

DRAFT

Youth LEAD
External Evaluation

Vodafone Australia Foundation

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1 Executive Summary

- Youth LEAD is a three day leadership and sustainability workshop for young people. This Evaluation assesses how the program meets its stated objectives.
- Key components of the workshop that contribute to how it meets its objectives are:
 - strategic questioning: a skill to delve deeply into issues and find solutions for moving forward;
 - action planning: participants develop plans that they carry out after the workshop which are built around issues that matter to them and an awareness of their unique strengths;
 - gradual exposure: the workshop gradually increases the level of challenge it introduces, so that participants are stretched but do not “shut down”;
 - facts and stories: accurate information is provided and personal stories are used throughout to bring the facts to life and provide inspiration;
 - follow up and networking: after the workshop participants connect into the Youth LEAD network which provides ongoing support and motivation.
- Everyone interviewed for this Evaluation agrees that Youth LEAD is fulfilling its stated objectives:
 - Youth LEAD *strengthens the capacity of young people to be leaders in their own communities* by developing their leadership skills, improving their self-confidence, and helping them find clear pathways of action around issues that are important to them in their communities.
 - Youth LEAD *builds youth capacity to engage with the ecological and social challenges of our time* by helping young people overcome the feeling of being overwhelmed by the challenges, making the issues personal, enhancing participants skills and providing them with the tools they need to take on the challenges.
 - Youth LEAD *fosters the development of youth social enterprise skills and the capacity to think critically and act creatively* by providing tools to help young people think critically about complex issues, building their confidence and developing their creativity around actions they can take on issues that matter to them.
 - Youth LEAD *builds local – regional – national – international communities of young environmental leaders actively working for peace, understanding and ecologically sustainable futures* by maintaining contact with participants after the workshop, encouraging big dreams and goals, and providing support and inspiration via the Oz GREEN / Youth LEAD community as young people pursue their dreams and goals.
- The Youth LEAD program has been found to fulfil all its program objectives. It appears to be a significant life-changing experience for most participants with positive outcomes that are long-lasting and that benefit the individual, their community and ultimately the planet.

2 Introduction

This report constitutes an external evaluation of the Youth LEAD program which is run by Oz GREEN (Global Rivers Environmental Education Network). Youth LEAD is a 3-day residential workshop for young people that grew out of a desire to educate young people honestly about environmental issues and equip them with the skills and tools to take effective action. Beyond the workshop, participants become part of the “Youth LEAD / Oz GREEN community” which is an active network of individuals who support each other as they find their own ways to work towards sustainable futures. This report has been commissioned by the Vodafone Australia Foundation, a funder of Youth LEAD, to evaluate the program against its stated objectives.

2.1 About This Evaluation

The Vodafone Australia Foundation (VAF) has commissioned Matrix On Board (Matrix) to undertake an external evaluation of Youth LEAD. The program is currently in its third year of receiving funding from VAF, and the Foundation wishes to have an independent external assessment of the program.

The primary purpose of this Evaluation is to assess the extent to which Youth LEAD is fulfilling its stated objectives, and as a secondary aim it enhances the reader’s understanding of the Youth LEAD program. The information gathered in this Evaluation is presented from two aspects: Section 4 describes some of the key aspects of the program which contribute significantly to how it achieves its outcomes; Section 5 then examines each of the stated program objectives and describes in detail how Youth LEAD fulfils each objective. The information is presented in this way because the funder will better grasp how the program achieves its objectives if a grounding in the key elements of the Youth LEAD program is presented first.

2.2 Methodology

This Evaluation is based primarily on a series of interviews that were designed and conducted specifically for the purposes of this Evaluation. Interviews were conducted with twelve past participants of Youth LEAD, five of whom are now working with Oz GREEN, as well as with one of the Co-Founders who is also CEO of Oz GREEN and two Vodafone Australia staff. Oz GREEN staff who had completed at least one Youth LEAD program were asked questions both from their personal experience as a participant and more generally from the perspective of someone who is professionally familiar with the program. Other information that informs this report includes feedback data from the Youth LEAD national gathering (in January 2005), the Youth LEAD *Facilitation Training Manual*, and some additional statistics and materials provided by Oz GREEN.

