



Yarri Wada - the first year in review

What did we aim to do?

When members of District 23 voted to endorse and support the Yarri Wada Puppet Project (YWPP) for the biennium July 2008-2010, we voted to support a **unique project that would deliver an ambitious set of outcomes**. These included:

- Assist Aboriginal women create a health and education program that would bridge the gap between white health knowledge and traditional cultural practices;
- Promote women's health and safety;
- Identify and support young Aboriginal women leaders;
- Facilitate cross-generational discussion of key community issues;
- Promote women's self-esteem;
- Assist women lead positive change in their communities; and
- Achieve clear education and leadership outcomes for women.

The YWPP also aimed to:

- Be a collaborative, cross-sector funding initiative; and
- Create a model program that could be adapted for use in other remote communities.

Most importantly, **this project was to be deeply rooted in a friendship between Aboriginal women and Zontians** and was designed to empower and support Aboriginal women to address issues in their own way.

When we voted to support the YWPP, only one Zonta club in our District was actively working with Indigenous women, and we all decided we needed to start somewhere and explore **how friendships might grow into life changing projects**.

With your support, in the first year of the biennium alone, YWPP has already achieved a remarkable number of these aims.



Yarri Wada's shift in direction now addresses issues facing young girls in the community

The puppets

It is important to acknowledge that the focus on the use of the puppets as a teaching tool has shifted significantly. The initial **puppet-making workshop unleashed a creative process** that soon demonstrated that flexibility and variety were the keys to successfully engaging the target audience.

Puppet making in Stage 1 of the project brought women of all age-groups together to brainstorm what needed to be achieved, underscored the success of art as a vehicle for communication, identified project leaders and inspired an innovative approach to teaching positive life skills and health messages.

While story-telling and puppetry are still an integral element of the project, the emphasis on puppets has shifted and we remain faithful to our core promise - to **support Aboriginal women to design a program that meets the needs of participants, and over which they have complete creative control**.

As a result, the YWPP has been able to identify and respond to a key concern of the women of the Ngarinyin, Worrora and Wunambal peoples - issues facing young girls: non-attendance at school; exposure to drugs and alcohol; domestic violence; child abuse; lack of hygiene; stress; and loss of identity.

Major sponsor





Yarri Wada—the first year in review continued

Leadership and Collaboration

Through the YWPP the **senior women have encouraged and supported emerging younger women leaders** to implement strategies to make positive changes to the lives of girls aged between 8 and 18.

During this stage of the YWPP three younger Aboriginal women emerged as the leadership team for Stages 2 and 3:

- Leah Umbagai (artist and Mowunjum community member),
- Estelle Umbagai (Mowunjum community member) and

- Beryl Davis (Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Derby Health Service)

Together, they developed the **Monorngungga Young Girls' Project** with input from Angela Fisher, Child Health nurse from the Kimberley Public Health Unit.

Monorngungga: Walking Forward with Pride

The second stage of the YWPP has been called "Monorngungga: Walking Forward with Pride".

Participants and their parents were briefed before the course and the parents had to give permission for their children to attend.

Designed by Leah and her team, the Monorngungga project was broken into six stages:

- **Introduction:** designed to bring the girls together, get to know each other and create a safe place where opinions and concerns are respected;
- **Puberty Blues:** dealing with physical changes, personal hygiene, self knowledge;
- **Talking "Sex":** understanding sex physically and emotionally;
- **Speaking out about feelings:** talking about sexual rights, establishing personal boundaries and understanding the consequences of sex in terms of health and pregnancy;
- **Back to Country Day:** fishing, relaxing together and talking about positive life styles; and
- **Stepping Forward With Pride Day:** a graduation day of grooming, pampering, reporting back to parents and moving forward.



Through the Monorngungga Young Girls' Project the young girls are able to learn about life and take control of their lives

The Outcomes of the Monorngungga Project

Twelve girls completed the pilot course with 100% attendance and the girls have requested a follow-up course.

Importantly, there has been an increase in:

- the incidence of adolescents presenting for sexual health checks; and
- parents and community members articulating their desire for health education.

Pre and post course questionnaires showed:

- an appreciable increase in factual knowledge about puberty and having babies;
- positive and optimistic answers to questions;
- improved self-esteem; and
- greater confidence in the girls about their bodies and their thoughts.

A health worker at the local school has said,

"the girls that undertook the course keep telling me they are excited for the time when they will get their period."

They tell the big girls to look after themselves and where to go for check ups, and all of them come - including the boys.

They are not waiting till they get an infection, but are presenting after unsafe sex.

One of the older girls said she was at the clinic after a lecture from her little sister on how to use a condom!"

The next stages of the Monorngungga Project:

Stage Three is now being prepared and will include:

- a repeat of the course for a second group of girls;
- a course for the 13-18 age bracket; and
- roll out of the YWPP program to other communities in the region.

These courses will be completed over the next few months before the start of the wet season and we will be able to update you at our District 23 Conference.



Building the future from Yarri Wada

Walking together

We are satisfied that the original aim of establishing a model for a **Zonta District Project to address the urgent plight of the Indigenous people of Australia has been achieved.**

The Yarri Wada Puppet Project has enabled clubs in District 23 to work with Aboriginal women to have a positive impact on the lives of young girls in communities of the Kimberley.

