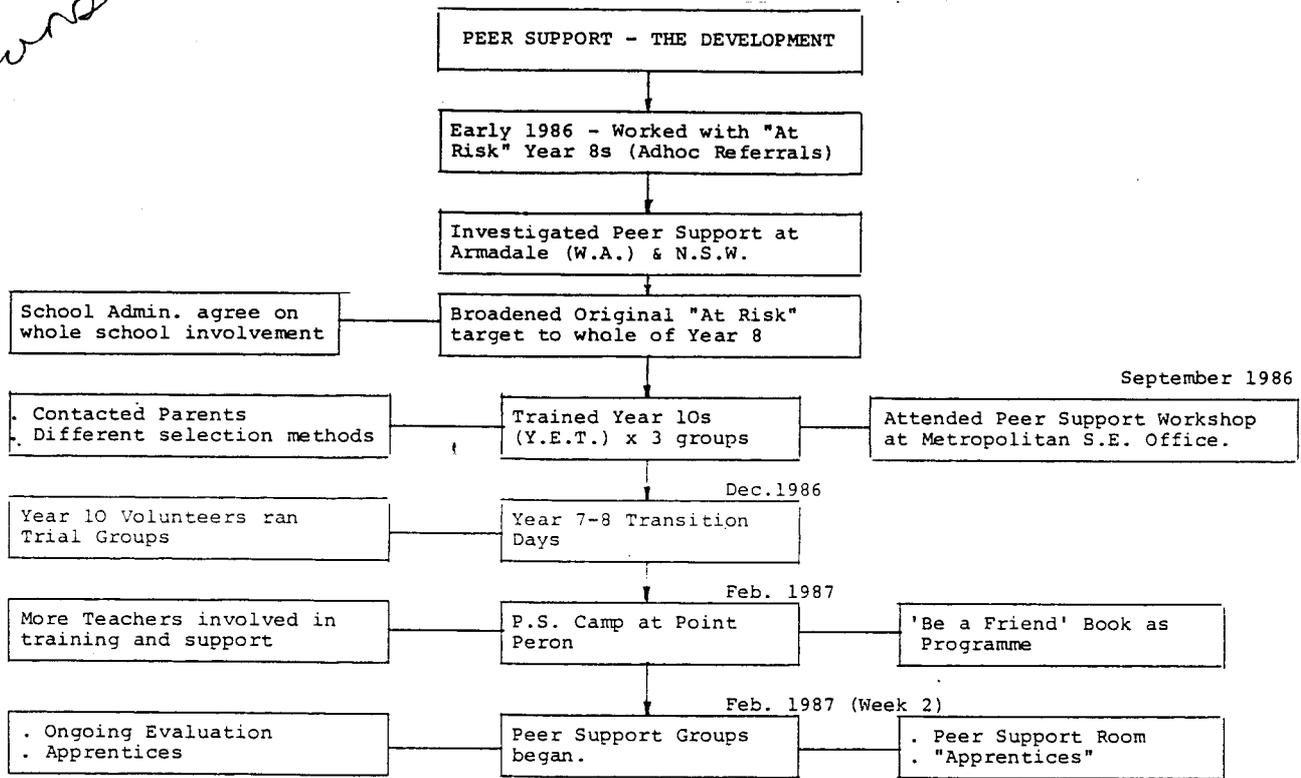


*File Peer Counselling*

WANNEROO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL



**BE A FRIEND.**

- TERM I: 1987:
- Matched 2 leaders to groups of 10-12 year 8 students.
  - Commenced "Be a Friend" programme
  - Groups met twice every 6 days (6 day cyclic timetable).
  - Lunch time meetings with leaders and support staff.
  - Opening of Peer Support room.
  - Evaluation/feed back questionnaires.
  - Included volunteer 'apprentice' leaders in programme.

- TERM II: 1987:
- Reduced contact time from 2 days to 1 day per cycle.
  - Introduced smaller regular recess/lunchtime meetings with leaders and support staff.
  - Alter Peer Support room from an informal 'drop-in' centre to one which requires referral by a staff member or genuine appointment.
  - Peer Support leaders' workshop.
  - Suggested idea of Unit Taster Programme to leaders.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

1. Developed a unit of Peer Support to provide training plus credit points. (Currently being S.E.A./Ministry of Educ. approved).
2. Planning commenced for training Year 10 leaders - August 1987 start date.
3. Planning 7 - 8 transition involvement for leaders (jointly with feeder primary schools).
4. Planning a comprehensive evaluation to be conducted toward end of 2nd Semester, 1987.

