

*“Building pathways to help young people flourish
across our schools and communities”*



UPPER HUNTER APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY SUMMIT REPORT

Friday 28 July - Saturday 29 July 2017
Muswellbrook High School

michellemcquaid
writer • teacher • change activator

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Where there's a Will

**Where there's a Will Upper Hunter
Appreciative Inquiry Summit Outputs**

***"Building pathways to help young people flourish
across our schools and communities"***

Through the joint efforts of the local charity "Where There's A Will" (WTAW) and the Positive Education Schools Association (PESA), more than 120 students, teachers, principals, parents, community and sporting groups came together in July 2017 at Muswellbrook High School to explore how we could help young people to flourish across our schools and communities in the Upper Hunter region. Facilitated by Michelle McQuaid, our aim was to:

- Discover what was working well across our schools and communities when it comes to helping our young people to flourish.
- Dream of what might be possible if our schools and communities were able to help more young people flourish consistently across the Upper Hunter.
- Design pathways for our schools, sporting clubs, community groups and families to use positive psychology approaches to connect our resources and ensure we're giving our young people the knowledge, tools and support they need to consistently flourish.
- Commit to the actions our schools and community will start immediately taking to make our hopes for the wellbeing of our young people in the Upper Hunter a reality.

It was an incredible two days that united the community's strengths, demonstrated what our young people are capable of achieving and the opportunities for the adults in our community to mentor their development and growth. Best of all, it was a lot of fun!



What Did We Discover?

After hearing more than 100 stories across the hall we learned that:

- Young people flourish when they are given opportunities to challenge themselves and to connect with others.
- Young people want to - and are able to - take the lead in creating and navigating these opportunities for themselves.
- Young people would like – and benefit greatly from – the support and mentoring of adults who respect and value them.
- It makes it easier when we all have a common language to share.

We heard stories of flourishing young people who:

- After attending a student-led Appreciative Inquiry Summit St at Peter's College, came home and, with the support of adults around them, for the first time ever connected student leadership groups across the Upper Hunter schools in their own Appreciative Inquiry effort to explore how they could individually and collectively be leaders who help make positive changes for young people happen in their community.
- At the under 10's Cricket Club with the help of a 17 year old student who coached them discovered that the fun that can come from learning new skills and making new friends when we come together around a shared interest.
- Overcame anxiety or challenges when there was a community of friends, teachers, parents and others around them and any stigma of needing help or support is lifted.
- Have a science teacher who treats them with respect and engages them, by not simply teaching them the physics curriculum, but makes it relevant and meaningful to their lives.
- Attended the Great Aussie Bush Camp or the Outward Bound programs and had the opportunity to put themselves in uncomfortable, but supportive environments to discover the bravery and strengths they didn't know they had until that moment and to feel more connected by this shared discovery and adventure to each other.
- Were members of the Robotics Club and figured out how to raise \$60,000 themselves through fundraising and sponsorship so they could attend a competition in Texas for students around the world.
- Welcomed and accepted kids from other countries who are coming into their schools by taking the initiative themselves to invite the new kids to be part of sporting teams and take part in school and community activities. As a result it has quickly created a sense of belonging and diversity for everybody.
- Were part of an F1 program who created and built a car to race in Malaysia, but lacked the skills to raise the money so they could travel to the race. By working with other students who helped them learn how to fundraise they did eventually

manage to get there, and were able to have this incredible opportunity for learning and growth as a result of learning how to each play to their strengths.

And we heard the story of Jake:

Jake is a student who has cerebral palsy and can only speak with the assistance of a computer and needs a full-time classroom aid. Despite these challenges and the loss of his father, Jake has managed to win the respect and hearts of his peers through his extraordinary bravery, his grit and his immensely positive attitude. Jake can say just one word. That word is "Yes!"

As a result his classmates are incredibly supportive of Jake. When he plays basketball with them, they catch the ball on his behalf and ask him where he wants to pass it and make this a reality for him. As they've read books in class about other children facing physical challenges that Jake relates to they have noted down and passed messages of encouragement to him.

This year Jake was voted school captain. For Jake and his classmates, this is a shared story of triumph over adversity in which they each play a starring role that enables individual and collective flourishing.

As we explored the stories of young people flourishing in the Upper Hunter, we found these common root causes of success:

The need for challenges

- Engagement
- Determination
- Courage
- Have a go!
- Growth mindset
- Grit
- Development and commitment
- Accomplishment gives meaning to all
- Strengths – knowing what they are (identifying)
- Relaxing, joyful environment
- Belief – fun
- Providing opportunities to explore
- Participation in training and competitions
- Other person centred
- Willingness to be part of something bigger
- Shared meaning; purpose
- Life skills
- Creating positive environments in creative areas ie. The Conservatorium of Music
- Opportunity with support

- Providing pathways through employment opportunities to direct youth onto their next path post-school

The need for connection

- Building relationships, good camaraderie, belonging
- Belonging
- Collaboration
- Teamwork

The need for students to lead

- Students voice
- Student direction
- Student centred ownership
- Strength of relationships older and younger
- Relationships at all levels
- Strong leadership

The need for mentoring and support

- Scaffolding for success
- Creating positive role models for students of all ages (mentoring)
- Encouragement from many places eg. community, schools, etc.
- Diversity of good mentors in all – meet individual needs of youth
- Supportive community
- Inclusivity and support from the P&F to ensure no kids miss out
- Food for Friends program – provides a sense of giving and caring for youth
- Positivity leadership by the principal to flow through to staff and students (leadership from top)
- Integrating with other schools
- Extending boundaries of support

What Did We Dream of Creating?

