

BRIDGEWATER URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAM

Submission No.218

Project Youth Build

**Program Outline
Funding Application**

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 BURP and its Objectives

The Bridgewater/Gagebrook Urban Renewal Program (BURP) is a community self help program that was established to improve the economic, social and physical environments of an area once described as having Australia's lowest level of well-being.

BURP has long-term objectives to transform its community by breaking the conditions causing generational unemployment and low income.

1.2 Project Youth Build and its Objectives

This program is intended to provide economically disadvantaged young adults (aged 16-25), with opportunities to obtain education, employment skills and meaningful work experience as a path to full employment. Project Youth Build will use a mentoring and one-on-one approach to link young people with role models who will encourage positive attitudes towards themselves and their community.

The specific objective of Project Youth Build is to build bridges from welfare to work. This involves the introduction of series of innovative programs designed to tackle the social issues that inhibit the ability of many long term unemployed to find jobs. These issues include;

- cultural unemployment,
- low confidence and self esteem,
- low levels of self discipline and work ethic,
- low levels of manual skills,
- low levels of literacy and/or numeracy,
- poor presentation skills

Project Youth Build is not a universal panacea. It is part of an integrated program of community development that will contribute to an increase in the social and financial wealth of the community. Its very name epitomises the desire to build value into the community through its youth.

Specifically, this project focuses on diverting young people from being totally dependent on society to being a contributor to their community. Project Youth Build will call upon every available resource to help it achieve this objective.

1.3 Background

It is important to understand the full effect of long-term unemployment within a community. The Bridgewater community has young adults who have grown up without seeing parents and neighbours ever going off to work. There is no understanding of the value of work, the rewards in doing a day's work, or the pride of accomplishment and sense of well being that it generates.

Traditionally, areas of high unemployment have accompanying social issues such as higher rates of crime, drug abuse and family violence. Additionally, educational levels suffer as young people being unable to assess or believe in the value of education fuel higher dropout rates. Tragically, this environment propagates the very social issues that created it. Put another way, the effect from one generation becomes the cause for the next.

If young people don't really see employment opportunities in their future they often don't see a future. We need to show our youth that there are pathways out of the cycle of unemployment and demonstrate that training and/or remedial education can lead to full and sustainable employment.

BURP believes that the time has come to truly demonstrate the benefits of taking someone off the public assistance rolls. This is far more than a reduction in cost to welfare agencies. There is enormous benefit to be gained by breaking the cycle of generational unemployment and giving someone a sense of being part of a vibrant community. Project Youth Build has the potential to make a significant contribution to this process.

1.4 Project Outline

BURP has generated numerous casual employment opportunities in the past and is familiar with young members of the community showing initiative and readiness to begin this stepping-stone to employment, training and work experience. Whilst past projects have provided temporary employment activities, on completion of the funding program the participants are forced to return to dependence on the welfare system.

Project Youth Build has been designed to create continuity of employment, training and personal development that leads to a full employment outcome. A critical objective is for Project Youth Build to become a self-sustaining entity that does not rely on external assistance. Programs that depend on external income cannot make plans beyond the limit of the funding program.

BURP will partner with other employment and training agencies in order to provide skills training and linkages to other employment programs to maximise opportunities.

The concept begins with forming a ten-person work crew taken from local youth. BURP will develop work activities that will call for a daily work crew. Initially it will involve low

skilled, highly labour intensive tasks but will grow and diversify into other areas as the program develops.

There will be rules on attitude and performance with a high expectation of compliance. This will be a work environment that will involve a mix of work, job skill training and remedial education. The work will primarily be community based, which will increase the service and support to the community. There are many neglected areas in the Bridgewater community and this is a way of addressing them.

Each participant will be allocated a mentor from the business/services community who will assist with personal development through encouragement and role modelling. This will create links with council, police, fire and job training groups and expose both the youth and the business community to different ways of seeing each other. It is hoped that these mentoring relationships will prevail after people have graduated from the program into full employment and community participation.

Project Youth Build will simultaneously develop a flow of people and a pool of resources. It will provide focused resources that collectively build pathways to break long-term dependencies on government assistance. As the individual develops and is ready they will be provided with job skills, training and education designed to equip them to obtain true employment and move out of the program, thereby opening space for someone new.

Within the program there will be opportunities for leadership training. Each group of participants will have team leaders appointed from within who will be encouraged to take on extra responsibility and undertake extra training. The mentoring program will be particularly relevant to leadership training and it is hoped that graduates from the scheme can in turn become mentors for subsequent programs.

