



# From city to country: changing youth health conversations

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The adventurous and exciting transition from adolescence to adulthood is challenging enough as is, even before considering additional social, economic and cultural factors which disproportionately impact a young person's maximum health potential.

The Dr YES program aims to bridge this gap, by providing health education sessions to high-school students on relevant youth health issues such as alcohol and other drug use, sexual health and mental health. These discussions, facilitated by volunteer medical students, have a strong focus on harm minimisation. Employing this peer-to-peer style fosters an open environment for discussion, aiming to empower young people to make informed decisions about their own health.

Dr YES engages with more than 4,000 students within the Perth metropolitan area on a weekly basis, and even more students through our rural outreach initiatives. Our focus for 2025 centred on minimising health inequities by taking a need-based approach to more regularly engage with young people from a variety of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds beyond the central Perth metropolitan area.

This vision became a reality with the successful completion of two week-long rural trips and doubling the previous number of high-demand whole-day trips to visit schools in Mandurah, Alkimos, Forrestfield, and the Perth Hills. Also, Dr YES visited twice as many alternative youth education centres in 2025 than in previous years – visits which included two youth centres and one college catered for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.



Dr YES Goldfields Volunteers.



Dr YES South West Volunteers.

We are grateful for these opportunities to interact with such diverse and resilient groups of young people.

In June 2025, 15 of our dedicated volunteers facilitated Dr YES sessions in Kalgoorlie and Merredin – our first time visiting the Goldfields region since 2019. Our annual South West trip in November 2025 was once again a resounding success! Throughout the week, 25 enthusiastic volunteers delivered educational sessions to more than 1,300 young people across Bunbury, Busselton and Harvey.

Dr YES sessions were also conducted in Karratha by our previous Dr YES coordinators who were completing their senior years of medical study with the Rural Clinical School of Western Australia. This opportunity allowed medical student volunteers to provide tailored sessions that directly address the needs of their local community. We are excited to announce that these sessions will continue in 2026.

As we approach our 30th year of service to the community, Dr YES continues to remain grounded in its mission of delivering accessible health education that is fun, frank and fresh. It has been truly inspirational to witness the program expand across the State to meet the changing needs of today's young Australians.

Rural trips with Dr YES are an excellent opportunity to promote health literacy, connect students with local services, and allow our volunteers to deepen their appreciation of the many vibrant communities thriving throughout WA. Understanding the unique strengths and challenges faced by these communities is a step towards creating more empathetic and resourceful future clinicians. These complementary efforts ensure we can continue supporting young people with the clarity, confidence and compassion they deserve. ■