1. What is Peer Support?
2. Why have a Peer Support Programme?
3. How do we select/recruit students?
- 9 4. What are the training models?
5. How can the programme include counselling on course selection and coping with school subjects?
6. When and where will the training take place?
7. Could someone 'from 'outside' the school do the training?
8. How should the Peer Counsellors be supported and co-ordinated?
- 8 9. How many students can be trained at once?
10. How can we involve the primary schools in the training programme?
11. What amount of time is involved in the design and organisation of a programme?
12. What's happening in other schools? (W.A., Nationally and Internationally).
13. Can a Peer Counselling Programme be run by students?
14. What are some methods of evaluating the Programme?
- 7 15. How can parents be involved?
16. How do you help teachers/parents with their concerns about loss of control of students?
- 6 17. What are some methods of advertising Peer Support?
18. Will Peer Support leaders be resented by their peers?
19. How do we make Peer Support Leaders credible to their younger group members?
- 5 20. How do we go about gaining accreditation for the training and operation of a Peer Support Programme?
- 4 21. How do we encourage volunteer leaders if there is no formal recognition (i.e. credit points) for their involvement.
- 3 22. How do we get potential Peer Support leaders time to do their training (assuming there isn't a space in the timetable)?
- 1 23. How do we get support from Admin. and other teachers?
- 2 24. How can we 'sell' the programme to others in the school/ community?

THE PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM by Elizabeth Campbell, Director and Company  
Secretary of The Peer Support Foundation Limited, P.O. Box 701,  
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The Peer Support Foundation has been established by members of Sydney Rotary Clubs and professional people concerned about the welfare of young Australians. It was registered on July 20, 1983 as a non-profit company limited by guarantee. James Dibble was elected Chairman on August 23, 1983. The purpose of the Foundation is to provide funds, administrative and legal expertise to introduce and maintain the Peer Support Program in secondary schools throughout New South Wales. A fund-raising campaign was launched by the Deputy Premier, the Rt. Hon. R. J. Mulock on March 2, 1984.

*Content*  
The Peer Support Program trains senior students to help the younger ones. It recognises that one of the most valuable resources in schools are the students and has tapped this resource and used it to improve the quality of life in the school environment.

Peer Support is based on the principle that at every level and in every age group in society, people absorb information and values from each other. The information can be valuable or harmful. If peer support transmits sound ideas it can be a useful education tool.

The program develops a feeling of caring in the school community and reinforces the school environment by providing more personal contact between younger and older students. It gives senior students opportunities to test their leadership skills. It gives them the challenge that only responsibility can give, teaches them to look at the world realistically and find practical answers to personal and social problems. It provides junior students with a safe and friendly environment in which to develop their own individuality.

There is only one way to protect young people against the many destructive forces in society and that is to raise a generation of young people with enough self esteem and confidence and with enough hope in the future to resist harmful lifestyles and develop the purpose to live effectively.

It is unreasonable to expect children entering high school to have formed absolute opinions about themselves, or to have the ability to keep their individuality unchanged against peer pressure. It is safer to follow a strong leader than confront one, to "go along with things" than be the "one out". It is a process in which individuality and strength of will is often lost and in which a sense of failure can be born. How long does it take for the individual to re-appear? Often, the damage is permanent and is probably the cause of problems in later years such as low self-esteem, the inability to discuss matters effectively, to present well for interview or to form relationships based on honesty.

We have developed a society in which peer pressures are continuous and powerful and we are trained to accept many things that are not factual or beneficial. Many children find it difficult to understand our ambivalent value system and cope with social pressures, and quite often, creative and unique abilities inherent in every child are never developed.

They have been born into a world which has provided them with an awesome set of problems and the miracle is that most of them do survive psychologically and physically. A percentage of them don't, for a number of different reasons. For

This can be due to many factors. The increased number of single parent families and the growing number of Australians living at near poverty level increases stress and insecurity amongst their children. Lack of communication and affection within the family can occur in any economic strain in the population and the resultant isolation and personal deprivation can cause irreversible mental and personality problems. Many school leavers do not have any guarantee of employment so their motivation for study must suffer.

I established the Peer Support Program in 1971 at a school where a 16 year old boy had died from an overdose of heroin. I was then working with the New South Wales Department of Health as a Drug and Health Education Officer.

The Principal at the school invited me to establish a program which would aim to reduce drug abuse amongst the children. I asked to speak to the students from the same year as the boy who had died, and was immediately impressed by their maturity, their caring and intelligence. I asked them if they would be willing to set up a support program for Year 7 students on an ongoing basis.

