



Royal Agricultural Society of NSW



MEDIA RELEASE

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Wauchope Showgirl answers \$25,000 Question

Hope is on the horizon for isolated youth in the Hastings Valley, thanks to a bright idea from the current Wauchope Showgirl involving a 1960 double-decker bus.

Ms Emily Burt is the inaugural winner of The \$25,000 Question – an initiative of the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (RAS) Foundation to encourage young people to get involved with their local community.

Ms Burt's idea was to create a mobile youth centre to service outlying communities around Port Macquarie such as Beechwood and Wauchope, using a 1960s double-decker bus called 'The Big Red Bus'.

"I'm concerned about the high suicide rates amongst youth in our country areas, as well as the increasing risk-taking behaviour which are often the result of limited recreational opportunities for young people," Ms Burt said.

"The Big Red Bus provides a fun, safe environment where young people can hang out together, play team sports, hear guest speakers and have access to computers and an on-board café."

The bus will be staffed by volunteers from the Alive Youth Group; an organisation based in Port Macquarie for young people aged 15 to 25. The group has a history of hands-on community projects including after school programs, sports activities, fundraising for a variety of charities, and even volunteer work in an orphanage in Thailand.

Chairman of the RAS Foundation Mr John B Fairfax AO said the \$25,000 Question encourages young people to step up and take a leadership role in their community.

"By providing the \$25,000 Question through the RAS Foundation, we want to foster initiative and leadership among rural youth," Mr Fairfax said.

"Young people are the future of rural communities, and this program gives them the opportunity and impetus to think about practical measures they can take to improve their community and develop their leadership skills.

"Emily's project will have an impact beyond her immediate local community and create a positive and lasting legacy for the region. I congratulate her on being the inaugural winner of the \$25,000 Question."

The \$25,000 Question is one of three flagship programs funded by the RAS Foundation. Entry is open to current or former entrants in The Land Showgirl or RAS Rural Achiever competitions under 30 years of age.

Applicants were required to identify an issue or need in their community and an existing community organisation they would partner with to implement their idea. Submissions were judged on several criteria including innovation, impact and implementation.

"It was gratifying to see that there were 25 entries of a commendable standard for this inaugural initiative," said Mr Fairfax.

A presentation will be made to Ms Burt at the Sydney Royal Easter Show on Saturday 18 April. Ms Burt anticipates The Big Red Bus will be operational in the Hastings Valley later this year.

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