

Municipal Public Health Planning Good Practice Program Forum for Second Round Projects

Wednesday, 3 March 2004
Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre

Summary

The Good Practice Forum for second round projects was held on Wednesday March 3rd 2004. Helen Jordan from the Program Evaluation Unit, The University of Melbourne, facilitated the forum. Attendees included Ron Frew and Catherine Viney (Department of Human Services) and eleven people attended from nine Good Practice projects representing the following Councils: Stonnington City Council, City of Greater Dandenong, City of Port Phillip, Nillumbik City Council, City of Darebin, the Pyrenees, Ararat & Nth Grampians Shires, Colac-Otway Shire, City of Whitehorse, and the Mt Alexander and Central Goldfields Shire Councils.

The objectives of the forum were:

- To provide projects with the information gained from the evaluation of the first round Good Practice Projects;
- To discuss progress of the Good Practice Projects,
- To share experiences and discuss issues that have arisen during project implementation; and
- As a group identify strategies that would address some of the issues presented.

Helen Jordan began with a presentation of the Good Practice Evaluation, during which she provided a report of the findings of the first round Good Practice Projects and a summary of the second round project objectives and themes; and directed project officers to information on strategies, key lessons, and resources that may be useful to the second round projects.

Each project gave a 10 minute presentation of their project that included project progress, experiences and issues. According to these presentations, projects were progressing well. Two projects had to reassess their initial objectives in light of difficulties faced with work pressures but were confident, with some re-organisation of workplace roles and responsibilities; that they would meet their objectives. All projects commented on the usefulness of *Environments for Health* as a framework. One project reported how the framework enabled other council plans to be embedded in the MPHP (e.g. safety plans and early years plans).

A round table discussion followed the presentations. These discussions focused on the problems faced by projects and strategies that could be adopted. Issues primarily focused on staffing demands and skill and capacity needs for rural councils, project sustainability, and approaches to community consultation. A number of potential strategies to address these issues were raised. For example, to address the issue of staffing demand for rural councils it was suggested that rural projects could develop stronger links with PCPs and health services in the area; develop cross Council network committees at the CEO and senior manager level, incorporate project objectives and wider MPHP practices into annual work plans; involve students/local health promotion experts in the project; and tap into other funding opportunities. Many of these strategies were relevant to the issue of sustainability. Projects were very interested in the computer assisted community

consultation approach adopted by the City of Port Phillip. Information on resources and tools developed by the projects or utilised from sources elsewhere were shared between the projects.

Future resourcing and support of the projects was discussed during the round table discussion. The suggestion for 'buddying' between projects was raised. This was tabled as an agenda item for discussion during the next Good Practice Reference Group Meeting.

Participant feedback on the format and structure of the forum was positive. The timing of the forum was seen to be appropriate. Projects felt that they were able to provide valuable information, benefit from the experiences of other projects, and share developed resources. Participants also provided positive feedback on the small group format. The small group discussions provided a flexible fluid arrangement where participants could interact easily and feel comfortable expressing and sharing their views and experiences. The small group round table discussion was also seen to encourage networking opportunities during and following the forum.