3 Overview of Youth LEAD

Youth LEAD is a three day residential leadership and sustainability workshop for young people aged 15 to 25. It engages participants with ecological and social challenges by fostering personal connections with the issues, with other participants and facilitators, and with themselves. To a significant extent it is also a personal development workshop, with many young people reporting an enhanced sense of self and clarity around their own passions, strengths and role as an agent of change. There is a strong focus on facts about climate change and up-to-date information. Participants also develop skills that they take with them, with which they are better equipped to take action in their communities and continue working for sustainability in the face of diverse challenges.

During the workshop each participant sets goals and develops action plans around the ecological impact of their own lifestyle and around eco-social projects that they will undertake. One of the workshop's most significant outcomes is that it moves most participants from feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of climate change issues to an understanding that their contribution is significant and what that contribution could be. This enables them to take action, knowing that their action will make a difference.

Critical to the long-term outcomes from Youth LEAD is the follow-up and networking that occurs after the workshop. Most participants describe the workshop as "just the beginning". As they embark on their action plans they maintain contact with the Oz GREEN community, to whom they can turn for support if required or just encouragement when they need it. This ongoing engagement with the Oz GREEN community leverages the gains achieved during the workshop and gives young people the support and strength to follow through on their action plans. If obstacles are encountered they can connect with other Youth LEAD participants or mentors from the Oz GREEN community who can support them as they apply the skills they possess to work through the obstacles and find appropriate paths of action.

Key outcomes that young people report after the workshop include:

- **Confidence and inspiration:** Connecting more deeply with who they are and hearing stories about what other young people have achieved inspires Youth LEAD participants and gives them confidence to take action around the social and ecological challenges of our time.
- **Skills and knowledge:** After completing Youth LEAD, participants are equipped with a range of skills to help them take action in their community around issues that concern them, as well as greater knowledge of the facts around the issues. They can approach the challenges they face more creatively and critically and find appropriate and meaningful paths of action.
- **Strategies for action:** During the workshop participants develop three action plans that contain steps for attaining goals that are meaningful to them. Having these strategies mapped out makes it easier for young people to follow through and take action after the workshop, and the process by which the action plans are developed ensures that the goals and the means by which they will be achieved are both realistic and meaningful for the young person.
- **Networks and ongoing support:** The workshop is just the beginning of the Youth LEAD experience. Young people have ongoing contact with the Oz GREEN / Youth LEAD community and receive invaluable support and encouragement as they follow through on their action plans.

Oz GREEN describes Youth LEAD as the most ambitious and most important of all its programs, the “pinnacle” of its achievements so far. People who have completed the program describe it in many diverse ways: it is holistic, empowering, transformative, inspiring, a youth leadership program, educational, fun, environmentally focussed but more than that, a place to go and connect with what you really care about in the world. Many say that it helped them gain clarity and focus around the issues that matter to them and helped them to move from concern to action. They also highlight the personal development aspect, that it allowed them to “tap into” their own answers, and provided them with tools to achieve goals that are important and meaningful to them.

There is little doubt that the program is popular. At the national gathering in January 2005 all respondents rated Youth LEAD as enjoyable (with 88% saying it was “really enjoyable”), interesting (“very interesting” according to 97%) and relevant (“really relevant” according to 94%). When respondents at the national gathering were asked to use their own words to describe the program nearly half of them used the words “inspiring” or “inspirational”. Other common descriptors included “empowering”, “fun”, “life changing” and “supportive”.

Since its inception in 2002, over 550 people have participated in Youth LEAD. This is across 36 workshops run in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory and a pilot program run in Lahore, Pakistan.¹ Youth LEAD has recently won the 2007 NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change Allen Strom Eureka Prize for Environmental Sustainability Education. This prize is awarded for excellence in the design, implementation and evaluation of programs for environmental sustainability education.

