

Alma Doepel Project

Youth Development through Sail Training



Sail and Adventure Ltd

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Alma Doepel Project

Achieving outcomes for the Youth of Victoria

Background

Alma Doepel is a three masted topsail schooner and is a unique vessel in Australia's maritime history. She is one of the oldest wooden hull square-riggers surviving with more than a hundred years of history behind her. Alma Doepel was beautifully restored during the 1980's with her moment of glory arriving on Bicentenary Day, the 26th of January 1988



, where, along with the Young Endeavour, she led the Parade of Sail on Sydney Harbour. The next 10 years were spent running a commercially viable youth sail training operation within Port Philip. The appointment of a new Chairman and Directors initiated the restructuring of the Sail & Adventure Limited Board during 2008 and signalled the beginning of a new era for Tall Ships in Melbourne.

Alma Doepel is now located in Melbourne's Docklands and is undergoing major hull and engineering works to regain commercial survey certification. Further works on the rig and other components are also being completed so the commercially viable operations detailed in the business plan can be implemented. Most importantly, the ship will be able to return to her work with Victoria's youth through the delivery of Youth Sail Training Programs.

The youth programs run onboard sail training ships like *Alma Doepel* help young people build resilience and confidence to develop awareness of themselves and working with others while fostering leadership and teamwork. These outcomes are key factors in reducing the current high rates of youth suicide and depression.

Alma Doepel's youth sail training programs provided one of the only entry points to the marine industry in Victoria and developed life skills for thousands of young people. The ship is currently being restored in Melbourne and has had over 57,000 hours volunteer spent on the restoration so far.

Alma Doepel

There are at least 190 Tall Ships located at various sites worldwide. They serve a variety of purposes from stationary exhibits to ocean going vessels taking part in youth training and ocean racing events. The majority are specially built replicas and there are very few original (100+ years old) Tall Ships in operation. In the International Sail Training Association list of Class A Tall Ships there are only 7 original Tall Ships out of a list of 68.

Alma Doepel is of exceptional heritage value in that she is the only Australian built ship of her era and rig still afloat and capable of putting to sea. She is the only operational survivor from the early 20th century "mosquito fleet" of around 500 ships, all Australian built wooden hulled Tall Ships. As such she is a working link to a time when similar ships carried the bulk of global commerce in their holds. *Alma Doepel* also has close links with Melbourne, having traded in and out of the port since 1916. Thousands of commercial sailing ships plied the oceans in the 19th and early 20th centuries linking the old world, the new world, Asia and Oceania.

Currently there are no other sail training vessels of *Alma Doepel's* size or type in Victoria. Port Philip is lacking in focal points for tourism and Docklands urgently need an icon that is widely supported by local people and will assist in

promoting community development. *Alma Doepel* is the tallest sailing ship that can pass under the Bolte Bridge and into Victoria Harbour (Docklands) as a result of State Government intervention in the design process that set the height of the bridge to allow access by the *Alma Doepel*.

Youth Sail Training

Participation in the working of sailing ships is known to be a powerful attraction for active and adventurous learners and quickly develops team skills and personal confidence. The traditional sailing process offers a variety of challenges working above deck in teams of 3 to 50 members and provides an enclosed, structured environment for rapid development and practice of leadership skills. Sail training requires participants to confront many demanding challenges, both physical and emotional. It is an activity that inspires self-confidence and the acceptance of personal responsibility. It promotes an acceptance of others whatever their social or cultural backgrounds, and develops a willingness to take controlled risks. For most who undertake sail training on Tall Ships it is a positive life-changing experience.



According to a study by the University of Edinburgh (Allison et al ,2007);

“Young trainees who participate in off-shore sail training programmes show measurable improvements in social confidence and their ability to work with others ... and the benefits are sustained over time after the voyage experience”...