As a group we put ourselves in the year 2020 and tried to visualise the schools and communities in the Upper Hunter using positive psychology practices and connecting our resources consistently in the ways we had discovered works best for young people. We dreamed of:

- Realising that we are all in this together (see here: <https://vimeo.com/229058980/666fdcfb02>). That across the region we are one large extended family who need to look for what lights each of us and to value each person's unique strengths (see here: <https://vimeo.com/229072060/04a2b88b6e>).
- Reporting the good news (see here: <https://vimeo.com/229072184/3444afd52d> and <https://vimeo.com/229072299/97079193b5>) that from pre-natal to young adults that we have provided our young people, their teachers, their parents and their community with the resources – be they a common language, training or apps (see here: <https://vimeo.com/229058956/a7ccd10d3d>) – to help them truly flourish. That our youth are alive, our teachers can unwind, our language unites, our mentors do it right, our towns support our people, our children share, our parents care, our churches get messy and that we're flourishing everywhere.
- Understanding that it takes a village to raise a child. And as a result our schools have come together to create a safety net of influencers for our young people that lifts them up (see here: <https://vimeo.com/229058985/6da7f0debc>). We've also created websites and apps that help us to connect to pathways for wellbeing across our community (see here: <https://vimeo.com/229071918/8f6568ea68>).
- Positive education becoming bigger for the Upper Hunter than the mining boom (see here: <https://vimeo.com/229072466/04eba129b2>)! After all from little things big things grow - P.E.R.M.A. (see <https://vimeo.com/229058965/ec4d1da17e>)
- And that's the way we became the PERMA bunch (see here: <https://vimeo.com/229058962/4f2259e271>).

As one of our students wrote:

"Dream big" they say,
So we have had a little play.
We've kicked off with Bounce Back,
And given it a crack.

We need to value teachers' wellbeing,
Because overall they're human beings.
We need to educate the parents so they can be seen,
Positively participating in this big dream.

We need students to be aware,
That mental health is not a scare.

Where There's A Will is teaching us to care,
Our deep emotions, we can share.

Promote a more flexible education,
So that everyone can strengthen their relations.
Having a goal of mastering civility,
Because in the end anything is a possibility.

In every school there would be a counselor,
A teacher specially trained to be an advisor.
For parents, wellbeing would be at the centre of what we do,
And teachers could include this in their reports to you.
If only respect could be seen,
Like a confetti path of where we've been.
It would not only decrease our cries,
But bring colour to our lives.

Continuation of Where's There's A Will in schools,
We thank you for all the tools.
It takes one great mind to change a community,
Imagine what we can do with unity.

(See here: <https://vimeo.com/229058974/bdbce56b9c>)

And as one of our teams wrote (to the tune of *The Lion Sleeps Tonight*):

In the Hunter, the Upper Hunter,
The youth's alive tonight.
In the schools, in all the schools,
The teachers can unwind.

In the classrooms, the peaceful classrooms,
Our language does unite,
In the clubs, the sporting clubs,
The mentors do it right.

In the towns with all out people,
Support is always there.
Children sharing, their parents caring,
We flourish everywhere.

We know the way, we know the way.
We have the way, we have the way.
This is the way, this is the way.
We are the way, we are the way.

See their live performance here: <https://vimeo.com/229058978/195de1bec1>

Specifically we hoped for:

Our young people:

- Feeling confident to take risks because the community supports them.
- Paying what we've learned about wellbeing forward to others.
- Removing the invisibility of mental illness.
- Looking out for each other and helping each other to flourish.
- Have mentor groups across different age levels.
- Have opportunities for more fun, play and things to do in our communication

Our schools:

- Embedded strategy of wellbeing across all our schools.
- Every person in each school has been trained in wellbeing.
- Updated curriculum that includes mental health.
- Make learning more fun and achievable.
- Respect for teachers and students.
- Value teachers' wellbeing.
- Staff working together across our schools.
- Extra wellbeing support within our schools, rather than having to look outside.
- Continuation of Where There's A Will and Bounce Back in our schools.

Our families:

- Attend positive education training and openly share ideas with each other about strategies/positive education ideas
- To feel empowered to improve their own lives and those of their children
- To know that a range of emotions is normal and knowing how to navigate them is part of being resilient.
- To support and value each other.

