given an opportunity to share information relating to the projects. There were some incidences of self-disclosure from young people, however, they were given several opportunities to opt out of speaking at any time and workers offered support to young people or their workers after the conference.

### Learning experiences

There are things we would do differently next time. These learning experiences include:

- involving young people in the organisation of the conference from the beginning

- providing skill development for those taking lead roles prior to the event, so that they had the confidence to intervene in any unexpected outcomes or events that occur when working with a large number of young people.

## EVALUATION

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Evaluation of the rural worker training, the manual, project support and project management were woven into the project by gathering information from the pre- and post-workshop impact training evaluation and the *Investing in Rural Youth Journal*. The journal, given to rural peer education project workers, not only acted as a prompt for each stage of their project, but also gathered information linked to the project plan (see Appendix 2) and the evaluation plan (see Appendix 3) for the entire Investing in Rural Youth project. The SHine SA project officers were also given a journal to gather different evaluation information, once again linked directly to the project and evaluation plan.

### Rural worker training

A total of 192 workers in 11 rural locations participated in training. Attendance numbers across the seven regions ranged from 22 in the South East to 36 in the Hills Mallee and Southern area. This outcome exceeded expectations and supported the effectiveness of training in rural locations. As a result we were able to meet the planned goal of training a minimum of 10 workers in each region.

The training was provided in 11 rural locations to maximize access. Project workers reported that the amount of training workshops over a short time span was at times very demanding and would have been better run over a longer period. All training workshops were run by two project workers.

The following data comes from the pre- and post-workshop impact evaluation. See Appendix 4: Training Questionnaires for a copy of the forms. Using a scale of 1 – 10 for most of the questions, with 1 being no/nil and 5 OK/some and 10 excellent/yes, participants were asked to indicate where they rated their knowledge of:

**Youth participation:** Prior to training, a majority of participants indicated that their knowledge was OK, with a few participants responding on either end of the scale. Post-training the average score was 8, indicating an increase in knowledge.

Prior to training, a majority of participants indicated they had some knowledge of the principles of youth participation, scoring between 4 and 5. Post-training the average score was 8, indicating an increase in knowledge.

Prior to training, a majority of participants indicated that they had a below average understanding of the benefits of youth participation, scoring their knowledge at an average level of 4. Post-training the average score was 9-10, indicating a large knowledge increase.

Prior to training, participants were asked to identify youth participation strategies they knew about. An overwhelming majority of responses listed youth issues, not participation strategies. Post-training, it was evident that participants were able to identify a range of youth participation strategies, clearly demonstrating an increase in knowledge and understanding.

**Peer education:** Prior to training, the majority of participants indicated they had some knowledge of peer education, scoring an average of 4-6. Post-training the average score was 7-9, indicating an increase in knowledge.

Prior to training, most participants rated their competence at using peer education as a strategy for youth participation at around 3-4. Post-training the average score was 6-10, indicating an increase in confidence.

**Health and wellbeing:** Prior to training, participants were asked about whether they had an understanding of the issues for young people. The range of responses was from 6-10, indicating most participants felt they had an understanding, which they could demonstrate by actually identifying the issues. Post-training

scores on average increased to 7-10. There does appear to be a high level of knowledge of youth issues amongst rural workers.

**Collaboration:** When asked if participants had worked collaboratively with other agencies in the last 6 months, the response was slightly greater for yes. When asked post-training if they have plans or a commitment to working with other agencies on youth health issues, there was an increase in the positive response.

**Involvement:** Prior to training less than half the participants had been involved in youth participation or peer education. Post-training a majority of participants indicated that they would advocate and promote youth participation strategies in their region as a means of improving youth health and wellbeing.

In summary, the training increased participants knowledge in all the areas identified. In addition, on completion of training there was overwhelming support for youth participation from participants.

