



ruMAD? at Rokeby High

Rokeby High's ruMAD? students star in DVD!

On 2nd June 2011, Rokeby High students and staff assembled with special guests for the launch of the *Your Home: Our World* DVD - starring Rokeby High!

Minister for Community Development, the Hon. Cassy O'Connor MP, addressed the assembly, congratulating the students on their commitment to making a difference, before Senator Catryna Bilyk launched the DVD with a speech via video, full of praise for the students.



The DVD, produced by Move Media, was part of a project funded by an AusAID Community Capacity Building grant with the aim of raising awareness in Australia about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The film begins at the 2010 *Your Home: Our World* Child Rights Forum, hosted at Rokeby High, and follows the students' use of the ruMAD? framework as they are motivated to create *Concert 4 Cambodia* in support of the MDGs ([read about the Concert here](#)). The DVD has already inspired many more teachers to get started with ruMAD? and empower their students to Make A Difference too.

Advocacy for the MDGs by the Rokeby students has continued to grow since the 2010 project, with a second concert in 2011, *Rokeby High 4 Firefly*, organised by the ruMAD? Options Class. Students have also designed and painted vivid MDG murals on several of the school buildings. You can [read about the 2011 Rokeby High 4 Firefly concert here!](#)

ruMAD? Coordinator wins Pride of Australia Medal!

Rokeby High teacher and ruMAD? Coordinator, Emma Christian, was recognised for her teaching and ruMAD? work in 2010 with a Pride of Australia 'Inspiration' Medal. The Inspiration Medal recognises a "member of our teaching profession in primary or secondary school, state or independent, who has been truly inspiring" - which describes Emma well! Emma's achievement was reported in *The Mercury* on 28 Sept, 2010:

"In just over two years as a teacher, Emma Christian has made her mark beyond her own classroom... This year she is co-ordinating a new program called 'Are You Making a Difference' for the whole school plus helping roll it out to

ruMAD?

[Learn more about ruMAD? in Tasmania](#)

Spreading the MADness at Rokeby

Rokeby High first thought about implementing ruMAD? in 2007, but it took until 2009 to get started. [Learn more...](#)

What the Rokeby Principal says

"Our school has got a tremendous amount out of it..." [Read more...](#)

What Rokeby students and teachers say

"I know that nothing's impossible..." [Read more...](#)

Rokeby ...

[2011 MAD activities](#)

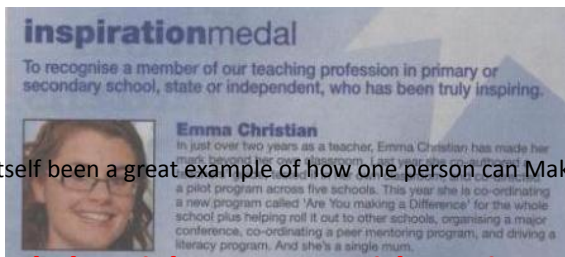
[2010 MAD activities](#)

[2009 MAD activities](#)

[ruMAD? Fair Days](#)

[Hosts the Youth Action Conference](#)

ruMAD? at Rokeby is supported by the [Sidney Myer Fund](#)



itself been a great example of how one person can Make A Difference!

other schools, organising a major conference, co-ordinating a peer mentoring program, and driving a literacy program."

Congratulations to Emma, whose commitment to empowering and engaging Rokeby High students as change-makers has

Rokeby High partners with Justice Crew to Make A Difference!



In 2010, two major MAD projects emerged from Rokeby's Grade 7s and 8s which saw them partner with Sydney-based dance troupe, *Justice Crew* (winners of 2010's *Australia's Got Talent* contest) to make a difference! The Grade 8s' vision for "a community which upholds respect for itself and others, and is a beautiful, safe and friendly environment to live in" led them to invite the *Justice Crew* to run a number of multi-school workshops as a way to break down barriers between young people through the shared passion of hip-hop and dance.

The Grade 7s who participated in the *Your Home: Our World* program chose to support education for the poor by fundraising for the *Tabitha Foundation* in Cambodia, at the same time raising awareness of organisations working to tackle world poverty. The resulting *Concert 4 Cambodia* (reported in *The Mercury*, on 9 Oct, 2010) attracted a crowd of 300 to Rokeby High's gym to see an impressive line-up of acts, including *Justice Crew*, and raised over \$6000!

