




RESILIENT KIDS GEELONG



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1. Executive Summary

Resilient Kids Geelong is a collaborative project developed by the Leaders for Geelong Project Team ('the Project Team') in partnership with Barwon Child, Youth & Family Services ('BCYF'). The project was developed in response to a growing need for parents in the Geelong Region to access information about supporting their kids to build resilience.

Building resilience in kids is a necessary and helpful way to promote healthier and happier kids and ultimately healthier communities. As noted by project partner BCYF:

'We know that by positively changing the course of a young person's life we can build resilience and a sense of self-worth in young people, helping them to stay at school, improve their relationships with families and their community which in turn can lead to long-term community benefits like an increase in school retention; school and community safety; and greater employment opportunities.'¹

Kids are primarily connected through family, school and community groups. Given the existing breadth of services being offered within the educational space and by community groups, this project focuses on families as a means to build resilience in kids.

There are already a number of parenting programs in the Geelong Region that acknowledge the importance of building resilience in kids. Whilst these programs play a significant part in educating parents about how they can teach their kids to be more resilient, they are often limited to either self-referred parents or those mandated to attend. It is also highly likely that these families have reached a crisis point already.

Resilient Kids Geelong has involved the development and implementation of an online resource for parents to easily access evidence-based material delivered through the BCYF website and Facebook page. This will be supported by a number of local community organisations and groups by sharing the content from BCYF's Facebook page to extend the reach of the project's message as far and wide as possible.

2. Project Mission

“TO CREATE A COMMUNITY THAT SUPPORTS FAMILIES TO DEVELOP RESILIENT KIDS”

In a complicated and fast-paced world, the ability for young people to resiliently navigate through life is one crucial element to maximising opportunities for happiness and success. While some are resilient by nature, research shows that resilience can be nurtured and developed, particularly when actively fostered by parents.

Embracing social connectedness creates healthy communities that contribute to promoting good employment opportunities and maintaining good physical and mental health as well as many other benefits to the individual, the family and the community in general. Building resilience in kids will equip them with the necessary skills to make informed decisions and help pave the way towards community connectedness and a better society.

Resilient Kids Geelong aims to support parents, families and significant members of kids lives to access evidence-based material to assist kids to enhance their resilience in dealing with life's challenges.

3. Methodology

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

This project has developed organically from the notion that building resilience in kids is a necessary and helpful way to promote healthier and happier kids. The idea came from within the 2015/17 Leaders for Geelong (LfG) cohort. Typically projects are pitched by a Project Champion; with initial research and investigation already having been undertaken to develop the project scope and mission. This sets the Resilient Kids Geelong project apart as the project was a big picture idea pitched without a Project Champion and without the rigour surrounding initial research.

This presented a challenge for the project team to develop a concept into a tangible project that would provide community benefit and attract a 'Project Champion'. The vision and mission needed to be flexible enough for a potential partner to negotiate to ensure a relevant fit with their own mission, vision and goals. Resilient Kids Geelong then had to adjust already tight timelines and project goals to ensure the project could be completed on time and within budget.

RESEARCH

Preliminary research explored existing local support services; research papers; articles; Internet and social media based investigations which identified:

1. A lack of useful information available for parents;
2. No central, easily accessible resource for information about resilience;
3. The sheer difficulty in reaching large numbers of parents, impacting parent's ability to participate in assisting their kids to build resilience; and
4. The primary environments in which kids have support networks to build resilience are at school, in community groups and in the home.

Of particular note was in April 2017, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published a worldwide report on student wellbeing (Program for International Student Assessment 2015 (PISA)) which highlighted the current challenges facing school kids. The report showed that Australian students (age 15) were reporting above world average incidences of bullying and were experiencing anxiety as they approached exams and assessments.

From this research it became apparent that a real gap existed around resources for parents who weren't necessarily at crisis point, but were seeking information to support them to build resilience in their kids.

It became increasingly apparent that the Internet, and more specifically, social media would provide the best platform to allow the project to achieve the greatest reach within the community. This was validated with the results of the 2016 Sensis which confirmed 69% of Australians are now on social media and Facebook is the most commonly used platform (95%), followed by Instagram (31%) and LinkedIn (24%), with the typical Facebook user spending more than twelve and a half hours per week on the platform, compared with around eight and a half hours in 2015.

Our research showed that significant resources exist which are delivered to kids through school curriculum and programs run by community groups and sporting organisations. However parents did not have ready access to resources. A list of references identified in the research phase of the project is included in Section 6 of this report.

CONSULTATION

Various stakeholders in the sector including BCYF, Bethany and City of Greater Geelong (CoGG) Family Services confirmed the gap in resources available for parents. All stakeholders agreed that there was a growing demand for information to be provided to parents around the issue of building resilience in kids and confirmed that not being able to reach large numbers of parents prevented the potential for information to be shared. It was also identified that influence is often greater in a peer-to-peer situation rather than one that is mandated upon parents or kids.

PROJECT CHAMPION

During the stakeholder consultation phase of the project it became apparent that the project scope and mission aligned strongly with BCYF's vision, purpose and values.

