

Title: Suicide Prevention Training for People Who Work with Depressed and Suicidal Indigenous People

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WHY AND WHO?

Our community like other communities has felt the pain of loss through suicide, this pain has been felt more often and more keenly by our Indigenous families. Many more of our Indigenous young people especially our young men, have taken their own lives, and as their families and friends struggle to understand **Why**, our organizations struggle to find ways to stem this horrible tide.

One of our local family groups has lost seven of its young men to suicide over the last two years.

Our local Mental Health Planning Days have identified gaps in services and resources in relation to Indigenous mental health issues.

The issues are complex and multi-layered and agencies and staff often find it difficult to meet their Indigenous clients needs. There are very high rates of mental health problems among our Indigenous community that are often related to grief and loss, and cultural and social disadvantage across education, employment, accommodation, and historical impacts.

So when the opportunity to access funding to specifically target these issues, there were people/organizations already having these discussions who readily agreed on the focus of our DSQ – Qld Alliance submission.

Our group consists of representatives from:

KCC Keppel Community Care –

Who provides in home services to people in our region, the services assist people with disabilities and frail elderly to maintain independence.

Darumbal Community Youth Services –

An Indigenous organization that provides accommodation, support, advocacy and referral services to young people and families.

Community Employment Options –

Who provides employment and training services and support to employers and job seekers who experience barriers to employment.

Milbi Incorporated –

An Indigenous organization that provides accommodation and support for those homeless, suffering alcohol, drug or other substance misuse and those at risk or who have already come into contact with the criminal justice system.

Queensland Alliance -

The peak body for the Community Mental Health Sector, that provides support and development for over 240 community organisations working in Mental Health in Queensland.

Our project was much more than just the objectives we outlined, it was an opportunity to bring together both Indigenous and non-Indigenous

organizations with a shared focus on addressing a significant Indigenous problem - suicide. It involved increased communication, planning and commitment between these organizations for the ongoing development of appropriate and effective services to Indigenous peoples.

Our overarching goal is to prevent suicides, but our underlying goal of coming together forming closer relationships to create a greater understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals and services of the challenges faced by Indigenous Australians. This understanding will lead to better treatment and prevention of the Mental Health needs of Indigenous people in our community.

This will occur by people coming to the table, listening, talking and planning together to find ways to address the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous mental health outcomes.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

The CQ Alliance (which is our informal name for our group) has hit the ground running so to speak in terms of delivering training for members of our local community. The following training has occurred:-

Two (2) ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) 2 day Workshops were offered with 44 people attending;

We have also run 2 x 3 hour SafeTALK suicide awareness workshops where approximately 25 people attended

We have run an Indigenous Trauma Workshop where approximately 20 people attended. This workshop was facilitated by the Indigenous Psychological Services from West Australia.

We have funded two local Indigenous young people (1 male and 1 female) to be trained as ASIST Facilitators for our region and they have

just returned from a full week of training in Brisbane. There was all positive feedback on the workshops. These young people will be mentored and supported to deliver the ASIST workshops by the current facilitators and this brings the number of qualified trainers in Rockhampton to 5 and 3 of these are Aboriginal people.

These workshops were heavily subsidised training opportunities - There was money raised from the workshops and this money will go back into the community in the form of training either for subsidies or to bring specialists to our city.

This training has been in response to the needs identified within our local community and has all taken place within a short period of time. The focus was always on training the workforce and particularly those working with Indigenous clients to address critical determinants for suicide or self-harm.

Whilst providing the training for the community, the CQ Alliance members have also been developing stronger linkages and partnerships between each other and building a collaborative and responsive network.

THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS

Over the next twelve months our plans are to continue as a group/consortium to meet regularly and plan ongoing training and development for local staff and community members, utilizing the funds that we collected during the 6 months of the project.

These plans include:

- From our project evaluation we will take the learnings and explore ways to improve on what we have done before moving forward

- Organising and running more of the subsidized ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) workshops, by;
 - Utilising our newly trained Indigenous ASIST facilitators
 - Identifying staff and services to promote this training to
 - Expanding the access to training to include community members, by trialing a new approach where services will be asked to identify and “sponsor a community member” to attend the ASIST workshop.
- Organise more of the SafeTALK suicide awareness workshops targeting workers and community members
- Identify further needs of awareness raising and community education by looking at the areas of education, employment and accommodation.
- Taking information from the Indigenous & main stream Mental Health Planning days to discuss further

FUTURE GOALS AND GROUP FOCUS

Once the evaluation and analysis is completed for the project funded by the Qld Alliance, the CQ Alliance members intend to build upon what has been started with this project. There are a number of innovative and community focused strategies to be further developed at the local level, State and National levels.

These include:

* Darumbal Community Youth Services CEO being invited to become a member of the Qld Health and Disabilities services Mental Health Advisory Roundtable.

* Identifying individuals and agencies within the local community that hold resources and/or assets which could be contributed towards a community pool of knowledge around mental health and/or social and emotional well-being e.g. Bidjerdii Aboriginal Medical Service has a Bringing Them Home worker and a Link-Up Counsellor for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by the Stolen Generation policies

* The Qld Budget 2009-2010 announced Early intervention for young people showing early signs of mental illness who will receive a boost with an additional \$2.2 million allocated in 2009–10 (\$6.5 million over three years) to trial two community residential programs and \$5 million has been allocated to develop sustainable service responses to support vulnerable people.

* Develop a Community of Practice as an Action Research project which is a joint project between the Department of Communities and local NGO's and other government services.

* Sign-off on Partnership Agreements between members of the CQ Alliance outlining roles and joint responsibilities

* Explore opportunities for research to inform practice
Working towards developing a Treatment Centre for young people affected by alcohol and/or drug/solvent addictions within Central Qld

The project for training people who work with depressed or suicidal Indigenous people has addressed an apparent need within the local community. This work will be continued for the health and well-being of our people within our local community.