"Students from both classes [8A/Dance and 7B] have been working hard since Term 1 on these events. The projects were largely thought of by students themselves to address an issue that is important to them. They have also had to do lots of

organising and fundraising including phone calls for sponsorship, planning how to host lots of people at the school and running car wash days. It has been a fantastic way for the students to develop some skills in event organisation and management and they were complimented by the many other schools that attended the two events." **Tullia Chung-Tilley, Grade 8A/Dance teacher**

The project was documented by Move Media for the *Your Home: Our World* DVD and will inspire many more to go MAD. You can read about [Rokeby High's MAD projects in 2010 here](#), and the [Your Home: Our World Project here](#).

Spreading the MADness through Rokeby and beyond!

Rokeby High's implementation of the ruMAD? Program has deepened over the last 3 years, spreading throughout the school as part of a successful strategy to engage students and improve learning outcomes.



Rokeby High first approached TCGL about the ruMAD? Program in 2007. The school is located on the Eastern Shore of Hobart, in what has historically been known as Clarence Plains. It is a small school, with an enrolment of around 200 students, servicing families from Seven-Mile Beach, South Arm, Cremorne, Clarendon Vale, Rokeby, Lauderdale, Acton and Clifton Beach. The challenges of generational unemployment and relative poverty experienced in some of the school's feeder suburbs contributed to Rokeby High's classification amongst the 25 most needy schools in Tasmania (<http://www.myschool.edu.au>). Prior to 2007 the school was struggling with enrolments, which were in steady decline, attendance levels were well below average, and suspension data was relatively high. Literacy and numeracy data was below average.

Rather than accept that this was the reality of a school in a low socio-economic area, the staff at Rokeby set about making changes to the whole school, beginning with a comprehensive review of all school systems; communicating with all key stakeholders about the future of the school; improving the school behaviour support policy; developing new

structures for learning; bringing more relevance and rigour to the curriculum, and by forming a more progressive and positive learning culture among staff and students. The school decided on a process of greater community involvement to address these issues, an approach supported by research showing that young people's active civic participation has positive outcomes for their educational participation and achievement.

In 2007 a number of teachers from the school attended ruMAD? training and a group of students from the school attended the annual ruMAD? Youth Action Conference. It wasn't until 2009 that teacher workloads allowed the implementation of the program to commence, and a partnership plan was created with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Rokeby High and TCGL. The aims of the partnership as stated in the MoU were to improve:

- student engagement in learning;
- the level of social participation and citizenship skills of students; and
- the level of school-community connection.



The objective was to address the aims by developing a culture of MADness at Rokeby High, and support structures were implemented at the school:

- Year 9 teacher, Peter Veness, took on the role of dedicated ruMAD? coordinator within the school, demonstrating the efficacy of the program in his own class, and having 20% teacher release to support other teachers within the school;
- on-site training for all teachers in the ruMAD? Program, and ready access to further training and resources from TCGL staff through regular emails and visits; and
- active encouragement by senior staff to the opening of the school to the local community and to students undertaking real-life community projects.

TCGL facilitated funding for the 20% teacher release (paid jointly by Rokeby High, the Department of Education and the [Sidney Myer Fund](#)), and provided all training, curriculum materials, teaching resources (from the Global Learning Resource Library), community contacts (guest speakers, excursions, information on events and campaigns) and mentoring.



[You can read about Rokeby High's MAD projects in 2009 here](#), which included the development of a Community Courtyard, and a highly successful MAD Fund-Raising Day which involved the whole school! Excitingly, attendance rates improved from 2008 (79.4%) to 2009 (80.7%) against an overall decline in Tasmania (2008 91.2%, 2009 90.1%).

The partnership was continued through 2010, with Emma Christian taking on the role of ruMAD? coordinator at Rokeby High and spreading ruMAD? further through the junior school (teacher release was again generously funded by the Sidney Myer Fund). [You can read about Rokeby High's MAD projects in](#)

[2010 here](#), which included the *Justice Crew* dance workshops, *Concert 4 Cambodia*, and another fantastic whole-school MAD Fund-Raising Day!

An on-line student survey completed throughout 2010 showed the following responses before and after students became involved in ruMAD?:

- I like living in my local community: (from 83.6%, up to 100%)
- I have made a difference in my local community (from 34.3%, up to 65.4%)
- I enjoy learning about other people and the world around me (from 77.6%, up to 84.6%)
- I enjoy going to school (from 73.1%, up to 92.3%)

Rokeby High also became a hot-spot for making a difference, spreading the MADness to many other schools by involving them in the program. Rokeby High played hosted to other southern Tasmanian schools and students for the:

- *Your Home: Our World* Child Rights Forum;
- Harmony Cup Soccer Match;
- ruMAD? Youth Action Conference;
- *Justice Crew* Dance Workshop;
- *Concert 4 Cambodia*; and

- MAD Fund-Raising Day.