### **The manual**

All 192 trained rural workers received a manual. However, for evaluation purposes it was decided to gather information from the rural project workers to determine its practical application. All project workers reported using the manual at some stage during the life of their project. Each project found different sections valuable, with the evaluation section being cited most frequently as useful.

Comments included:

- the manual was used throughout the project
- most of the manual was used at various stages of the project
- we used it at the start of the planning, how to begin, what to include, it guided the funding process and the evaluation section was used many times.

In order to see if there were any gaps in the manual, we asked what additional information/resources they required to complete their project. Not every project answered this question, but additional information and resources were requested from SHine SA workers and the Library and Resource Centre, as well as other peer education programs, the web and libraries. It was also suggested that more examples of different methodologies and strategies could have been included in the manual through example sheets. Overall this feedback indicates that the manual was a valuable tool that all the projects used to varying degrees throughout the project.

### **Peer education projects**

The initial aim of Investing in Rural Youth was to fund a minimum of two peer education projects in each region. However at the end of the selection process only one project met the criteria in each of the South East and Northern and Far Western regions. Then two approved projects returned their funding, leaving only one project in the Wakefield region. And with one project in Eyre not finishing their project, in the end only three regions had at least two completed peer education projects.

All projects reported increased networking in their area and there was strong evidence of collaboration in each region. In addition to strengthening relationships with SHine SA, some of the ways that the projects reported that this occurred included:

- project steering committees involving other organisations
- guest speakers from other agencies
- workers from other organisations involved in the project
- links with other projects, schools and the community
- informal networks created with young people and parents.

All completed projects were committed to mentoring their peer educators. It was good to see that five projects reported mentoring of other workers in peer education within their organisations or with other agencies. This increased the sustainability of peer education in these rural areas.

Investing in Rural Youth aimed to achieve organisational changes in at least three regions to improve services for young people as a direct result of the peer education projects. Eight projects across all seven rural regions reported that there has been organisational policy/changes implemented, although the degree varied and was usually relative to the success of the project. Changes from the eight projects were:

- The *YAC-RAP* project showed the organisation and workers better ways to work with young people at risk and provided better links with the local school and council.
- *PEFY* gave the organisation experience in working with young people in a different way and they were subsequently looking at adopting the peer education model to save an unsuccessful project.
- The *Anti-bullying and harassment* project provided a process for young people to be more involved in projects at the school and the development of school policy.
- The *Violence is not OK* project encouraged health curriculum changes and the participation of young people in leading classroom discussions.
- The *STAR girls group* project reported community wide changes, including a new community room, local council YAC meetings at the school and a shift in the local doctor's practice to be more responsive to young people.
- The *JAG 4 Youth by Youth* project produced major changes in the Rocky River Health Service, including the creation of a 0.2 youth specific position, 'young people' included in all job descriptions, increased youth participation, a more youth-friendly service and increased partnerships with the local schools.
- The *SMILE* project have formalised a youth team and reported more visibility of youth issues in the organisation.
- The *Brothers in Arms* project now have an open door policy.

Investing in Rural Youth aimed to have young people included in service planning in at least three rural regions. Eight projects across all seven rural regions reported that young people have been involved in service planning through participation in:

- youth forums, committees, planning groups and council meetings
- direct consultation and/or involvement in decision-making
- special projects.

Most projects reported an increased use of local services, even if it was small, but most agencies indicated that it was difficult or too soon to measure evidence of improved health and wellbeing. Many indicated that there was increased awareness of local services, which they anticipated would eventually translate to increased access. Perhaps the greatest improvement was seen in the peer educators involved in the projects. Workers reported that they noticed the increased self-esteem, confidence, problem-solving skills, awareness, peer support, communication skills, and leadership qualities. Generally, the young people have improved their ability to make good choices that will positively affect their health and wellbeing.