Our communities:

- Empathy for mental health.
- Open discussions within community groups about the benefits of positivity and wellbeing.
- A common language for wellbeing across all schools, clubs and organisations.
- All members of the community group have completed Mental Health First Aid
- Interagency groups work with their client to impart positive education messages and skills
- Mentoring for our young people.
- Have a growth mindset and follow through.
- A Wellbeing Centre in our communities to bring people together.

How Could We Make Our Dream A Reality?

We brainstormed, prioritised and prototyped possible pathways of how we might make these dreams of enabling remarkable people to flourish a reality. The ideas we are really keen to take forward in the short-term include:

Student Leadership:

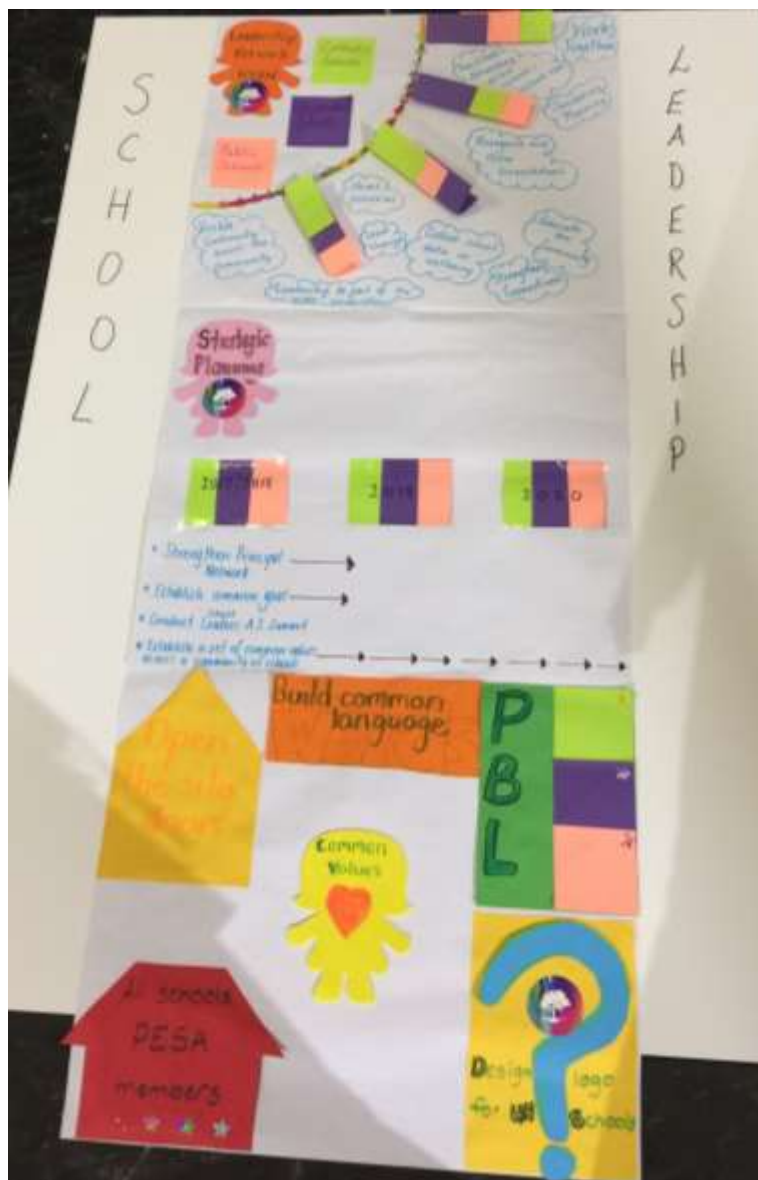
See here <https://vimeo.com/229058954/518b08435a>

We want to build leadership in the Upper Hunter area for all people by focusing on: primary schools, reluctant leaders and programs for boys. We'd like to put a poster like the one below in all schools so all students know what we're towards and our timeframe. For example, we'd love to help run a "Challenge Day" across our schools like a circuit that draws on student's different strengths and encourages us to collaborate and help build leadership in the Upper Hunter.