This report will often refer to young people who have completed the Youth LEAD program as “Youth LEADers”. All quotations in Appendix A are from interviews conducted as part of this external evaluation.

3.1 Background

Oz GREEN was founded in 1992 and was incorporated in 1993 as an independent not for profit organisation. It is run by co-founders Sue and Col Lennox who were originally school teachers in Sydney’s Northern Beaches. They believed they had a responsibility to tell young people the truth about climate change, but were concerned that the problems would seem overwhelming.

Youth LEAD started in 2002 as a response to these concerns. Around this time, Sue and Col Lennox came across Fran Peavey and her tool of strategic questioning. This is discussed in greater detail in later sections, but is a significant component of the workshop. The strategic questioning technique supports a strong theme that runs across the Youth LEAD program, namely that individuals have the answers within them. The workshop nurtures young people to discover their “inner wisdom”. This enhances their self-esteem, connects them with their own strengths and passions, and helps them to act with confidence and sincerity.

Several pedagogical theories underpin the structure and content of Youth LEAD. Among these is experiential learning, the notion that involving participants in subject matter that is important to them and creating experiences, rather than just providing information, is a much more powerful way to learn. The workshop engages participants personally with the subject matter. One of its key strengths is that it moves young people from a sense of feeling overwhelmed by the social and ecological challenges of our time, to an understanding of how they can have an impact on the broader issues by taking action in an area that is meaningful to them.

¹ Statistics provided by Oz GREEN.

4 Workshop Content

This section outlines a few of the key aspects of the Youth LEAD workshop that interviewees identified as having a profound impact on them. These are some of the critical components of the workshop that contribute significantly to the program achieving its objectives.

4.1 Strategic Questioning

Several Youth LEADers identified the skill of strategic questioning as the main benefit – or among the main benefits – they gained from the workshop. This is a questioning technique that provides the opportunity to use different ways of thinking to explore an issue deeply. It encourages people to use not only rational analytic thinking, but also to pay attention to their emotional, physical and spiritual responses to issues, questions and information. The questioning technique gives a framework for delving deeply into an issue and exploring diverse possibilities for moving forward. Participants report that this skill increases their confidence to take action, because they feel that no matter what hurdles or difficulties they may encounter, they have a tool that enables them to face the problem and find alternate paths of action if necessary.

Strategic questioning works from the premise that the answers to problems lie within people and within the issue. It is a technique designed to uncover the answers that are already there. It encourages participants to pay close attention to their responses to questions on a number of levels: rational / analytical as well as emotional, physical and spiritual. This is based on the assumption that taking action on issues that are personally meaningful cannot be planned purely on an analytic level. It allows individuals to develop action plans around issues where their passions lie and with an awareness of their personal strengths. The result is that they are more likely to follow through with their plans, to be more committed to taking action and to achieve change through their actions. Recognising this, the technique of strategic questioning helps participants identify where their passions are, what strengths they bring, and what they are prepared to do in terms of taking action. Many participants report drastically increased clarity and a sense of being true to themselves and feeling stronger in who they are subsequent to the Youth LEAD workshop. The technique of strategic questioning makes a significant contribution to helping participants achieve these outcomes.

4.2 Action Planning

During the course of the workshop participants develop three action plans. They are extremely pragmatic and likely to be realised, because participants are encouraged to think of what they are willing to do, and to focus their actions in the areas where their strengths and passions lie. Every Youth LEADer interviewed had followed through on their action plan. For many, their initial action plan was a first step and they have gone on to take further actions and have made many worthwhile achievements.

The three action plans are:

- one to reduce their ecological footprint;
- one to strengthen a leadership skill in themselves that they have identified as important;
- one plan for a project of their choice (individual or shared).

