



November 24th 2006

Teaching RESPECT to fight crime and truancy

Australia's leading Indigenous Theatre Company is using hip-hop, break-dance, theatre skills and traditional dance to increase community pride and reduce crime in Perth's northern suburbs.

Yirra Yaakin's workshop program, RESPECT, is funded by the Department of Corrective services to fight truancy, crime and anti-social behaviour in Balga, Koondoola and Girrawheen.

The workshops are co-ordinated by professional Indigenous actors with experience in areas such as theatre, film, circus-skills and traditional didgeridoo and dance.

The RESPECT program has also attracted members of Perth's popular hip-hop group DOWNSYDE.

Scotty from Downsyde has helped the students write and record their own rap-song featuring a sample of Aretha Franklin's classic song RESPECT.

The students will be heading into a recording studio on Monday 27th of November to lay down their first-ever professional recording – a significant achievement given that these participants are seen to be 'at-risk-youth'.

Yirra Yaakin Executive Producer Sam Cook said workshop participants connected with hip-hop and were keen to learn MC'ing, rapping and break-dance.

"There's a misconception that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teenagers are swapping their own identity for Americanised hip-hop culture, but that's not true, they're just expressing themselves through a contemporary art-form, while still maintaining their own cultural identity." Ms Cook said.

RESPECT aims to engage young people, improve their self-esteem and pride and help them make positive life-choices.

The workshops are provided free-of-charge to all Indigenous participants.

The students will celebrate their successful participation in the RESPECT program with a community BBQ and CD launch in Balga on Thursday 7th of December at 3pm.

PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES: Monday 27th Nov at 3.00pm, workshop 'rappers' will be recording their CD in DOWNSYDE's home studio at 39 Dunedin Street, Mount Hawthorn.

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