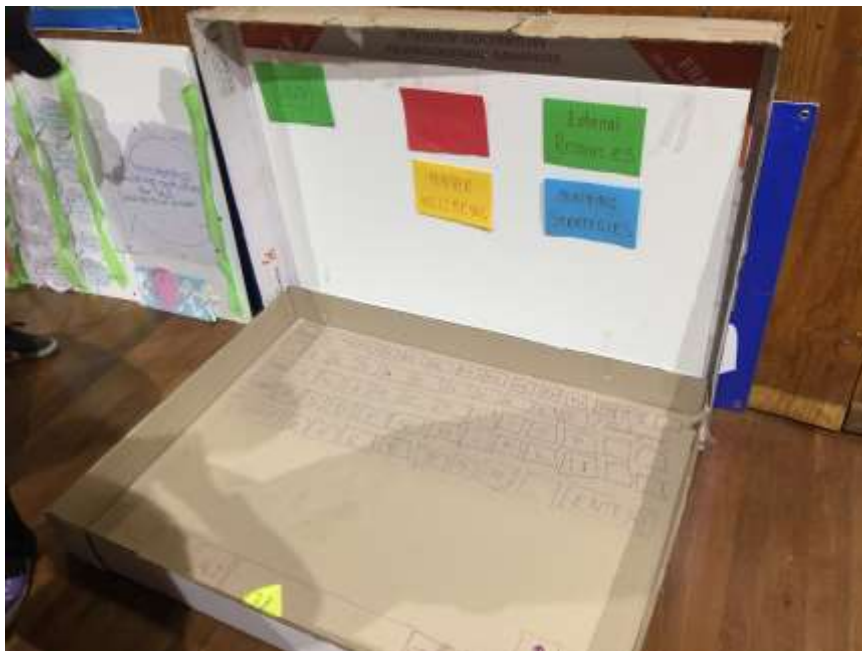
School Leadership: see here <https://vimeo.com:229058948:0c40a580c3>

We'd like to continue leveraging the Principals' Where There's A Will Network across our schools by: extending the group beyond principals to include executive team members (i.e. deputy principals) so we have succession planning in place, ensuring we are sharing our resources for wellbeing across the schools and measuring the impact we are having; we want to leverage the schools' strategic plans by conducting a mini AI Summit to create shared vision and goals across our schools; and building a set of common values and language with a common logo for our schools and all being PESA members.



Professional Development: see here <https://vimeo.com/229058943/92dfb88f25>

We want to create a website all teachers in the Upper Hunter could access with a login that contains: a Chat Room where teachers can connect with each other; Teaching Strategies to show us how to develop positive psychology and PERMA skills in our classrooms based on the different stages of childhood development; Teacher Wellbeing with resources to help teachers improve their own wellbeing and ways to share what's working well; External Resources linked to Upper Hunter Services, PESA and other positive education tools; and Online Training on PERMA and mental health first aid. . In addition Where There's A Will has secured funding for Melbourne University's Professional Certificate of Positive Education to during 2017 and Professor Lea Water's Visible Wellbeing Program for a number of our schools in 2018 to help support our efforts.



Curriculum: see here <https://vimeo.com/229058923/1008cad4bd> Priorities to come

We agreed on the importance of a common language across our schools and community that utilises evidence-based positive psychology approaches for effective pedagogy. During our prototype we explored the use of PROSPER (as featured in the Bounce Back program), during our post-summit discussions we have agreed to focus on PERMA as this is what is being used for all other audiences and to incorporate Strengths under Engagement and Resilience under Accomplishment.



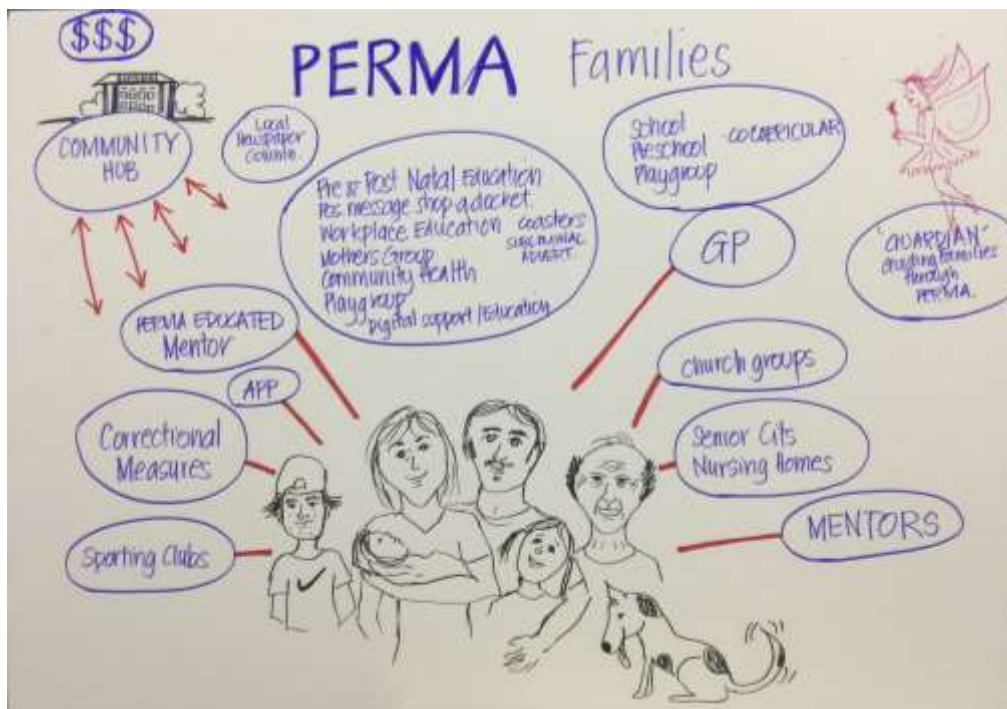
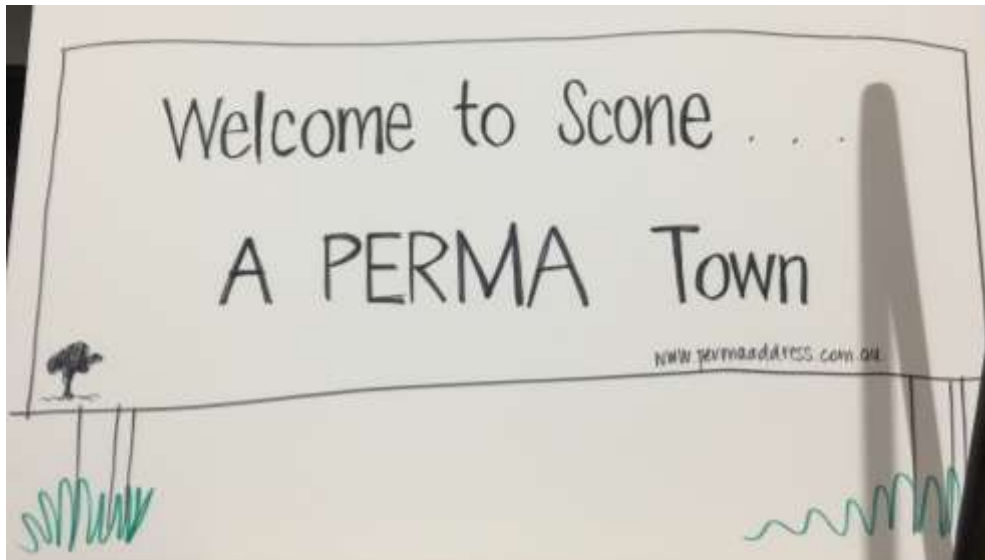
Co-Curricular : see here <https://vimeo.com/229058912/183fadae4d>

