



# Promising Practice Profiles

<b>Project title</b>	Moorditj Coolangars (“Solid Kids”) Community Hub
<b>Project practice</b>	Closing literacy and numeracy gaps between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal children
<b>Project undertaken by</b>	Mt Lockyer Primary School, WA
<b>Start date</b>	February 2007
<b>Focal areas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Healthy young families</li><li>• Supporting families and parents</li><li>• Early learning and care</li><li>• Creating Child friendly communities</li><li>• Families and children’s services working effectively together</li></ul>
<b>Program</b>	Communities for Children
<b>Issue</b>	<p>Mt Lockyer Primary School is located in the North-West corner of the boundary of the City of Albany, in South-West Western Australia. The majority of the school’s population is from a predominantly public housing area with related low socio-economic indicators, for example high unemployment, single parents, young parents and limited transportation.</p> <p>In 2007, 362 students were enrolled in the school, of which 18% were of Aboriginal origin. The number of Aboriginal students at Mt Lockyer Primary School has steadily increased since 2006. Evidence of lower achievement, particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy, correlates with the broader finding that the education outcomes of Aboriginal children are below that of non-Aboriginal children (see literature review). This has been compounded by reported high levels of absenteeism prior to the program’s inception.</p> <p>Factors contributing to disengagement with the education system in the Mt Lockyer area include a lack of understanding of the importance of the non-compulsory years of schooling, limited knowledge of enrolment processes, reduced access to early childhood and health professionals to gain advice about attendance, and overall poor relationships with schools.</p> <p>In response to such issues, four targeted priorities at Mount Lockyer Primary School and for the WA Department of Education and Training have been identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• an early intervention program for ages 0–8 in literacy and numeracy;</li><li>• improving the attendance at pre-compulsory education;</li><li>• closing the gap between the achievement of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students; and</li><li>• developing partnerships between the community and the school.</li></ul> <p>Moorditj Coolangars or Solid Kids Program is an Aboriginal-specific offering, linked in to other programs within the school, all of which address these four priorities. The program identified more than 20 families within the school zone as potential participants. Solid Kids operates with the understanding that schools are easily accessible and neutral venues for local families where there are pockets of social isolation and limited transport options. It aims to provide families with a non-threatening drop-in space, acknowledging that improved relationships between parents, children and schools promote better educational outcomes.</p>

## Program context

The Lower Great Southern Communities for Children (CfC) is a regionally based initiative located on the southern coast of Western Australia, five hours south of Perth. The vision for the CfC is “to have positive caring communities in the Lower Great Southern in which young children can reach their full potential”. This vision recognises the geographical and socio-economic challenges of this 41,500 square km (approx) site with its variable and frequent lack of access to reliable information, services and support for children 0–5 years and their families. Extensive community consultations, across the 13 Local Government Shires within the site, have helped the Lower Great Southern CfC identify these inconsistencies and plan for the establishment of culturally appropriate and safe environments for young children and their families to grow and develop together.

Community Hubs, as a CfC initiative, aim to enhance child friendly communities through the establishment of safe, culturally appropriate meeting places where child and family related activities and support can be provided. The program aims to encourage community members to work together to improve early childhood health, development and wellbeing in their local area, improve interest and capacity to own and respond to early childhood issues and ensure their community is inclusive of all families and cultures.

The Moorditj Coolangars Community Hub is located at Mount Lockyer Primary School, in Albany, the regional centre of the Great Southern Region in Western Australia. Moorditj Coolangars provides information to predominantly Aboriginal parents and carers of children aged 0–5 years, preparing them for school. This includes promotion of early literacy and numeracy awareness, parenting skills and knowledge of and access to community resources, whilst creating a connectedness to school in readiness for commencement to kindergarten within the school facility.

Moorditj Coolangars commenced operation in January 2007 and is one of several innovative programs operating within Mount Lockyer Primary School as part of the vision to raise literacy and numeracy standards and close the gap between the achievement of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. Most of the families participating in Moorditj Coolangars have children currently in the school system and some have been involved in other programs such as the Elders Circle Attendance+ initiative, which supports improved student attendance and engagement. Specifically, Moorditj Coolangars aims to raise awareness of the critical importance of the early years in developing early literacy and numeracy capacity. It is based on the understanding that if parents are empowered with this knowledge they will be better placed to support their children in their future education.

The **overall aim** of Moorditj Coolangars is to close the gap between the achievement of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students by increasing children’s literacy and numeracy skills and attendance at non-compulsory education (kindergarten and pre-primary) in a school based setting.

This overall aim is to be achieved through the following five **strategic program objectives**, whereby participation in the program will:

- provide families greater access to information on early childhood development, health and wellbeing for young children;
- strengthen relationships between families and the school;
- increase parents/carers confidence to participate more fully in the education system;
- encourage parents/carers support and promotion of education for their children; and
- increase school based pre-compulsory enrolment and attendance.

