

Students tell stories

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Young people have been given the rare and exciting opportunity to further their cultural and artistic skills through participation in a program called Basin Bytes.

The program, run by the National Museum in Canberra and taking in the Murray Darling Basin, began six months ago and has been directed by the program's regional workshop facilitator, Paul Gamble. It was open to people 25 years or under.

Facilitator Paul Gamble with two of the students, Kylie Russell (front) and Maxine Vale.

The project saw the participation of nine enthusiastic students - Echuca Secondary College year 10 students Maxine Vale, Kylie Russell, Emma Scott (part-time), and Echuca High School students Louise Picone (year 8), Eloise Moffatt (year 9) and Callum Butcher (year 10).

Three mature-age students, Quinton Godfrey, Ashley Scurrah and Daniel Cardeno also took part in the program.

The project, which was held at Echuca Secondary College, required the students to take digital photos that would tell a story of their local area.

The students were asked to give not only the facts of their story, but were encouraged to draw their inspiration from an emotive word such as loneliness, mystery, thrill or hope.

The subject of the story was left entirely to the individual students and was not restricted to the more traditional options such as the history of the Murray River, or

the paddlesteamers, to allow for the students' own expression and creative talent.

Once the stories have been completed, they will be launched and published on the Internet, the knowledge of which has challenged the students to keep in mind that they are not just representing the area to the local or Australian community, but quite possibly to an international audience.

Project co-ordinator Paul Gamble said the program gave the young people an opportunity to be curators for their area, as they were required not only to tell how, when and where in their stories but to also give their own emotional response.

For Echuca Secondary College student Maxine Vale, the project was a great opportunity, through which she could expand her interest and experience in photography.

Maxine, a Picola resident, has based her project on the history of her town. Her subject demanded a great deal of dedication and has required her to undertake a lot of research to discover the history of Picola.

All students have been required to devote their own time to the program, with many giving up weekends, afternoons, and their lunchtimes on Thursdays.

Arts and technology coordinator at Echuca Secondary College, Norman Wright, believes the program has given the students involved greater occasion to broaden their horizons and expand their opportunities, and the positive response from the students is a sure sign that Basin Bytes will become a very successful program.

The launch of the students' work is expected to take place either late this year or early next year, so anyone who wishes to see some fascinating art from these very talented students may attend or simply visit the website once it has been completed.