



PROJECT O LAUNCHES IN COOMA

On Friday 24th February at 11am in Cooma, Big hART will launch a new initiative for the young women of Cooma - **Project O**.

The aim of Project O is to assist young women in rural communities build strong personal agency to help prevent family violence, foster resilience and change their story. With Project O, young women acquire new capabilities, learning how to become change-makers in their community. This sense of personal agency assists young women to be courageous in the face of stereotypes and inequalities that place them at risk, in a society where violence in relationships is common.

"It is a privilege to be working with these inspiring young women to roll out this initiative in the Monaro" said Big hART CEO Scott Rankin. "Project O creates an opportunity to we build resilience, confidence and skill and these young women seize the chance and do the rest."

In 2017, 20 young women aged 13-15 years old from the Monaro High School will participate in Project O. The initiative delivers skills-based workshops and will see the young women work with inspiring female mentors to help them step up, be heard and create a stronger community. In 2017, the young women of Cooma's Project O will develop new skills through running a range of events including a MessFest for this year's Youth Week, plus a 24 hour Colourathon which will be a unique partnership with nationally acclaimed Cooma-based business Birdsnest.

Friday's launch will run from **11am-12pm at the Monaro Public Library** and will be presented by the Cooma Project O girls. Special Guests who will speak at the Launch include the Project O Cooma girls, Administrator of Snowy Monaro Regional Council Dean Lynch, Big hART CEO Scott Rankin, Deputy Principal of Monaro High School Vivienne Chelin, the Birdsnest team and Project O Tasmania participant Angela Woolnough.

Project O began in Tasmania in 2014 and has gone on to win numerous awards. The 'O' stands for Ophelia and of the 30,000 words in Shakespeare's play, the role of Ophelia is given less than a thousand. Her struggles are similar to many young women – she feels worthless and disempowered.

Big hART was founded in Tasmania's north west 25 years ago and has since grown into Australia's leading arts and social change company of national renown. Our work assists vulnerable people who are experiencing complex disadvantage to have a voice, reimagine their future, and gain the skills – the gift of their story can help drive generational change. To date Big hART has worked in over 45 communities, alongside over 7500 individuals in urban, rural, regional and remote Australia and won over 30 awards, most recently the 2017 Tasmanian Human Rights Award for Organisation of the Year.

Project O is proudly supported by the Australia Council for the Arts, the Federal Government's Office for Women, Catalyst, Monaro High School and Birdsnest.

Project O Cooma will launch at 11am on Friday 24th February at the Monaro Public Library. All project enquiries to Rose Ricketson, Producer Big hART



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