Rokeby High was also featured as a national case study of student participation in the community, in *Schools, Communities and Social Inclusion*. (see **A framework for student participation** by Black, R. from (forthcoming) 'Civic Participation for Community Capacity Building' in D. Bottrell and S. Goodwin (Eds) *Schools, Communities and Social Inclusion*. Melbourne: Palgrave Macmillan)

In 2011, ruMAD? continued as a whole-school focus with more staff undertaking professional development, and the offering of an ruMAD? Options Class for Years 8, 9 and 10, taught by Emma Christian and Olivia Stevens. [You can read more about Rokeby High's MAD projects in 2011 here!](#)

A feature of the second half of the year were weekly visits to the school by the TCGL School Coordinator to provide professional support. This allowed for contact with more more staff and the timely provision of advice and teaching resources. The year finished with all staff attending planning sessions at TCGL's library in Battery Point to look at resources and plan for 'making a difference' through the new Australian Curriculum.



From the students, teachers and others...

"I know that nothing's impossible and we can make a difference, and it doesn't matter who you are or how old or what school you go to or how smart you are, you can make a difference in people's lives." **Grade 7 student**

"What I learnt to be was more responsible for my actions than others and to not just be focussed on my small world but the bigger world around me." **Grade 7 student**

"We pulled off a concert, which was really big and that, so basically if you put your mind to it and actually really try hard you can do what you want, and help people." **Grade 7 student**

"I've enjoyed it heaps. I've learnt that we're really fortunate in Australia with what we have - there are other people way worse off - and that I can make a difference myself just by doing a few small things." **Grade 10 student**

"In our class this year we are doing ruMAD? and I'm going through a tough time at home at the moment and ruMAD? makes me almost forget and makes me feel better because it feels great to be able to help others who can't help themselves." **Grade 7 student**

"In our class this year we are working on ruMAD? to help children in poverty stricken countries to gain better lifestyles. This has made me realise that by helping with a worldwide cause it makes you feel great and able to achieve many goals. I also enjoy working in groups of people to brainstorm ideas to raise money to achieve our goal of being more caring, reliable and positive. This year we are trying to act the best for these achievements." **Grade 7 student**

"I like doing ruMAD? because when I am working it does not feel like work because it is great and it is one of my favourite subjects." **Grade 7 student**

"I like ruMAD? because it makes me want to come to school and it gives us a chance to help people in need." **Grade 7 student**



"The ruMAD? Program has taught me that kids can make a difference and that it's all worth while." **Student**

"ruMAD? improves relationships between students and teachers, and community and school." **Teacher**

"ruMAD? is great for exposing students to the realities of the world, the lives that the majority of the world's population experience." **Teacher**

"Specific disengaged students suddenly turned around and shone." **Teacher**

"Students are more able to express ideas and opinions re poverty – they have a greater awareness of issues." **Grade 9/10 teacher**

"I teach ruMAD? because it enables my class to design a shared vision based upon their individual concerns and issues." **Grade 9/10 teacher**

"With some students they are genuinely passionate about helping the school engage in community partnerships, this is all due to ruMAD? being incorporated into our school." **Grade 8, teacher**



"Students are more open to participating in community activities, and are proud to show their efforts and felt pride in what they had done, with the community coming in seeing Rokeby High School in a more positive setting." **Teacher**

"There is a greater emphasis on ethics and values generally in peer conversations." **Teacher**

"Students who had previously demonstrated low literacy and numeracy skills excelled at specific tasks for a purpose - from writing applications for money to building activities, to organising a jumping castle – FANTASTIC!" **Grade 8 teacher**

"Students were able to interact with real people in the community as opposed to 'just teachers'. This gave students the opportunity to get to know community members they

might not normally come into contact with e.g. councilors, politicians, and community workers. You could tell they 'felt important' and were valued." **Music teacher**

"ruMAD? has benefited my child through: awareness of the way other people live; more aware of global knowledge; involving the community with the school; they all work together to make things happen." **Parent**

From the Principals...

"The ruMAD? Program has been running in our school for the past two years. The program has impacted in such a positive way on many components of our school. A key theme of the ruMAD? Program in our school is connectedness and the demonstrated influence this has had on improved attendance, organisational skills, leadership and commitment of students has been profound. It has also assisted the school to develop connections and links within our community with individuals, groups and organisations which otherwise would not be possible. These connections have had benefits that impact much wider than the program itself.