Coming out of the workshop with clear and specific pathways of action clearly defined makes it easier for participants to follow through on those plans. This strategy and the process by which the plans are developed dramatically increases the likelihood that young people actually will

take those actions. The fact that they developed the action plans with an awareness of what is most important to them, and what their key skills, qualities and strengths are, makes the action planning component of Youth LEAD all the more powerful.

4.3 Gradual Exposure

The Youth LEAD workshop is built on the principle of gradually increasing the intensity of challenges it presents to participants. A spiral is used to describe this principle: starting with small challenges, and building on that same skill but increasing the level of challenge. For example, many people find public speaking to be a challenge. The Youth LEAD program starts participants off speaking in pairs, so each young person only needs to speak to one other peer. They work up to speaking to gradually larger groups of people, and by the end of the workshop each participant presents to the entire group and their friends or family.

Similarly, creative expression is encouraged gradually. At the outset of the workshop participants create their own name tags using a range of craft materials. Many participants report that they have not engaged in this type of creative activity since they were much younger. The theme of creative approaches to issues is woven throughout the workshop. At various stages participants are invited to use different outlets such as drawing or painting to express their vision for the future. They are encouraged to think deeply and consider creative approaches to issues that concern them (a process that is facilitated by the strategic questioning technique).

This theme of gradually increasing exposure to a new idea or challenge prevents participants from “shutting down”, as they may be apt to do when faced with a task they find unacceptable. Although Youth LEAD takes them out of their comfort zone, it is done gently. The gradation means that each step participants take out of their comfort zone is an acceptable level of challenge. When this challenge is surmounted, then another step is taken. Participants are also encouraged to pay attention to their emotional and physical responses as they undertake tasks that they may find unsettling. Young people find this process “respectful” and “honouring”, and often life changing.

4.4 Facts and Stories

Oz GREEN have a strong commitment to presenting accurate information about the state of the planet. They have an active research process so that the facts presented in a Youth LEAD workshop are current as of that week. A segment in the workshop entitled “Pulse of the Planet” presents facts about the state of the environment. This provides young people with accurate knowledge and facts about the issues that concern them.

A key aspect of how the information is delivered is that throughout the workshop facilitators use stories to bring the facts to life. The stories tend to be either from their own experience or from that of other Youth LEADers. This technique has the effect of making the issues “personal”: the stories take the environmental issues beyond facts and statistics and link them to the lives of people who are connected with the participants. This perspective on climate change enhances participants’ understanding of the issues and boosts their desire to take action.

The stories also have the crucial function of illustrating to the young people taking part in Youth LEAD that action taken at a local level, working with one’s own strengths and passions, can have a significant impact on the big picture of climate change. The stories show participants that other young people, just like them, worked out what they wanted to do and did it, thus achieving significant outcomes. Participants describe these stories as inspirational and tell how

they gave them courage to take action, along with confidence that – especially with the support of the Oz GREEN network – they too will be able to achieve great things.

One of the stories that many Youth LEADers refer to as inspiring is the story of how Oz GREEN was founded by Sue and Col Lennox. As teachers they were concerned that young people were not being adequately prepared to engage with the critical sustainability issues we face. They quit their teaching jobs and sold their home so they could set up Oz GREEN. They wanted to find ways of helping young people engage with the social and ecological challenges of our time, but in a way that helps them take meaningful action. Youth LEAD participants report that hearing how Oz GREEN was founded and seeing for themselves what Sue and Col have achieved and continue to achieve inspires them to be a part of social change themselves and gives them the confidence to take action of their own.

4.5 Follow up and Networking

Attending a Youth LEAD workshop is, for most participants, only the first step in their involvement with Oz GREEN. Built into the workshop are a series of structured follow up sessions. These are an opportunity to reconnect with people who they met at the workshop and check in to see how their action plans are going. Many participants find that these sessions reinvigorate their drive and motivation. They also provide opportunities to brainstorm around issues that may have arisen in the course of following through on action plans. In addition to the face-to-face follow up sessions there is a well used e-list that circulates information among Youth LEADers.

