

National Close the Gap Day March 22nd 2012



Moorna members Aunty Karl Mourach & Tricia Flynn Scrutton

Madjitil Moorna, Singers of Aboriginal songs participated as one of the many community organisations who hosted an event as part in National Close the Gap Day. The choir held their first Close The Gap event on National Close the Gap Day 2011 and were encouraged to proceed this year being supported by the Shire of Kalamunda through sponsorship of the Kalamunda Performing Arts Centre venue.

Ninety five people came to participate in the Close The Gap seminar and afternoon tea in Kalamunda, Western Australia.

Chris Vigus MC quoted three broad statistics, these being that *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can expect to live substantially shorter lives than other Australians – up to 10 - 17 years and more, that babies born to Aboriginal mothers die at more than twice the rate of other Australian babies, and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience higher rates of preventable illness such as heart disease, kidney disease and diabetes.*

Mr Vigus reminded us that these are statistics that you would associate with an impoverished nation. Australia is far from impoverished yet this health crisis is happening right here in our own backyard.

There was a diverse and wide representation from organisations and members of the local community. These included staff from

- Mental Health Commission & State Government
- Health Department and mainstream health service providers
- General Practice, Perth Primary Care Network
- Community health
- Local councils, Non Government Organisations
- Koya Aboriginal Corporation
- Department of Education
- Health Consumers Council
- Richmond Fellowship WA
- Chaplains and Health educators
- Dental Health Services
- Local Community members

George Haydn Curtin University Cultural Consultant, Tina Newman Independent Living Centre WA, William Trott Health Consumers Council Aboriginal Consumer Complaints Coordinator





Dr. Martin Glick Dental Health Services
Jan Owen Kimberley Dental Team
Dr. Paul Candy Dental Health Services



Lyn Sykes Community Mental Health Nurse
Chris Vigus Chairperson Madjtil Moora Inc
Dr Terry Buchan Associate Professor, Notre
Dame Medical School
Mrs Kathy Buchan

Led by Guest Music Director Gina Williams Madjtil Moorna sang two of Gina's songs in the Noongar language to open the proceedings. We were then privileged to hear from two experts who informed us of their services.

Mr Michael Mitchell Program Manager Specialist Aboriginal Mental Health Service (SAMHS) emphasised the need for investment in both health and education. He explained how SAMHS recognised the need for restoration of not only the individual but also the family and community. SAMHS aims to operate with cultural integrity, to provide a holistic, whole of family, whole of life approach to service delivery incorporating traditional healers and having no age cap to service provision. The SAMHS model is that of supporting and enhancing access to Mainstream Mental Health (MH) services for Aboriginal People while increasing service capacity to meet Aboriginal peoples' needs within existing MH services targeting current barriers to access of transience, homelessness, limited support, isolation and engagement issues.



Lesley Boyd Service Coordinator of Mental Health Hills Community Support Group with SAMHS Program Manager Michael Mitchell



Program Manager Michael Mitchell with Madjtil Moorna members Tricia Flynn Scrutton, Moira Lane, Angela Highstead, Jan Owen and Tracy Sandercock

It was very interesting to learn of the effort being placed on training and the development of Aboriginal staff with professional career pathway opportunities. Through partnerships with Charles Sturt University a range of workforce development activities will include a one year Youth Worker Certificate, a 2 year Diploma in Mental Health and a 3 year Bachelor of

Health Science in Mental Health. On the job training will be facilitated with regular clinical supervision, training and monitoring consistent with National Mental Health Standards.

Of equal interest was learning about the process established to generate solutions to wage inequity for Indigenous Workers and the links with tertiary institutions to ensure training relevant to industry needs with the resulting increase in the number of Indigenous workers entering the health workforce.

Through powerful partnerships, relationships with all service providers will be enhanced. On the completion of training Aboriginal staff will be able to choose mainstream or Aboriginal career pathways developed by SAMHS and the Health Department WA at equal levels with mainstream colleagues.

With Mr Michael Mitchell's vision and commitment and the support of his clinical team we have no doubt that his desire for SAMHS to be a service that will provide a statewide role in mental health, advocacy for Indigenous consumers and a peak body for Indigenous professionals will be achieved.

