

COMMUNITY
CARE, ENGAGEMENT, DEVELOPMENT, OUTCOMES
Lessons from Remote- My Story

Indigenous Mental Health



Traditional Ways

- Social and emotional well-being-
 1. Strong spirituality
 2. Sense of belonging to people and land, language, skills, knowledge of environment, animals, plants
 3. Responsibility and roles

Historical

- People's land being taken over
- People removed off land, massacres
- Aboriginal protection act
- White Australia policy
- Stolen generations
- 1967 referendum on Indigenous rights of citizen
- Native Title – Mr Mabo

Current Socioeconomic environment.

- Disadvantagement
- Inadequate housing
- Low income earners
- Welfare benefits
- Inadequate education
- Intergenerational trauma
- Third world health standards

North Qld Context

- Family Map:
 - GG born into the her tribal group Njadjon people, rainforest people of Mt Bartlefrere
 - Her father first White man in North to gain permission to marry full blood indigenous woman
 - Many attempts to remove them to Palm Island, constant struggle to avoid the protection act
 - Many atrocities' against Njadjonji people due to Russell river gold fields starting
 - “Selections” of rainforest, taken by farmers, immigrants
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- Mother a baby when GGGG removed to Palm Island 90+ years of age (RIP),
 - 1967 referendum (Grandparents heavily involved) , mother a young woman - me
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- Native Title over Njadjonji National Park areas
 - GG and mother alive in living in North

In my Grandmothers lifetime

- Hunter gatherer life style
- Land taken
- Mass removals, loss of lives
- Introduced as unpaid labor to industrialised society
- Stolen generations- intergenerational trauma, related lives
- Post 1967 referendum human rights “recognised members of society”
- Native Title, today JETLAG.

Palm History

- 44 tribal groups inc. Torres Strait Islanders
- Mission- lives “by the bell”
- DOGGIT “government run” inc. shop and land.
- Every facet of life regulated, prescribed
- Most beautiful places on earth, safest to work



Suicide

- Mental Health Team Late 1990's.
- High figures across North Queensland Ernest Hunters suicide report 3 communities.
- Deregulation of lives
- Destruction of roles of men, high unemployment
- Substance misuse after history of prohibition
- Inadequate housing
- Inadequate education opportunities
- ? Undiagnosed mental illness
- Health care
- Deaths in Custody Report
- Mainland – racism

Riots leading to Palm Island Select Committee Parliamentary Inquiry

- *“Underlying issues bigger than Mental Health Services”*

Community

- Individual families
- Elders
- PI Council/ Mayors
- Women's shelter
- Men's Group
- Ferdy's Haven Rehabilitation
- Football team

Non Government Organisations

- Job agencies
- Red Cross programs
- Indigenous Family Violence Unit
- TAIHS

State

- Housing
- Health- mental health adult and C & Y
- Primary health Medical Superintendant, DON
- ATODS
- QAS Senior Paramedic
- QPS Senior Sergeant, Community corrections
- Schools

Federal

- Department of Communities
- BWCOLGMAN Futures



Mental Health Services

- Small part of strategy, primarily responsible for suicide prevention.
- Led by health workers, development of team structure, geographical and cultural guides for clinical staff. First point of contact for community access
- Gender mix of team
- Flexible service provision
- Community education- Council, elders, NGO's, Families, Individuals, Gov- Education, TAFE.
- Early Intervention- referrals- family, QAS- EEO, Flexible access
- Community treatment options.

Community engagement

- Education opportunities to individuals on accessing help, crisis management, mental health education, families, school, TAFE, organisation staff.
- All staff- health workers, clinical, consultants

Community Development

- PI Council self initiated alcohol management
- Reduced Canteen hours
- Limiting alcohol choices on offer
- PCYC
- Men's Group- Cell watch men in custody.
- Women's Group/ Shelter

Community Care

- Referral pathways
- Early Intervention
- Ways of supporting caring capacity of family
- Processes between agencies to support community

Community Outcomes

- Reduction in rate of completed suicides two years of “0”
- Reduction of admissions to Joyce Palmer Health Service
- Reductions of transfers to acute tertiary facilities
- Rare use of Mental Health Act
- No use of QPS to transfer

Learning's

- Community ownership of treatment, service access
 - Minimal use of Mental Health Act- Involuntary Treatment Orders less 2%
 - Utilising “Family Treatment Orders”
 - All organisations mandated to work together
 - Willingness by leaders at all levels to do this
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- *Does this translate to other communities/ areas*
 - Yes because its individualised and community owned
WHOMEVER your target group

Key Issues

- Public vs Private
- Working together elsewhere, same level of collaboration not evident
- Mainland behind

Criminal Charges Joe Blow

Court Case
Conviction
Sentence Served (18mth-10years)
GO HOME!! FREE MAN

Mental Health Court
(Unsound mind/ Unfit to plead)
Charges discontinued
Forensic Order
Sentence + more detention
May not be able to return home
Mental Health Review Tribunals
Forever watched

Mental Health Act – Forensic Provisions

- Young indigenous people charges
- Custody
- Mental health service
- Diagnosis
- Forensic units
- Forensic orders, forever regulated by MH services
- *Advocate for good legal representation! Please!*

Acknowledgements

- Thomas Pryor, Bernadette Johnston
- Mayors of Palm Island Council, Eryka Kyle, Delena Foster Oui, Alf Lacey
- Palm Island Elders & Councilors
- Grandparents

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