## Practice description

Moorditj Coolangars involves the delivery of information sessions with Aboriginal families around a range of health and social issues. Specific input is provided by health and community development practitioners, including community nurses, speech therapists, dieticians, Auslan teachers (for hearing impaired), health officers, social workers and school administrators. Aboriginal parents within the school catchment become involved in Moorditj Coolangars through an individualised approach. Invitations to attend the program are either hand delivered, posted or sent home with older siblings attending the

school. This is followed up by the school with phone calls and offers of transport to and from sessions. The content of information sessions is based on consultations with families and serves as a means of building relationships between the program, school and Aboriginal community.

Twelve information sessions were delivered in 2007, with over 70 adults and 47 children attending throughout the year. These sessions were designed to be interactive and parents encouraged by presenters and staff to participate, with relevant materials provided in support of delivered content.

The program is managed by a coordinator who undertakes logistical and organisational tasks and the Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer (AIEO) with the role of building personal relationships with families. An additional feature of the program is the use of a designated space as a Community Room, which is staffed by the AIEO and available for parents to access throughout the school day. Further, the program has been designed to include and involve Aboriginal families in other Indigenous and mainstream programs running in the school complying with the Education Department of Western Australia's sustainable, whole of school approach.

The key activities, which make it an effective approach are detailed below.

### **The program focuses on building relationships between the School and Aboriginal community**

Moorditj Coolangars has developed relationships through flexible approaches that reinforce trust and mutual respect between Aboriginal families and the School. For example, one approach has been to establish a physical space (Community Room), which has a "drop-in" capacity that provides for the immediate support needs of Aboriginal families. The Community Room is an informal setting with comfortable seating, creating a non-threatening and friendly atmosphere. As this is the AIEO's workspace, the worker is available to meet with parents informally and offer them tea and coffee. The Community Room has a toy-box and library for visiting children. Overall, for Aboriginal families, the Community Room normalises the notion that the school is not only educative but a supportive environment.

An aspect of the AIEO's role is to visit families at home to encourage attendance and discuss support options provided by the school, for example, providing transport to parents for school related activities. Because of the AIEO's strong connections into the community, the worker promotes the program through friends and community members in general conversation. While it is acknowledged that relationship building takes time, it is a crucial investment for future school attendance of Aboriginal children that families find the school to be a non-threatening environment. The AIEO is a vital part of this process. Every chance to build relationships is valued, for example, if only one mother attends a session this is seen as a great opportunity to build one-on-one rapport.

Other techniques employed to build relationships include:

- helping parents with basic organisational skills, such as providing access to the photocopying machine, laminating important documents and giving them files for storage;
- "checking in" with mothers about how they feel their older children are coping at school and offering assistance to them if required in an unobtrusive manner; and
- supporting and encouraging families if they experiencing difficulties at home through gifts of food hampers and cards.

This focus on building relationships is important in achieving one of Moorditj Coolangars's objectives, with the overall aim of developing partnerships between the school and wider community.

### **The program is culturally appropriate**

Moorditj Coolangars respects the local Aboriginal culture. This respectfulness is demonstrated through flexibility in running the program, understanding the interconnectedness and dynamics of families, and being sensitive to events which may occur in the community (e.g., deaths, funerals). Family and extended family events can have an overwhelming and unpredictable impact

on program attendance at times and it is important to know what is going on within the community in order to be aware of their needs. It is the AIEO role to liaise closely with significant Elders to ensure that the school is kept informed of community events and can respond appropriately.

Moorditj Coolangars celebrates culture by adopting culturally meaningful practices, such as involving Elders in multi-generational dialogue during information sessions and engaging older primary school aged siblings of the in program activities. Involving older siblings has proven extremely important in encouraging parents to participate and strengthened parent-school relationships. As an example, one activity involving older siblings was the art and design of literacy and numeracy bags. These students' creations were influenced by feedback from parents and younger children. Bags also contained resources made by older siblings such as the 2008 Moorditj Coolangars calendar, which were presented at an end of year party. As many of the older siblings were involved in other programs conducted by the school, their role in the program was integrated into the curriculum in a meaningful way.

Other ways that the program celebrates local culture is through the use of photos and invitations, which are very important for families. Older siblings took photos of their families and created personalised invitations for the information sessions. Personalised invitations with photos of the children and parents are a very powerful tool in recognising each family. Both parents and children take pride in the invitations and are more likely to attend. This is reinforced by public displays of photos involving Aboriginal parents and their children.

Finally, Moorditj Coolangars incorporates the culturally appropriate practice of positive modelling. A critical adjunct to parent information sessions that address issues such as ear health and speech development, is providing an environment that normalises healthy practices. For example, healthy food is prepared during the information sessions to be eaten in break time (e.g., fruit kebabs). Personal hygiene is also reinforced particularly around colds and flu (e.g., tissues are always available for children's use).