Youth Build will also provide new links to training and developmental activities by partnering with existing groups such as Project Hann for "never before type" opportunities. Local businesses and the Brighton Council will also be encouraged to participate in partnerships that will help to develop the program.

1.5 Funding Requirements

Whereas the ultimate objective of Project Youth Build is to be a self funding program, it is evident that financial assistance will be required during the establishment phase to ensure that all structural, organisational, legal, financial and social issues are addressed adequately and sustainably.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background to BURP

BURP has gained national recognition as a community organisation that has achieved enormous success in improving the quality of life within a disadvantaged region.

BURP grew out of the special needs of the people living in the extensive broadacre public housing estates, built in the early 1970s on the banks of the Derwent River some 20 km north of Hobart. Changes in government attitudes and economic conditions saw the concept of a self sufficient satellite "city" shrink into an isolated dormitory suburb lacking services, facilities and most importantly, employment opportunities.

The social and economic problems that arose within the region have been well studied over the years. Surveys have identified high unemployment, low incomes, high incidence of single parents, low levels of school retention and poor health, all leading inevitably to low levels of self esteem and well-being.

In 1996, Commonwealth, State and Local Government bodies, in conjunction with enthusiastic community members established the BURP urban renewal program to tackle the problems head on. Whilst the public sector bodies provide essential support and services enabling the program to proceed, it is the strong community ownership and involvement that makes BURP successful.

The residents know what the issues are and BURP has provided the means of addressing those issues. As a result, in just a few years Bridgewater turned from an address of last resort for public housing tenants to a highly sought after locality.

The success of BURP may be demonstrated by the following statistics;

- Full housing occupancy
- Vandalism costs down by 65%
- Crime rate down by 65%
- Increased community pride and awareness
- Stronger links between residents and the public sector
- Local solutions to local problems

2.2 Key BURP Initiatives

Extensive community consultation identified the following priority issues for BURP;

- Stimulation of economic and employment growth;
- Opportunities for community development project work;
- Activities and entertainment for youth;
- Sport and recreation facilities and opportunities;
- A local environment requiring enhancement;
- Housing and surrounds needing care and attention; and
- Improved transport and access

Numerous projects and activities have been undertaken within each of these sectors and significant advancements have been made across all areas. The cumulative impact across the community has been enormous with regard to quality of life, but BURP is not satisfied with the impact that it has had on the standard of living.

3 Project Youth Build

3.1 Objectives

The objective of Project Youth Build is to build bridges from welfare to work by increasing the employability of the young disadvantaged people. It is intended that a pilot operation be established at Bridgewater with a view to expansion throughout the state once the program has been proven and refined.

Typical issues to be overcome and means of addressing them include:

ISSUE	PROPOSED ACTION
Generational or cultural unemployment.	Break the cycle by providing interim employment and completing the transition to full employment
Low confidence and self esteem	Participate in confidence building programs including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - team building exercises - leadership training - mentoring programs - skills development

Low levels of self - discipline and work ethic.	Maintain a workplace discipline throughout the program with a high expectation of compliance.
Low levels of manual skills.	Provide skills training and opportunities for practical application of skills.
Low levels of literacy and/or numeracy.	Provide remedial education as part of the personal development program.
Poor presentation skills.	Encourage improvements in posture, dress and demeanour through role models and positive reinforcement.

3.2 Implementation

Project Youth Build will commence with a pool of ten young unemployed people assessed as having limited employment potential. It will be important to enhance the chances of success of the pilot program by avoiding disruptive or negative influences in the initial intake.

The applicants will undergo an initial skills and educational assessment to determine their areas of developmental need. They will then become employees of Youth Build and will be expected to abide by the requirements of their employer with respect to punctuality, attendance, diligence and attitude.

They will be allocated group or individual employment tasks that will be complimented with training and personal development sessions. During the course of a working day, when not engaged in work programs they will be engaged in some form of developmental program.

Each employee will be allocated a mentor, who will provide his or her services on a voluntary basis. A key role of the mentor will be to expose their charge to aspects of Tasmanian community life that lead to attitudinal change. In a sense, this will be a "deprogramming" of some of the prejudices that may have arisen from their family environment and/or peer group and replace them with positive and inspirational examples.

Group and/or task leaders will be appointed and assisted to develop leadership skills. There will be constant positive reinforcement and reward for effort to demonstrate the benefits of employment compared with the restrictions imposed by a fixed income.

3.2.1 Employment

Project Youth Build will become a labour hire firm, providing labour resources to state and local government, local businesses, farms and the general community.

The initial employment tasks may be quite menial, will undoubtedly have low skills requirements and will probably be labour intensive. There will need to be a balance between group and single activities with careful management of group dynamics. There will also need to be sensitivities towards concentration spans and the clarity of instructions.

