

## APPENDIX 6. RESPONDING TO A HEALTH ISSUE

### Introduction

Four projects adopted a coordinated response to a particular health issue. The use of the *Environments for Health* framework was reported to have resulted in a broader framing of questions and strategies, and consultation with a wider range of stakeholders than would have otherwise occurred.

The Baw Baw Good Practice project addressed mental health issues within the community by adopting a more coordinated approach to the management of mental health issues and undertaking strategies to improve the feelings of belongingness within one's community.

The Yarra Ranges Good Practice project focused on the issue of wastewater management. The project responded to this issue by promoting the involvement of key departments within Council and agencies and stakeholders across the Shire; including the issue of wastewater management in the community consultation process for the Council's Vision 2020 Community Plan; developing a background paper that highlighted the issues and strategic options for addressing the issues; and using a range of media to highlight the importance of the issue to the community. Since the primary focus of this work was to plan according to an integrated approach, this report can be found in Appendix 3 Integrated Planning, rather than in this Appendix.

The Cardinia/Casey Good Practice project was an action research initiative investigating the impact of, and responses to, postnatal depression (PND) by conducting focus groups with women who have been affected by PND. Rather than being based on the medical model, the consultation considered the four dimensions of the *Environments for Health* framework (economic, social, built and natural environments) in framing questions and strategic responses to the issue of PND.

The Banyule Good Practice project focused their efforts on integrated planning through the health issue of physical activity. As partnership development was the central issue of the Banyule project, information on the Banyule project to promote physical activity is contained in Appendix 2 Partnership Development, rather than in this Appendix.

## **Baw Baw - Mental Health – It’s Everybody’s Business**

Baw Baw’s Good Practice project focused on the mental health of Kooris and young males.

### ***Strategies adopted to improve mental health and wellbeing***

The Baw Baw Good Practice project adopted a coordinated approach to the management of mental health issues within the community by drawing together other organisations within the Shire that had a focus/interest in mental health issues. Targeted partners in the process included:

- Central West Gippsland Division of General Practice;
- Central West PCP;
- West Gippsland Healthcare Group;
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services;
- Schools;
- Local churches;
- Sporting groups;
- Koori community;
- Local police.

Potential partners were invited on the Mental Health Committee and were provided with an overview of what the project was trying to achieve. Minutes to meetings were provided to interested parties.

The second component of the Baw Baw Good Practice project involved working with priority groups to identify issues that affected their sense of belonging and strategies to address these issues. Strategies adopted included community seminars, a Koori Cultural Day at the local Primary School and the joint funding of an Indigenous Leadership project.

### ***Case Study #34: Community Engagement***

The Koori project engaged the Koori community, mostly through Koori Elders and others who were already linked into the Koori community. As this was the first time that the Shire had undertaken any major project with the Koori community, the level of engagement was reported to have been better than expected. It was felt that this was potentially due to the fact that the LAECG (Local Aboriginal Education Community Group) had existing links with the community. Tapping into existing networks is recommended to be of great value when dealing with the harder to reach groups.

Some of the Good Practice project funds were used to fund smaller community identified and driven projects. Members of the community presented the mini projects to the steering committee, which were then funded if they met the agreed selection criteria.

*Also described in the Appendix on Community Engagement.*

### ***Impact of the strategies***

According to the project, a sense of commitment was gained to address the mental health issues identified in the MPHP.

A range of mental health and wellbeing issues were together identified by the two target groups, Kooris and young males, and those who were working or involved with these groups.

The identified issues formed the basis of the activities undertaken to address mental health and wellbeing.

### ***Case Study #35: Impacts of the community engagement process***

According to the project the community engagement process developed:

- Stronger links with the Koori community, schools and families in the community.
- A greater understanding of the community's needs.
- A greater understanding of cultural issues. The links developed with the Koori community had increased the Council's understanding of the relevant cultural issues.

*As described in the Appendix on Community Engagement and Community Capacity Building.*

Two seminars, 'Just for Boys' and 'Helping your child through Secondary School' were held in the Warragul Regional College. These were designed to address 'sense of belonging' in the young males target group. According to the project, parents felt that the seminar gave them a better understanding of the issues their adolescent children face. The 'Just for Boys' seminar, on initial perceptions, had appeared to the project personnel to be well received but evaluations undertaken with the young males, one-week post seminar, highlighted some areas for improvement. Information from the project evaluation will be useful to re-develop the format and content of future seminars, if they are to be repeated.