“The positive value of the sail training experience transcends national and cultural boundaries”

The Alma Doepel Youth Sail Training Program in the 1980s and '90s assisted many of Victoria's Youth to learn more about themselves, others and the sea. Helping them to overcome adversity, challenge themselves and reach their own goals and ambitions.

The environment onboard Alma Doepel builds a social community that fosters friendships, with the added satisfaction of achieving personal goals. In addition to these personal development outcomes, young people learn new skills such as small boat handling, navigation, meteorology, fire-fighting, first aid and outdoor survival. When appropriate, additional opportunities will be available to promote education and research in marine and climate science.

Alma's market position is unique. In addition to providing youth sail training Alma Doepel is able to provide:

- Authentic Sail Training for public and corporate customers
- Youth development programs promoting leadership, resilience, team work and self understanding.
- Living museum experiences for tourists and the public
- A living example of eco-friendly transportation
- A beautiful and fascinating ship accessible to a wide range of Victorians.

Youth Issues

Modern society has thrown up many complex challenges for young people. Changes to society, family units, communication and technology have created a society which many youth find challenging and complex. This leads to the current issues which are holding our young people back. According to Headspace 2017, they are:

- One in 16 young Australians is currently experiencing depression
- One in six young Australians is currently experiencing an anxiety condition

- Suicide is the biggest killer of young Australians and accounts for the deaths of more young people than car accidents
- Young people are most concerned about coping with stress, school or study problems and body image in that order
- Young people see mental health as a more important issue than things such as the environment, bullying, education and employment
- A quarter of young Australians say they are unhappy with their lives
- Young people experiencing Mental Health issues are more likely to have drug and alcohol issues, or be unemployed in later life.

According to the research on Australia's youth and young people, the following are key factors in addressing the current issues;

- Youth needs the life skills to 'navigate' their own personal journey

According to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)

Being good navigators requires a more conscious approach to personal development so that all young people have the capacity to see how their personal biography has developed and how it may be constructed in the present to maximise their options for the future (Wyn J 2009).

- Learning to sail a large tall ship is a metaphor for life-long learning

Building skills for life as well as work requires an understanding of how young people themselves can build their lives, in real space and time, starting from where they are standing. It means developing approaches that will equip young people to establish themselves in relationships, communities and in jobs, and to do so with a sense of engagement, control and of belonging.

- Self esteem and well-being are key factor in the success of young people

The Australian Temperament Study of Youth found that 'a substantial number of the cohort were experiencing mental health problems or were involved in risk taking' (Wyn, 2009). The research confirms that alcohol abuse is increasing and that the heaviest drinkers in adolescence remained the heaviest drinkers in young adulthood.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) also notes this association, but draws attention to the fact that young people with mental health problems are more likely than their mentally healthy peers to be disengaged from school and to be unemployed (AIHW, 2007). Both of these contributions provide support for the view that schools have a role in promoting young people's well-being and should play an active part in supporting processes of early intervention

- Programs need to address the gap between school and broader society

In a speech given by the former Prime Minister Julia Gillard, she highlighted the following

Every year ... another 45,000 to 50,000 early school leavers who should be on the path to becoming skilled tradespeople, para-professionals and professionals... are ending up drifting through casual jobs, often unable to attract a partner or have a supportive network of friends. Certainly, these young people will not be in a position to buy a home. We know that this work and personal insecurity contributes to homelessness, substance abuse and other tragedies for the individuals involved. Our society is the loser.

The imperative for getting this right is moral and economic. It has been estimated that the failure of young people to make a smooth transition to the world of work is costing our economy some \$1.3 billion per year. And the cost of failure is only going to increase. In the modern economy we simply can't afford to have around one-in-five young people not contributing

Youth Outcomes

Sail Training is in a unique position to deliver outcomes that work to address the issues and challenges effecting Australia's Youth.

