Community Services Skilling Plan

Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Home and Community Care Services Best Practice Stories 3
The Community Services Skilling Plan team is working on a diverse range of workforce and sector development initiatives for the Department of Communities, Home and Community Care (HACC) Services. Our contact number is 1800 835 866.

This HACC initiative is a key commitment under the HACC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service Development Plan and involves showcasing best practice HACC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service delivery models to promote innovative and positive service delivery practices to meet the cultural needs of their communities and build cultural capacity within the HACC sector.

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Graphic design and print Ben Mathieson - www.bmgraphicdesign.com.au

This is the last of three publications that are distributed to all HACC organisations.

Through these publications HACC organisations and service providers have the opportunity to showcase their initiatives and to learn of activities and service models other HACC services are implementing.

Yamadi clients did a Tai Chi demonstration at the Mackay Family Day during NAIDOC week this year.
Promoting Independence at Yamadi

Yamadi Lera Yumi Meta Association is an Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander Home and Community Care (HACC) service based in Mackay. At Yamadi the team is always looking for new ideas to ensure they deliver appropriate services that meet the needs of their clients. Most recently Yamadi was one of the only HACC services in Mackay to receive funding from the Department of Communities for a functional independence project. Yamadi has implemented a number of activities to increase the wellness of their clients since receiving this funding.

A popular activity amongst the clients at Yamadi is Tai Chi. Initially Yamadi clients participated in a 6 week Tai Chi program as part of a falls prevention pilot project delivered through Queensland Health. When this trial ended, Yamadi continued to deliver the classes. The classes which regularly attract 15 to 18 people every week are noticeably increasing the mobility of Yamadi clients.

“One lady who participates in the classes started off with a wheelie walker and was really off balance when she first started. Now this lady does not need any mobility aids and even rides a push bike,” recounted Elizabeth Warren, manager at Yamadi. “Another lady progressed from a wheelie walker to a stick and now she keeps leaving her stick behind at the centre because she is not relying on it as much.”

“Tai Chi has really helped to boost the clients’ confidence,” says Elizabeth. “They even asked to do a demonstration at the Mackay Family Day during NAIDOC week this year and encouraged others to join in. We were really proud of them. People think they are old and they can’t do things like that, but there they were - exercising, having fun and encouraging other people to join in too”.

The team at Yamadi have even explored opportunities to promote wellness in their other service types. “Our personal care budget was not being used because people did not want or need assistance with showering, so we looked at other ways to utilise our personal care money,” shares Elizabeth.

With permission from the Department, Yamadi started to deliver massages, nail trimming and hair cuts as part of their personal care program. “The massage helps clients with their mobility, balance and circulation and the nail trimming frees up the podiatrist who is always in high demand,” says Elizabeth. Most importantly “… the personal care has really made clients feel confident. They feel better about themselves and when they feel better about themselves they want to get involved in more things”.

Large numbers turn up to Yamadi to get their massages, hair cuts and nail trimmings. Elizabeth explains that providing these services at the centre means that clients can have lunch and participate in social activities while they wait, which provides the effect of an additional day of centre-based respite.

Clients are asked to make a $5 contribution towards their personal care. They can also buy massage and haircut vouchers. Family members often buy the massage and lawn mowing vouchers as gifts for Yamadi clients. “One family buys 12 months of mowing vouchers and gives them as gifts at Christmas,” explains Elizabeth.

Yamadi is continuously looking for new activities to introduce as part of the functional independence program. In the future Elizabeth plans to introduce Food Sense classes to promote healthy eating and a budgeting class. “We like to do things to empower our clients and build their self esteem and this helps to build their functional independence,” says Elizabeth.
With the exception of their vehicles, the We Care Day Respite Centre which was purpose built in 1995, lost everything to flood waters.

The flood waters of January 2011 exceeded previous flood records and We Care Day Respite Centre experienced flooding to the roof top of their two storey building.
Managing Disasters: The We Care Experience

On the 10th of January 2011, We Care Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service for the Aged and Disabled received a text message from the Ipswich City Council indicating that the Bremer River was going to flood. The staff were given just two hours to evacuate their riverside Day Respite Centre. In the past, flood waters had reached the centre’s fence line, so in the short timeframe they were given to evacuate, We Care staff members prioritised the evacuation of their vehicles to an off site location and moved all their computers to the second level of the building.

Unfortunately, the flood waters exceeded previous flood records and We Care experienced flooding to the roof top of their two storey building. With the exception of their vehicles, the We Care Day Respite Centre which was purpose built in 1995, lost everything.

The loss of the centre was devastating for both staff and clients of the service. Despite their significant loss, the We Care Board and staff members agreed that the continuation of services was a high priority. In an effort to ensure that service delivery continued, the We Care Board and Staff met weekly at a local family restaurant to discuss rostering and any problems that staff members were encountering. Whilst road closures prevented access to the homes of some clients, the majority of We Care clients were receiving their regular in home care services within a week of the floods.

“All staff members went above and beyond what was required of them,” said Denise Ruska, Manager at We Care.

As part of their flood recovery, We Care was able to draw on strong partnerships with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services in the region including the Kambu Medical Centre and the local youth centre – Children of the Dreaming. Partnerships with these organisations led to the sharing of volunteers and support services. “Kambu Medical Centre became a hub for the Aboriginal community during the floods and we helped with some of their clients and they were able to help with some of our clients” said Denise. A similar arrangement was also in place with the community service workers from Children of the Dreaming.

