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Rowing WA and Wesfarmers make waves with new partnership

Rowing WA and Wesfarmers today announced a new five-year partnership which aims to deliver valuable new life skills to young people by introducing them to rowing, a sport and discipline that might otherwise be out of their reach.

The partnership will see Wesfarmers provide financial support to significantly expand Rowing WA's Making Waves program which piloted last year.

The program will provide coaching at no cost to hundreds of students annually, attending local high schools in the communities around Western Australia's world-class rowing centre at Champion Lakes and who, despite their proximity, might otherwise never have the opportunity to experience 'the ultimate team sport'.

Rowing WA President David Rose said today's announcement at the Champion Lakes Regatta Centre was a milestone in the history of rowing in Australia.

"Making Waves aims to change the lives of young people using rowing as a platform to develop new life skills and stronger links to higher education," Mr Rose said.

"It is about far more than creating crews for racing. It is about breaking down barriers. Armadale, Kelmscott, Byford – the students here in this south-east corridor are being given an opportunity to be involved in a sport that for many would otherwise be out of their reach."

"This gives teenagers a chance to create a new community hub near where they live, a world-class facility, where they can safely explore a new activity that promotes physical and mental wellbeing, which builds self-esteem and instils pride. It enables students who may live with many challenges to learn respect for others and themselves and push their own boundaries. The generous support of Wesfarmers is helping Rowing WA achieve our objective of embedding this program in the local Armadale community."

Four high schools are currently participating in the Making Waves program – Armadale Senior High School, Byford Secondary College, Cecil Andrews Senior High School and Clontarf Aboriginal College. More than 200 teenagers have started learning to row and 200 more are enrolled this year. The expansion of the program is aimed at increasing participation to up to 800 young people per year.

Making Waves is also supported by Curtin University's 'Curtin Ahead' program, an established alternative pathway to tertiary education which has taken Making Waves students to Curtin to introduce them to university life.

Wesfarmers Managing Director Rob Scott, an Olympic medallist who began rowing while at a Perth public high school, said the Making Waves initiative had the potential to make a significant impact on the lives of young people.

“Every teenager deserves opportunities that help them to grow, to feel motivated and self-confident,” Mr Scott said. “Rowing is a real team sport, it’s a very difficult sport, and teamwork and mutual respect are crucial. It has the power to touch, shape and change lives and develop great qualities in students.”

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