

Background

SQUARE PEG PROJECT

Funding application submitted to Department of Health (“Healthy Tasmania” initiative) by a previous Council Manager

Priority Area – Physical Activity/Healthy Eating

Funding of \$13,195 confirmed however Council officers were concerned at the outcomes of the project and how achievable they were (e.g. 1000 participants and 15 collaborators)



Background

Due to these concerns, discussions were held with DHHS representatives who indicated that Council could re-scope the project and submit it for their consideration

A variation was entered into with DHHS regarding the funding and Council felt more confident in its capacity to deliver a worthwhile program whilst still delivering on the project's initial statement

Council's in-kind contribution to the project included facilities, two community development staff, one recreation officer



Project Statement

“Square Peg Project is an initiative for young people (including those disengaged from education and employment) to increase knowledge, skills, wellbeing, health and fitness through a fun, no cost and accessible physical fitness and well being program. It will support the establishment and maintenance of positive relationships, social connections, healthy eating and physical fitness behaviours, through self-empowering young people.”



Project

Discussions at Council level as to how best to engage with disengaged and/or at risk young people (based on community knowledge and experience of the staff involved)

Discussions then held with Department of Education to work with students from the Space Program – a tier 4 facility based in Devonport who work with disengaged students from years 7-10 from Devonport, Reece, Latrobe, Ulverstone and Sheffield High Schools



Project

By focussing on a particular cohort of students, rather than trying to increase numbers, better relationships were built with the participants by Council officers

A two hour weekly program was developed (not including school holidays)

The funding was predominantly used to fit out a kitchen at the Devonport Recreation Centre



Project

A recreation officer would spend ½ hour with the students doing recreational activities

The balance 1.5 hours was spent in the kitchen preparing low cost, healthy meals by the participants

The students cooked nutritious meals for themselves and also to take home for their families

A recipe book was provided to all participants at the end of the year



Unexpected Outcomes

Students became more aware of community issues

Preparation of food for the “Ageing Stronger, Active Longer” program (dips, fruit salad, healthy slices)

Two projects run by the participants with assistance from Council staff:

- “Parma for a Farmer” Day – raised \$235 for drought appeal
- “Parmi for a Puppy” Day – raised \$335 for Devonport Dogs Home and Devonport RSPCA



Unexpected Outcomes

Whilst the numbers at the program were smaller than the original scoped project, the benefits for the students were significant

Student "A"

Day 1 of the program, made no verbal or eye contact with Council staff and did not participate in the recreation component

Did not communicate during the cooking session although did reluctantly participate



Unexpected Outcomes

Following day 1, Council officers did not think “A” would return
She appeared to have very low self-esteem, poor health, no confidence and did not communicate well in groups
“A” did however return and slowly began to participate and engage more each week; she smiled, laughed and led some aspects of the program as Council officers worked hard to build trust and develop a respectful relationship with “A”
Her whole appearance changed in a very positive way which was noted by both Council staff and Space educators



Beyond the funding

Council has now committed to continue funding the Square Peg project from its operational budget

Due to the Devonport Recreation Centre now being better equipped, Council can run more programs around fitness and food

“Fit Fun and Food Days” were held during school holidays which included healthy food and fitness and craft activities and will continue to run into the future

“International Café”, a group specifically for new migrants to Devonport, now meet with their families on a monthly basis due to the re-vamped kitchen/meeting room space



A photograph of a modern building with a glass facade and a walkway, with a blue box containing the text "Questions?" overlaid in the center. The building features a prominent glass and metal structure with warm interior lighting visible through the windows. A paved walkway runs alongside the building, bordered by a low concrete wall and young trees. The sky is clear and blue.

Questions?