- Sail Training delivers outcomes beyond those achieved in land based programs

Through the participation in structured Youth Development Voyages young people learn life skills beyond those that can be delivered in a traditional

educational format. This is supported by research by McCulloch (2007) who suggested, “It is that combination of limited space and restricted privacy, the movement of the vessel and the inescapability of the whole experience that makes living at sea so profoundly different from any dry land context” (p. 300).

- Sail training delivers outcomes for young people that improve self-esteem and well being

Grocott and Hunter (2009) found that “participants experienced increases in the esteem in which they held their feelings of global self-worth, physical appearance, emotional stability and mathematical self-esteem” (p. 455).

Research conducted by Kafka et al. (2012) demonstrated that participants in a sail training voyage had increased levels of self-esteem and decreased levels of risky attitudes, aggression, and racial and gender bias, showing that self-esteem increased positively in this case without an increase in socially unacceptable behaviour post-sail training program.

- Sail training enables young people to engage with each other and learn about being part of a community / team

According to research conducted by Finkelstein and Goodwin (2005): The data showed that nearly all the respondents (94%) claimed the voyage assisted them to cultivate friendships with people from different backgrounds. They reported they felt more successful in social situations, that they made friends more easily and communicated well with others. (p. 13)

This is also supported by Allison et al. (2007), who stated that “analysis of the changes in trainees’ assessments of their own social confidence consistently shows that there is an increase in this measure between the beginning of a voyage and three months later” (p. 30).

Allison et al (2007) also comments on the value of the value of the structured, hierarchical and disciplined nature of the operations of a sailing ship. They compared small crews (4-10), likened to family groups with those of large military crews (200-300) within which the trainee has only minor responsibilities

and little opportunity for progression of duties. Alma sits in the middle of this spectrum and provides the best of both settings.

Alma Doepel Results

During the 1980's and 1990's *Alma Doepel* conducted Youth Development Voyages for 4154 young people. Included in these numbers are the following estimates of youth

- Youth at risk 203 (Victoria police or Juvenile justice system)
- Youth with Legacy Australia - 287
- Sponsored youth from disadvantage - 165

Young people who have now gone on to positively contribute to society. In the effort to close the loop of some of the youth at risk, the organisation is aware of past voyagers who participated in a Sail Training program onboard Alma Doepel. Of these who were sent on through the juvenile justice system, we are aware that many have made a positive transition through to adult life and are now in a range of careers such as:

- Youth worker
- School teacher
- Radio announcer
- Professional sailor / mariner
- Corporate Manager

Based on this data, the business plan for *Alma Doepel* outlines that at least 9 Youth Development Voyages will be conducted each year. A sample breakdown of youth on each voyage is as follows;

- Youth at risk - 2 per voyage (18 per year)
- Sponsored youth from disadvantage - 2 per voyage (18 per year)
- Youth from a refugee or indigenous background - 2 per voyage (18 per year)
- Remaining full-fare paying youth - 30 per voyage (270 per year)

The research suggest that programs which can change the life trajectory for young people can significantly reduce the chance of future criminal activity and subsequent jail time. Ultimately having a positive contribution to society and reducing costs to government.

Controlled access to internet, social media and “screens” in general. Schools are now including “screen-free” time to help reduce the negative impacts of peer-group competitive behaviour and increase the face2face interactions and real-life experiences

Conclusion

The opportunity to deliver life changing programs such as those delivered onboard *Alma Doepel* enables significant changes in the lives of young people. Young people who struggle to transition to the workforce and contribute positively to society place significant costs on Government and society.

Over the first 10 years of operation, the *Alma Doepel* Program will deliver much needed programs for Victoria’s young people to;

180 Youth at risk

180 Disadvantaged youth

180 Refugee and Indigenous youth

As outlined in the Alma Doepel Business Plan, the ongoing work of the Alma Doepel project is sustainable, self-funding and delivers real and tangible results.

An investment by Government into the establishment of the Alma Doepel programs through the completion of the restoration of the historic vessel is required. This investment will deliver significant and measurable returns to Government and Society for decades.

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