The ruMAD? Program has also provided a framework to allow students to focus on real local or world issues in the curriculum. This authentic and rich study of motivating and meaningful topics has assisted with the students' engagement with their learning." **Peter O'Keefe, Principal 2010-11**

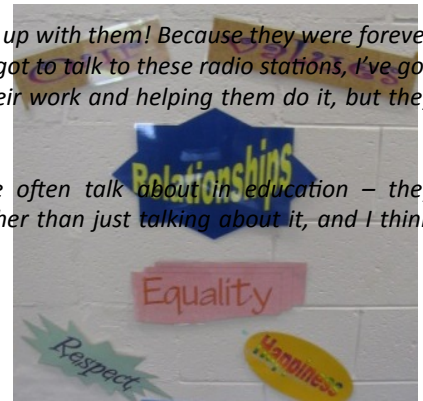
"Our school has gained tremendously from this. First of all, it was probably one of the bravest things we've done in terms of taking something across the whole school. We found that was difficult in the first few months of the year, but there was a point in time where it blossomed right across the whole school and the students understood what it was about, especially the concept that they created – of us connecting ourselves better with the community – and they developed an understanding of how what they do, can also reach out to the outside world. So it was part of their learning about connecting themselves with the community better and also learning about the rest of the world and thinking about that, developing their empathy.

It's been a marvellous concept, it's been a big journey, and it hasn't always been smooth running... But there was a point in time ... and it was probably

about 5 weeks ago when the children started to grab hold of this and just run with it and they took over. In fact, they took over so much we struggled to keep up with them! Because they were forever coming to us saying, "I've got to write this letter to this organisation!" or "I've got to talk to these radio stations, I've got to try to get these sponsors..." And so we were busily checking and editing their work and helping them do it, but they were off and running!

I think the teachers really demonstrated the good skills of teamwork we often talk about in education – they demonstrated those to each other. They pitched in and worked and did it rather than just talking about it, and I think they've got a lot of satisfaction from it.

It's one of the most powerful programs I've ever seen in a school, and primarily I'm saying that because I've experienced it... When you experience it and see what it's done for our children and how we're building more positive community and connectedness – it's very impressive. Quite frankly we wouldn't have done a day like this 5 years ago. We may have been too concerned about all the things that could go wrong rather than getting on and making it happen. I feel we have come along way as a school.



We can run a day like this where the children have taken control, and every staff member is relaxed. They're totally engaged, they've generated the activities, they've worked hard...

And there's little groups of Grade 8 boys who've been running their own fundraising exercises – there's one where you've got to run a ball down a particular hole to get a prize, and they've spent 6 weeks in MDT making that machine with their own hands, and they've used it to raise money here today for these causes who they've nominated. That's a classic example."



Steve lists the benefits to Rokeby High resulting from the ruMAD? Program as:

- Empowerment of students: student initiated learning has resulted in the highest levels of engagement with learning evident in the school for over a decade.
- Organisation of the ruMAD? Day focussing on community connectedness and supporting people in overseas countries living in poverty has 'lifted' thinking and awareness of the outside world, unified students, 'softened' the school culture (through development of empathy and compassion), and most importantly enabled students to have fun.
- Student attendance rates at Rokeby High School have slowly but continuously shown improvement during 2009. A key theme of the ruMAD? Program in our school is connectedness. In particular, younger students have demonstrated increased ownership of their school and senior school students have demonstrated leadership, proficient organisational skills, increased levels of commitment and an understanding of the 'local' and 'wider' world.
- ruMAD? has provided a real framework for personalised learning as individuals and groups of students have negotiated and developed learning projects with teachers.
- The program has enhanced teamwork and a positive culture amongst the staff.
- Community links are being developed to a level not seen for over a decade. These links include businesses, parents and grandparents, local organisations eg. Clarence Council and more families are being connected with what is happening in our school."



Steve Lewis, Principal 2009

Rokeby ruMAD? Days

In 2009 and 2010 Rokeby High students organised ruMAD? Fair Days that set the whole school buzzing!

On 26 November 2009, the whole school ran its first, hugely successful MAD Day to celebrate their MAD activities and raise funds for local and global projects. The day was attended by a record number of parents. Student activities during the day included a number of fair-style sideshows they had created themselves: apple-bobbing, wet the teacher, hotdog-eating and vortex-throwing competitions, a raffle of donated goods, and a plant nursery stall, to name just a few.