We Care opened a temporary office at Brookwater, just on the outskirts of Ipswich, not long after the floods so that staff had somewhere to meet, catch up and continue their ongoing training. Kambu Medical Centre, which had recently been refurbished, kindly donated furniture to assist We Care with the set up of their new base. According to Denise, having a strong support network for staff and good communication with the Board was a really important part of their flood recovery process.

During the floods, members of the We Care governing Board were offered support from a professional board which We Care had put in place over 10 years ago. Professionals on this Board include a barrister, psychologist, doctor and social worker. The We Care board were able to call on the barrister for legal advice on workplace health and safety issues, the legalities of selling the house and insurance claims. Arrangements were also in place with the social worker in case any of the staff members needed someone to talk to about the grief and loss they may have experienced with losing the centre. “If staff aren’t emotionally supported they cannot be emotionally supportive to the clients,” said Denise.

“Traditionally, the respite centre has been a cultural base for the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The people that clients’ meet with at the centre are more like family. So it has been really hard to continue some of the cultural activities when we don’t have a regular base to work from,” says Denise. However, they have managed to ensure that the popular respite service continues with clients participating in weekly outings or meetings at the local park or medical centre.

A number of families affected by the flood disaster have sought social support from We Care. Overall the We Care clientele has increased significantly and they now have a waiting list for all service types. Both clients and staff are now looking forward to seeing a new We Care respite centre become a reality in 2012.
Melba at a Health forum held in Bundaberg
Queensland Aged and Disability Advocacy Service (QADA): Giving another Voice to Elders

Melba Townsend is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocate with QADA. QADA is a statewide advocacy service funded by the Home and Community Care program. This program provides information, education, support and representation to enable HACC clients and clients of community packaged care and residential aged care to better understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities.

Melba is based in Brisbane and provides advocacy support in the south-east Queensland region. QADA also employs another Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocate, Larraine Gabey, who is based in Cairns. Melba and Larraine spend most of their time out and about visiting different communities. In their roles as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates with QADA, Melba and Larraine aim to give a voice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who can’t speak up for themselves.

There are a number of reasons why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HACC clients may ask Melba or Larraine to help them have their voices heard. Some common reasons include not being happy with the hours or types of services delivered by HACC providers, not being happy with staff performance or conduct, and not receiving culturally-appropriate services. “Our role is to support the clients and make sure they are getting a quality and culturally-appropriate service,” says Melba.

All HACC service providers have an obligation under the Community Care Common Standards to provide their clients with information on advocacy services and assist them to access an advocate where necessary. Melba and Larraine can play an active role in assisting service providers to meet their obligations relating to advocacy. As Indigenous advocates they can deliver information and education sessions on advocacy to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers and HACC clients. They can also assist individual clients to explore their options, consider their rights and responsibilities and communicate with their service provider.

According to Melba, communication plays a big part in resolving concerns. “Often people aren’t communicating with the manager or coordinator of the service and this is when misunderstandings can occur and issues become escalated,” says Melba.

QADA also delivers information sessions to mainstream HACC services through Melba and Larraine. “We try to educate the service providers about where the client may be coming from as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person,” says Melba. A comprehensive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander information pack has also been developed to assist all providers in relaying the advocacy message in a culturally-appropriate way.

For more information on QADA or to obtain copies of the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander information packs, visit www.qada.org.au or call 1800 818 338.
Inspirational Leadership in Central Queensland

At 21 years of age and having served as a Director of the Board, Matthew Cooke was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of Nhulundu Wooribah Indigenous Health Organisation. During his 4½ years as CEO at Nhulundu, Matthew’s leadership has been inspirational and acknowledged on several occasions. In 2007 Matthew was awarded the Young Leader Award in the inaugural National Excellence Awards in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health; in 2008, he was awarded the Deadly Vibe Young Australian of the Year Award; and most recently the local branch of the Australian Institute of Management announced Matthew as their 2011 Young Manager of the Year.

Family members inspired Matthew to pursue a career in health. “Both my Aunty and Uncle were Senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers. My grandmother also studied Aboriginal health at a later age and this was a great inspiration to me,” says Matthew. Matthew also suggests that his personal interest in corporate governance attracted him to the Nhulundu Indigenous Health Service. Governance provides us “with an opportunity to plan and direct services to meet the future needs of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community,” he continues. “Younger people wishing to pursue a career in health and aged care need to have a passion to better their people and their community,” says Matthew. “You need to have drive and determination. What you put in is what you take out”.

Matthew’s interest in Indigenous health and corporate governance extends beyond his role at Nhulundu. Matthew is also the deputy chairperson of the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council, a Director of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and a Queensland representative on the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Reference Group.

Matthew suggests that all Home and Community Care service providers can benefit from gaining a better understanding of how other corporate, non-government and government providers operate. “Nhulundu has learnt from other organisations about how we can restructure and develop our own business model to meet the outcomes of our community”. Nhulundu developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with 23 other human and social service organisations in the Gladstone area. “This MOU is the foundation for building long-term relationships with other providers in the region,” he says.

“One of the best things we have gained from working with other organisations has been the development of best practice policies and procedures. There’s no point reinventing the wheel. We all have a shared vision to deliver better services.” From Matthew’s perspective an important part of this vision is the delivery of integrated and coordinated care. “We don’t want to see clients in a silo,” he says. “Clients become reluctant to access services if they have to go to more than one provider.”

The HACC program at Nhulundu delivers allied health, domestic assistance, social support, personal care, centre-based respite, transport and client care coordination. In addition to this, Nhulundu Indigenous Health Organisation also operates a medical centre, and a range of community support programs including child care, court support, education and employment services, housing support and community aged-care packages. “Having all these services under one roof allows us to be more responsive to the grass roots needs of the community,” says Matthew.