We need to be integrated into other groups – particularly Student Leadership and Sporting and Community Groups. Going forward we have decided to role the ideas of this group into these efforts.



Families: see here: <https://vimeo.com/229058927/868a52739b>

When you drive into any town in the Upper Hunter you would be welcomed into a PERMA town so everyone knows what we value. We would like to help create: training to support our families; PERMA messages throughout our community (i.e. shopping docket, sporting grounds, etc); workplace education on why wellbeing matters in our companies, families and community; in nursing homes so our elderly are thriving; and case workers for families in need who understand wellbeing and PERMA; and a hub in each community where people can learn, connect and share around these ideas.



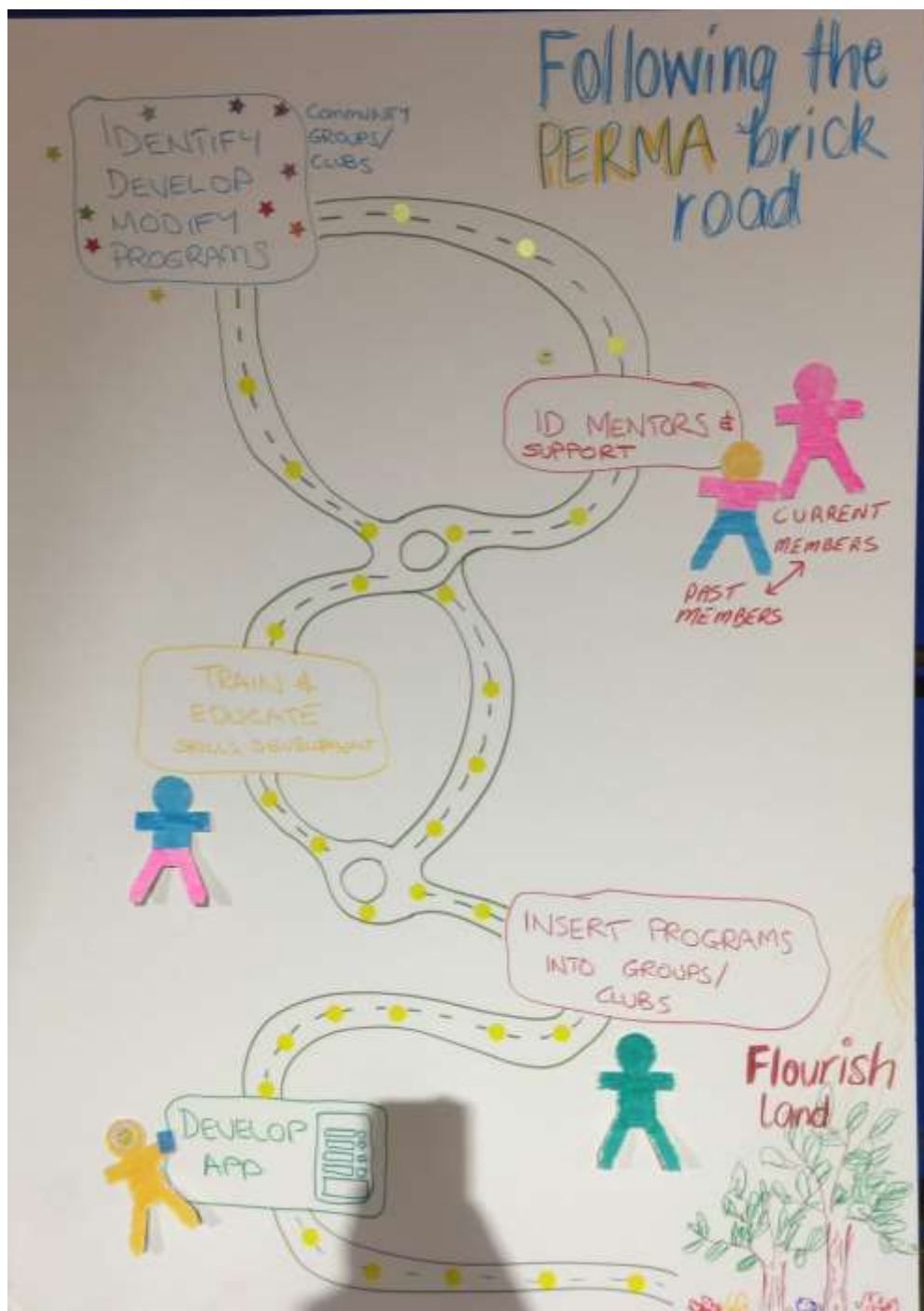
Mentoring: see here: <https://vimeo.com/229058938/069221c136>

