

**For Immediate Release
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Wallarah 2 pledge \$5,000 to support Central Coast youth through Plan-It Youth project

The Wallarah 2 Community Foundation has extended a helping hand to Plan-It Youth, a local youth mentoring project supported through collaboration with not-for-profit NSW Active Retirees and Mentors Inc. The \$5,000 grant will be used to support the Plan-It Youth volunteers continue to provide one-on-one mentoring to high school students on the Central Coast ensuring the students stay on track, enabling them get the most out of their educational experience and to assist their future job prospects.

The money provided by Wallarah 2 Coal Project, under its Community Foundation Grant Program, will provide Plan-It Youth with the means to recruit and professionally train volunteer mentors, the majority of whom are senior citizens from the Central Coast community, with a wealth of life experiences to share with the next generation.

These mentors work with year 10 and 11 students in public high schools across the Central Coast supporting them and encouraging them to remain in the education system to continue their learning and increase employment opportunities once they leave school.

Plan-It Youth is committed to improving the lives of both the mentors and youth, sharing life experiences, engaging, connecting and promoting a mutual understanding of cross-generational values. This is delivered via one-on-one mentoring sessions with the dedicated and professionally trained mentors spending up to two hours a week per student for an entire school term.

Ken Bate, President of the Central Coast committee of the program's support group NSW Active Retirees and Mentors said, "The mentoring experience we provide for students is quite often the only time in their life when someone has offered unconditional support and guidance.

"With youth unemployment on the Central Coast sitting between 13 and 30 per cent, Plan-It Youth's ultimate goal is to guide students on pathways that lead to these young people growing into responsible and productive members of the community.

"We believe the service we offer is critical to our area. With youth unemployment so high, a huge number of single parent homes and many families struggling day to day – and these statistics looking to continue to trend upwards - the needs of young people from socially and or economically disadvantaged backgrounds must be a priority. We believe our program is a proactive way of addressing youth unemployment and disengagement in the region – without it our young people's futures will be severely compromised.

"The program has been received with huge success in the community with the mentoring sessions equipping students with the confidence, knowledge and tools to remain at school and complete their HSC, or embark on traineeships or apprenticeships through the TAFE system.

"We aim to help students follow their passions and were recently involved in organising for a student of Tuggerah Lakes Secondary School realise her passion for photography by spending a day with the staff of Breeze Magazine to shoot around the beautiful Long Jetty area.

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“Thankfully, the funding provided by the Wallarah 2 Coal Project will ensure high school students on the Central Coast continue to receive the support our mentoring provides, and for that we are truly grateful.”

Peter Smith, Community Manager of the Wallarah 2 Coal Project said, “Plan-It Youth supports the very foundation of our community, supporting the youth that are our region’s future. The success of the program to date is testament to the work of the volunteers at Plan-It Youth and we are thrilled to be able to play a small role in helping ensure this worthwhile project has the resources it needs to continue.”

The Plan-It Youth program was founded on the Central Coast in Berkeley Vale high school in 1998 and from its success was introduced into other regions throughout NSW.

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For more information, interviews or photos:

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