Workers could clearly see the benefits of using peer education, demonstrated in their absolute support and commitment to using it as youth participation strategy again in the future. Their comments included:

- 'The project has far exceeded our expectations. There are currently plans to re-look at existing projects and [to see] how peer education can be used.' (PEFY)
- 'Peer education is very effective due to connecting young people with other young people...[it] operates by valuing young people and allowing them to gain new skills...with flexibility.' (YAC-RAP)
- 'It reinforces to young people, school community and adult community members that young people have a contribution to make. It was satisfying to see young people...developing confidence and skills in an area which they were concerned about.' (Violence is not OK)

One of the most rewarding and unexpected outcomes of the peer education projects, was the involvement, commitment and development of the young people, many of whom embraced the opportunities presented through their projects and have chosen to participate in other activities within their communities. This includes involvement in:

- the *Youth Lets Shine Together Conference*
- involvement in decisions about local service delivery

- policy and resource development
- involvement in local youth councils
- kids help line peer education training
- participation in other community activities.

Most projects also reported that the young peer educators expressed to workers a desire to be involved in further projects and wanted to do 'more new stuff'.

Another positive outcome has been the way some organisations have seen the benefits of getting young people involved through peer education and are now exploring ways to adopt youth participation practices in their workplace beyond the life of their project. Details have been provided in the outcomes of each project description, but the highlights include:

- South East Women's Emergency Service are looking to run more groups with young people
- YAC-RAP have run more camps
- Victor Harbor High School have involved young people in policy development and have become involved in further youth participation projects
- Clare High School is involved in SHine SA's *share* program
- Rocky River Health Service have developed a youth participation policy
- Uniting Care Port Pirie Central Mission has supported SMILE as an ongoing group and more young people have been trained
- IDSC Options secured additional funding to increase the scope of their original project
- RivSkills are looking to run more training with a different group of young men.

## Project management

One of the unique features of this project was that the management and the support for the rural projects was based in a metropolitan location and further more, the three SHine SA project workers were located at three different sites. To ensure effective communication between the project workers and the project manager, regular meetings, emails and phone conversations took place. All members of the project team took part in planning and resource development to ensure a common understanding and continuity of service was developed. Communication via newsletters and attendance at rural meetings was also an effective way of ensuring regional managers and other key external personnel were kept informed of the project development.

Ongoing support to rural projects provided by the three SHine SA project workers was made possible by allocating monies in the budget for rural travel. Where travel was possible by car, support visits were more frequent due to the ease of travel. Support visits were less frequent in rural areas accessible by air, due to cost, the organisation required and the perceived need to maximise the visit, however in these areas telephone contact was high.

The number of projects funded in each rural region varied. This meant that one of the SHine SA project worker supported six projects across three rural regions. However, these regions were easily accessible by car so the project worker felt it was achievable and in fact, ended up having more time to spend visiting each project. The other two project workers were working with three and four projects each, with the group of three projects in the more remote communities. Each project worker was allocated the same amount of time to support the all rural projects, so travel time was a consideration.

There was a break in continuity of support by the project worker supporting the more remote communities (due to leave) and it is interesting to note one of the three projects did not continue and another experienced difficulties and did not complete all aspects. It can be surmised that continuity of support with the same worker is essential to the success of a project, especially when contact is more difficult due to distance.

Access was an issue, whether the projects were nearer metro Adelaide or more remote, especially when it came to unexpected or unforeseen problems. For example, if projects struggled in their development, telephone conversations proved not as effective as face to face meetings. Project workers reported that issues were more easily overcome when they could initiate and support meetings of stakeholders or key persons in projects. Phone contact was less effective and less likely to deliver a resolution.

Overall, it was an effective way of managing a rural South Australian project within budget constraints, but there are some things that could be managed more effectively and these include:

- working in smaller groups to quicken the process during resource development
- reducing the number of workshops or lengthening the time over which they are run
- arranging 'block' visits of time to remote regions to work with projects and rural workers
- allocating a larger proportion of resources and travel money to those more remote rural regions to enable more frequent access by the project worker
- ensuring continuity of project workers when possible.

