

## Startup Weekend Outback Edition: A First for Remote Australia

Ideate. Validate. Pitch.

These were three words of significance in Longreach when the global innovation StartUp movement became reality in Australia's Outback when Startup Weekend Outback Edition [SWOE] was held at Longreach's Old Airport Terminal.

Thirty-five eager participants from as far as Birdsville, Tambo, Blackall and Ipswich attended the first night.

“Critical mass and diverse ideas being pitched are paramount to the success of a Startup Weekend, and we had both”, SWOE organising team member Kristine Arnold proudly explained.

“Bringing new events to the Outback can be challenging,” said Mrs Arnold.

“People like to know what they are before they give up their weekend. While there have been 92 other Startup weekends in Australia, this is the first in a remote region”, said Mrs Arnold.

Advance Queensland funding, along with support from RedRdge and RAPAD ensured the success of the weekend.”

The weekend kicked off with globally renowned USA based Startup Weekend facilitator, Daniel Johnsen setting the scene before the SWOE participants were invited to pitch their ideas in 60 seconds. With great diversity in the group, the youngest pitchers were 9 and 11 years old.

Nineteen pitches covering a variety of pain points (issues) were delivered and SWOE participants then voted on the ideas they thought most likely to get to minimum viable product (MVP).

“Next came the hard part”, said Mrs Arnold. “The hustle; negotiating with people to join their team and the start of the business journey for the weekend. Saturday was masterclasses from Daniel about the importance of validation, how to approach people and the lean business model canvas”.

“SWOE participants then headed out to athletics carnival, the main street and local lunch spots to validate their idea with the general public”.

“What was also exciting was that visiting mentors from Mackay, Brisbane and Ipswich volunteered their weekend to guide and advise the teams on pitch techniques”, said Mrs Arnold. “Pitching practice was feverish until business development tools-down at 3:30pm. Judges arrived and SWOE teams took a deep breath before their final pitch”.

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Vernon Meyer, Innovation Director, Qantas Group Innovation and Ventures and Neil Makepeace, CEO at GWI [formerly Glentworth] joined local ABC Chief of Staff Nicole Bond as judges for the five final pitches.

Websites and Facebook pages proudly displayed the MVP of each group and excellent pitches explained the target demographics, income stream and validation of idea.

“The pitches and ideas were on par with those that I have seen all over the world” stated SWOE facilitator, Mr Johnsen. “I look forward to facilitating another one in the region before my time as Entrepreneur in Residence with RAPAD finishes next June”.

RJM Water Solutions with 11 year old Riley as CEO was the winning team with team ‘Souvenear’ runner up.

Startup Weekend started in July 2007 when founder Andrew Hyde got 80 people together working on one topic in Boulder, Colorado in the USA. Ten years on and now under the Techstars banner, over 2900 events to date have been held across 150 countries. Startup Weekend Outback Edition was the 93<sup>rd</sup> Startup Weekend in Australia.

Ends

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