

# COMMONALITY, COMMUNITY AND OPPORTUNITY

## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME REDESIGN

Meningie Area School, Adelaide  
2016-17

NoTosh Team:  
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How do you support a community school when the community itself has been hit by crisis? The small town of Meningie suffered so badly from the 2007 drought that it saw a mass exodus of its population and an economy in tatters. Meningie Area School felt the impact hard, with a dramatic drop in student numbers. With NoTosh as its partner, the school soon repositioned itself as the rejuvenated heart of this community.

Meningie Area School wanted to create the best possible learning opportunities for its Reception to Year 12 students, and support strategies for growth laid out by the town in the wake of the drought. The NoTosh team helped leadership design ways to open up the school to the community, and provide just the right amount of structure and direction to enable the local community to help shape teaching and learning in a meaningful way.

We co-designed a Community Engagement Day, and engaged staff and students together with an intense immersion into the NoTosh Design Thinking process. The school asked the wider community to develop a number of critical questions for the town's future, and then teachers took those questions, considered how they might be tackled in a classroom environment, and carefully adapted them to fit within the curriculum so students could work towards answering them, while fulfilling learning goals at the same time.

Taking the process one step further, the school considered how they could create local opportunities for students, which would, in turn, help reinvigorate the town and encourage young people to stay on after they finished school and make a life for themselves in Meningie.

With staff and students introduced to NoTosh Design Thinking in the same way, any sense of 'top-down control' was removed, ensuring that every individual was understood to be an equal, with something unique to offer. Together, staff and students created and tested responses to their own challenges: their ideas were both inspiring and controversial.

News of what was taking place at the school quickly spread throughout the local community, and the relationship between the two was



strengthened. Students established themselves as trustworthy, responsible, reliable and innovative contributors to society and the local area.

The students were given the opportunity to present their ideas and prototypes in a showcase environment, set up and delivered by the school. Having worked closely with students on the concept of pitching ideas (with focus on skills, style and delivery) the NoTosh team were confident in their ability to deliver first-class, engaging pitches. Each team presented their thinking, process and prototypes to a large audience at the expo. As a result, students were able to secure help and support from both the town council and a number of local businesses, ensuring that initiatives would be further developed and realised.

Ideas which have been put into practice include the school farm, where students are responsible for its care and growth. They take advice from local community members, and create strands of sustainability which are in turn equipping students with the basic skills to survive. The farm has further developed relations between the school and the local community, showing students how easily the advice and support of local businesses can be accessed, while demonstrating to the community the rich potential of its young people.

The depth of ideas, and their possible impact, could see changes across the local area that will encourage new visitors to the town, see the local economy grow, and create a more resilient and prosperous place to live. Meningie is on the journey to recovery, focusing their energy on creating resilience through learning.

**'The confidence of students, their ability to articulate ideas and prototypes, their behaviour and attitude to working in groups, and their ability and willingness to tackle issues showed the whole local community, not just the school, the potential, focus and grit of the students'** *Iain Love, Principal, The Meningie Area School.*

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Let's start talking.  
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