

2007 NSW Health Awards Entry

*Complete under the following headings and use the italics as a guide.
Remove the italics when completed.*

Entry Title (50 characters or less)

Promoting Health & Nutrition with the Bowraville Preschool

Abstract (120 Words)

Promoting health and wellbeing through preschools is a pilot program being undertaken by the Bowraville Community Preschool. Facilitated by the Regional Health Services Program and in partnership with Partnership for Aboriginal Care and Durri Medical Service the project's aim is to provide children with easy access to health services which will enrich their lives and have a positive impact on their learning. Through a Health Expo and Fun Day held at the preschool, a Health Screening process over a two week period at the preschool, and a second Expo Day held at the Bowraville Out-Post for the families who do not access the Bowraville Community preschool, a large number of children accessed health services which had previously not occurred prior to this targeted program.

Aim (30 Words)

To improve the health of children and their families who live in Bowraville through early detection, intervention, education and support. To take services to families who do not access the traditional health services.

Nature of the Problem (100 words)

This project was an initiative of the Bowraville Preschool staff as a direct consequence to the closure of the Aboriginal Preschool at the Bowraville Out-Post. Increased support was needed for the Bowraville Community Preschool who picked up the Out-post preschoolers. The students were not being screened through the traditional health services and early intervention and diagnosis was recognised as a major priority. Partnership for Aboriginal Care through its Community Grants Program Healthy Lifestyles-Healthy Culture came on board and has provided funding to support this initiative.

Extent of the problem (150 words)

The Bowraville Community is one of three National Priority Areas in NSW identified as being most disadvantaged. To resource disadvantaged communities the evidence shows we need to improve health outcomes, provide Parent Support Programs and increase access to Childhood Diagnostic Services. That is exactly what this project aims to do.

In 2002 a Bowraville Community Alliance was established by members of the Bowraville

Aboriginal, Educational, Economic and Community Groups. Their visions to have the Bowraville community decide and document what it wants for the future in terms of social, cultural, environmental and economic development and to develop a strategic plan to enable that vision to become a reality.

The 2006-2007 Strategic Plan has identified five priority issues; Improving Health is one of these.

They have identified to improve "health" there needs to be

- "Programs and activities that foster greater well-being and nutrition"
- "Health Services for preschool aged children"
- "Information about health access and outcomes in Bowraville"

Strategic importance (100 words)

The project incorporates many of the strategic directions outlined by NSW Health. This project provides early intervention and education on healthy life styles to children, which will result in better outcomes for their futures. It provides a service that the Aboriginal community will access. It is a quality service that has respect, is safe and is available where the clients live. This is an early intervention program which provides a primary and community health service in partnership with public and private health systems and other stakeholders. It is linked back and supported by hospital services.

Planning and implementing solutions (300 words)

The Project commenced in March 2006, the Bowraville Preschool and the Partnership for Aboriginal Care sent out invitations for interested services to come to a planning meeting and information session on the project proposal.

- A working party was developed with two planning days held in March / April
- The Regional Health Service Program, Partnership for Aboriginal Care and Durri Aboriginal Corporation Medical Service major stakeholders / partners
- The Regional Health Service Program Health Promotion Coordinator was appointed Project Facilitator
- A working party was formed and met monthly
- In consultation with parents and other stakeholders it was agreed a Health Expo at the preschool was the way to launch this project and engage community support. Surveys were given to parent and service providers on the day which identified the community's needs.
- Feed back form service screening staff resulted in refining intervention methods and scheduling
- Child and Family Services NCAHS hold a weekly service in Bowraville. Aboriginal children were not accessing this service. A second Expo Day was arranged at the Bowraville Outpost. The staff from the Out-post sent personal invitations to all the Aboriginal children 0-6 years living on the Mission. NOTE: Extremely successful method to get the children to come, as they had their invitations in hand
- We collaborated through the Out-Post to have Elders help us on the day providing the funds for them to cook a traditional Aboriginal meal at the Expo and involving the young mums. Once again very successfully.

Outcomes and Evaluation (200 words)

The Regional Health Service Program / Bowraville Preschool outcomes have included:

- Health Expo and Fun Day held at the Bowraville Community Preschool Attendance was recorded at 150
- Health screening over a two week period in June 2006 at the preschool. The total number of preschoolers offered screening was 50, with 10 out of the 11 Aboriginal students enrolled being screened. Screening included; vision, hearing, gross motor, fine motor, speech, Health checks – Children, Dental and drawing.
- The screenings at the preschool resulted in 2 children receiving clinical therapy for Speech Therapy and 36% receiving classroom follow up, and 1 child receiving clinical Occupational Therapy follow-up, with 56% receiving classroom follow-up
- The Health Expo held at the Out post in November 2006 targeted families that do not attend the Bowraville Community Preschool 0 to 6 years. This attracted a large number of children that previously hadn't been accessing the services, as evidenced by large numbers recorded for screening, such as; vision: 15, hearing: 12, gross motor: 23, fine motor: 23, speech: 23, Health Checks - children: 26, Dental: 30, and Mr Germ Hand Washing Preschool Program: 30.
- As a result of hearing screening, 50% of children were referred to their GP, and dental screening resulted in 3 children receiving major dental work
- Purchased special playground equipment to improve gross and fine motor skills to increase physical activity. Total Cost \$2000.00, included training for staff.
- Developed a comprehensive Aboriginal Preschool Nutrition Program called "Deadly Tucker"

This program has been evaluated by parents' surveys, evaluation sheets from service providers and feed back from the preschool teachers' and the staff at the Out post.

Sustaining change (100 words)

The Regional Health Service Occupational Therapist and Speech Therapist will provide an on going screening program in the Bowraville Community Preschool by engaging with the Before School Screening process each term. The sustainability will be further advanced by these staff providing intervention in the classroom setting to students who require further support and formal follow-up with parents. Health Promotion/ Family Fun Days will be continued at the Outpost and at the preschool to enable access for all children in the community. Partnerships will continue to be developed with the local services, such as the Optometrist to provide services at the Preschool and the Outpost.

Future Scope (100 words)

This project was targeted to the rural remote Bowraville Aboriginal Community; however it did not discriminate and included Non Aboriginal families. The Regional Health Service Program is unique; service delivery is based on a Health Promotion approach not a clinical intervention model. We are a community based team working in partnership to offer a service that focuses on, prevention, early detection, affordability, easy access, being culturally respectful, creative and non traditional. This innovative approach could easily be transferred to all rural health services that are addressing the challenges faced with providing equitable health care to all clients in their community.

Total: 1200 words (including references but excluding reference list and entry title)