Schoolies with a twist

BY BLAIR THOMSON

A BORDER Rotary club is seeking school leavers keen to make a difference.

While many young people celebrate the end of high school by travelling to the Gold Coast or Byron Bay for schoolies, a group of Albury-Wodonga students will head to Cambodia to help those in need.

Organiser Cameron Roberts of the Rotary Club of Belvoir Wodonga said the trip, which has run for several years, was partly to volunteer and partly to show how others lived.

"It’s an alternative to the traditional type of schoolies," he said.

"Not everyone is keen to do that sort of schoolies, and the alternative is to go overseas and see another culture.

"There is an opportunity to work with less fortunate people and see the things they have to contend with.

"They will be given the opportunity to assist and come back with a different attitude and picture of things."

The two week journey starts at Phnom Penh before heading to Siem Reap for community work.

"The big benefit for the young people is having their outlook on life broadened and understanding the things other people face," Mr Roberts said.

"It reinforces the advantages we have here, and it allows us to achieve something good for the people of Cambodia."

Annabelle Sheridan attended last year’s trip after completing Year 12 at Xavier High School.

She is returning on this year’s trip as a team leader.

"I love to travel which is one thing, but I had never been to a Third World country," Ms Sheridan said.

"They have to get by without simple things like fresh water and toothbrushes.

"It’s hard to see, but it’s also good to know that you’re doing something to help the community."

The trip will also take in some of the history of Cambodia, including of the Khmer Rouge which carried out arbitrary executions and torture.

"I feel we like we did make a difference," Ms Sheridan said.

"Especially with the kids, it was great to see them laugh and smile.

"It felt like we did something for them and made their day just a bit brighter."

The attendees will fly out on November 22 and return to Australia on December 7.

For more information email borderschoolies@gmail.com or search for the Border Alternative Schoolies Facebook page.

HELP: Cameron Roberts and Annabelle Sheridan are preparing for a trip to Cambodia later this year. Picture: MARK JESSER