We would have a dedicated mentoring champion who would: understand what already exists for mentoring in our community and who would like to be involved; to provide a framework and guidance for people to become mentors for young people; to train our mentors in PERMA and wellbeing; and to match, monitor and celebrate mentors and the people they support.



Community Groups + Sporting Clubs: see here <https://vimeo.com/229058916/1b4d421871>

We believe we need to prioritise mentoring (this has been rolled into the mentoring group as we go forward), funding for training and education and how to connect a wellbeing and PERMA focus into our existing sporting and community groups so we can reach Flourish Land. Our focus became how to deliver all of this through an App.



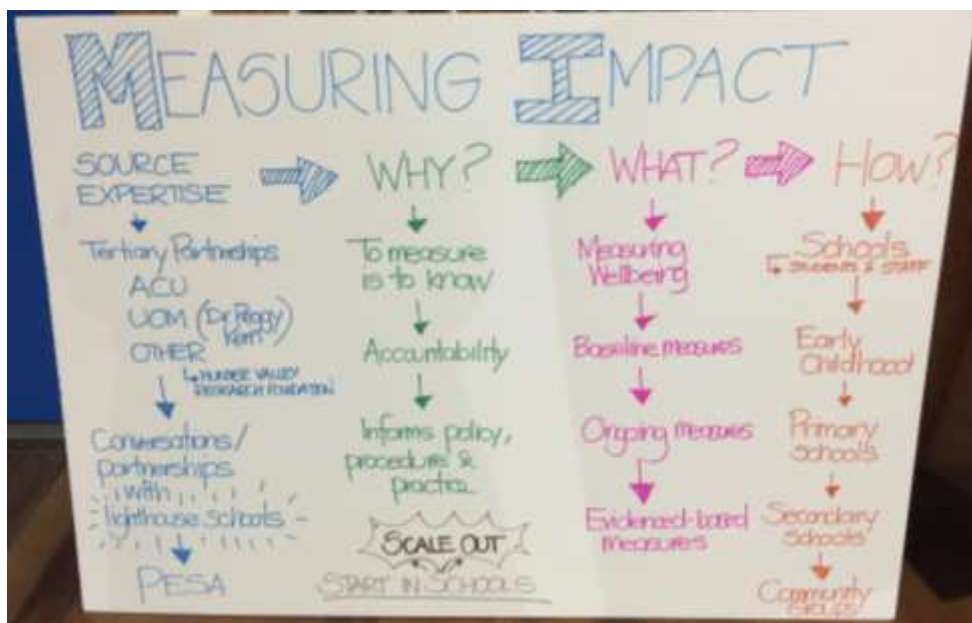
Community Relationships: see here <https://vimeo.com/229058922/dca4255cc1>

We want to grow Where There's A Will to branch out into our community we believe this can be achieved by: creating a community app for wellbeing services that stems from WTAW and the values of PERMA; create community forums for sharing information on wellbeing and mental health and possibly mini-AI summits for these groups; and creating safe spaces to seek support for wellbeing and mental health (i.e. helpline and houses).



Measurement: see here <https://vimeo.com/229058931/7e5bf774b8>

Getting a measure of success is one of the most important steps we need to take in this whole process so we understand what impact we're having, what's working and what's not and to be able to continue to attract funds for our efforts. We need to: source expertise to assist us (Dr. Peggy Kern who is a global expert on the measurement of PERMA has now agreed to support our efforts); we need to collect a baseline measure (Peggy, Michelle McQuaid and WTAW are working to establish this across our community and in 2018 our work with Professor Lea Waters and her Visible Wellbeing team will also collect measures across our schools); we need a long-term plan for maintaining, analysing and reporting on the measure of our impact.



