



*Rock and Water presenter Freerk Ykema with program participants.*

# Rocks stand firm, water flows

Teachers from around the State came together recently to train in an international program which has helped decrease bullying and improve student behaviours.

“STUDENTS live in a society that is completely different to that of 20 or 30 years ago. Young people have to make choices, and there are so many to make.

“They can make these choices if they know who they are and are aware of themselves. But young people aren’t always aware of who they are.”

The philosophical observation comes from Freerk Ykema, an educator from the Netherlands who travels the world to train teachers and youth workers in the social skills program he developed 14 years ago and which has since won world acclaim.

Rock and Water teaches students social skills and self esteem through physical exercises. Initially developed for boys, it has proven equally successful with girls.

The program leads from simple self defence, boundary and communication exercises to a strong notion of self confidence and offers a framework of exercises and ideas to help young people become aware of purpose and motivation in their life.

Freerk was at South Fremantle SHS recently to help train 40 Western Australian teachers over three days.

Tim Sambell from Christmas Island DHS said the range of applications covered by Rock and Water would be very useful in his classroom.

“The applications learnt here will help deal with bullying. We have lots of different cultures at Christmas Island DHS so it will be very helpful with communication as well as health and physical education,” he said.

Beaconsfield PS teacher Joel Yates said it was about teaching students self awareness so they could deal with problems and diffuse situations.

“Students can learn ways of dealing with emotions without fighting so it will be a good grounding for them to learn these things in primary school before they move on to secondary school,” said Joel.

Kalumburu RCS teacher Gail Baker works in a remote Aboriginal community and signed up for Rock and Water because it would work with her students.

“Some of the secondary students do have behavioural problems and the different techniques learnt through this program will help them control their tempers and make them think about their actions,” she said.

