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**MEDIA RELEASE**

## **Youth Focus a Priority for Mid Murray Council**

Two successful Youth Week events and a bold photography project have led the charge for Mid Murray youth to get involved in their community and has continued the focus by Mid Murray Council to support and inspire the region's next generation.

Two events to celebrate Youth Week 2018 – the Mannum SK8 Jam and a scooter competition run by the Morgan Youth Club – were well attended and a great way to get young people involved in a fun and active way, says Council's Acting Community Development Officer Jane Barnett.

"Over 150 people gathered at the Mannum skate park, with 25 young people participating in the formal competition. Former Mannum local Tim Towie who was instrumental in getting the skate park up and running MC'd and coordinated judges for the event and it was really inspirational to see Tim encouraging the young kids to get in and have a go," she says.

Meanwhile, a bold photography initiative designed to get school students exploring the impact of drug and alcohol addiction in regional towns has been hailed a huge success.

The PhotoVoice exhibition, funded by the Mannum Progress Association in partnership with Mid Murray Council, saw photographer Jim Fenemore work with Mannum Community College students to create artworks exploring the consequences of drugs and alcohol in the community.

Mrs Barnett says she was impressed with how the Year 8 and 9 students boldly took on a difficult subject.

"I was really impressed with the insight of the students and their artworks, including video diaries, photography and even 3D art. It was about opening up a conversation about the impact of drug and alcohol addiction in regional communities and the students really took it on," she says.

Mid Murray Council's Acting Director of Community Services Amy Loechel says the project was an excellent example of Council working collaboratively to fulfil a community need.

"Collaboration is key and rather than being the sole provider, Council forging partnerships with organisations, individuals or service providers to work together on community projects or events is a move that benefits the entire community," she says.

A strong priority on youth programs would see the next generation of Mid Murray residents happy, healthy and engaged in their community, Ms Loechel says.

"The youth are our future and Council has a solid focus on creating opportunities for young people in all the Mid Murray regional communities, through youth development, health, wellbeing and resilience initiatives and recreational opportunities," she says.

Ms Loechel says Council's ongoing *Create a Playground* and *Mobile Fun Box* initiatives, which rotates interactive play and skatepark equipment around small communities, are also ways Council is endeavoring to balance the gap between city and regional opportunities for youth.

"People who choose to live regionally should have every opportunity that their city counterparts have," she says.

"Council's priority is to continue to support the community with projects, events and initiatives which further develop positive actions for children, youth and families in the Mid Murray."

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