



Linking Industry with
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Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

25th, 26th, 27th November 2009 at Longerenong College

Students from Melbourne and the local region joined together over 3 days at Longerenong College in an inaugural three-day *Leading the Way* Forum. Many came not knowing what to expect or what was in store for them during this sustainability event.

Yet all participants left with a deeper understanding of water issues facing the Wimmera region and a greater appreciation for those who manage their daily activities in these times of a changing climate. All students made a commitment to take personal action in their homes schools and communities and many left with the promise to stay in touch with new friends made during the forum.

The Forum started with a range of team building activities and then students broke up into special interest groups to consider issues concerning the allocation of water from the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline Project. On the second day, eight local representatives gave a series of presentations to highlight different points of view and students visited some local places of interest to see sustainability practices first hand. On the final day, students delivered group presentation and made commitments to personal action. One student summed up the Forum as "Collective passion for a sustainable future."

But it was not all about research and study. A highlight of the forum was the bush dance held on the first night. Joy Forbes, a local bush dance caller and Principal of Goroke P-12, had all the students up dancing together and mixing with one another for a couple of hours. The students went to bed exhausted and woke the next day looking to build on their newly found friendships.

Tim Shaw, CEO of the Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN said, "It was great to see local young people mixing with young people from the city. I was amazed at the close friendships that formed over this short period of time. I hope we get the chance to hold this Forum again and extend our bonds with our city neighbours."

Jane Stewart, from Tomorrow's Leaders for Sustainability, said "We spent a great deal of time planning for this Forum and are now thrilled with the results. The final student presentations were of a very high standard and not only showed a great understanding of water issues facing the region, but also gave the students an opportunity to showcase their communication skills to a new audience in a new setting."

The Forum was hosted by the Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning Employment Network and Local Community Partnership and was delivered by staff who manage the Tomorrow's Leaders for Sustainability program. The three-day event was funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and was supported by a wide range of local community groups and organisations and individuals.