### **Peer education as an effective method of health education**

This is difficult to ascertain from this project in such a short time frame, although research can provide evidence that peer education is effective. Young people can reach those who health professionals sometimes can not and in a way that other young people find acceptable.

In this project we asked the funded projects to include in their evaluation their peer educators' thoughts about whether they would be involved in another peer education program. Overwhelmingly, the peer educators wanted to be involved again and were asking what was next. In some cases they even initiated the process.

There is evidence that some projects had an impact in the community. For example, community development boards have registered an interest in *JAG 4 Youth by Youth* and they have been invited to participate and deliver activities in various community events. These kinds of requests have been threaded throughout many of the projects, and although the young people who received the health messages from the peer educators were not asked for their feedback, it appears other organisations and agencies have identified their value.

Sustainability was a key measure of the success of the project and there is evidence that youth participation and peer education is now well entrenched in some communities following the life of the project, as discussed above.

## KEY OUTCOMES

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The Investing in Rural Youth project had strategies in place to achieve certain outcomes (see Appendix 2). The evidence collected during the evaluation process (see Appendix 3) indicated the following key outcomes were achieved:

- ☑ the training manual was available in each region
- ☑ training held in 11 rural locations spanning all seven rural regions of South Australia
- ☑ a minimum of 22 workers were trained in each region in youth participation and peer education
- ☑ strong evidence of collaboration on the peer education projects
- ☑ all projects reported increased networking in their region as a direct result of the peer education project
- ☑ mentoring in peer education has occurred in some areas
- ☑ all seven of the rural regions reported that there has been organisational policy/changes implemented to improve services to young people
- ☑ young people have been invited to participate in the planning of rural services and programs
- ☑ all projects reported an increase in numbers of young people accessing local services, even if it was small
- ☑ anecdotal evidence of improved youth health and wellbeing, especially in terms of self-esteem and confidence of young people involved in the peer education projects
- ☑ a resounding YES! from the rural project workers in response to using youth participation strategies again.

The only expected outcome that the project failed to achieve was funding a minimum of two peer education projects in each of the seven regions. Funding was allocated to two projects in five regions, however only three regions were successful in having two completed projects.

Other key outcomes included:

- ☑ *Youth Lets Shine Together Conference* held in Whyalla to showcase peer education projects
- ☑ evidence of sustainability in many regions through continuation of peer education programs, increase of young peoples involvement in an advisory capacity, policy change, increase in young people involved in worker education
- ☑ strengthened relationships between SHine SA and rural workers
- ☑ the manual was used in the Investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth project.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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The recommendations from the Investing in Rural Youth project are:

