

First in First Aid



## The Australian Youth Council – Key Themes and Messages

### EXPLORING ‘COOL AND HEALTHY – what does it actually mean?’

The first Australian Youth Council (AYC) message for 2006 called for St John to be a ‘cool and healthy’ organisation. But what does this actually mean, and what implications does it have for our organisation?

The message highlights an issue for St John that the AYC identified as important to ensure the continued relevance of the organisation. The AYC wants to encourage St John to start to think about its image in the community, and the way that it addresses the health and well being of its members.

The AYC would like to see St John as an organisation which:

- uses vibrant and exciting marketing to attracts new members;
- provides health promotion programmes and fosters a culture of ‘good health’ within the organisation by seeking opportunities to educate and inform members;
- is in tune with the latest volunteering trends and best practice models;
- constantly re-evaluates its relevance to the community and community needs.
- utilises the latest technologies to engage members across the organisation;
- is vibrant and competitive in the volunteering sector, particularly as a youth development organisation.

#### **Step 1 ‘cool and healthy’ – Better promote what we do well and who we are to the broader community.**

St John Ambulance is a well recognised brand across the Australian community, though all too often our incredible services to the community go unrecognised. In order to better leverage community, commercial and government support, St John needs to use advertising networks and public relations channels to clearly articulate the volunteer work by all areas in the organisation. In particular, the way St John builds human capital or community capacity by developing its members and helping fellow community members in time of needs or distress.

An example of this kind of strategy is the way that the St John New Zealand ‘Cadet of the Year’ is selected. This is based on their ability to be a positive spokesperson for organisation, and their representation qualities rather than first aid ability or particular experience in organisation. This young person is used as marketing tool for St John New Zealand Youth, both internally and externally.



This might mean that St John focuses less on promoting the more traditional parts of our organisation and processes, and instead think about the ways that we can best embrace opportunities to sell our work. When we are the first to do something, like establishing cycling response crews, or we are the best at what we do, like successful resuscitations using first response teams and defibrillation we need to better promote our great work.

## **Step 2 'cool and healthy' – To be more relevant to our community and responsive to community need.**

In order to best serve our community and be cool and healthy, St John needs to be relevant and responsive to community need. An organisation that provides services and programmes based on identified areas of need, whatever they may be, ensures its continued significance and longevity as a respected facet of the Australian community. This requires St John to 'think outside the square' for ways to best engage volunteers, and best serve our community.

Traditionally, St John's programmes have provided training and development opportunities, the provision of community service and first aid products. As we challenge ourselves in an ever-changing era to remain relevant, we need to allow our services to evolve to 'fit' the community we serve.

### **'Cool and healthy' - some things to think about**

- The importance of our image in the community, particularly the way we look and our responsibility to 'role-model' health and personal well-being.
- The ability for our organisation to be a key stakeholder in responding to multi-agency emergencies and pandemics across state and territory borders.
- Maintaining our focus on national and international ties to 'unite' the St John family.
- The ability of our organisation to remain flexible and allow members to nominate their participation that is catered to personal desire, skill and availability.
- Promotion of our alternative volunteering programmes, particularly in Community Care and eye care volunteering.
- The way that, as volunteers, members have the opportunity to work with many teams, with people with varied skills and experience, and build valuable networks.
- Our capacity to provide free training to an Australian Quality Framework standard, and personal and professional development opportunities.

### **Case Study – AMPERSAND NETWORK ([www.ampersand.org.au](http://www.ampersand.org.au))**

A Melbourne based organisation 'Ampersand' has recognised the value of volunteering and the need for it to be an attractive option for young people. Ampersand run 'Losing your V' nights at local Melbourne pubs, which aim to present exciting student friendly volunteer positions to young people in a fun environment. Tom McIlroy from Ampersand says the night is a 'unique opportunity for sexy, ambitious students to network in an environment where volunteering is the focus.' Ampersand is a non-profit organisation working to make volunteering more appealing and accessible to young people and brings volunteering prospects to young people via an online database with over 8,000 student friendly opportunities.

This is just one example of the way that volunteering can be marketed to young people as both cool and healthy. Whether its pub nights for university students, exciting volunteer programmes, adventurous camps or international exchanges – St John needs to use its initiative and get creative to think of **ways to best engage our membership and the community we serve**. Now that would be cool and healthy.

Sally Hasler, Chair AYC &  
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On behalf of the AYC  
Feb 2007