An Indigenous Leadership project was jointly funded by the Good Practice project and the Healthy Communities project to assist the Koori Community to address issues concerning youth and 'sense of belonging' in their community.

### ***Case Study #36: Forging links and pooling resources with existing projects***

The Healthy Communities project, funded by the PDPC (Premier's Drug Prevention Council) for drug and alcohol related issues, was conducted in the Baw Baw Shire Council over the same period as their Good Practice project. The two projects had strong linkages with each other. The Good Practice project addressed the issue of drugs and alcohol for the Koori community, which also impacted on 'sense of belonging' and 'community connectedness'. Consequently, the pool of funding and resources was used to facilitate both projects.

In addition, combining of the Mental Health Committee with the Drug and Alcohol Misuse Committee to form the Baw Baw Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group renewed the interest of those partnerships that were being developed by the project. This was evidenced to the project personnel by the greater interest and attendance by organisations and community groups since the committees were combined.

*As described in the Partnership Development Appendix*

With regard to partnership development, the project reported better links with the Koori community, one of the local schools (Warragul Regional College), and the West Gippsland Healthcare Group. This observation was based on the continued participation of these groups in the project to its conclusion.

There were some initial hurdles with gaining commitment and ownership of the project, dealing with changing steering committee membership, and focussing the Koori project. Once the Good Practice project linked up with the PDPC project it gained momentum and support for the proposed objectives.

One of the initial aims of the project, to promote the impacts of mental health issues on the community, was still evolving. The newly formed Baw Baw Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group, (formerly the two separate committees: Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Committees) planned to continue examining these issues.

***Practices embedded in Council as a result of this initiative***

It was felt by the project personnel, that the project had limited impact on the practices of Council with regard to the MPHP. A member of Council (from the Environmental Health Office) nominated to continue to attend the LAECG meetings to ensure these links remain open. A continued commitment by partners to be involved in the Baw Baw Health and Wellbeing Committee was also reported.

***Time needed to undertake a similar project successfully?***

The project suggests (1.0 EFT) needs to be dedicated to the project, over two or three years to achieve continued and sustained changes.

***Additional resources or materials now needed to enhance sustainability of project achievements***

The project recommends that a dedicated staff member work on health promotion and MPHP activities in order to sustain project achievements.

***Other Appendices where Baw Baw is noted***

- Partnerships
- Community Engagement and Community Capacity Building
- Workforce Development

## **Cardinia/Casey - Post Natal Depression in the urban growth corridor – better targeting our responses (Research with women themselves)**

This joint initiative between the City of Cardinia and the City of Casey was an action research project investigating the impact of, and responses to, post natal depression (PND). Together these two Councils cover the southeastern urban growth corridor of Melbourne, which has a large population of families with young children.

The research aimed to increase awareness of holistic best responses:

1. to PND/mothers/families with young children;
2. to mental illness.

This project based its investigations on direct consultation of women who had been affected by PND on the social model of health. The consultation considered the four dimensions of the *Environments for Health* framework (the economic, social, built and natural environments) in framing questions and strategic responses.

The actual responses are as yet unknown as the report is about to be released and promotion of findings and advocacy will be the next phase of the project.

### ***Unexpected benefits***

According to the project, women who participated in the research forged spontaneous (unsolicited) social connections. Many have met up informally since, for socialisation and personal support.

### ***Practices now embedded in Council***

#### ***As reported by the project, the following are now embedded in Council:***

- There is now an appreciation of the need to promote and raise the awareness of mental health;
- Value of consulting affected groups is recognised;
- Staff in Planning, Landscaping, and Engineering Units think more about the mental health of families in new urban areas and what features relevant to their core functions impact on mental health. This is a critical issue given the speed and scale of the new housing developments being built in the two municipalities that are largely catering to families with young children.

### ***Additional resources or materials now needed to enhance sustainability of project achievements***

The project suggests that more dollars need to be committed to these issues at the local level. The project noted that competition for resources in a growth area is extremely high, with the two key competitors being:

- Capital Budget;
- Staff/personnel to keep up with:
  - (a) growth in demand for service provision to a rapidly expanding population; and
  - (b) an increasing demand from state government for Local Council to engage with them in partnership projects and for public policy evaluation and formation and implementation.

***Changes the project anticipates will have sustained over 12 months***

The project anticipates impacts in three areas:

1. Service providers;
2. Community awareness and responsiveness; and
3. Urban planning.

***Other Appendices where Cardinia/ Casey is noted***

- Community Engagement and Community Capacity Building