Many participants report forming significant friendships in the Youth LEAD workshops, and often young people choose collaborative projects for their action plans. The Oz GREEN network also facilitates contact between Youth LEADers who are working on similar projects or in the same geographical region. If a young person moves into a new area there is often an existing Youth LEAD network in that area. They can tap into this network and immediately feel a level of comfort and support from other young people who have been through the same transformative experience as they have, and who are ready to support them in their project.

A great deal of information sharing takes place among Youth LEADers. Often they support each other in their action plans by facilitating contact with others who have relevant experience, by brainstorming solutions to a difficulty encountered, by providing emotional support, and through contact with others who share similar concerns. Participants report that their awareness that the support network is there helps give them the confidence to take on big challenges, knowing they have the network to fall back on when they need a boost. Contact with other Youth LEADers provides “reinspiration” and renews confidence and hope. Hearing positive stories from others’ actions reinvigorates young people on their own projects.

5 Youth LEAD Objectives

Every Youth LEADer interviewed agreed that the Youth LEAD program does fulfil its stated objectives. This section describes the ways that the program achieves its objectives, demonstrating the connections between aspects of the program and the outcomes that participants report.

5.1 Strengthen the capacity of young people to be leaders in their own communities

Teaching and demonstrating leadership skills, and building confidence to act

There are three main ways that Youth LEAD strengthens the capacity of young people to be leaders in their own communities. The workshop

- enhances their leadership skills – both by teaching and demonstrating;
- builds their confidence; and
- helps them find clarity and pathways of action around issues that are important to them.

The Youth LEAD program contains components that develop participants' leadership skills. An activity called "Knots" is an experiential learning exercise that demonstrates the efficacy of a participatory leadership style in a very visual and physical way. This reinforces the program's philosophy that there are no conventional "experts", but rather that each individual has a unique and important contribution and everyone can be a leader. Another activity called "Three Leaders" is a guided visualisation that helps participants identify which qualities they value in leaders. Participants report that they were brought to the realisation that these qualities are within themselves. They then develop an action plan around the leadership skills that they wish to strengthen in themselves.

These exercises that work to develop participants' leadership skills are reinforced by the facilitators who model the leadership behaviours and styles that are discussed. Throughout the workshop they do not behave like experts who are teaching novices, rather they facilitate the transformative learning experience for the participants and *they also go through it themselves*. Facilitators participate in all activities and develop their own action plans each time they do a workshop.

Throughout the workshop stories are told that bring the theory to life. The stories are powerful because they "make it personal". Often they are stories of the facilitators' own experiences or those of other Youth LEADers. These stories demonstrate the qualities of leaders that the group discusses. They also foster leadership skills and inspire young people to take action by instilling a sense of possibility, that they *can* make a difference.

Building self-esteem and confidence is one of the key ways that the program strengthens the capacity of young people to be leaders in their own communities. Participants report that the workshop helped them to realise that their own ideas are valid and worthwhile. Many report that they became empowered to believe in their own decisions, which made them more confident to take action. They reconnect with who they are and what their unique strengths and abilities are. This increases their self-esteem and improves their capacity to become leaders. They are supported as they speak in front of increasing numbers of people. Additionally, they are given up to date information about the environment, which increases their confidence to speak about the issues.

Youth LEAD also strengthens the capacity of young people to be leaders in their own communities by moving them to a state from which action is possible. Every participant reports that the program helped them move from a sense of feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of the issues that concern them, to feeling that they can take action that is meaningful and will have an impact. This shift is discussed in greater depth in section 5.2, however moving to a state where young people are confident to take action is critical in strengthening their capacity to be leaders in their own communities. They are much more likely to take a leadership role around an issue in their community if they realise that their concerns are valid and that the action that they take will have an impact on the issues with which they are concerned.