Our second speaker was Mrs. Jan Owen Joint Coordinator with Dr. John Owen of the Kimberley Dental Team (KDT)



Mrs Jan & Dr John Owen Joint Coordinators KDT



Assistant Craig the crocodile helping with the distribution of thousands of toothbrushes

Established in 2009 to work initially in the East Kimberley region of WA the Kimberley Dental team (KDT) is a privately owned, incorporated company primarily privately funded however receiving sponsorship and grants with Jan & John Owen, directors and joint coordinators. Jan as a member of the Madjitil Moorna choir joined in the May 2009 "Madjitil Moorna and Halls Creek Mob" project on the invitation of Doreen Green, teacher at Halls Creek Senior District High School.



Madjitil Moorna concert with Halls Creek School kids 2009 sponsored by **Healthway**



Craig the Crocodile assisting with oral health education

Through this opportunity a class room screening and education program was set up. The raw data on the high rate of dental disease (38% in urgent need) prompted the formation of KDT. Treatments were initially 95% emergency (pain & swelling). After 8 trips the ratio is now 65% emergency/35% patient request including simple denture work. KDT strives for a 50% mix of preventive and treatment; everyone receives instruction and a family oral health pack. The oral health promotion component uses oral health packs, at school education program and the oral health booklet .KDT provides ongoing education through packs, booklets, support & encouragement for health clinic and teaching staff to continue the program. The specially designed “Strong Teeth” booklet was available at the event for anyone to take away with them for their family and clients.

KDT is staffed by volunteer dental personnel; dentists including new graduates, specialists, assistants, therapists, hygienists, technicians and final year dental students. It visits Community Schools and Health Clinics and East Kimberley communities by invitation. Screening of children has occurred children at the following community schools: Balgo Hills, Billiluna, Mulan, Ringers Soak, Yiyili, Frog Hollow and Warmun. Further information about their work can be found at www.kimberleydentalteam.com but an example of positive outcomes is seen below.



Pre Treatment



Post Treatment

Jan informed us that like any great team KDT aims to engender efficiency, enthusiasm, mentoring and a team environment. The Team complements and supports the government and private dental services and isolated staff with minimal bureaucracy and an emphasis on cultural sensitivity, awareness, and mutual respect.

The Power of Partnerships is seen through connections with Dental Health Services, WA Country Health Service , Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Council and Aboriginal Medical Services clinics, Royal Flying Doctor Service, dental supply and equipment companies, Australian Remote and Rural Oral Health Workers and the Bush Dentists sharing knowledge, resources and experience, private dental practitioners in the Kimberley and the University of Western Australia.

Choir member Tracy Sandercock said this about the event*“The speakers were passionate & informative on their specific topics.....Michael on mental health and education with a focus on family & community unity & support through seamless networking & communication.*

Then there is our Jan (& John).....I personally admire the hard work Jan & John have put in (& the dental volunteers) & their obvious genuine concern about dental health in the remote Kimberley communities.....and guess what.....they are 'REALLY' doing something about it..... making a difference to hundreds of very grateful people. I reckon they are so successful because they go about their business in such a non-intrusive, respectful way & have built solid relationships within the communities over the past 3 years.....coming up to 4 years”.

That power-point presentation was fantastic..... definitely left a photographic impression highlighting the importance of preventative dental health.....great stuff Jan”.

Since the Close The Gap campaign was launched in 2007, it has called on the government to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the development of a long-term plan to close the gap in health equality. Michael Mitchell and Jan Owen have given us an insight into how this can be done through committed and secure partnerships at all levels across their areas.

Chris Vigus reminded us that the Close the Gap campaign consists of health, human rights and community organisations under the leadership of peak Indigenous health organisations. It is calling for continued funding of the Government’s “closing the gap” programs past 2013, when they currently expire. Chris encouraged us to sign the Close The Gap pledge. Mr Vigus once again acknowledged the speakers and their positive impact and encouraged us all to work at an individual and local level to promote change. He thanked the Madjitil Moorna team for preparing afternoon tea and acknowledged and thanked Healthway for their continued sponsorship of Madjitil Moorna events and festivals.



Madjitil Moorna members Aunty Karl Mourach, Tricia Flynn Scrutton and Tracy Sandercock

We hope that you might feel inspired to join us next year.

Pauline

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Supported by



Madjitil Moorna, Singers of Aboriginal Songs

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