Occupational health and safety issues must be managed as a priority, and pre-task training will be necessary prior to every assignment in the initial stages. Appropriate work cover and public liability insurance will need to be maintained.

In the absence of paid work for clients, tasks will be created with a view to providing community benefit. The employees will be unaware whether it is a paid or community benefit project and standards of quality will be maintained on a consistent basis.

3.2.2 Training

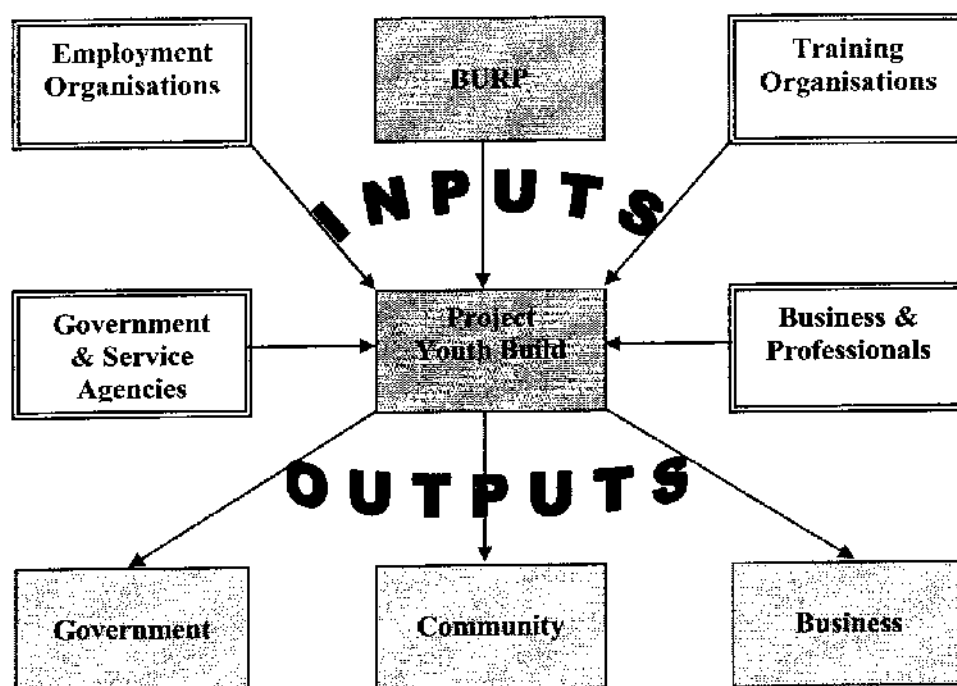
Training will be provided via a number of channels, with a high proportion being delivered on a voluntary basis.

Preliminary discussions have been held with the local high school regarding remedial literacy and numeracy training. Specific skills training, and the equipment and facilities required for training delivery will be sought once a greater understanding of the direction of employment opportunities emerges.

3.3 Structure

Structural issues are still to be established, as it is essential that the ultimate structure is compliant with all statutory and legal requirements and is tax effective.

It is expected that Project Youth Build will be an incorporated Not For Profit entity having relationships with the community as illustrated below.



3.4 Support and Support Systems

The Bridgewater community recently had a rash of bush fires that were deliberately lit by a small number of people. The external perceptions of the community as a whole suffered because of these actions by a few.

It is accepted that there are elements of the community involved in anti-social behaviour but it is important that agencies such as the Fire Department avoid stereotyping youth within the region due to problems experienced with a few individuals.

Project Youth Build is designed to remove young people from an environment of inactivity and boredom that leads to mischief and vandalism, and insert them into an environment of productivity and positive development. If the program works as expected, the number of responses to fires or police call outs will drop as youth are engaged in activities working in general support of the community. Informal youth leaders and peers become part of the solutions of the community. Mindsets will change and pathways of communication will open with Police, Fire and Council service providers.

Meetings have been held with representatives of the Fire Department, Police and Brighton Council and strong support has been shown for this program. The group sees it as a way of using young people to begin to change perceptions while helping to do remediation and landcare work. Once operational, Project Youth Build will demonstrate Police and Fire

personnel engaged in community support. It will provide young people with role models and new life and job skills. The intent is for them to serve as peer role models and offer different insights and ways of thinking.

Specifically, the following community leaders have showed strong levels of support;

Geoff Dodge	General Manger	Brighton Council
Peter Edwards	Police Inspector	Tasmania Police
Philippa Burk	Sergeant	Tasmania Police
Gavin Freeman	District Officer	Tasmania Fire Service
Teresa Banman	Manager	TasFire Training