At the January 2005 national gathering participants reported a number of ways that Youth LEAD had affected their capacity and intention to take action on issues that concern them. More than half (56%) said that Youth LEAD provided them with confidence and motivation to take action. 28% said action planning improved their capacity to take action and 22% said that having a clear path to follow increased their intention to take action. Hearing success stories was also an important motivating factor, and one quarter of participants said that the support networks increased their capacity to take action on the issues that concern them.

5.2 Build youth capacity to engage with the ecological and social challenges of our time

Moving from overwhelm to action, with the skills to find their course of action

Several aspects of the Youth LEAD workshop develop the capacity of young people to engage with the challenges we face. Primarily, these are:

- overcoming the sense of feeling overwhelmed and moving to an understanding of action they can take;
- strategic questioning;
- honest and thorough information, finding clarity;
- making the issues personal.

One of the primary benefits of the Youth LEAD program is that it helps young people move from a sense of being overwhelmed by the ecological and social challenges of our time, to a state where they are ready to engage with the issues. The program reinforces the interconnectedness of all the world's challenges, and emphasises that making an effort in any initial area will have a significant impact. This emphasis allows young people to choose an issue about which they feel passionate and to realise that if they take some action around this issue of their choice, their efforts will make a difference. This approach also empowers young people to select a course of action that not only aligns with their interests, but also their personal strengths and skills, knowing that their action will impact on the broader ecological and social challenges which seem so overwhelming.

The skill of strategic questioning is a key one in enabling young people to engage with ecological and social challenges. It is a tool that allows the user to face a seemingly impenetrable problem and have a strategy for working with that problem. It facilitates the discovery of creative options for action around an issue. Being able to find options improves young people's capacity to engage with issues, since they are more likely to find a course of action that they can take and that will impact on the issue with which they are concerned.

Oz GREEN's commitment to telling the truth about the issues also supports young people's capacity to engage with the ecological and social challenges of our time. The organisation has

an active research program to ensure that the information provided is current and accurate. This commitment equips young people with the knowledge they need about the challenges they face. The commitment to being honest (while positive) about the issues is respectful to workshop participants, and many of them report that the information provided significantly deepened and broadened their understanding of the issues that concern them.

At the national gathering in January 2005 participants identified many ways that Youth LEAD had helped them to clarify their thinking about issues they are concerned about. One quarter of respondents mentioned the technique of strategic questioning as helping them significantly in this regard. More than half (53%) of respondents said that the exercises that helped them to “find themselves” and gain clarity and focus around their own passions and concerns had an important impact on how they thought about issues that are important to them. 38% of respondents reported that having access to facts, information and stories about climate change enabled them to think more clearly about these issues.

The way the information is delivered, and especially the use of personal stories, helps young people to engage with the issues. The stories make the issues personal, validate their concerns, and help them to connect with the challenges we face. The action planning component of the workshop then helps them to bridge from their concern to a plan for action that they can take, building from their enhanced sense of self and knowledge of their own strengths.

5.3 Foster the development of youth social enterprise skills and the capacity to think critically and act creatively

Building confidence to act and teaching skills to explore issues critically and find creative paths of action

Youth LEAD fosters the development of youth social enterprise skills by:

- providing tools for thinking critically about complex issues;
- building confidence to take action;
- expanding the sense of what is possible;
- developing creativity.

Again strategic questioning is a significant factor in fostering the development of youth social enterprise skills, and the capacity to think critically and act creatively. This skill allows young people to develop action plans that are achievable yet ambitious and align closely with both their passions and their skills. It also makes these plans more resilient and hence more likely to be realised. If obstacles are encountered then the young person has a skill that they can apply to the situation that they face. This enables them to adjust their plans and persevere, maintaining the end goal in sight, rather than being defeated by obstacles that may initially seem insurmountable. Strategic questioning provides a framework and structure for thinking critically about an issue and finding creative courses of action around an issue of concern.

During the workshop young people spend several hours thinking deeply and critically about the issues that concern them. They are provided with tools for addressing the issues – such as strategic questioning, and various guided visualisations – and practice applying them. These components of the workshop provide the foundation for social enterprise skills that the participants take with them. They learn how to grapple with complex and challenging issues, how to find pathways to action, and how to use creative means to find options and solutions.

