Wagga Wagga High School  
Small Waves Program

Context
Wagga Wagga High School was established in 1912 and is an inclusive, comprehensive high school situated in a large regional centre. The school has 1,045 students, including 70 students who identify as Aboriginal. Over 70 students are from a language background other than English and many were once refugees from Africa, Burma and the Middle East. Almost 40 languages are spoken in the school which has a Family and Occupation and Education Index (FOEI) rating of 91 (2015/16 average).

Enhancing community consultation
The Small Waves Program was designed to strengthen current associations with community members and foster new partnerships between the school and the local community. In 2016, eight Year 10 students applied to develop and implement an individual community based project. Each project needed to be of direct benefit to the local community and be able to strengthen family and community engagement in student learning outcomes. Each team member was paired with a mentor from the community who provided support during each phase of the project. Students received training in community awareness, strength/skill identification and project management through a company based in Gundagai.

The range of projects included:
- the professionally printed ‘A Peel into the Past’ recipe book containing contributions from community members
- a food bank of frozen meals to be distributed to those in need within the community
- handmade cards for the local hospital, churches and community service organisations
- gift packs for families of newly enrolled *English as an Additional Language or Dialect* (EALD)* students containing interviews with current EALD students, stationery, a map of the school and explanations of idioms used to describe places within the school
- street art

All projects were presented to the school and community at an exhibition evening. Students spoke about the design and implementation of their projects with parents, mentors, teachers and community members. Parents and Citizens (P&C) Presidents from each of the school’s partner primary schools were invited to attend and were presented with copies of the ‘A Peel into the Past’ recipe book to take back to their schools.

Achievements
The Small Waves Program has been a resounding success. Wagga Wagga High School has established strong school-community partnerships which will enhance the local decision-making process. The involvement of partner school P&C members served to strengthen the connection between primary and secondary P&C groups. The school intends to use this connection to further develop an effective parent representative body that represents all families. Students, mentors, parents and community members evaluated the program and made the following comments:
- “I’ve noticed that my mentee has grown throughout the entire project and actively sought out new people within the community to engage with in the process of completing the book”, “What a fabulous initiative”, “The quality of the projects is a credit to you and all of the students. The painting is fabulous” and “I felt that my project really made a difference in my community. I made people feel happy.”

Small Waves is featured in a documentary at [Wagga Wagga TV](http://www.wagga.wagga.tv).  

Sustainability
The school aims to build upon the connections made through the program to encourage primary school parents to consider attending their child’s high school P&C group. A staff member from the school will attend partner school P&C meetings to provide information on the initiatives and achievements of high school students. The staff member will also facilitate opportunities for high school students to assist other P&C groups to engage in the local community consultation process within their respective schools. The school will use its connection with partner school P&Cs to engage and consult with more diverse groups within the community. The Small Waves Program will operate again in 2017.

* EALD students are those for whom English is an addition language or dialect.

For more information on Wagga Wagga High School visit their website.