Vision	A community where people are safe, connected and empowered to live well.
Purpose	To provide, deliver and develop services, where the need exists, that advance the rights and wellbeing of children, young people and their families.
Values	Integrity, Commitment, Inclusion

Both the project team and BCYF could see how the project could marry in and support new and current services and programs being offered by BCYF.

SOCIAL MEDIA

As a result of our research it was determined the best approach for the project was to develop an online platform for information that could be shared through Facebook. The project team identified a number of local social media influencers, including Geelong Mums, Geelong Mummas, Geelong Football Club (GFC) and CoGG. These social media influencers were identified based on their existing reach within the Geelong community having in excess of 210,000 followers.

Initial contact with Geelong Mums and Geelong Mummas has been undertaken and interest in supporting the project by way of sharing information through their respective Facebook pages has been confirmed.

A draft Social Media Strategy has also been developed for BCYF to build upon and finalise agreements with Social Media influencers.

DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION & HANDOVER

Design and development of a web based communication platform was undertaken in consultation and conjunction with BCYF, who felt that:

'The Resilient Kids Geelong project is fantastic because it is important for parents to be able to engage in a peer-to-peer forum where they are able to share information. If parents can help build the resilience and self worth of their children there is potential they will stay in school longer and experience more fulfilling relationships with their family and friends which in the long-term provides many positive outcomes for the future. Collaboration with the Leaders for Geelong has been a positive experience for all involved, particularly as it offered another opportunity for BCYF to showcase one of their many amazing programs.'

Implementation of the online resource will be launched on the BCYF website in May 2017. The final reach of the information will ultimately depend on the success of the social media reach BCYF obtain through the securing of agreements with social media influencers.

At the time of project handover BCYF committed to completing the following:

- Launch web based communication platform utilising the BCYF website as the knowledge bank and the BCYF Facebook page as the method for publishing articles;
- Finalise the draft Social Media Strategy;
- Finalise agreements with social media influencers;
- Continue to post resilience based articles after the conclusion of the Leaders for Geelong 2015-17 project phase; and
- Develop a strategy for monitoring and reviewing the success of the program.

4. Key Findings

THE GAP IS REAL

- School programs already running include the Building Resilience in School Communities Grants Program, which support Government schools to build the resilience and wellbeing of their students.
- The critical role in which parents play in contributing to kids being able to build this resilience has been identified.
- Whilst schools have a role to play, parents have the prime responsibility and it is their duty to ensure kids learn how to be resilient and how to overcome adversity.²

PARENTS ARE KEY

- Limited resources exist that are parent-focused to assist kids, particularly as an early intervention.
- Parents are not always aware of the existence of resources that are available to assist them.
- Resources that do exist are not stored in a central, easily accessible location for parents.

EVERYONE FACEBOOK

- 15 million active Facebook users every month in Australia.³
- Facebook users now spend the equivalent of a full working day on Facebook each week, averaging 8.5 hours on the site.
- 59% of social-media-using parents indicate that they have come across useful information specifically about parenting while looking at other social media content.⁴
- Social media is broadly viewed as a source of useful information and as one parenting tool among a collection of options.⁵
- Parents were found to especially like to try to respond to the good news others post, answer others' questions or receive support via online networks.⁶

5. Outcomes

The Project Team has adopted a communication platform that has the capacity to reach a large numbers of parents. This platform consists of an online resource of resilience building information as well as a targeted social media strategy to start the conversation for parents to build resilience in their kids.

The purpose of delivering information via social media is to increase the reach via a platform that is widely used. Social media networks have become vital channels for people's daily interactions. Users rely on these platforms to keep in touch with family and friends, gather information and share what is important to them.

The use of Facebook as the social media tool to deliver information to parents provides the flexibility of delivering short pieces of information. Facebook will provide the option of parents being able to add comments themselves and further the engagement through peer-to-peer communication.

Ultimately, the Project has delivered a resource that will assist in creating a community that supports families to develop resilient kids.

6. References

Websites and organisations engaged with during the research phase of the project included:

- Barwon Child, Youth & Family
- Education Victoria
- Beyond Blue
- Headspace
- Parenting Ideas
- American Physiological Association
- Kids Matter
- PsychCentral
- Maggie Dent
- SmilingMind
- ReachOut
- Kids Help Line
- Sensis 2016

Footnotes:

- 1 Avail at <http://www.bcyf.org.au/how-you-can-help/volunteering>
- 2 Donnelly, K 'Our children need resilience, not cotton wool', The Drum
- 3 Cowling, D 'Social Media Statistics Australia- May 2016 avail at <http://www.socialmedianews.com.au/social-media-statistics-australia-may-2016/>
- 4 Ibid
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 'Duggan, M. Et Al, Parents and Social Media' avail at <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/07/16/parents-and-social-media/>
- 7 Ibid, p 22 of 65

7. Acknowledgements

Committee for Geelong

Barwon Child, Youth and Families

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Bethany

Geelong Mummas

Geelong Mums

Geelong Cats

Our fellow Leaders for Geelong 2015-17 participants



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