

Thrive

Wingecarribee Youth Safer Celebration Summit 2004

Coordinated by Youth Solutions and Joynt Youth Action

Background

The Wingecarribee Shire covers 27,000 square kilometres with a total population of approximately 40,839. About one-hour drive south-west of Sydney, the Wingecarribee Region is a diverse community embracing rural through to urban living.

In recent times, the Wingecarribee Region has experienced much hardship in relation to celebratory gatherings. In response to these events Youth Solutions on behalf of Joynt Youth Action, facilitated the 'Thrive- Wingecarribee Safer Celebration Summit', on 6 September 2004.

Project Partners

- Youth Solutions
- Wingecarribee Shire Council
- NSW Premiers Department
- Local Secondary High Schools
- Department of Education & Training
- NSW Police
- Wingecarribee Health Service

Funding was received from

- Joynt Youth Action
- Wingecarribee Shire Council
- Youth Solutions

Pre-Summit consultations

The Summit was supported by an extensive and comprehensive needs assessment involving young people, parents and teachers.

Young People

Focus groups were conducted with a total 212 young people prior to the Summit in order to obtain valuable information from our target group and ensure that young people were clearly represented in the Summit's deliberations.

All focus group participants were aged 13-17 years; 31% were male and 69% female (higher percentage of females participating due to involvement of an all female high school and young female's general willingness to participate in focus groups). Participants represented a broad cultural and socio-economic mix and were accessed via 5 local high schools.

Questions asked focussed on:

- *What types of parties/celebrations young people attend?*
- *What makes a party 'great'?*
- *Where most parties are held?*
- *What young people need to consider as a host, and a guest, of a party?*
- *What sort of things ruin a party and what they can do to prevent or avoid them?*
- *What would you do in an emergency situation?*
- *What support do young people need, who can help and what they can do?*
- *What do parents/adults need to know to help young people celebrate safely?*
- *Where young people get alcohol from?*
- *What is the best way to get information across to young people?*

Key points of interest included:

- Most young people were familiar with '000'
- Many were familiar with basic first aid.
- The presence of a parent or supervising adult at a party would generally reduce the incidence of negative behaviour, eg: excessive alcohol &/or other drug use
- Alcohol was the primary drug noted at parties, followed by marijuana
- Tobacco was present at many parties but was not considered to be an issue.
- Parents were identified by most young people as helping to make a party great-if they remained in the background and didn't interfere too much with party proceedings - the "cool parents".
- Due to lack of transport options for those young people who did not have a license, parents were crucial in transporting young people to and from parties.
- The term 'gatherings' was used across all focus groups and defined as a small gathering of less than 20 trusted friends. Drinking of alcohol does not always occur, however these parties were seen as harmless even if alcohol or drug use was occurring.
- Location of party whether it be residential or on a property would often set the scene for the party.
- Those who lived primarily in the Southern end of the shire spoke of traveling to Wollongong for parties.
- Very few young people aged under 18 stated that they were celebrating in pubs/clubs with the exception of some young people traveling to Camden to attend an under 18 night club.
- Some young people spoke of traveling to Sydney for parties and clubbing.

Parents

Focus groups (12) and surveys (21) were conducted with 33 parents who were accessed via all 5 high schools. Participants were 12% male & 88% female. Parents were asked the same types of questions as young people. Parents were identified by young people and teachers as playing a major role in safer youth celebrations.

Questions asked focussed on:

- *Describe types of celebrations your child would normally attend?*
- *As a parent, what do you think are all the components of a great young person's party?*
- *Where are most young people's parties held?*

- *What do you need to consider when:*
 - hosting a young person's party?*
 - your child is attending a party as a guest?*
- *What types of things can go "wrong" at a young person's party?*
- *If something does 'go wrong' at a party, what would you do:*
 - if you were hosting the party?*
 - if you received a phone call from your child at the party?*
- *What can you do to help prevent/avoid these problems?*
- *What do young people need to know to celebrate safely?*
- *Where do young people get alcohol?*
- *What support do you need to help young people celebrate safely?*
- *What is the best way to get information to parents?*

Overall parents were very concerned about the safety of their teenagers when celebrating (obviously due to sample size this may not be representative of entire parent population).