The teaching and practicing of adaptable skills contributes significantly to the youth social enterprise skills that Youth LEAD fosters in participants.

The various ways that the Youth LEAD program bolsters young people's confidence and their belief that they can make a difference to the big issues of our time also contribute significantly to the development of youth social enterprise skills. For young people to act as social entrepreneurs they need to believe that their actions can have a significant impact, and this belief makes them all the more committed to the course of action on which they decide.

The way other people's stories are used also fosters the development of youth social enterprise skills, particularly in terms of building confidence and developing the capacity to act creatively. The stories demonstrate the achievements of others – often other young people – and help participants realise that they too are capable of taking action that can make a difference. The stories also have the function of expanding participants' understanding of social enterprise: they bring to life a wide range of diverse strategies that have all made an impact. This expands the realm of possibilities and encourages young people to act in creative ways.

Another way that Youth LEAD fosters the capacity to think critically and act creatively is by using different forms of expression. For instance, participants are asked to draw their own vision of how they would like the future to look. Many of these participants have not done any drawing since they were much younger, so the activity awakens in them a new way of looking at the world. Graphical representation is often significantly different to the ways that some people are accustomed to conceptualising issues that concern them. This type of approach to the issues helps to facilitate creative action and broad critical thinking about social and ecological challenges.

5.4 Build local – regional – national – international communities of young environmental leaders actively working for peace, understanding and ecologically sustainable futures

The workshop is just the beginning

Oz GREEN, as part of the Youth LEAD program, is very proactive in building communities of like-minded young environmental leaders. This is achieved through:

- follow up sessions after Youth LEAD workshops;
- email lists to keep Youth LEADers informed of others' actions;
- support and inspiration provided by the Youth LEAD community;
- encouraging big goals, knowing that support is there if required.

Youth LEADers have various types of contact with the Oz GREEN / Youth LEAD community after they complete the workshop. There are structured follow ups with participants after each workshop at one-, three- and six-month intervals. New South Wales and Victoria are moving to a different model of follow up. Under the new model, there will be a follow up session for workshop attendees one month after each workshop. Subsequent to that, Youth LEADers will be encouraged to attend bimonthly Youth LEAD get togethers held in their local area. These will be open to everyone who has attended a Youth LEAD workshop, not just attendees of a particular workshop. These bimonthly forums will facilitate interaction among Youth LEADers who are living and working in the same local area, even if they did not attend a workshop in that area.

In addition to the face-to-face contact sessions, there is a well used e-list that operates among Youth LEADers. This is a way of sharing news about achievements, highlighting successes, and seeking support. This is an important component of the Youth LEAD network since Youth LEADers are spread not only around Australia but also overseas.

All Youth LEADers interviewed have followed through on their action plan and have then gone on to further achievements. As they continue working for peace, understanding and ecologically sustainable futures they draw strength and inspiration from being connected with Oz GREEN and with the networks of other Youth LEADers working towards similar goals in their own communities. This sense of connectedness enables them to be bolder and braver in the actions that they take, because they know that the Youth LEAD network is there to provide them with support if they should require it.

Many Youth LEADers report that they have formed long lasting friendships through the workshop. Having contact with the Oz GREEN network also helps some of them to feel less isolated. Their environmental concerns may have made them feel quite alone in their communities, and returning to their communities to work towards ecological sustainability without much local support can be an isolating experience. Keeping in touch with the Oz GREEN community helps them to feel less alone and provides them with the support they need to keep progressing their plans.

70% of Youth LEAD participants remain engaged with the Oz GREEN community years after completing the workshops. For many this means being active users of the e-list and staying connected with particular individuals within the network. 10% of Youth LEADers have applied to do the intensive training to become facilitators.² Additionally, as Oz GREEN has grown as an organisation most of the new employees taken on have been Youth LEADers.