In the evening a hangi was cooked with the help of members of the Maori community, to celebrate ethnic diversity through food. There was also a very successful fashion parade and art auction, where student artworks went 'under the hammer' alongside pieces by renowned Tasmanian artists. Instead of bidding in dollars, participants bid that they would pay a chicken, blanket, toilet, or some other item for a poor community, using the Oxfam 'Unwrapped' gift catalogue – and raised over \$3,800! [You can read the full story on the 2009 MAD Activities webpage.](#)



On 11



November 2010, all grades again designed and ran their own activities for their second MAD Day. This time, the students decided to split the money in half to go towards two school/community projects planned for 2011: expanding and developing the kitchen to include a cafe; and developing a weights room for the gymnasium - both spaces to be opened to the community. The MAD Day was attended by families and neighbouring schools - Clarendon Vale, Rokeby, and John Paul II Primary Schools. The student-designed fair-style activities returned, as well as free activities that everyone could enjoy, including performances by student bands, and stalls to raise awareness of issues chosen by students, such as depression and self-harm. [You can read the full story on the 2010 MAD Activities webpage.](#)

Comments about the ruMAD? Day from staff and community:

"It's just brilliant! If you look around and you see the looks on people's faces, I guess the biggest reward any teacher can ever get out of their career is what's happening out there. You look around and you see kids that are participating – they've generated this, it's not me – this is the community, this is kids spreading the word to their community, and the whole community coming together." **Teacher**

"As principal of the school I saw our students, staff and community members united to celebrate life and contribute to the needs of others on ruMAD? Day on 26 November 2009. It was arguably one of the highest points in the history of the school." **Teacher**

"Once students sunk their teeth into their focus project, attendance was excellent – and they were always needing to work on it." **Teacher**

"There was a nice whole school feeling which linked the school to the community in a fun and interesting way." **Teacher**

"One of the great things about ruMAD? was being able to use it to engage kids of a lower ability in the 'big picture' event e.g. having them do simple but crucial tasks e.g. ticketing, seating, ushering, serving food, cleaning etc." **Teacher**



"We ran a concert at the school and one at the local sports ground. It was well attended and was a great opportunity to demonstrate their skills and talents, not only to parents but the broader community as well." **Teacher**

"I also noticed learning outcomes linked to ruMAD? Day, for instance, some students were able to: • Play their own compositions • Employ newly learned technical skills (eg. Sound engineering, stage management)." **Teacher**

"I saw disengaged students attending school on a regular basis." **Teacher**

"High attendance on the day and leading up to major events that students had ownership over. Specific disengaged students really fired up and shone." **Teacher**

"There was a large percentage of lower achievers who had an outlet during the lead-up to ruMAD? Day." **Teacher**

"In 2009 I was approached by the Rokeby High School Principal to participate in the ruMAD? Community Day. The Tasmanian Army Cadets is a Youth Development Organisation with its motto being 'Courage, Initiative and Teamwork' With 8 of our cadets, who are actually based at Rokeby High School, I organised a stall as a recruitment drive within the local community. This proved to be a very successful day. We gained numerous

children wanting to become cadets. This will enable positive outcomes for many of the adolescents in the local community. ruMAD? Day brings the whole community together and helps to enable young people to become active citizens and identify common values within their community. ruMAD? Day is one of the high points of Rokeby High School and congratulations must go to all concerned." LT (AAC) C. PARR, O.I.C 611 Platoon, Bravo Coy, Tasmanian Army Cadets

ruMAD? Youth Action Conference 2010

In 2010, Rokeby High played host to the largest event on the ruMAD? calendar: the Youth Action Conference! On 31 August, the school welcomed 180 students from 16 southern schools, campaigners from 10 non-government organisations (NGOs), a great many community guests, and 1 pig. Community guests included Minister Lin Thorp, Julie Collins MP, and Senator Catryna Bilyk - who made a speech in Federal Parliament congratulating the students and staff of Rokeby High, as well as the TCGL.

Rokeby students prepared a large display of their MAD activities and spoke about this with students from other schools and guests. They also participated in workshops on a range of social issues (such as poverty, human rights, animal welfare, climate change, and youth health) with campaigners from national and local NGOs.

Another group of Rokeby High students from the catering classes organised the catering for all guests and impressed everyone with their professionalism and culinary skills.

Thanks to Rokeby High for a truly excellent day that inspired many more Tasmanian students to keep Making A Difference!

[Read more about the conferences \(now the Fairer World Festival\)...](#)

