

Youngtown ABCDE Learning Site – 13 October 2020

[11.33 a.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, at the heart of our communities are our people. For a long time, the effectiveness of people power has been overlooked as a driver for meaningful and long-lasting change. Initiatives that look to bring the everyday person into decision-making processes often seem like they will bring good results, but can fall by the wayside, become talkfests or fail to deliver tangible results.

I believe the cause for this is that there is often a focus on implementing ideas that are too unwieldy, too undefined, or do not have broad consensus. To my mind, the better and more meaningful approach is to leverage what assets already exist in the community, and make them the best they possibly can be.

This is where the City of Launceston's initiative of the ABCDE Learning Sites comes in as an innovative force. The acronym stands for 'Asset Based Community Driven Effort', and the program is all about focusing on what is strong, not what is wrong. It enables a community to identify its assets, build connections, and create change to benefit those living within the area.

The development of a learning site is a 12-month process. To help coordinate this, the City of Launceston provides a place-based community connector, who guides a group of community members through a self-led, flexible process. The Bank of I.D.E.A.S. has a methodology that comprises eight touchstones - the recruitment of a community team, hosting conversations to discover assets, engaging locals, building connections through social interaction, visioning and planning, implementing change, and fostering celebrations. This process is context-based and will vary in application from community to community. Considerations include the composition of the community, understanding age brackets, socio-economic status, levels of education, demographic data and taking stock of the available access to and opportunities for support. Again, the program focuses on what is strong, not what is wrong.

The challenge is for community members to move from being treated as customers, consumers, clients and patients in programs that are not their own and to start being treated as co-owners, co-producers and citizens in the design and implementation of actions that build their communities as healthy, caring and inclusive places and groups.

Right now, this program is being rolled out in the suburb of Youngtown in my electorate and has already started making great strides towards achieving milestones. The Youngtown Builder Time event was held in mid-September; it brought together people from right across the Youngtown community utilising an informal space with conversations being facilitated by the community connector, Sarah McCormack, who has been involved with previous ABCDE projects.

Sarah's role involves supporting, facilitating and mentoring communities as they develop their visions of plans to encourage the celebration of achievements and reflecting on what occurs. Everyone is welcome to attend the Builder Time events and it is an excellent way to get in touch with other locals who want to make their community the best it can be. In its reasonably early stages, the Youngtown ABCDE project already has some outstanding ideas to take stock about what they love about their community, to get creative, and how they will continue to use

them in new and novel ways, bringing people together to try new and fun activities that will ultimately lead to happier, healthier Youngtown residents.