



Zonta District 23  
Yarri Wada Puppet Project  
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24<sup>th</sup> August 2009

Many thanks go to all the sponsors who contributed to the success of the Yarri Wada Puppet Project in 2008-2009.

With your continued support in 2009-2010, we would like to build on the strong foundation of last year so that from 2011 onwards the project will be self sustaining. If you haven't sponsored the project previously, this is your chance to make a difference.

The Yarri Wada-Strong for Country-Puppet Project came about from discussions between Zontians and senior lawwomen of the Ngarinyin, Worora and Wunumbal peoples in the Kimberley. The senior lawwomen wanted to do something to help their communities break out of the cycle of poverty, violence and hopelessness...so they could regain pride in their culture and create a future for their children and grandchildren. 'Empowerment through life education' was seen as the answer – but how could this be done in a culturally appropriate, non threatening way?

Initially, the women thought that puppets may provide the answer. The women would be able to acquire puppet making skills, create scripts that passed on health education and cultural stories and establish a puppet troupe to spread the messages across the Kimberley.

The project got off to a great start with funding from the EON Foundation and many clubs from Zonta District 23. With the help of the Spare Parts Puppet Theatre puppeteers, a series of workshops were held in the Kimberley where over 50 women learned various facets of puppet making and 19 obtained formal qualifications. The culmination of this effort was the display of two puppets, each over 3 metres high, at the World Puppet Festival held in Perth in 2008.

The Kimberley women caused quite a stir at the World Puppet Festival and also got people talking in the communities about the 'empowerment through life education' aims of the project.

From these talks the senior lawwomen requested that the project take a slightly different path so it could be a catalyst to bring together a range of initiatives that had previously not been integrated into the lives of people in the community and Yarri Wada matured with the adoption of the *Monorggunga-Stepping Forward with Pride* phase of the project.

This phase has seen young female role models from the community and local community nurses undertake specialised training so they are able to prepare young women for the 'big wide world'. The initial course was developed for 10-16 year old girls and covered serious issues including puberty, self defence, hygiene, pregnancy, self defence and where to get help locally if required. It also included fun activities such as art, makeup, grooming and a bush camp where the girls were guided by senior lawwomen in 'women's business' at sacred sites.

The girls shared their experiences with their families and friends. Community nurses report that feedback is very positive, hygiene is improving, the girls constantly pester to learn more and the number of young men visiting the local clinic for venereal disease check ups has increased!

More importantly, the project has gained a number of 'project partners' including the Mowanjum Community, Mowanjum Aboriginal Spirit of the Wandjina Artists Cooperative, Family Planning Association of WA, United First Peoples Australia, the David Wurrpunda Foundation, WA Department of Health, the Kimberley Public Health Unit, WA Child Health Service and Beyond Blue and plans are in place to develop training courses for older girls and eventually, young men.

**It costs about \$300 to fund each girl on the training course and we are asking you to consider donating \$500 to help us run another course so that the momentum created will be sustainable.**

**You may choose to send toiletries and make-up, as it is hoped to provide small 'gift packs' on the course to help the girls with their 'makeover' activities.**

This project is all about women helping women to help their communities...with your support we'll be able to help our indigenous sisters realise their dream to be 'Strong for Country' and enable them to 'Step forward with Pride'.

Kind regards

Two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The first signature is 'Fiona Crowe' and the second is 'Sciona Browne'. Both signatures are written in a cursive style.

Fiona Crowe and Sciona Browne  
District 23 Yarri Wada Puppet Project Co-ordinators  
Zonta Club of Perth Inc.