

GIVE A DAMN

FINAL REPORT



Conservation
Council SA



Government of South Australia
Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges
Natural Resources Management Board

**GIVE A DAMN
ACKNOWLEDGES THE
KAURNA PEOPLE AS THE
TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THE
ADELAIDE PLAINS.**

**WE PAY OUR RESPECT TO ELDERS
PAST AND PRESENT.**

**YOU HAD IT RIGHT, AND WE'VE
MADE A MESS OF THINGS.**

BACKGROUND

We know young people give a damn about environmental issues.

The 'South Australians and the Environment 2016' survey found 72% of respondents aged over 15 years were concerned about the environment.¹ In 2019, 150,000 young Australians attended the Schools Strike for Climate.

However, while people aged 16-24 years are largely connected to current environmental issues through education and social media, there remains a gap in programs aiming to engage this group.

Give a Damn is a trial project launched in February 2019 to explore how young South Australians can make day-to-day behaviour changes to live more sustainably.

There is significant room for young people to adopt sustainable day-to-day behaviours, partake in environmental volunteering² and to become active on environmental issues. We need to understand what sustainability means to young people and what activities will motivate greater youth participation on sustainability issues.

The Give a Damn (GaD) project, delivered by Conservation SA and the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges (AMLR) Natural Resource Management (NRM) Board, has trialed a range of exciting initiatives to inform a strategy for greater youth sustainability action.

¹'South Australians and the Environment 2016', naturalresources.sa.gov.au/files/sharedassets/adelaide_and_mt_lofty_ranges/corporate/progress_reports/south-australians-environment-2016-summary.pdf

² *Engaging the Disengaged: Revealing the Barriers to Youth Environmental Volunteering in South Australia* - thesis by Benjamin James Page, 2018

WORKING GROUP

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NRM: Christy Spier, Hugh Kneebone
Hinterland: Robin Parkin



GO TO THE PEOPLE.

It became clear to us, through the success of our pop-up events in high foot-traffic areas, and through the feedback of participants, that Give a Damn activities are most likely to succeed when we **physically place ourselves in the way**.

Young people have many competing demands on their attention, whether school or uni, or other external activities. To carve out space in their day, **we need to be on site, as closely integrated into their lives as possible**.

This also means that the intervention—whether switching to beeswax wraps, reusable cutlery, or swapping clothes—is also easily integrated into their lives, which might mean actually placing items into their hands.

Taken by itself, this may seem an unsustainable solution to behaviour change; however, we think informed by insight no. 2, this approach holds some interesting possibilities.



MOTIVATION FOLLOWS ACTION.

We received strong positive feedback about the activities where participants could walk away with a new skill and a new product that would enable them to put their knowledge into action straight away, without further action.

For sustainable behaviour change, this may be a fairly cost-intensive approach. However, research has shown that **action often inspires motivation, rather than the other way around**¹; therefore, providing young people with an activity which is an expression of values for balance and sustainability may help activate those latent values in them.

Therefore, if Give a Damn's goal is broader than just personal behaviour change, we believe that as a first step to activating less-engaged young people, **our hands-on activities have the potential to make a significant impact**.

¹Noam Shpancer 2010, 'Action Creates Emotion', Psychology Today, https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/insight-therapy/201010/action-creates-emotion?quicktabs_5=0



SOCIAL MEDIA SHOULD BE SOCIAL.

Social media is where many young people are interacting. This is clear from the abundance of evidence for young people's use of social networking platforms.

But social media is fast-moving and constantly changing. Our primarily informative approach thus far did not capture people's attention, demonstrating the need for informative content to be of excellent quality in order to cut through.

If we want to have a sense of online community as a further stepping stone for young people after their first engagement, in addition to an information-sharing page, we may need to make a **friendlier online platform for people to share their own events** and content to enable horizontal sharing across Give a Damn's network.



YOUNG PEOPLE GET IT DONE.

We primarily interacted with young people who were already oriented towards sustainability initiatives, and many were recruited through other partners working in sustainability.

These people are not a high priority to recruit given they have already made steps to involve themselves in sustainability initiatives; however, we learned that **many engaged young people have an interest in finding the right way to reach out to their friends.**

We've also been inspired by the actions of the Schools Strike for Climate student organisers; when properly resourced and with appropriate training, young people will make things happen for themselves.

We recognise an opportunity here, not just for Give a Damn staff to reach out to young people, but to provide young people with the right supports and tools to do so themselves.



THIS WORKS FOR WOMEN.

Women were on board for Give a Damn. However, we struggled to attract many male participants, and almost none of our regular volunteers were men.

We examined some of the different responses amongst our different focus groups, and tried to look for patterns amongst those that were more male-populated.

We speculated that the group with a high proportion of young men represented tended to have slightly less interest in personal change activities and more in systemic change; however, the sample wasn't large enough to be conclusive.

We think this question warrants more exploration—potentially by enlisting some young people to participate in a research and co-design activity which includes chatting to some guys aged 16-24 years.



THE BRAND MATTERS.

People liked the brand. Even by the conclusion of Give a Damn's four-month trial, **the partners we had engaged with were requesting further events to be hosted by Give a Damn.**

Recent writing on the topic of branding in the era of social media suggests that successful brands today are those that cater to and are taken seriously by a particular subculture.¹ For us, this corresponds to those who believe in the capacity for personal behaviour change to provide the foundation for broader political change.

That means constantly staying attuned to what it is that is valued by the young people and partners who work with us. Our partners told us that Give a Damn is valued for providing good quality, well-organised activities and trainings and due to our outreach potential to young people.

¹Douglas Holt 2016, 'Branding in the Age of Social Media', Harvard Business Review, <https://hbr.org/2016/03/branding-in-the-age-of-social-media>



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