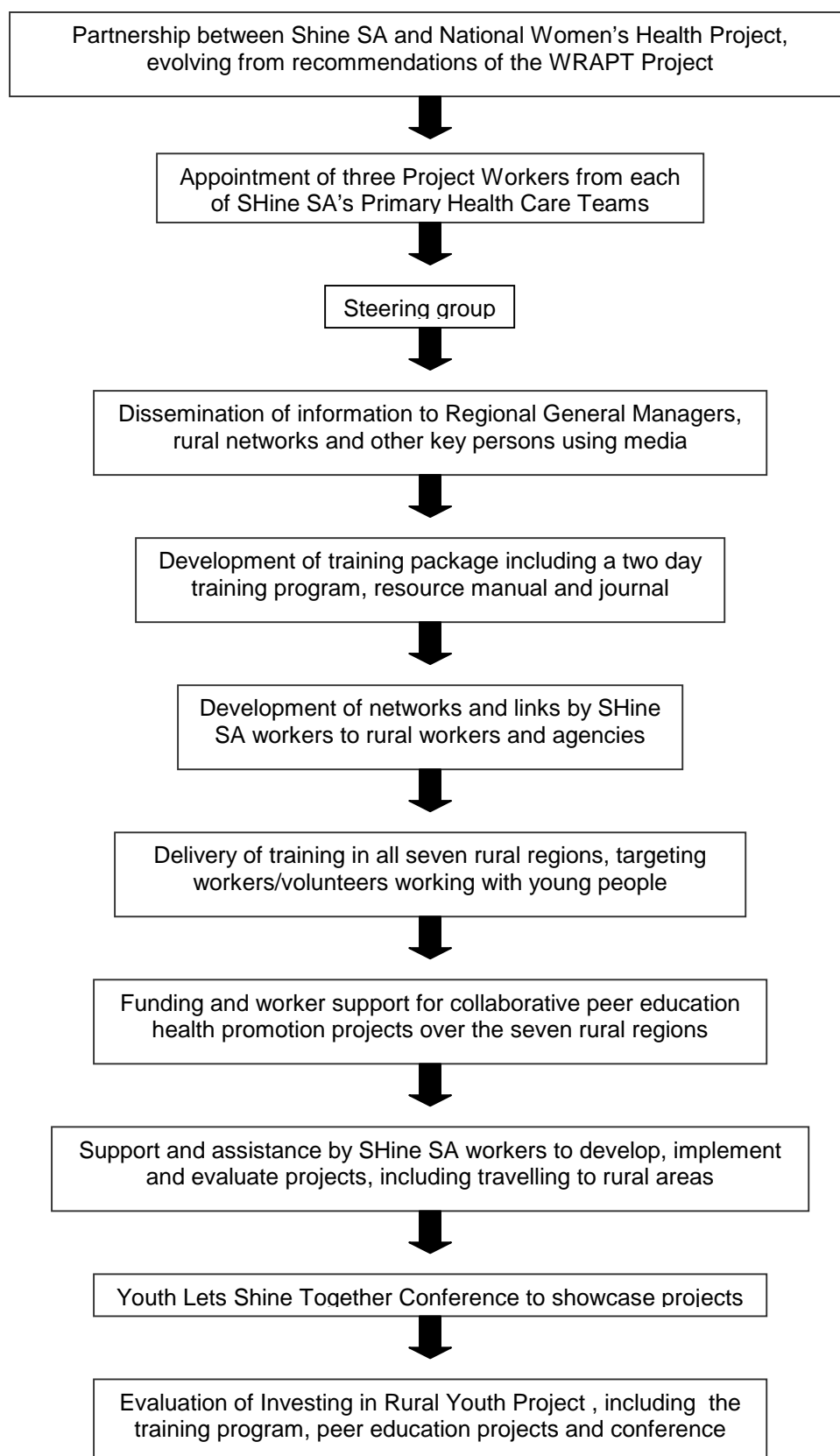
- ▶ SHine SA continue to build upon relationships with the rural networks this project has established.
- ▶ SHine SA follow up with each of the completed projects in 6-12 months to determine the long term benefits, if any, that this project created for young people and the organisations involved, assess the sustainability of peer education in the regions, determine the need for further support and professional development.
- ▶ SHine SA continue to advocate for peer education as a youth participation strategy.
- ▶ Even though mentoring other workers to ensure the sustainability of the use of peer education as a youth participation strategy was a component of this project, it is recommended that the project is repeated within the next two years due to the changing nature of the rural workforce. Ongoing support and staff development will ensure that peer education is more likely to become an integrated work practice.
- ▶ If this project were run again, additional support be targeted at the most remote communities, where issues of access and equity to services and resources can have an impact on the success of the project.
- ▶ The resources and experience that has been gained from this project could be easily transferred to a metropolitan-based project if funding were available.

