



RURAL ECOH – ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN ORAL HEALTH

Population health planning for rural Medicare Locals: Evaluating community participation for delivering outcomes.

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Newsletter 3

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Project update

Since the last newsletter, we have finished 2 rounds of community meetings in each state. Although numbers were smaller than we would have liked the quality of the interactions within the groups has been fantastic. We have spent a significant amount of time connecting with other community groups and feeding their information into the planning processes. So far we have gathered a lot of information from the communities with regard to;

- Current knowledge about oral health
- Available services for oral health
- Community aspirations for oral health
- Barriers to good oral health
- Pathways for oral health

Workshop Summary Vic

Running community workshops in mid-winter in Victoria brings its own challenges including a very frosty and foggy drive to the meetings, problems with heating the venues and getting people to come out when the top temperature for the day is 5 degrees. However we did run 4 workshops over the July-August period with small but very willing groups. At Swan Hill the focus of the meeting moved towards thinking about prevention from a young age and focused on the early years settings. Having the manager of the public clinic in attendance was a bonus as the group learned a lot more about the clinic and the pathways to access it.



A cold start to the trip to Swan Hill



Swan Hill workshop 2 group

As part of the project Virginia also attended the Principals network meeting which was run by the Southern Mallee PCP and included teachers, principals, health promotion, and allied health staff from across the region. It was a great opportunity to present the project and to examine the links between oral health and broader health and how we might work together with the schools participating in the Achievement Programs as part of the Healthy Together Victoria program. The Achievement Program is for schools and early years settings and oral health is one of the priority areas. For those interested in how this program works you can access the information at <http://www.achievementprogram.healthytogether.vic.gov.au/>



The workshop at Kerang was well attended with the group identifying early childhood settings as an appropriate avenue for oral health promotion. We spent a lot of time discussing the different ways that this work could be done and the best options for who might be able to do that.



Kerang group attendees

After a lot of media attention and running a street stall in the lead up to the Kyabram meeting at KCLC we had a great turn out with 12 attendees from a range of settings. The group also identified early years as a focus and the role of the Maternal and Child Health Nurses. We were fortunate to have 2 oral health staff (public & private) attend and their insights will be invaluable for the implementation phase of the project. We also had good representation from the PCP, KY Health and community.



Street Stall Kyabram



KCLC venue for Kyabram meeting

The final meeting for this round was in Cohuna (at the request of the Gannawarra Shire). After giving way to the local cows on the way up to Cohuna we had a small but enthusiastic group attend the meeting. It was great to have the council, community members and health professionals (including the local dentist) around the table. There was a lot of robust discussion about solutions for the Shire regarding poor oral health status and fluoridation of the water

emerged as a key for this group. We will be working with the group to advocate for fluoridation of the town supply at Cohuna.



Milking time in the Shire of Gannawarra



Workshop 2 Cohuna

Workshop summary QLD

Sunny Queensland kicked off the winter with a visit to the Ingham show with some James Cook Uni students, two puppets and a tooth suit. Kristina and Lauren did an excellent job and delivered education to about 40 children from pre-school to primary school. Using the puppets they asked the children to demonstrate how they brushed teeth whilst providing education on correct brushing and frequency of brushing. They also asked children questions on healthy eating and snacking. The education session was well received by the community and complimented the discussion at the second community workshop. The second workshop focused on two areas which the group felt would improve oral health outcomes for Ingham; More widely available education to support good oral health behaviours and greater awareness of oral health pathways available for Ingham residents. A further consultation with an Ingham seniors group facilitated by the Hinchinbrook community support centre at the end of July also highlighted a need for more information on where they can access oral health services in town.

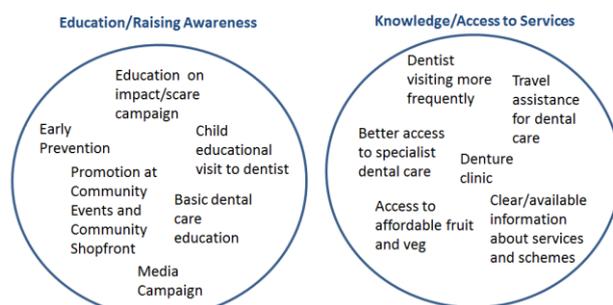


JCU Dental students having fun with the kids at Ingham Show



The second workshop in Hughenden presented a change in weather for the normally hot and sunny Queensland with early July temps reaching 0 degrees after sundown. The workshop (rescheduled for the afternoon due to the cold snap!) was very stimulating with participants voicing a high level of satisfaction with dental services in the town and communication between health professionals to support resident access to services. However they did feel that oral health pathways could be advertised better to the general public and would like to see more travel support to access specialist oral health services in Charters Towers and Townsville.

What things would benefit Hughenden to help people keep their mouths healthy?



Some of the ideas discussed in Hughenden

Our Bowen workshops are leading the way and workshop three took place at our TMML offices on Thursday 7th August. Following on from themes arising in workshop two, the small but keen group explored ways to improve oral health outcomes for Bowen. Drawing from initiatives which have been implemented in other communities the group came up with a number of innovative ideas to improve collaboration across oral health and health services.



A view from sunny Bowen



Healthy nibbles to stimulate the minds at the Bowen workshop

Project meeting in Townsville

We spent the day on Monday 4th August with our Townsville partners taking stock of the project to date and planning for the meetings 3 and 4. A very productive day and some fantastic planning took place. A summary of that meeting will be sent out to all group members in the near future



Mandy, Jane, Virginia, Helen (VIC) Sarah, Karen C and Rhonda (with Felicity on the VC) QLD



Early morning walk in Townsville

Lessons learned

Communities are keen to participate in conversations about oral health improvements however coming to formal meetings does not always appeal to community members. We need to continue to work hard to raise the profile of the project and ensure that we are reaching as many groups as possible. Planning for implementation and sustainability will be keys to the successes as we move into the next stages.

Virginia & Karen C