How Will We Deliver On These Commitments?

All participants were invited to volunteer if they would like to attend a first meeting after the Summit to explore how they could begin making their design priorities and prototype a reality. Where There's A Will will provide coaches to help guide each of these teams, but does not have the resources alone to make these hopes a reality. The following people agreed to take these next steps together:

Student Leadership:

Our hope is that all young people in Upper Hunter Schools have access to leadership opportunities. At present this team includes: Genevieve Cook, Sally Hagley, Rebecca Hopkins and Lindy Hunt. Together we hope to:

Key Deliverables	Potential Resources Required	Target Date
Secondary Summit Focus on reticent students with school/communities nominating Adelaide 2018 2020	Plan re-evaluation of 2017 to WTAW Budget and recommendation for the future Link in within UHY serviced and UHSCYC (Leanne and Mary)	End of Term 3 2017
Burn Bright 8-10 and PS kids	Food for 30/8/17 Evaluation and future recommendations	End of Term 4 2017
The kids in the middle	Term 4 after exams Survey to assess growth/feelings/skills	
Gala Day trial	End of term 3,4 1) SHS and SAS → run a Merrina day 2) MHS and STJ → 2018 all schools	
Boys leadership	Johnno, Lachlan, Marcus, Toby, Harrison Term 1 2018	
Primary school involvement	Invite to all secondary activities Term 3 2018 Summit	
Promotion of Student Leadership	Produce a poster to summarise opportunities and get it out to schools	ASAP

School Leadership:

Our hope is to Establish and preserve shared union of wellbeing across the Upper Hunter Schools. At present this team includes: Niamh Marzol, Helen Whale, Nate Atkinson, Paul Smart, Elizabeth Bate, Jane Fuiono, Megan Druitt, Kelly Pearson and Brian Drewe.

Together we hope to:

Key Deliverables	Potential Resources Required	Target Date
Strengthen Principal network and revision vision	Meeting together Update email list	End of Term 3
Conduct school leaders AI summit	Venue Committee Facilitator from PESA Co-ordinate pupil free days 2018	2018
Upskill leaders (principals)	Ravenswood school – excursion School in action	2018
Termly meetings to include exec from each school		2017 T4 onwards
Common elements in strategy plan – Across UH schools	Share plans Discuss plans at meetings	2018-2020
AI Summit 4D's Strategic Plan? PESA conference rego/attendance	Use student leaders to lead/facilitate	
Establish a virtual network – Google Docs	Brian – Agenda PD – teach us how to use Google Docs	2017 T3

Professional Development:

Our hope is to create a website/portal for teachers to connect and complete professional development. At present this team includes: Samantha Fragar, Natalie Walters and Sharon Benton-Crooks. Together we hope to:

Key Deliverables	Potential Resources Required	Target Date
Create the platform	Squarespace Facebook Funding for license est. \$200 p/y	
Facebook group	UH teachers Upper Hunter teachers network	
Add content to website	Links to resources	
Advertising	Facebook sponsored Principals/admin in school distribution	
Content – PESA + registered PD	Positivity institute – Rose K-6 possible modules Headspace – Gred Early childhood Australia webinars	

Curriculum:

Our hope is to create a consistent curriculum (designated KLA) that is taught throughout all schools and facilitates a common language for the whole community utilising evidence-based positive psychology and good educational research for effective pedagogy. At present this team includes: Kat Moore, Liz Leman, Lizz Hickey, Toni Noble and Shelby Lewis. Together we hope to:

Key Deliverables	Potential Resources Required	Target Date
Consistent F-12 Positive Education Curriculum	Department backing School leadership backing Contacts for schools in the area (networking) PD Website Evidence as to why it needs to be included	2018
Designated KLA	Department backing NSW Wellbeing framework School leadership backing	2018
Allocated time (percentage of overall reaching time 45mins -1 hr)		2018
Whole-school wellbeing report	Central	2019 – influences by teacher development
Curriculum - Scope and sequence of PERMA - Teaching strategies - Bounce Back program (written units K-12)		2018

Families:

We hope that every family in the Upper Hunter has awareness/access to PERMA education/knowledge. At present this team includes: Fay Burton, Polly Yuille, Sally Ward-Thomas,, Kirsty Hailes, Nicole McKenzie and Waid Crockett. Together we hope to:

Key Deliverables	Potential Resources Required	Target Date
Training	Money Communication Trainers Strategy/plan	Develop a plan at first meeting: December 2017
Subliminal products/advertising opportunities	Convenor/brains trust Strategy	December 2017

Mentoring:

We hope that we can establish a "Mentoring Mindset" in the Upper Hunnter and commitment to the philosophy that it takes a village to raise a child. We want to have a paid (mentoring champion) who is invested within the community to bring together all groups to develop and support mentors within the community which will lead to mentoring people in need