## **APPENDICES**

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## APPENDIX 1: INVESTING IN RURAL YOUTH FRAMEWORK



## APPENDIX 2: INVESTING IN RURAL YOUTH PROJECT PLAN

### Goal: to improve the health and wellbeing of young people in rural South Australia

*Through using peer education as a youth participation strategy*

#### Objectives

To increase the competence and confidence of workers in rural areas to develop peer education and youth participation programs	To increase the capacity and responsiveness of rural services to meet the needs of young people and build youth partnerships	To improve accessibility to services for young people to enhance their health and wellbeing	To build capacity of young people so that they can access information, services and resources that help them make healthy lifestyle choices
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#### Strategies

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ a train-the-trainer manual</li> <li>◆ two-day training workshops in seven rural regions</li> <li>◆ support and mentoring from Project Workers through the peer education project</li> <li>◆ ongoing links with SHine SA after the project</li> <li>◆ encouraging networking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ minimum 10 workers in each rural region trained from non-government, government and voluntary organisations</li> <li>◆ trained workers encouraged to 'mentor' other workers to ensure knowledge remains in the region</li> <li>◆ manual is given to each worker attending training</li> <li>◆ encouraging collaboration between services</li> <li>◆ workers are skilled to train other workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ issues of accessibility and flexibility addressed in training workshops</li> <li>◆ workers and young people encouraged to address issues of accessibility through youth participation strategies</li> <li>◆ encouraged management support for organisational change to improve access to services for young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ peer education health promotion projects in each region</li> <li>◆ young people trained as peer educators in each region to increase knowledge and skills and empower them</li> <li>◆ collection of statistics and anecdotal information on the improvement of young peoples' health and wellbeing</li> </ul>
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#### Outcomes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ manual is available</li> <li>◆ training in seven rural regions occurs</li> <li>◆ minimum of two peer education projects occur in each region</li> <li>◆ evidence of collaborative projects</li> <li>◆ increase or expanded networks in each region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ minimum of 10 workers are trained in each region in youth participation and peer education</li> <li>◆ manuals are available in each region</li> <li>◆ workers plan to use youth participation and peer education strategies after term of project</li> <li>◆ each worker identifies other workers to train or 'mentor'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ at least three rural regions have implemented organisational policy/change to improve access to services</li> <li>◆ young people are invited to participate in the planning of services and programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ increased amount of young people accessing local services</li> </ul>
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## APPENDIX 3: INVESTING IN RURAL YOUTH EVALUATION PLAN

Evaluation will occur at three levels and throughout the project. They are:

- workers participating in the training and peer education projects
- young people trained as peer educators
- young people as recipients of the peer education program.

Participating workers	Peer educators	Recipients of the peer education program
Evaluation gathered by Shine SA project workers	Evaluation gathered by trained workers	Evaluation gathered by workers and peer educators
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluation of the manual</li> <li>2. Process and impact evaluation of the training workshop, including pre- and post-evaluation and journal entries</li> <li>3. Collect evidence of:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ at least ten workers each region trained</li> <li>◆ documentation of two peer education programs from each region</li> <li>◆ qualitative information about network expansion or creation</li> <li>◆ commitment to mentoring</li> <li>◆ collaboration in each region</li> <li>◆ organisational changes to a service in three regions</li> <li>◆ young people included in service planning in three regions</li> <li>◆ increased use of local services</li> <li>◆ commitment to use youth participation strategies again</li> <li>◆ anecdotal evidence of improved youth health and wellbeing</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Process evaluation of training and training program</li> <li>2. Pre- and post-impact evaluation on confidence, knowledge and skill level</li> <li>3. Collect evidence of                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ peer education projects</li> <li>◆ retention rate of participants</li> <li>◆ unexpected outcomes of projects</li> <li>◆ barriers &amp; solutions</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Process and impact evaluation of project, using where appropriate pre- and post-evaluation tools</li> <li>2. Collect evidence of                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ participants willingness to be involved in a peer education project again</li> <li>◆ their impressions of usefulness of peer education</li> </ul> </li> </ol>