Interesting issues identified include:

- Parents feel more comfortable letting their teenager go to a party where they know the parent or have spoken to the parent who is hosting the party
- Parents may have discussions with their child about: alcohol use & non use, amount of alcohol to be consumed, type of alcohol to be consumed, whether parent will buy alcohol for their child – this starts occurring from approximately 15 years of age.
- Communication with the teenager is vital. Seen as the most important factor between child and parent. Issues discussed include: attending parties, behaviour, alcohol use/non use, transport, expectations, consequences, safety of self and others, what to do if an emergency occurs.
- Parents need more opportunities to discuss parenting issues with other parents
- Parent information and education regarding the issues
- Many responses to questions were identical to that of the young people and teachers

Teachers

Surveys were conducted with 31 teachers who were accessed via all 5 high schools. Participants were 45% male & 55% female. Teachers were asked the same types of questions as young people and were representative of all subject areas.

Questions asked focussed on:

- *Describe types of celebrations your students would normally attend?*
- *As a teacher, what do you think are all the components of a great young person's party?*
- *Where are most young people's parties held?*
- *What do you think needs to be considered when:*
 - hosting a young person's party?*
 - when a young person is attending a party as a guest?*
- *What types of things can go "wrong" at a young person's party?*
- *What can your school do to help prevent/avoid these problems?*
- *What is your school currently doing in regards to safer celebrations?*
- *What do young people need to know to celebrate safely?*
- *Where do young people get alcohol?*

- *What support at a school level, do you need to help young people celebrate safely?*

Interesting information gathered included:

- Most teachers lived locally
- Teachers believe that schools can only play a supporting role to parents
- Values education is important
- Personal Development/Health/Physical Education (PDHPE) is the main subject area where safe celebration issues are discussed. Other subject areas include-pastoral care & tutor classes.
- Access to updated resources would be helpful
- More curriculum time needed to teach safer celebration issues
- Parents were identified by young people and teachers as playing a major role in safer youth celebrations - schools need parental support to teach about this issue.
- Better communication needs to occur between teachers and other teachers, teachers and parents and teachers and students.
- Many responses to questions were identical to that of the young people and parents

Key themes identified throughout the focus groups & surveys:

- **Parents** - need for education regarding their responsibilities and general safer celebration education
- **Transport** - lack of safe affordable options within the community for young people, drink driving
- **Education** of young people regarding safer celebration initiatives, time & resources within schools to teach about safer celebrations
- **Safety** - gatecrashers & security were of concern.
- **Alcohol** use, misuse, access and availability and harms that can occur to those young people who choose to drink or who are harmed by other people's misuse of alcohol, eg: violence, damage to property/vandalism, drink spiking, alcohol related behaviour such as unwanted sexual attention, accidents due to intoxication
- **Drugs** such as marijuana, speed, ecstasy were highlighted as being available/used at parties. Tobacco was not seen as an issue but it was at most parties

The Summit

Held on 6 September 2004, the Summit brought together key stakeholders in the Wingecarribee community to address the issue of keeping our young people safer before, during and after celebrations. Although some activity was already underway across the region, the ad-hoc nature of such activity meant that the potential benefit resulting from a coordinated strategic approach had not yet been achieved.

The Summit was attended by 57 delegates from across the Wingecarribee Region, including a significant number (72%) of young people.

A range of key stakeholders, including Joynt Youth Action President, Ms Michele Scamps, Marathon runner Heather Turland, and Youth Solutions staff addressed the Summit in order to set the scene for 'Think Tanks' later in the day. Think Tanks involved delegates working in small groups to identify key issues of concern and potential solutions to identified issues.

Key issues identified included (but not limited to):

- Alcohol and other drug use/misuse
- Lack of transport options available to young people
- Education regarding safer celebration strategies-young people, parents, community
- Stereotyping of different schools, eg: government versus non government
- Boredom and lack of entertainment and recreation opportunities

Teachers present from each school participated in a short professional development workshop with the Department of Education & Training Drug Education Consultant.

The Summit resulted in draft plans of action addressing key action areas for the Wingecarribee Shire.

Post Summit Action

In 2005, funding was available for young people who attended the Summit to further develop and implement their action plans. Four of the high schools involved in the Summit (1 government and 3 non government) implemented action. Key strategies implemented and organised by young people with support of their schools included:

- Peer led, one day Year 10 Safer Celebration Summit-included training of year 11 peer leaders
- Parent workshop
- Drug Forum for Year 9 students
- Drug Forum for parents of year 8 and 9 students
- Self defence workshops
- Safer Celebration and Drug Awareness Days
- Newsletter items



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