

youngsocialpioneers

Lachy Ritchie
24 years old
Fremantle, Western Australia

Lachy Ritchie is the founder of Dismantle, a project that uses the process of recycling bicycles as a medium for generating positive social change. The most powerful part of this project is demonstrating what happens in the journey from junk to bicycle; it is through this experience that Dismantle changes people's perspectives of the world around them.

Dismantle teaches people the skills to turn waste into opportunity and useless into useful, with the hope that it will have a flow-on effect to all aspects their lives.

"By 'Dismantling' our preconceptions we are able to see the world in a whole new light," says Lachy.

Dismantle's primary goal is to develop and manage a bicycle recycling workshop for the community. This workshop will be used as a launching pad for education and engagement programs with a focus on disadvantaged groups. Dismantle also places a strong focus on promoting cycling as part of a healthy, sustainable lifestyle and highlights how bicycles are the perfect medium to tackle serious social issues in a positive and engaging way.

Lachy was inspired to create Dismantle after travelling experiences in India, Indonesia and rural Australia that opened his eyes to the vast differences from the values and lifestyle that he was familiar with back at home.

"Upon returning to 'normal Australian society' I was struck by the disconnection that characterises the way we live and wanted to set about reconnecting people through recycling bicycles," he said.

Dismantle has since burst onto the local community scene, holding regular events in Fremantle and Perth and attracting anywhere from 20 to 200 participants. Its first event was a vintage bike ride and fashion parade called the Freo Tweedrun, which attracted over 200 riders.

Lachy is currently in the process of coordinating the construction of the Dismantle bicycle recycling workshop. The workshop will embody Dismantle's mission by transforming two discarded shipping containers into a dynamic community facility that will act as a hub for recycling, education and fun times on two wheels.

Dismantle has recently completed a highly successful pilot program, in partnership with the Public Transport Authority of WA, that saw a group of 10 at-risk young people complete a bicycle recycling and community engagement program. Based on the success of this pilot, Dismantle is currently seeking funding for a 12-month program for 100 young people suffering from mental health issues. The second pilot program will take old bicycle frames donated from the Rottneest Island bike hire scheme and transform them into handcycles for 10 disabled children.

Lachy was chosen to take part in the Foundation for Young Australians' 2011 Young Social Pioneers program, which equips young social change makers with the knowledge and skills they need to lead and run their organisations and projects successfully.

"I'm really happy to have been chosen to take part in this year's Young Social Pioneers program and am looking forward to meeting some great people and learning the skills I need to help make Dismantle a long-term success," Lachy says.