At present this team includes: Hannah Hunt, Kaye Wright, Tanya Elphinstone, Sarah, Jayne Curruthers, Stella Raleigh, Pammie Seccombe, Pauline Carrigan, Amy Cox, Steve Guihot and Michelle Green. Together we hope to:

Key Deliverables	Potential Resources Required	Target Date
Define/document the role Quantify the role → clear vision	Prospectus	Within a month
Funding	Money → funding primary health network	3 months
Measurement		
Awareness/data (the who)		
Partners – interconnecting with other groups		

Community Groups & Sporting Clubs (with Co-Curricular):

We hope to form a committee that involves representatives from all schools, community and sporting groups. A place of contact to share ideas and resources. At present this team includes: Kim Wilson, James Burns, Jodie Mayall, Eloise Hand, Marika Everleigh, Mick Reynolds, Kathy Burns, Linda Richardson, Sally Jackson and Charlotte. When we first come together we hope to finalise our milestones and how we will work together.

Community Relationships:

We hope to create strong relationships between communities and schools so that they may flourish by embedding a consistent message throughout the community and harnessing shared actions. At present this team includes: Patrick Wild, Virginia Reynolds, Robert Thurgood, Jaclyn Geerin, Doug Harris, Isis Hallett, Heather Ranclaud, Jane Callinan, and Kirsten Noack. Together we hope to:

Key Deliverables	Potential Resources Required	Target Date
Initial meeting – stock take of activities and groups in existence	Place Royal Hotel Score	7/9/17
Identify a group in each UH town for a pilot program for WTAW		
AI Summit for each town		
Pilot program??		
Mental health first aid for Murrurundi		
Rural outreach WTAW events		29/7/18
Information sharing across committees		

Measurement:

We hope to measure our progress and success – starting with baseline measurement and regular measurement intervals to ensure efficacy, sustainability and accountability and to provide future direction. At present this team includes: Daryl Dutton, Lauren Sheargold, Will Mulligan, Jane Mendelson, Nikki Cook, Gillian Ryland, Marita Hayes-Brown, Kim Bence and Peggy Kern. Together we hope to:

Key Deliverables	Potential Resources Required	Target Date
Identify appropriate measurement tools: - Students - Staff	- PESA to seek input from members - Request information from state departments of education (SA, NSW) Hunter and NE Health (Lee Waters) → students and staff	4 weeks
Start collecting baseline data - Students - Staff (PERMA profiler)	Peggy Kern: EPOCH tool? → invite her to come a day early to discuss this Data and anecdotal evidence	Ask Peggy
Report Baseline results to community Communication and rollout plan		
Data collection		12 months later? Ask Peggy

Next Steps & Recommendations

The AI Summit was an incredible opportunity to connect and gain commitment for helping more young people across the Upper Hunter region flourish consistently. Where There's A Will can not deliver this alone, so it is essential that we find ways to maintain the interest and momentum we have created and pay forward these opportunities to expand our reach across our community.

The Where There's A Will Steering Committee for the Summit will now take on a coaching role for each action team, to help them stay connected, supported and celebrated as they tackle their design priorities. WTAW will continue to keep all participants and the broader community up-to-date with the progress of each team and look for opportunities to continue connecting our individual and collective efforts to help young people to flourish in the Upper Hunter.

In addition to the action teams that have emerged from the summit there have been discussions about several other opportunities for which future teams may want to be created or investments made. These include:

- **A wellbeing community app** – In both the dream and design sections there were suggestions for different apps or mobile websites to help support our local education, tools and practices. This could be built off the WTAW website, but it needs a team to drive it.
- **A wellbeing hub** - in several of the dreams and design priorities mention was made of physical spaces where people can learn about PERMA, access resources, come together for events or find someone to talk to. Perhaps there is an opportunity to pilot a WTAW hub in one of the towns to explore demand for this kind of service.
- **PERMA Training** – several of our action teams have identified the need for training – school leaders, teachers, families, mentors, community and sporting groups. Whilst teachers are being covered through the Professional Certificate and Visible Wellbeing initiatives, there are no current plans in place for these other stakeholders. There could be a cost-effective opportunity to bring in a trainer to quickly upskill these groups – and train these groups to train others – and inject another wave of education and momentum around PERMA that would advance the hopes of multiple action teams.
- **Documenting The Journey** – so that other communities around Australia and the world can learn from the Upper Hunter experience it would be wonderful to find a way to document what is unfolding on video. We are reaching out to documentary makers who may be able to assist us.

We also think it is essential that the WTAW Steering Committee and the action teams walk the talk on wellbeing. We would recommend that group wellbeing coaching is put in place for the steering committee as a way to thank them for all their hard work and support them on this journey. We also recommend that action teams are encouraged to replicate this effort among themselves as a way to keep people engaged, energised and motivated for the journey ahead. After all we are the way.