It seemed obvious that younger students would take much more notice of slightly older peers than they would of myself or any other "authoritarian-type" figure. The senior students were most enthusiastic and saw the program as a challenge and a way to help prevent similar tragedies occurring at the school. Sufficient volunteers were trained to provide group facilitators for all the Year 7 students in groups of six. We trained forty senior students, allowing for some to fall out during the course. The training program included self-awareness, confidence building, communication, group discussion and group leadership skills, personal relationships, personal values, the effect of peer pressure on adolescents, an awareness of social problems and social and personal responsibility.

The senior students were trained over a time equivalent to twelve double periods. They were then allocated six Year 7 students and met for one weekly period for at least twelve weeks.

One of the most valuable results of the program was the remarkable transformation of the senior group leaders. The opportunity to accept responsibility had led to a much greater degree of maturity and self-confidence.

The younger students were able to develop their own individuality and learn to resist harmful peer pressures in the small family-sized groups.

This program was introduced into thirty secondary schools in N.S.W. in the early 1970's. Unfortunately, due to a recession in 1975 the Government was not able to provide funds and the program stopped.

In 1980, the Crows Nest Rotary Club funded a Peer Support Program in a secondary school in their area. Other Rotary Clubs followed suit and funded the program in a further twelve schools.

In 1981, a successful evaluation of the Peer Support Program was done by the Lecturer in Education Studies at the Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education, Mr. Tony Foster, on a pilot Peer Support Program carried out at the North Sydney Girls' High School.

He strongly recommended that the program be continued at the school. He further recommended that "the Peer Support Program should become an annual program for each Year 7 intake, beginning as soon as Year 7 arrive at High School and continuing for the full year".

Teachers at the school said that the co-operation and increased responsibility of student leaders involved in the project helped teachers, and were a valuable resource in the school.

A report on the program at Ryde High School from training officers, Kerry Brown, Barbara Mummery and Louise Roberts, stated -

"The objectives of this initial trial program were to encourage caring friendship and support between the students at Ryde and to open up communication between Year 7 students and the more senior students. The concept of peer support groups could become an excellent vehicle for establishing this kind of communication within the school. Increased self-esteem by students taking part added considerably to the overall value of the program."

The advantages of the Peer Support Program have been acknowledged in the N. S. W. Government Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Pupil Behaviour and Discipline, as follows -

"It utilises an existing resource in school - the older pupils, thus increasing the involvement between the senior and the juniors. It develops certain skills in the older pupils : awareness of responsibility leadership, understanding of self-esteem and its growth increased skills of communication, tolerance and understanding. It establishes worthwhile contact between a large number of pupils.

"It helps to establish for participants a sense of worth as individuals, encourages them to develop a responsibility to the needs and feelings of others and develops the ability to communicate such feelings and needs through the establishment of effective relationships."

John P. Pierce, MSc(Epid)MA(Psych)PHD(Comm), Senior Lecturer in Health Education at the Department of Preventive and Social Medicine, Commonwealth Institute of Health, University of Sydney -

"The initiation of substance use (alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, etc) has been described as transition behaviour on the part of teenagers; that is, it is behaviour that they use to indicate to those around them that they have moved on to the next phase in their lives. Warnings about later health consequences that may result from regular use have little impact on this type of behaviour.

The only programs that have demonstrated an ability to reduce the incidence and prevalence of such substance use in teenagers have been those based on peer support. In these programs people of the same age and slightly older get together and discuss the problems facing themselves as teenagers, why substances are used, and alternatives to their use. The Peer Support Program that has been put together by Elizabeth Campbell is an excellent example of one of those programs."

The Peer Support Foundation has maintained continual liaison with officers of the New South Wales Department of Education, concerning the content, administration and implementation of the Peer Support Program in N. S. W. Secondary Schools. The Head of the Personal Development Unit, N. S. W. Department of Education, Mr. Graham Drayton, acted as education consultant to the Peer Support Foundation from March 1983 - March 1984. Kevin Donnelly has now been appointed as Education Consultant to the Foundation.

The positive co-operation established between the Peer Support Foundation and the N. S. W. Department of Education has made it possible to integrate the program into the school curriculum. The involvement of members of the teaching staff facilitates the implementation, administration and supervision of the program.

About 150 schools in N. S. W. will introduce the program in 1985. We have had requests for the program from all States in Australia. We have held Peer Support Training workshops for a total of 400 teachers to implement the Peer Support Program in 80 schools in Term III in 1984. We have planned two workshops for sixty teachers in October this year.

Many teachers have attended training workshops in their free time. Enthusiasm for the Peer Support Program from teachers, students and parents has been tremendous.