# APPENDIX 5: CONFERENCE PROGRAM

## Youth Lets Shine Together Conference

Shine SA provides a range of sexual and reproductive health services for the South Australian Community through its Teams, which are located throughout metropolitan Adelaide, South Australia. Shine SA particularly works in partnership with the following communities:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- People with disabilities
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities
- WOMEN

**Northern Primary Health Care Team**  
The Linc, 520g Rd, Marano Park Shopping City, Sturtfield 5114  
Telephone: 8254 8200

**Southwest Primary Health Care Team and Professional Education & Assessment Team**  
17 Phillips Street Kensington 5008  
Telephone: 8431 5177

**Southon Primary Health Care Team**  
Woodcroft Community Centre  
175 Howe Road Woodcroft Vale 5182  
Telephone: 8205 8164

**Sexual Health Line**  
9 am – 1 pm, Mon-Fri  
Telephone: 8304 0444  
Country Callers (Toll-Free): 1888 188 171  
TTY: 8431 5177  
Email: [sexualhealth@shinesa.org.au](mailto:sexualhealth@shinesa.org.au)

[www.shinesa.org.au](http://www.shinesa.org.au)

## Youth 'Lets Shine Together' Conference Program

**13 November 2002**

Westland Hotel/Motel  
100 McDouall Stuart Avenue  
Whyalla










**Look Around!**

The Adelaide Youth Empowerment Program (AYEP) is a national initiative, where young people are encouraged to lead the way and play a key role in their own lives.

- Adelaide Empowerment (Aged 15-24)
- Denver Charter (15-24)
- Barrow Charter (15-24)
- New Brunswick Charter (15-24)

**Organising Committee**

Shirley Owen, Melissa Stewart, Julie Wynn, Polly Adams, Gailyn Kavanagh, Marlene Brown, Paul Peacock, Frances Flynn, Daphne Stone

**Advisory Committee**

Shirley Owen, Melissa Stewart, Julie Wynn, Gailyn Kavanagh, Marlene Brown, Paul Peacock, Frances Flynn, Daphne Stone, Christine Smith, VEG of Adelaide SA, Sir Charles Sturt, Steering Committee of Investing in Rural Youth Project

**Project Co-ordinators**

Michelle Smith, Kyla Ota, Tracy Pinnock, Margaret Almyer, Margaret Heath, Cheryl Almyer, Debra & Andrew Curran

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[www.shinesa.org.au](http://www.shinesa.org.au)

# Conference Program

# Program Abstracts

12 pm	Registration	MC: <b>Rob Gerrie</b>
1 pm	Opening Address	
1:05 pm	Welcome	
1:10 pm	Key Note Address	
1:30 pm	Youth Participation	
2 pm	Peer Education	
2:35 pm	Investing in Rural Youth	
3:10 pm	Investing in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Youth	
3:30 pm	Youth Advisory Groups	
4 pm	YAC Rap	
4 pm	Afternoon Tea	
5 pm	Stop Think Act	
6 pm	CHAMPS	
6 pm	Building & Harassment Project	
7:20 pm	Dinner	
7:50 pm	SMILE	
8:45 pm	JAG 4 Youth By Youth	
8:55 pm	Violence is not OK	
	Brothers In Arms	
	Supper	
	PEFY	
	Talking Realities	
	Roving Feedback	
	Closing Address	

**JAG 4 Youth By Youth**

We are the JAG 4 Youth By Youth, the consortium came together and were involved in eight sessions of peer education. From these sessions we learnt about issues relating to youth in our Northern Area Council region. After the eight sessions we were motivated to continue with youth leadership and have now begun the formation of a Youth Advisory Committee (YAC). Through this we hope to make a very real and positive impact on our Northern Area Council region to address youth issues. We want to provide Northern Youth Voice in 2003, to act as a brand of the YAC.

**Positive Education for Youth (PEFY)**

PEFY will be presenting a short history of the development of our Peer Education program in Mount Gambier and will talk about the history, evolution and how they formed and implemented the PEFY program in the local community. There is a plan to deliver the education via play that was presented at one of the high schools on teenage pregnancy, safe sex, performing and healthy relationships and a wider youth development as community resource for education to young people. It included local and statewide education agencies.

