



NAPCAN
PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE

EMBARGOED UNTIL MIDNIGHT 1 SEPTEMBER 2013

NAPCAN National Play Your Part Awards

To: Back Track

For: Innovative and Inspiring Youth Work

Name of Organisation: Back Track

State: NSW

Location: Armidale, NSW

Since 2006, Back Track's mission is to offer young people aged 13-17 who have high rates of non school attendance, the opportunity to reconnect with their education and training, to become work ready, find jobs, lead happy and productive lives and participate fully in the community. Initially focussed on young men there is now a dedicated girls program too.

The BackTrack principles and methodologies have particular relevance to rural communities where skills shortage, unemployment and disadvantage can be the greatest. The vision is to create awareness in the community of the role they can play to support young people, particularly those who are having a hard time, to gain the necessary experiences to maximise their productivity and wellbeing.

Back Track has four programs with opportunity for participants to move between them:

1. Iron Man Welders – Iron Man Welders has developed a fully operational welding workshop based at a former Shire Council workshop. Through state government grants and financial and material support from community and local business and industry, the workshop has been equipped and upgraded to training standard.

Participants undertake courses at Cert 11 level in Metals and Engineering, Access to Work and Training and Vocational and Community Engagement. They also obtain their OH&S, fork lift and other qualifications. Several employers now have a preference for taking on the work ready young Iron Man Welder graduates as apprentices or trainees.

As part of the Iron Man Welders Program there are 12 young men working and training to complete a Certificate II Engineering. Their current community project is some new soccer goal posts for the Rologas Fields in Armidale.

2. Paws Up – Paws Up began as a way to engage youth. Through the dogs the youth connect with others and build trust, learn self-discipline while disciplining the dogs, learn self-confidence from public performance, communication skills as they interact on the show circuit and manage themselves and their dogs in varying situations. The dogs

are a strong and persistent tool for talking through the difficult issues in life and coming up with solutions.

The dogs in the team mirror the challenges and progress of the boys. They don't clear every jump, they often take a fall, but they have learned to trust that someone will be there to catch them, and they face the next jump with the belief that they can fly!

3. AgLads – AgLads was developed to address the Armidale region's growing trade and agricultural skills shortages in response to the interest shown by producers at Agricultural Shows where the Paws Up Team performed. AgLads has since developed as an innovative industry led program focussed on creating employment opportunities for youth in rural communities.

It provides training, work experience and progression to paid work crews. Teams of AgLads are completing on the job training on local properties under the guidance of industry mentors and are attaining certificates in Rural Operations through a flexible training partnership with Tocal College at Patterson.

Several AgLads now participate in BackTrack contracting teams on farms in the district and have acquired Certificate III in Agriculture from Tocal College.

4. Imagine This - This is the dedicated girls' program, which began in July 2010 with the aim of working with young women 13–18 years to deliver a range of opportunities and training that can create life changing impact for the girls.

A well developed partnership with Armidale High School blends the opportunities offered by BackTrack with school attendance.

Training opportunities for the girls cover a broad range of areas allowing for individual interest and pursuit of employment such as Community Services Cert 11 statements of attainment through a locally designed course building links with students in local primary schools.

The strength of the program stems from the genuine desire for a sense of belonging which is built on through the use of mentoring. The mentoring program is designed to develop sense of self that captures the skills of professional women, both indigenous and non-indigenous, and in doing so builds supportive relationships in the wider community.

One of the essential elements to the BackTrack success is the commitment and involvement of community, through organisations and businesses and individuals making cash and in-kind contributions.

In establishing programs in new communities BackTrack is focussed on building the capacity of communities to deliver the program for themselves and to mobilise the commitment and resources at all levels required to do so. The BackTrack approach has had a positive impact on young people's lives and created a ripple effect across the community, with noticeable change in community attitudes towards these young people: seeing them now as positive contributors and embracing their potential.

NAPCAN is awarding 2013 National Play Your Part Award to Back Track for: their commitment to the wellbeing of young people and effective community engagement demonstrated by their locally relevant skills training programs.

For further details: contact Madelene McGrath, NAPCAN on 02 9269 9200