



Media Release  
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## **Connecting Volunteer University Students with local Not-For-Profit Projects**

'Project Connect' connects volunteer university students with WA not-for-profits through industry-mentored semester internships. The initiative provides students with opportunities to practice skills in a real world environment whilst addressing capability gaps in small WA organisations.

Since 2014 the Perth Global Shapers hub has been involved in placing 25 interns making a significant contribution to their host organisations including Australian Doctors for Africa, Ngala and Brightwater Care Group. Students have come from a variety of universities and are matched with industry mentors to provide feedback and guidance.

The Perth Shapers Hub is a diverse group of young people passionate about creating positive change who are selected based on their achievements, commitment and leadership potential.

Lena Mackey is a student completing honours in Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Western Australia. During the second semester of 2015 she has been interning with the DropIN project at WACOSS. DropIN is an online platform that allows non-for-profits and social services in Western Australia to create networks online. The goal of the project is to allow for cooperation and collaboration between different sectors in order to make better use of limited funds, maximise exposure of fundraising and awareness events and facilitate knowledge sharing.

Lena shares her thoughts on her Project Connect experiences below.

*My position as case manager for the DropIN team at the Western Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS) is to develop strategies and policies in order to increase hits and activity on the platform. This will require a case assessment of the activity of each network compiled into a report in which I will illustrate potential strategies to increase the activity of specific networks. To do this, I will be visiting and discussing the problems that current users of DropIN are having, as well as conducting phone interviews and survey feedback.*

*There are two other Project Connect interns Dwayne and Sahil working on marketing and product development to create a robust pricing scheme for basic versus premium accounts. This requires significant research to work out the additional benefits necessary to ensure*

*that the DropIN scheme is an effective one, as well as develop promotional strategies to augment the roll out of the different products.*

*What I have learnt so far in my short time as a team member on the DropIN project is how valuable interpersonal skills, problem solving and insight into the way people work is when it comes to creating effective online enterprises. The potential of online communication and collaboration is seemingly endless, but behind the technology are real people, who think and act in diverse and unique ways. Creating a platform which will make room for this diversity, as well as steer people to connect and communicate homogenously is a difficult task to undertake. I am so excited to be involved in a project with the potential to revolutionise the non-for-profit community sector. DropIN users now have the opportunity to bring their policies and dreams in line with a reality that is increasingly seeing the benefit of online communication and resourcing.*

More information can be found at <http://perth.globalshapers.org.au/>

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*Lena Mackey*



*Project Connect*

