

Minto Under 12's Project, NSW

The project setting

The Minto Under 12's Project is auspiced by Uniting Care Burnside and is located at the Minto Family Centre, a suburb north of Campbelltown in NSW. Campbelltown has a population of approximately 11,400 people – 26% of which are aged 0-12 years. There are approximately 1,000 housing department dwellings that are being re-developed to a reduced public and private mix. It has been estimated that 800 public houses will be demolished and that after the redevelopment two to three hundred will be available for public housing. The issues of service provision for children under 12 years was raised in Campbelltown in two independent

forums – one with residents of Minto and the other among key service providers.

Why is this project needed?

The purpose of this project is to create better opportunities for children in the Minto Public Housing Estate and to normalise the experiences of children. It is also to provide children with opportunities to reach their potential.

What are you trying to do in this project?

It is intended to reintroduce the concept of community caring, to celebrate childhood and to intervene before serious problems develop. It is also recognised that in order to make changes there needs to be a focus on parents and on the community of Minto as a whole. A priority of this project is in gaining parental involvement and having parents enjoy spending time with their kids.

How are you going about it?

The Minto Under 12's Project is only in the beginning stages. We are currently involving the community in planning in the following ways:

- Planning workshop (and introduction to Action Research) held with workers and parents with children aged 0-5 years, facilitated by Liz and Margo from SFLEX. Aim was to come up with ideas for programs for children aged 0-5 years.
- Responding to community need as evidenced by demand (enquiries and waiting lists regarding pre-existing groups) and issues being named by the community (for example the social impact of the redevelopment, no one wanting to hear the stories of families having to relocate due to the redevelopment).
- Trialing Paint & Play (a street based group for parents and children

aged 0-5 years) in various locations with a research focus on does this work – Why? How? Where? What do parents and children want, how do they want it delivered etc?

Use of action research

The practice of action research has a close relationship with the strengths-

based model of working with families and communities that Burnside adheres to. The Minto Under 12's Project has brought to our attention the question of how are we going to record the project? We are currently introducing new methods to add to our 'tried and true' forms of documentation, including:

- Video
- Photography
- Audio
- Journalling
- Paintings/drawings
- Scrapbooking
- Formal and informal service-user feedback mechanisms such as focus groups and surveys.

BUILDING STRONGER FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES IN THE DALY/COX-FINNISS REGION, NT

The project setting

The region of Northern Territory served by the program covers approximately 4000 square kilometres and has within it seven substantial Indigenous communities: Belyuen, Bulgul, Nauiyu Nambiyu (Daly River), Palumpa, Peppimenarti, Wadeye (Port Keats), Woolanang, and many more outstations. The largest community is Wadeye with a population of 2200. Three other communities have populations in excess of 300 people.

Woolanang Homeland Christian College has recently been established as a regional residential college for Indigenous secondary students on the edge of Litchfield National Park, a popular tourist area. The college has been planned and is being managed by a council representing local families and communities. The College has developed within a context of holistic community development taking account of health provision, family support, training opportunities, and employment creation.

This project targets primary school children and their families in four of the seven communities and, through partnership with Woolanang College, expects to achieve enhanced educational outcomes for the children.

Why is the project needed?

From the earliest planning stage of the College, community leaders in the region identified lack of effective parenting as a key impediment to participation and success in schooling. The Collins' Report "Learning Lessons" has also stated that, particularly in



Children from the Families and Schools Together (FAST) program, Daly/Cox-Finiss region.

remote communities, "poor attendance at school, for whatever reason, remains the most significant cause of poor learning". It further based the causes of poor attendance and poor attention directly in family health and parenting practices, and also in parental experiences of school, school-community relationships and the history of these.

Successful secondary schooling, regular school attendance, focused attention in class, and parental involvement in schools need to be developed at the primary schools from which the students come. So the project leaders from the Northern Territory Christian Schools Association sought an early intervention program in the region's primary schools that developed family functioning and strengthened the partnerships between schools, parents and the community.

What are you trying to do in this project?

The FAST (Families And Schools Together) program is an innovative, early intervention program for children who are at risk for a variety of reasons. It involves families in an

eight-week, school-based multi-family group experience. The program aims to build resiliency and protective factors in children by developing a support network for the family, and empowering the parents to be the primary prevention agent for their own children. It is conducted by a collaborative team, from the school, a local support group, and local parents, and it encourages the families to meet, following the program, as an ongoing support group.

It was developed by Dr Lynn McDonald from Wisconsin in the United States and was initially piloted in Australia through Kildonan Child and Family Services in Melbourne. FAST was chosen as it has demonstrated significant success in many disadvantaged communities in Australia and the United States, including those with Indigenous families. It has also included well-developed evaluation procedures showing measurable changes in child behaviour. The program is designed to build on family strengths and relationships within the community. Its internal training component develops leadership for team members.