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For immediate release

## **MEDIA RELEASE: MENTORS NEEDED AS THE CLUBHOUSE SOARS**

The Youth Connections Clubhouse has been humming all summer. The Clubhouse is a creative and safe out of school learning environment where kids can explore new ideas, develop new skills and build their confidence.

A holiday program run by The Clubhouse, in collaboration with the YWCA and with support from Lismore City Council, saw Goonellabah kids participate in an eight day intensive program. Stencils were cut, T-shirts were printed, murals were painted, robots, computers and all things tech were employed. Local art therapist, Karma Barnes, Director of the <IN.SCRIBE> Youth Street Art Program, visited town bringing her 'Imagine the Land' installation project, along with many, many bags of soil. Reds, ochres and deep browns - the kids went to ground laying down patterns of coloured soil around trees at the Conservatorium and Southern Cross University, exploring the intersection of nature and culture through their experiential play. *"The Clubhouse isn't just about computers; it is about people, and expressing ideas. We have a lot of fun,"* says Dusty McOnie, Clubhouse Coordinator.

2015 was a big year for The Clubhouse. Established by the Northern Rivers Social Development Council (NRSDC) and based on the highly successful international model - The Clubhouse Network – in just 17 months The Clubhouse has grown from strength to strength.

*"I think this past year shows that the model fits really well here in Lismore. And the potential it has for inspiring young people to enter fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM subjects) is really exciting,"* says Dusty. *"We're catering to a diverse group and it's truly wonderful to see the mix of young people, each with their own interests forming meaningful relationships around technology".*

### **Some Clubhouse Stats**

- 64 active members in the last six months of 2015.
- Of these 67% attended at least twice a week.
- Girls connecting with technology represented 39%.
- Active members reside locally in Goonellabah (36%) and Lismore (28%), and the rest (36%) are from surrounding areas.
- 17 schools in our region are represented in The Clubhouse.
- Outreach activities run with four local High Schools and the Lismore PCYC.



It's been a great year for partnerships for The Clubhouse as well. The YWCA came on board to provide transport for Goonellabah kids so they could access The Clubhouse program based at the Lismore Conservatorium. The Clubhouse also partnered with R.E.D.Inc (Realising Every Dream) who are conducting *E-Space* - a technology focused project - from The Clubhouse headquarters each Wednesday. *"E-space is an electronic, interactive workshop that supports and mentors young adults in the transition to employment, training or further education"* says Rick McQueen, project facilitator. *"The mentoring and supportive environment helps E-space participants to develop skills that will assist them with social inclusion, self-confidence and experience working with technology"*.

Another valuable partnership has been created with the SAE Institute in Byron who donated seven SAE Scholarships to attend their Summer Shorts creative media program. These were awarded to Clubhouse members, who would otherwise be unable to attend due to transport or financial constraint, who have frequently attended The Clubhouse in 2015, and who have shown interest and aptitude in film, animation, graphic design and music production.

The Clubhouse is preparing for another huge year ahead and is currently calling for Mentors. *"Mentors play a significant role in the life of a Clubhouse"* says Dusty. *"If you're an adult 19 years and up who is skilled in technology or the arts and have an interest in working with young people you can register as a Mentor. We'd love to hear from you!"*

The Clubhouse is also looking for local community support and investment as it relies on community grants to function. In the past year The Clubhouse received \$8,000 through an AusPost Community Grant to purchase a fleet of new robotics kits, along with a \$6,000 Intel Corp Start-making Mini-Grant which paid for electronics and microprocessors like Arduino and Raspberry Pi's.

*"We're going from strength to strength and it's an exciting time for our local youth as we continue to grow in expertise and gain valuable resources. Investing in The Clubhouse Program is not only investing your money locally, but it's investing in our youth and their future"*, says Dusty.

To register your interest as a mentor or to donate to the Clubhouse, send an email to [dusty.mconie@nrsc.org.au](mailto:dusty.mconie@nrsc.org.au)

**Northern Rivers Social Development Council (NRSDC)** is a community-based not-for-profit organisation that promotes fairness and social inclusion in the Northern Rivers region of NSW.

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**Attached Images Credit: Dusty McOnie**

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