

# PROJECT PROFILES

FIRST GLIMPSE

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One of the major themes that has emerged from our work with Stronger Families and Communities Strategy projects is the sheer diversity and complexity in the work that projects do. In this section of the Bulletin, as in previous Bulletins, we are pleased to publish project responses to a series of questions about their work.



## Koori Link Project

### *The project setting?*

The Koori Link Project, which began in September 2004 and is located in Orange in New South Wales, works with Aboriginal families and young people. It is a support, advocacy, case management and referral service and provides living and work skills programs, where needed. We have two full-time workers and one part-time worker.

### *Why is the project needed?*

Research with the local community identified that the needs of the Aboriginal community were not being met. In particular, there were

difficulties for Aboriginal families in accessing appropriate services. Koori Link is a program developed in response to these issues to assist, refer and support clients and families to access services. For example, mentoring, advocacy and support are provided to clients who need to access such agencies as the Department of Housing and Centrelink. Koori Link will also deliver early intervention programs as part of developing skills and a continual support approach.

### *What are you trying to do in this project?*

The purpose of the Koori Link project is to help the Aboriginal community through support, training and skills development, advocacy, mentoring. Using this approach clients are

empowered to take positive action in their lives.

### *How are you going about it?*

Initial work has involved letting the local Aboriginal community know that we are available anytime and even if it is for a chat. We have also been meeting local services and informing them about the Koori Link Project. We are also developing understanding of the scope of other services and where the project can fit in without duplication of services.

Through linking in with local community/government organisations and building up a working relationship, we will be better placed to work with the Aboriginal community. We will also be developing flexible, culture-friendly programs.

## Moree Family Support Services

### *The project setting?*

The project began in February 2004. It is auspiced by Moree Family Support and is situated in the Warialda Street Office in Moree in New South Wales. We share the office space with other services who are family based such as the Family Support Worker and the Volunteer Home Visiting Service. Our project is based on early intervention for children aged up to eight years, living in the Moree Plains Shire also within a 60 kilometre radius of Moree. We are going about our work in a variety of ways and taking the programs to the communities.

### *Why is this project needed?*

Our belief is that families are the starting point for significant change in our community and form the foundation for this project. By supporting and strengthening families, long term change will be positive and long lasting. Few services in Moree are working with an early intervention

and prevention model.

### *What are you trying to do in the project?*

Our project is aimed at providing an early intervention and prevention model of service delivery to families, youth and children. Our goals are to develop the capacity of families and communities, reduce significant disadvantage and develop strong service and support networks for families, youth and children.

### *How are you going about it?*

A work plan has been developed which encompasses a wide range of tasks. These tasks include: the facilitation of opening a parents room which is sorely needed in this area; running of playgroups in isolated areas; creating a mobile service for the Toy Library; recruitment and training of volunteers to assist with some of the projects; a leadership program for youth and newsletters have been produced and distributed to communities. Some of the goals are dependent upon consultation with communities and what they see is needed.

### *What has the project been doing in the last six months?*

In the last six months the project has been able to recruit all of the staff required. The last staff member came on board in May 2004.

There are seven supported playgroups now operating out of the project's office: three Indigenous playgroups, three rural and one that is held at the Family Support Offices. We have further identified more areas for the rural playgroups and are negotiating to begin holding them in those areas.

The Toy Library has become mobile and a catalogue has been developed. We are currently talking with families about memberships and the benefits of joining the Toy Library. A couple of families have indicated that they will become members.

Moree Council has a parents room in the local town hall that is only used for private functions. We are negotiating with them in relation to opening it during the day for a parents room - we are assured that the negotiations are a



formality and they will allow us to use this room. This will entail recruiting volunteers, training them and support – a lot of work. The parents room has been a great networking tool for us as a lot of the communities and organisations are excited about there being this kind of facility available in Moree. This has meant approaching business and organisations for funding to supply some of the equipment we will need. We have been successful in finding some sponsors but are always on the hunt for more.

A Project Advisory Group has been formed. There has been problems with availability of some members so I have sent letters to other organisations and community members who may be willing to attend. We have spoken about the formation of an Early Intervention Interagency Group and how we get members. There are many services that attend meetings in Moree and sometimes feel there are too many meetings. Still negotiating.

Project marketing has occurred. As a result of the marketing, Outward Bound has sponsored six young leaders in Moree. Feedback has been positive at this stage.

A new project to support Aboriginal women in South Moree is being undertaken. Consultation has been occurring and a great interest is being shown in the formation of this group. The idea for this group came about as the young mothers who were out of

the target group for the Community Midwifery Team had no other service to engage with. We hope to get the Aboriginal workers from local government and non government sector to come and speak (very informally) with the women about services and what they do in their jobs.

Some of our work plan has been hindered by circumstances beyond our control. The local Murray community has been in disarray due to renovations that are occurring in Stanley Village and Mehi Crescent. All of the families have been moved out of their homes and into town or with other family members which has had a huge impact on consultations and attendance at Playgroups. Some of the families are gradually returning but it looks as though the renovations will be occurring until next year.

#### *How has the project incorporated action research into its work?*

Action research is an ongoing process for us. We certainly talk with community members about their thoughts on everything that has anything to do with their community. We realise, especially in Aboriginal communities, that they really need to be part of the process otherwise it is just another program that will fail. We are flexible when we realise that something may not be working and look at why and strategies for how it can be changed so the program will not fail. Particularly in Playgroups this has meant in some

communities that it has helped in building community capacity.

#### *How is the project recording its processes and learning (including but not only action research)?*

There are numerous strategies I personally do such as small file notes with dates and times. We record supervision sessions on a table where some of the issues we face are talked about. I have worked on action sheets in relation to some projects that have been occurring. We also provide Family Support with monthly reports where some of these processes and learnings are talked about. The Early Intervention workers keep sign-on sheets for Playgroups and use the Smart software package for their statistics.

#### *What has been learned in the last six months that may be of interest and value to other projects?*

One valuable thing we have been taught is that sometimes we may not get the desired goal but it does not mean we should give up hope on goals. As long as the programs that we run, now or in the future, changes something (big or small) in a child's life, or gives a child a positive experience, then it is worth it. With the renovations that are occurring in some parts of Moree the numbers for the playgroup has been very low. However the playgroup activities will go ahead with one child in attendance. Staff at the agency realise that things will not change for communities overnight.

## **Tilligerry Family Network Project**

### *The project setting?*

The Tilligerry Family Network in New South Wales is based at Tilligerry Place, a community shopfront shared with Tilligerry Youth Project and Tilligerry Adult and Community Education. The

Tilligerry Peninsula is a geographically isolated community situated between Tilligerry Creek on the south and the southern shore of Port Stephens on the north, with the only land access being via Lemon Tree Passage Road. Tilligerry consists of the small villages of Tanilba Bay, Mallabula, Lemon Tree Passage, Oyster Cove and Salt Ash,

and has a current population of approximately 5,600 people. There is a predominance of families with children and older residents; 23.7 per cent of the population are under 14 years.

The project particularly targets those families of Tilligerry who are disadvantaged – that is, sole-parent families, young parents, families experiencing