The continuation of the Program will largely depend on financial support from government bodies and the public. The average cost of establishing the Program in a school is about \$2,000.00 per year. This is a small premium to cover the number of students at risk against the increasing hazards of a modern society. Many teachers and parents are already convinced that the Peer Support Program does offer this security.

## AIMS

1. To guide young high school students away from drug and alcohol experimentation, truancy and vandalism and many other types of anti-social behaviour.
2. To identify developing personal and drug-related problems before they become irreversible.
3. To develop confidence and self-esteem and help youngsters to think clearly for themselves in a safe, friendly environment.
4. To fill the parent/student and teacher/student communication gap, effectively combatting negative peer pressures.
5. To develop leadership and communication for Year 10/11 students who act as "discussion facilitators" and special friends for groups of six or seven Year 7 students.
6. To make support available on a daily basis within the school community through the links created between the students and the specially trained volunteer teachers participating in the program.
7. To help the senior students as much as the juniors by giving them a feeling of responsibility and usefulness at a critical period in their development.
8. To provide COST FREE BENEFIT for all participants as the groups continue to meet in subsequent years and as the training is passed on by the experienced people within the schools.
9. To encourage students to model healthy social life styles.
10. To provide family sized groups of support to the 40% of children who come from broken families.

## HOW DOES PEER SUPPORT WORK?

One of the most valuable resources in schools is the students. The Peer Support Program has tapped this resource and used it to improve the quality of life in the school environment.

Peer Support is based on the principle that at every level and in every age group in society, people absorb information and values from each other. The information can be valuable or harmful. If peer support is used to transmit sound ideas it can be a useful educational tool.

The Peer Support Program trains senior students to help junior students. It develops a feeling of caring in the school community and reinforces the school environment by providing more personal contact between younger and older students. It gives senior students opportunities to test their leadership skills. It gives them the challenge that only responsibility can give, teaches them to look at the world realistically and find practical answers to personal and social problems. It provides junior students with a safe and friendly environment in which to develop their own individuality.

Selected volunteer senior students are trained to act as group leaders for junior students. Peer Support Programs are held weekly and scheduled into normal class time.

The group leaders training course includes communication, relationships, social and peer pressures on adolescents, and exercises in self-awareness. It also includes training in discussion group techniques and knowledge about the overall needs of Year 7 students.

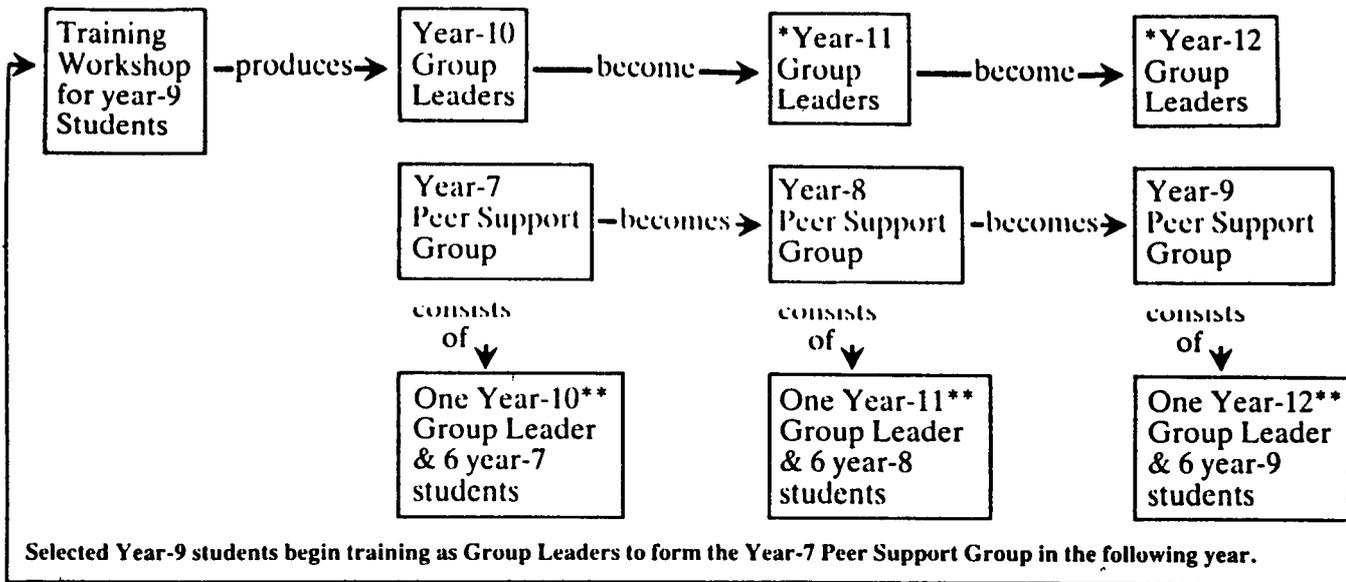
The program continues with the same leader and group the following year, when they graduate to Year 12 and Year 8 respectively.

