



Collie

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Taking control of our own destiny!

As part of a two-year program being funded by the Collie & District Community Branch of the Bendigo Bank, a group of local ‘ambassadors’ and emerging leaders have started a fresh conversation.

An advisory committee has been working with entrepreneur advocate Kerry Anderson who has developed the successful Operation Next Gen program especially for rural towns that are seeking to take control of their own destiny and strengthen their future prospects.

“While the program will be guided by Kerry, using her experiences from other places, it is really up to the Collie community to empower new leaders to help shape our own destiny,” explains Sarah Stanley, one of the Advisory Committee members. “New and exciting conversations will be taking place with new people in new places.”

Operation Next Gen Collie ‘ambassadors’ leading the conversation include James Abbot, Brant Edwards, Brianne Farr, Jodie Hanns, Mystique Hillier, Jasmine Hulls, Jarrod Martin, Tyron Massara, Wil Massara, Erik Mellegers, Regan Old, Jo Stanley, Ash Stewart, Natasha Ugle, Katie van den Brand, and Rebecca Woods

Their mandate is clear. Give everyone in the community an opportunity to get involved in the discussions and ideas as they gather momentum. However, having an open mind when it comes to positive change and a willingness to think creatively and look at existing landscapes with fresh eyes will be integral to the program’s success.

Ideas already identified through the recent community consultations, and a youth survey conducted in May, will contribute to the conversation. As part of the program, Collie’s ambassadors will have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills and network with other rural community leaders across Australia and overseas.

“We are very excited to get involved in long-term planning;” says Julie Hillier, another Advisory Committee member. “We will focus on how we can stimulate entrepreneurship, youth connections, leadership, and self-investment to build upon our rich history and ensure that Collie continues to be a great place to live and work well into the future.”

The ambassador group met for the first time on Friday 26 May at the Museum and then took a tour around town to reflect on how they may be able to generate new ideas to take Collie forward. The next day they followed up with a workshop at Harris River Estate.

Regan Old admits that he was compelled to say yes because he is “intrigued and interested in what could come out of the program.”

“Sometimes the craziest and hardest ideas can be the best,” Ash Stewart reflected after a session on innovation.

“I’m excited about hitting the reset button on our thinking,” agrees Rebecca Woods.

“We are privileged to be part of something with some real potential to drive the future development of Collie,” said Erik Mellegers.

Jodie Hanns is focused on a prosperous future for the town. “Innovation and change comes from seeing a problem, finding a solution and working together to make it happen.”

Mystique Hillier is “very much looking forward to what’s to come!”

Everyone will be able to follow how Collie is taking control of its own destiny through regular updates in the *Collie Mail* and *Whispers from the Valley*. There will also be the opportunity to join in as the ambassadors start sharing their exciting plans with the wider community and putting them into action.

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**PHOTOGRAPH:** Operation Next Gen ambassadors and advisory committee members are excited at the prospect of Collie taking control of its own destiny thanks to the generous support of the Collie & District Community Branch of the Bendigo Bank.

**For more information about this media release please contact Kerry Anderson (Program Manager) on 0418 553 719 or Sarah Stanley (Advisory Committee member) on 0408 344 833.**