

16th December 2021

West Wimmera Shire
Mr. David Bezuidenhout
49 Elizabeth Street
Edenhope VIC 3318

Dear Mr Bezuidenhout and Counsellors,

In my role as the Youth Liaison Officer at the Edenhope Police Station, I am working to assist our local youth through a program known as Operation Flinders. This long-standing program endeavours to re-engage young people who are 'at risk' with their communities and give them opportunities to develop leadership skills.

For 2022, after two years of being unable to field a team due to Covid border closures, I have been fortunate to be offered the opportunity to take a full team of 10 vulnerable youth, aged between 14 to 17 years of age, on an eight day wilderness program in the northern Flinders Ranges (S.A). The participants this year will be from across the West Wimmera Shire area. I am seeking your support to enable these youth to participate in this year's trip, which is scheduled for August 2022.

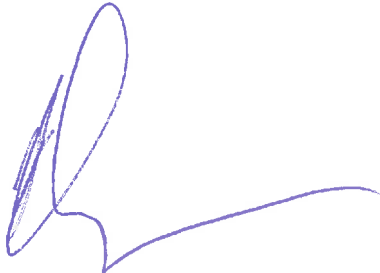
In the past ten years I have been involved with the program. I am now co-ordinating this program. I am currently working in partnership with the following agencies: Edenhope College and Goroke College. The colleges will allow the participants to attend this exercise within the school curriculum. Victoria Police will also be supporting me to take part in the exercise for the eight days.

There will be follow-up organised by Operation Flinders after the event in our local area, to help maintain a good working relationship between these young people, police and stakeholders. Building these relationships will provide ongoing mentoring, to help the participants further their goals and strengthen their achievements from this challenge.

I have included information on the Operation Flinders organisation, below. This includes details of the program, its operating principles and the content of this planned field exercise. The total cost of the trip is approximately \$42,000 – including travel to and from the remote site, accommodation for overnight stops enroute, and the field exercise amount of \$4000 per youth. In 2014, 2016, 2017 2018 and 2019 the West Wimmera Shire generously assisted in the success of this program. Any assistance to assist the local youth who are the future of our community would be greatly appreciated

Please contact me, if you require any further information regarding the program or what is entailed in providing your support. I would be eager to share with you and your colleagues the positive feedback regarding previous years' participants, which has been received from Edenhope College and parents. Any funding that is available through the West Wimmera Shire for this beneficial program would be gratefully appreciated. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Darren Ferluga', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Darren Ferluga

Leading Senior Constable 34011

Edenhope Police Station

Phone: 03 5585 1003

Mobile: 0411 032 049

Operation Flinders Foundation is a South Australian based charitable organisation that runs a world leading wilderness adventure program for young offenders and young people at risk. The program takes participants between the age of 14 and 18 years on an eight day exercise in the far northern Flinders Ranges, providing an opportunity for its participants to break away from their past and grow as valued members of the community.

The Foundation offers a unique program that presents its participants with a new direction in life. Teams trek 100km through the spectacular Flinders Ranges with the aim to develop personal attitudes of self esteem, leadership, motivation, team work and responsibility. They learn basic bush survival skills, are taught to abseil, discover Indigenous culture and learn of the rich history of the Flinders Ranges. Unlike other aspects of their lives, there is not an opportunity for the participants to 'opt out'.

Each team, of between 8 and 10, is led by a team leader skilled in navigation and bushcraft. The young participants live out and sleep on the ground, prepare their own food, navigate through the Flinders Ranges and learn the values of team work and respect.

An independent evaluation in 2001 reported that the program at that time lead the world in its outcomes, and found that the young people at high risk underwent a significant positive change as a result. Operation Flinders fields teams from both metropolitan and regional communities throughout South Australia. In the years 2008-2009, a record number of over 320 young people participated in an Operation Flinders Foundation Exercise.

Award Winning Program

In 2008 Operation Flinders also honoured as a winner at the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards. The Foundation was one of only six projects out of 67 entries from around Australia, and the only South Australian entry, to win a national ACVP Award.

