



AMA

GOOD NEWS AND BEST PRACTICE 2008

The AMA believes that rapid and substantial improvements in child health are possible, and the following programs and initiatives are just some of the examples from around the country of how community-based capacities are being applied to address child and infant health issues at a local level.

The Jalaris 'Kids Futures Club' and the Health Outreach Service, Western Australia

The Jalaris Aboriginal Corporation provides essential public health to Aboriginal families in Derby WA, including outreach to marginalised Aboriginal families who do not engage with any services or support. Jalaris adopts a holistic and child-centred approach to health and well-being based on early intervention and the health education of families, including awareness of nutrition and preventable illnesses.

The Jalaris Kids Futures Club and Health Outreach Service are complementary programs. The two local schools in Derby have estimated that about 10% of enrolled children (about 60 children, most of whom are Aboriginal) fail to attend school on any given day. The Kids Futures Club provides after-school educational activities based on health and cultural activities for Aboriginal children who are truanting, at risk of truanting or who have never attended school. In providing these activities, the Kids Futures Club exposes children to semi-structured learning and development activities that involve a culturally appropriate literacy and numeracy model which is also preparatory for school.

The Jalaris Health Outreach Service visits the families of children involved in the Kids Futures Club. The Outreach Service provides health support and information to families along with access to a mobile clinic, and also identifies family and household issues that may be impacting on the children. The Service has implemented a variety of programs, including the Mungarri nutrition program which provided nutritious meals to the children of parents who are heavy alcohol users, and the Building Stronger Families in Derby project involving homemaking and environmental health education for families.

Evaluation indicates that the Jalaris programs have promoted positive changes in health and increased interactions with mainstream health services by children and their families. The rate of engagement in the Kids Futures Club is increasing, and it is anticipated there will be a 30% increase in educational engagement by participants.

Yarrabah Indigenous Men's Support Group, Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service, Queensland

The health of children is affected by the health and well-being of their families, including their fathers. The health of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male population is the worst of any population in Australia. Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service is a community-based health organisation that delivers social and emotional services to the local Indigenous Community. The Yarrabah Men's Support Group was established as part of a response to high male suicide rates in the community. The group provides men with a culturally safe space for reflection, and re-establishment of their proper roles within their families and communities. Education about men's health issues is a central feature of the Yarrabah group as well as development of emotional resilience, and the reinforcement of codes of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Issues of family violence and substance abuse are also a focus for the group.

While there has been limited evaluation of Indigenous men's groups like this, the health promotion literature and Indigenous understandings of health support the approach they embody. Gurriny Yealamucka has partnered with James Cook University and the University of Queensland to help the community further understand its social issues, how these relate to health, and what services are most appropriate to the community. Gurriny Yealamucka was a finalist in the 2007 National Excellence Awards in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Awards.

Tsey, Komla, et. al., 2004 "A participatory action research process with a rural Indigenous men's group: monitoring and reinforcing change", *Australian Journal of Primary Health*, Vol. 10, (3), pp. 130-36

Safe Sleeping (SIDS prevention) in Indigenous Communities, Western Australia

Recent research indicates that Indigenous infants in Western Australia are significantly more likely to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) compared to non-Indigenous infants. This is attributed to lack of awareness and culturally appropriate resources in Western Australian Indigenous communities about the risk factors associated with SIDS. In direct response to this, the Safe Sleeping project was devised to increase awareness in communities through the development of culturally appropriate education programs,





interventions and resources, including a Safe Sleeping training manual for use by Aboriginal Health Workers. The Safe Sleeping project adopted a grass-roots community consultation approach fostering collaboration between Indigenous, non-Indigenous researchers, and health workers and professionals. Indigenous women were employed to coordinate the project and lead the community education program.

Initial evaluation of the Safe Sleeping project indicates a significant increase in knowledge and awareness in communities of the risks associated with SIDS, and the development of community initiatives to raise awareness of the risks through Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.

Freemantle, C. J., et. al. 2006, "Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and unascertainable deaths: Trends and disparities among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal infants born in Western Australia from 1980-2001 Inclusive". *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health*. Vol. 42, pp. 445-51.

Wellington Aboriginal Community Health Service Inc. (WACHS) *Healthy for Life* initiative, New South Wales

The Federal Government's *Healthy for Life* initiative commenced in 2005 and provides funding to health care services across Australia to enhance their capacity to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers, infants and children, and to improve chronic disease care. WACHS has participated in the *Healthy for Life* initiative since 2006 to improve and expand its existing child and maternal health services. The improvements being made through *Healthy for Life* include the development of an information package on the WACHS antenatal services which has been promoted to meetings of local women and mothering groups. An educational DVD for Aboriginal women on how to manage their pregnancy and the experience of childbirth has also been developed by a local mothers' group with the assistance of *Healthy for Life* funding. Posters and a booklet on postnatal care matters has also been developed, and a growth chart with developmental milestones is also planned.

***Healthy for Life* Newsletter, Issue 3, February 2008. Department of Health and Ageing, Australian Government.**

'Family Wellbeing' Project – Apunipima Cape York Health Council, Queensland

This Family Wellbeing Project is a personal and community 'empowerment' program run with adults and children in Hopevale and Wujal Wujal in Far North Queensland. The aim of the program – originally developed by a group of people from the Stolen Generation based in Adelaide – is to build the personal skills people and families need to become more motivated and confident to take greater control of their own affairs and participate in community change. The Family Wellbeing Project is structured into four stages, which allow adult participants to examine their personal relationships, how destructive behaviours can arise, and how to address these through development of skills in emotional expression, communication, and crisis management.

In Hopevale and Wujal Wujal, Family Wellbeing workshops provide participants with a safe environment in which they can explore their needs and aspirations, and develop strategies and support networks. A Family Wellbeing School Program was also introduced in Hopevale State School and the Bloomfield River State School to encourage confidence and skills among children for leading positive lives.

Since its inception, 88 adults and 70 children have taken part in the Apunipima Family Wellbeing program. Evaluations of the program have reported high levels of participant satisfaction, as well as participant activity to bring about improvements in the community. For example, participants have been involved in creating family business strategies to provide education and employment; as well as tackling poor school attendance rates and creating safe learning environments. Hopevale participants have been instrumental in trials being conducted of a new child screening tool for ear, nose and throat infections. As a result of the Family Wellbeing program, Education Queensland will also support a 'well-being' unit in the curricula of primary schools on Hopevale and Wujal Wujal.

Tsey, Komla, et. al., 2003, "Social determinants of health, the 'control factor' and the Family Wellbeing Empowerment Program", *Australian Psychiatry*, Vol. 11. Supplement, pp. 34-39.

Mooditj: Sexual Health and Lifeskills Program for Indigenous Young People

There is a high prevalence of sexually-transmitted infections, abuse, relationship violence, teenage pregnancy, and high risk sexual behaviour among Indigenous youth. The Mooditj program, is a culturally specific sexual health program for Aboriginal youth 11-14 years of age which has been developed by Family Planning, Western Australia after consultation with members of over 200 regional and rural Indigenous communities. Mooditj integrates issues of sexual health with physical, mental and emotional well-being. It promotes knowledge and personal resilience skills by providing an environment where young people can feel comfortable talking about sexual health. More than 300 Mooditj 'leaders' have been trained to facilitate the program, which has been implemented in Aboriginal communities in Western Australia, the Northern Territory, South Australia and New South Wales. The Mooditj program won the 2006 Healthway Excellence in Health Promotion Award.

Further Information: <http://www.fpwa.org.au/services/educationtraining/projects/#mooditj>