

Report from Deborah Campbell, Bunbury Uthando Group. 2012-2013

2012: The Bunbury Group began in May 2012. I had seen an article in the West Australian, reviewing the 100 Dolls Book, and thought that I would like to contribute.

We started with a very keen group, assisted greatly by ladies from Bethany Esprit Retirement Village at Eaton, who worked from home. Our first delivery of dolls, bags, change of clothes and rug was made in September 2012. From our total of 123 sets, well over half was from primarily from two ladies at Bethany.

Our group meets every Monday, except school holidays, 9-12, at Cooina Primary School. The enthusiastic headmaster is happy for us to use the Community Room for a donation only, which is great for our group. Our numbers dwindled to around 3 or 4, late last year, so I held a Sunday workshop, which helped greatly.

I also visited students at Australind High School who were studying Early Childhood Education. They were interested in making animals.

A display of Uthando was held at Bunbury Women's Health and Information Centre's High Tea, later in 2012.

2013 has seen a regular group of around 10, meeting every Monday. We love the project for the diversity of dolls and animals to make, both sewn and knitted. In April, 70 sets of dolls were delivered to Georgia, with some puppets and balls.

In April, three of our group participated in the Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School's Round Square Student Conference. This saw 140 students finish 70 dolls (200 were later delivered), in two days. All the initial work was undertaken by teachers, parents and grandparents from the school. We had a great, inspiring time.

My sister, who teaches at Thebarton Senior High School, in Adelaide, has started to knit for the Project, and I recently met with the home economics teacher, who is using Uthando in her textiles subject. I saw some wonderfully creative dolls made with much love.

Some ladies prefer to work from home. Occasionally, wonderful packages appear on my doorstep. We love to use donated items of wool and fabric.

From the beginning we have had a Facebook page: Uthando Doll Makers-Bunbury Group. This has been great to share ideas, especially with the Albany Group. I copy photos to share with my group, as most are not on Facebook. I do think much more can be done with the page in the future.

Uthando gives so much joy here and in Africa, and it's a pleasure to be involved.