Flexibility and integrity

In coordinating the project, care has always been taken to be responsive to the initiatives of the senior women and project leaders and to be flexible as situations changed. At the same time, care has also been taken to maintain the integrity of the original concept.

Cross-sector partnerships

The YWPP has already attracted partners in the:

- Mowanjum Community;
- Mowanjum Aboriginal Spirit of the Wandjina Artists Cooperative;
- Department of Family Planning WA (FPWA);
- the United First Peoples of Australia (UFPA);
- the David Wurrupunda Foundation;
- the WA Health Department,
- the Kimberley Public Health Unit (KPHU);
- WA Child Health Service (WACHS); and
- Beyond Blue.

We will continue to build on these relationships to ensure that the projects in the YWPP will be sustainable once the program is no longer a District 23 project.

Education and leadership outcomes

In terms of formal education outcomes so far, **19 women have received a TAFE Certificate 1 for their**



At the completion of the course the young girls have a pamper session—they thoroughly enjoy being 'princesses' for the afternoon!

participation in YWPP. Another four women have completed the certificated Mooditj course.

On the basis of her work in the YWPP, **Leah Umbagai has won a scholarship to Curtin University** to continue her tertiary studies, doing a Diploma in Community Development.

She will use the ongoing stages of the Monorngungga Project and associated programs as case studies in her research, which will provide formal critical analysis in support of ongoing funding for the project.

Leah and her team, and the health workers assisting them have commented on a new sense of confidence.

Aboriginal women in the leadership team are confident to engage the community on issues facing their children, are speaking in the schools and are confident they know what they are talking about.

The women have now completed many hours of health worker training and are far more outspoken. **They say they are passionate to continue developing and running the courses and will stand up for girls who are at risk.**

The women are also liaising with the Department of Child Protection, the schools and the Police.

Flow-on initiative

The success of the YWPP in regenerating a sense of power to affect positive change has seen the **establishment of an after school drop-in facility** at the Art Centre supported by team leaders and community members. The drop-in provides food and activities for children after school, including a homework hour and classes in traditional art and dance.

The **local schools have now requested that the women run the Monorngungga program** and the program being developed for older girls as part of the school Personal Development curriculum.

Longer-term vision

Through the development and success of the YWPP a longer-term dream has emerged to put in place a **Youth Coordinator for the region, based at Mowunjum.**

The establishment of someone in this position will facilitate ongoing programs and their continuity, consistent support for youth and liaison with other agencies.

Empowerment and hope

There is a strong belief among the leaders that by building on what has been started, developing stronger partnerships and encouraging the children to see different futures, communities will regenerate their self-determination and ensure the well-being of their young people.

What is also clear from feedback, is that the women leaders that have emerged through this project are recognized by their community and this has led to a **new confidence in the community's ability to address issues from within.**

Since the Project was launched in July 2008 and until August 2009, \$31,685 has been raised by supporters.

A HUGE THANK YOU TO ALL CONTRIBUTORS

Honour Board

EON Foundation	20000
Zonta Club of Perth	2000
Sandy McGregor and family	500
Zonta Club of Adelaide	500
Zonta Club of Adelaide Flinders Inc	500
Zonta Club of Adelaide Hills Inc	500
Zonta Club of Adelaide Torrens	500
Zonta Club of Alice Springs	500
Zonta Club of Bendigo Inc	500
Zonta Club of Bunbury	500
Zonta Club of Devonport	500
Zonta Club of Dunsborough Area	500
Zonta Club of Fleurieu Peninsula	500
Zonta Club of Frankston Inc	500
Zonta Club of Kyneton Inc	500
Zonta Club of Perth Northern Suburbs	500
Zonta Club of Port Lincoln	500
Zonta Club of the Riverland Inc	500
Zonta Club of Swan Hills Inc	500
Zonta Club of Wangaratta	500
Zonta Club of Melbourne on Yarra	435
Zonta Club of Para District Inc	250
Total	31,685

We still need your help to complete Yarri Wada Stage 3...

**If you would like to donate to the Yarri Wada Puppet Project, please send your cheque payable to the Zonta Club of Perth Inc to
PO Box 237
Nedlands WA 6909**

A thank you gift from those you have helped....



Thank you paintings from the young girls to sponsors...

Thank you to all the clubs that have supported the project in the last financial year. We know it is a big ask to raise \$500 when there are so many worthy projects competing for funding.

But please know that you have made a tremendous difference.

You have helped start something that will role out in communities around the Kimberley, nurturing leadership and assisting women, old and young, create a safer, healthier future.

Your continued support will see the development of a program for other age groups and their delivery in other Indigenous communities.

The Aboriginal women leaders said they were overwhelmed by a strong understanding that this initiative has been supported by a wider Australian community, by Zonta.

The children who participated in the course have created "thank you" paintings to be given to the sponsor clubs with heartfelt thanks.

Please help with **Yarri Wada Stage Three** that includes:

- a repeat of the course for a second group of girls;
- a course for the 13-18 age bracket; and
- roll out of the YWPP program to other communities in the region.