

Integrated health promotion is making a difference

A practical example:

Making Two Worlds Work

Upper Hume PCP, Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation and Women's Health Goulburn North East: 'Making Two Worlds Work'.

'Making Two Worlds Work' is one component of the broader work of 'Project: Equity'- a workforce development approach to recognising and responding to inequity and exclusion in the region.

'Making Two Worlds Work' is coordinated by Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation and Women's Health Goulburn North East. The objective is to build the capacity of the local health and community sector to work effectively and respectfully with the local Aboriginal community.

Strong partnerships with health and community agencies enable shared responsibility, by acknowledging existing capacities and strengths, and the ability to work effectively together.

Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation located in north east Victoria, have a small team of on-the-ground workers who provide direct support, catering for the most immediate day to day needs of the Aboriginal members.

Stakeholders of the program/project include:

Upper Hume PCP member agencies
Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation
Women's Health Goulburn North East



[A description and explanation of the six canvases painted for the Making Two Worlds Work project \(94kb, pdf\)](#)

What has the integrated health promotion response been?

Strategies and Interventions Used:

In collaboration with a range of Primary Care Partnership Member Agencies, practical resources have been developed to support organisations to incorporate Aboriginal health needs at three levels: policy and protocol development; program planning and implementation and health promotion and information provision. The local Health Portfolio Network attended by Aboriginal and generalist services acts as a reference group.

Plans have been made to involve the Aboriginal community in all aspects of decision making using Indigenous health promotion and community development principles and practices. This includes regular community conversations and endorsement of all material by the Board of Mungabareena.

If you haven't got the community on board then you've got nothing. The rest of the stuff will fall into place when there is good consultation, good communication and networks with the Indigenous community.

Community member

Locally relevant cultural awareness and equity training is offered to workers and agencies in the Upper Hume Primary Care Partnership catchment and Mungabareena workers are currently completing their Certificate IV in Training and Assessment which will strengthen training capacity and competency.

Art is used in a way that involves the community and acknowledges the essential role that storytelling, art and symbols play as culturally appropriate communication mechanisms. As a result a resource kit was developed and forms the backbone of the communication strategy.

The resource kit contains: a suite of six colour posters developed from the original paintings; a 'Working with Aboriginal clients and community' audit tool for agency planning and review ; a checklist for working with Aboriginal clients; a Health Promotion Framework with an 'Aboriginal lens' guide; a CD of over 100 graphic images based on the six paintings for agencies to use when designing written or visual information for Aboriginal clients and community; a DVD that explains 'Indigenous Welcomes' and 'Acknowledging Country', and describes the importance of art for Aboriginal communities; signage for services to welcome Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to their agency; and an information guide that includes local knowledge about culture and history, frequently asked questions, key Aboriginal organisations and contacts.

It is estimated that well over 120 individuals, workers and agencies – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – have been involved in the development of the artwork and resources. The resources were developed to ensure local ownership and relevance, however much of the material will be useful for other localities, or easily adapted. The resource kit was launched during NAIDOC week in July 2008.

What are the impacts?

Although it is early days, this approach has made a difference to the community members accessing generalist health services. When workers are involved with Mungabareena and the community through training and relationship building they are more willing to reflect on their assumptions and beliefs, consider alternative ways of offering services or making small adaptations that make a big difference.

We bring our 'middleclassness'. Our office environment is not inviting to Indigenous people. There is nothing they can relate to. It's a middle class setting.

Generalist agency worker

I realise it is up to us to reach out, not just make changes within and hope the Indigenous community notices and decides to access our services.

Generalist agency worker

It is recognised that empowerment is both a goal and an essential process for the community. As a result one of the key evaluation questions asked was, 'Where has the power changed hands?' Here are some of the responses to this question:

Power will change hands when workers and agencies start changing practices with Indigenous people, and then that will help empower our community to use the services. This will increase numbers accessing services and therefore our people will be dealing with their issues at earlier stages than they have been.

Mungabareena worker

I think this project has the potential to support non-Indigenous workers and agencies to recognize and respect the inherent strength and wisdom of our Aboriginal peoples as well as recognize that the impact of racism, colonization, the stolen generations, and that disempowerment is real and relevant.

Generalist agency worker

What's next?

Confidence has been gained by building genuine ownership of the project in the broader health and community sector. Resources will be enthusiastically utilised, due to the feeling of joint ownership. In turn, there should be a significant increase in the visibility of symbols of welcome, and use of the local art work and images for health promotion and information provision. Participation in cultural awareness and equity training and time for relationship building with the community will be supported. Ultimately, the overall aim is to see more Aboriginal people using the health services in the area.

Local agencies will evaluate the use of the resource kit and identify what's changed for Aboriginal clients and community, and what's changed from the perspective of the health and community sector.

The next stage of the project is to build on these resources by supporting the development of a local Aboriginal Impact Guide for policy development and review. The Upper Hume Primary Care Partnership members will work in a team to develop, trial and implement the policy. Lessons learned from this project will also be used by the Upper Hume Primary Care Partnership to develop strategies to tackle similar issues of exclusion and inequity for other marginalised communities.

If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping in a closed room with a mosquito

Danny Katz, The Age, 1 Oct 2004

Further information

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References

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