Left Right Think Tank: Update on Inclusion Project
April 2012

Left Right's Western Australian team, which is located in Perth, is running a project to try to involve rural and remote young people in our organisation, which aims to involve young people in public policy. The vast majority of our staff members live in capital cities and we want to engage a broader range of young people in advocating for a better future for Australia.

The project we’re running involves two components – a workshop and training. We are hosting a public policy workshop in Bunbury for young people who live in and around the area. The workshop is going to cover the importance of young people and the successes of young people pushing for change in their communities. It will also provide young people with the basic skills needed to get involved in issues their care about and to advocate for change. From this workshop we’re also looking to recruit some new staff for our WA team who live in the Bunbury region.

Although we haven’t met any young people yet as the workshop has not yet been run, we have learnt a few things and had some positive responses. We have been speaking with high schools in the area about the workshop, a couple of which have been really excited about this opportunity for their students. Teachers and principals are strongly encouraging their students to come along. I think this shows that there is definitely interest in having practical and informative workshops like these in more regional areas – having them largely located in main cities makes them inaccessible to a huge number of young people.

The project so far has also been a challenge for our organisation as we are usually able to engage a large number of young people or achieve high attendance at events through effective use of social media tools. However, we have found that more direct methods are needed to engage with young people outside Perth. We’ve used our mentor’s contacts to get in touch with council and other organisations. We have also been directly contacting schools and universities to find out how they can promote the workshop – and opportunity to become a staff member – for us, as well as put up posters. It has been difficult not having a team based in Bunbury as we have not been able to go there and talk to young people about the workshop ourselves. In the future it would be good to make an effort to do so or to start using schools and universities to publicise the event at an earlier stage. We are also contacting local media but won’t see the results of this immediately.

Over the next couple of weeks we hope that our efforts will result in the attendance we are aiming for. The next challenge will be for our workshop to pique enough interest in Left Right and public policy so that we are able to find some great new staff members!