**SMILE**

*Supper, Music and Independent Living Education*

SMILE is an SMILE Peer Education, supporting young people in the community with independence. Over the last 6 months SMILE has delivered 8 weeks of training on a variety of topics such as: drugs & alcohol, budgeting, housing, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and becoming aware of what discrimination and racism is. PEFY has had a successful start with the first 7 weeks with our own logo, key rings, t-shirts, magnets and other crafts and are looking forward to the products. These will be given to young people by people they see in the community that are in their lives and they can use them to be visible. We have also designed a website to run in schools and with groups of young people in the states that offer our independence.

**Brothers In Arms**

Brothers In Arms is a group of young men from a wide range of cultures, including Indigenous Australians. They are between 15 to 21 years old, targeted as a result of inappropriate behaviour, substance abuse, harassment, lack of education and/or involvement in crime. They are currently in the program and have been educated to work in the four high schools with peer education as a form of learning about a number of issues.

**Violence is Not OK**

Our "Violence is Not OK" Project was developed by young people 15 - 16 years of age in our community to raise the awareness and understanding of social and cultural gender issues. To support the development of skills and strategies to deal with strong women and to address aggression in relationships, sexual harassment and other behaviours. As part of their participation in the Project, eight young people (three male, five female) have developed a website for young people in our (South) Island. The website (about what is and isn't a healthy relationship, when to get help and how to resolve conflicts) VAC-RAP

*Peer Education Camp*

A history, your acknowledgment and future involvement and the role of history for an important role in reaching goals through personal/cultural, educational, leadership and stage and ground issues.

Young people from the youth program, which is called VAC-RAP designed and coordinated the program to learn young people through word of mouth education. The young people were given a series of activities that will be taught through to include educational activities, leadership and participation. Each day is designed and run within their local communities.

Young people from the camp are now involved in Peer Education in one of the high schools, five young people is also involved in a local Peer Education Program, which is about the 8 weeks, lessons and most activities to participate in other than Training Programs.

**Talking Realities**

The Talking Realities... (young people) project has demonstrated evaluation and evidence to show the formation of a peer education model to provide accredited training of TAFE Certificate 118 level for young people (14-22 years of age). The education is intended to present a learning and social health program to help young people to understand and deal with issues. Education projects have occurred across the state involving students and their parents from the state of Victoria, Northern Territory (NT) State in South Coast, the Riverland SA, as well as metropolitan Adelaide. SA schools have their sessions programmed to over 4,000 students.

The project has an early, consistent, professional and education focus and has demonstrated positive outcomes for providing young people with support, education and community participation, which will support young people to complete their education, move into the workforce, while enjoying the developmental needs and future prospects for their children.

**Riverland Young Persevering Project**

*Learning, Talking Realities*

The Riverland Young Persevering Project is a peer education project, using Talking Realities. Young students of the Riverland region are exhibiting 100% attendance leading to future peer education within the project. The project supports and encourages young people to increase young people and secondary students' academic awareness of personal short term and long term consequences of early parenting. The program also aims to increase young people's knowledge of social health issues and the local and global and health services they can access. On completion of the training program and talking presentation at school, the peer education will gain acceptance through its members of the State Certificate 3 in Community Work.

**CHAMPS/Kickstartin' Nungas Peer Education Camps**

CHAMPS and Kickstartin' Nungas camps support to increase the skills and use being of Aboriginal young people between the ages of 13-17 years in the Mount Meehan region. This is achieved through training, support, creative activities and experiential activities in a relaxed setting. Workshops have included drug and alcohol education and relationship/relationships education. Other activities have included art workshops with a guitar, singing, rap and dance workshops. A youth journal from the camp will be included in a youth journal that will be distributed to the participants and other young people.