The Peer Support syllabus, used by the group leaders, includes a variety of living skill relationships, personal and social responsibility, peer group pressure, assertiveness training and personal goals. The program is structured and each session has been practised by the group leaders so that they are totally familiar with the exercises they give their group and can feel confident and comfortable in their role as group leader. The exercises used can be a lot of fun and include learning, listening and hearing skills, role playing to help empathise with the feelings of others and self-awareness games. Discussion on relevant issues such as job opportunities and job selection and ways of coping with unemployment and using time effectively and ways of developing stable and viable lifestyles and the importance of good health, are included. Students are asked to involve their parents in some of the issues under discussion to increase parental involvement in the school and to improve intra-family communication. Written and verbal replies from parents concerning some of the issues have introduced a valuable dimension to group interaction.

The junior student groups are led by a senior student, but teachers trained for the Peer Support Program are at hand to monitor and evaluate the groups' activities.

### CHART 1

#### A peer support programme for training in personal development and human relationships for secondary schools



The workshop sessions begin during second term or at the beginning of third term and are held for ten weekly double periods. Workshop content consists of self awareness exercises, techniques in group discussion and group leadership, verbal and non-verbal communication, contemporary social issues and understanding them, basic psychology with emphasis on 12-, 13- and 14-year-old children, communication with family, peers, teachers and other adults, pressures on adolescents at school, in the community and at home.

Parent discussion groups, parent-teacher and parent-student discussion groups are held at regular times during the year.

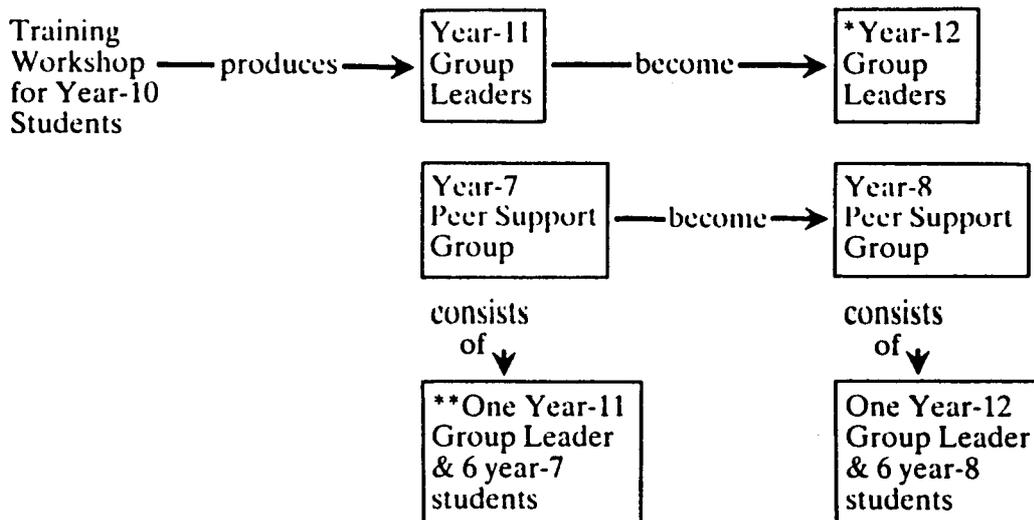
Volunteer teachers attend teachers' workshops, join parent discussion groups, teacher-student discussions and assist with the co-ordination of the program within the school.

\*Revision workshop for group leaders.

\*\*Group leaders continue with the same group through Year-10, Year-11 and Year-12

### CHART 2

(For year-10 students)



The workshop sessions begin during second term or the beginning of third term and are held for ten weekly double periods.

Workshop content consists of self awareness exercises techniques in group discussion and group leadership, verbal and non-verbal communication, contemporary social issues and understanding them, basic psychology with emphasis on 12-, 13- and 14-year-old children, communication with family, peers, teachers and other adults, pressures on adolescents at school, in the community and at home.

Parent discussion groups, parent-teacher and parent-student discussion groups are held at regular times during the year.

Volunteer teachers attend teachers' workshops, join parent discussion groups, teacher-student discussions and assist with the co-ordination of the program within the school.

\*Revision workshop for year-12 group leaders.

\*\*Group leaders continue with the same group through Year-11 and Year-12.