Connecting with the Oz GREEN network also provides opportunities for young people to participate in other Oz GREEN programs or in the action plans of other Youth LEADers who need extra support. Many of those interviewed have played a role in Oz GREEN programs beyond attending the Youth LEAD workshop. It is also quite common for participants to team up with other Youth LEAD graduates on their action plans. These opportunities not only support and reinforce young people's own goals and action plans, they also provide a chance to connect with other Youth LEADers and the broader Oz GREEN community.

The benefits of connecting with other Youth LEADers are significant. Many young people felt that Youth LEAD was an experience that changed their outlook and enabled them to connect with other likeminded people. There is a sense of affinity with others who have been through the same transformative experience. Some Youth LEADers report a feeling that they can cut through the initial "small talk" and very quickly build quite a deep rapport with others who have gone through Youth LEAD. They are able to share their goals and ambitions with each other, and find strength from the support provided. Having contact with each other reminds them of what's important and enables them to maintain their momentum.

Hearing about others' achievements is inspiring for Youth LEADers. The workshop's focus on telling stories and conveying the issues through personal experience continues beyond the workshop. Telling their own stories to the Oz GREEN community and hearing about the activities of other Youth LEADers is a way of keeping the stories flowing. Even outside of the workshop setting, the stories still have the same powerful impact. They demonstrate in a very personal way that change can be achieved by acting with an awareness of your unique strengths, and in an area that matters to you.

² Statistics provided by Oz GREEN.

6 Appendix A: Selection of Quotations

The following quotations have been selected from interviews conducted for this evaluation. They illustrate some of the outcomes that participants feel Youth LEAD achieved for them:

“Before I went I was generally concerned, but Youth LEAD gave me the ability to tailor my concerns to specific issues and understand the impact I can have.”

“Youth LEAD made me more aware of my own role in creating change. Instead of feeling powerless, I now have a greater sense of personal responsibility and understand my own role.”

“The stories expanded my sense of what’s possible. If they can do it, why can’t I? I can!”

“Strategic questioning was probably the most beneficial thing I gained from Youth LEAD. It gives me the sense that I can do anything I want to do.”

“For the first time I experienced my own amazingness.”

“Youth LEAD took me out of my head and into my heart. It made the issues much more powerful.”

“Youth LEAD allowed me to see different perspectives and be exposed to more points of view, philosophies, and ways of thinking.”

“Strategic questioning helped to get me to the point of action.”

“The main benefit I got from Youth LEAD was the strong connections I made with people I could relate to. That started me on the journey to where I am now.”

“The Oz GREEN network is an incredible source of support and inspiration. It gives me renewed confidence and hope. The door is always open for inspiration, creativity, getting involved.”

“I find contact with other Youth LEADers to be personally inspiring, re-energising and supportive.”

“The Oz GREEN community inspires you to dream big and make those dreams happen.”

7 Appendix B: People Interviewed

Name	First Youth LEAD	Position in OzGREEN (if applicable)
Gabriel Anderson	2004, Blue Mountains	Programs Coordinator South Australia & Northern Territory
Nick Bearlin-Allardice	2003, Bendigo	n/a
Robbie Charles	2006, Hamilton Downs (NT)	n/a
Wendy Hopkins	2004, Albury	Environmental Education Officer
Allison Hughes	2003, Bendigo	Sustainability Educator
Jodi Lennox	2003, Wagga Wagga	Program Manager
Sue Lennox	2002	Co-Founder / CEO
Kathryn McCabe	2006, Melbourne	Office Manager & Facilitator
Jana Michaels	2004, Albury	n/a
Hayley Morris	2006, Melbourne	n/a
Lilly Morrow	2006, Melbourne	n/a
Katie Ross	2006, North Sydney	n/a
Nick Towle	2006, Paton Park, (Tas)	n/a

Vodafone Staff	Position
Tim Hunt	Business Support Manager
Ramana James	Corporate Responsibility Manager