Through culturally appropriate practices, Moorditj Coolangars's third objective is achieved as parents feel safe and welcomed in the school environment. Through this support, education is promoted as a priority for their children. This is encouraging Aboriginal parents to enrol their children in pre-compulsory classes. Another consequence of this approach has been greater regularity in attendance for these children and their siblings.

#### **The program is needs-based**

In order to achieve the first strategic objective, Mt Lockyer Primary School has analysed the needs of students through data on attendance, literacy, numeracy, health and social and emotional data. Staff have consulted with parents and families including conducting an audit on inclusive practices in the school in 2004. Along with this appraisal, the Moorditj Coolangars program has also been monitored to ensure family needs are met. Needs assessment and monitoring has been undertaken through use of a survey, quarterly reporting to the CfC and ongoing feedback from parents to the AIEO, Program Coordinator and presenters. Information sessions have been developed in response to topics requested by parents. Transport is provided to parents as required.

A survey was also distributed in the final term of 2007 to assess parent satisfaction with the program to date and the School has adapted the program for 2008 based on their responses.

#### **The program builds connections with the broader community**

The program has involved participation from health providers such as Great Southern Aboriginal Health and the WA Department of Health Child Development team. The participation of these health organisations has assisted parents to develop knowledge and improve their understanding of important health and developmental milestones.

Other schools and community groups have also been involved as part of

informal networking, including Coolangarras Barmah Kindergarten and Rainbow Coast Neighbourhood Centre. These organisations have discussed the utility of the model—including its strengths and weaknesses—with the potential for more coordinated efforts, and best practice models to be implemented into other schools in the area.

In 2008, the program will involve Relationships Australia to support families dealing with domestic violence and the YMCA through its Great Foundations program, with a focus on promoting the role of fathers in parenting.

Building relationships with the broader community is an important ingredient for success directly related to the first strategic objective, as parents have been linked in to service providers to access the information they require.

### **The program is part of a sustainable, whole-school approach**

Moorditj Coolangars is one of five programs operating in the school to support children's literacy and numeracy achievement. Other programs are: the Elders Circle A+ attendance program, which aims to increase attendance and access to education through the involvement and support of Elders; the Learn-a-torium, an outdoor classroom which links cultures; the Indigenous Tuition Assistance Scheme (ITAS); and the Aboriginal Education Specialist Teacher Program (AEST). Funding and resources are coordinated through school planning to ensure programs can be sustained. As noted by the WA Department of Education and Training, all staff operate with the understanding that everyone is responsible and accountable for whole-of-school improvement.

This whole-of-school approach allows for the program to access other resources as needed, which has led to successful outcomes. As stated, older siblings of children aged 0–5 engaged in the program have proven to be a great asset in getting mothers to attend, and providing a happy and welcoming environment for their younger siblings who then look forward to starting school in Year 1. Elders participating in the attendance program have also been supporting families who have been identified as at risk due to non-attendance. The Elders are pivotal to this role across programs because they empower the community to help solve issues and concerns themselves, rather than taking a more punitive approach (e.g., child protection, police etc.). Families are more likely to listen to their elders than the school and they allow the school to continue to build positive relationships with the families. The School is no longer seen as the ones “waving the big stick”.

This sustainable, whole-of-school approach has led to improved relationships between parents, schools and service providers, and will promote ongoing attitudinal change throughout school life and for subsequent children and families.

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## **Research base**

Essential components of the Moorditj Coolangars program can be linked with literature and practice evidence, and the program itself builds on the existing evidence base. Research on the overall value of a community hub model, the importance of programs which build links between schools and Aboriginal families and the effectiveness of Indigenous specific programs and the importance of early learning to close the gap between the achievement of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children have been highlighted below and compared with characteristics of Moorditj Coolangars.

### **The value of the Community Hub model**

Moorditj Coolangars was developed with the understanding that an extensive body of literature and practice evidence confirms the effectiveness of community hubs to create better outcomes for children, families and communities. Literature shows that parents who have timely and easy access to quality assured, culturally appropriate information about child development and locally available services and supports are more likely to develop secure attachment with their children, have greater involvement of the father in a child's early years, demonstrate an improved capacity to provide nurturing home environments and have stability of family relationships and confidence in parenting (Australian Government, 2004; Stratham, 2000; Vimpani, 1996).

Through community hubs, parents are more likely to maintain connections with community services, such as schools, because of the diverse range of opportunities to participate, be supported and valued within an integrated community hub (Carbone, Fraser, Ramburuth & Nelms, 2004). The Victorian Government (2007) also supports an integrated system of services that can respond to the emerging need of children and families in local community settings.

Some examples of other successful community hub programs include:

- The Child Care Links Model (CCL), which uses child care centres in disadvantaged areas as community hubs to link families with young children to local support services and to strengthen community networks (Australian Government, 2007). An evaluation of the program undertaken in 2005 found that child care centres are an effective platform to support families with young children and the CCL model is an effective means for developing social capital within local communities (Australian Government, 2005).
- Early Years Hubs established as part of the Hume Communities for Children Initiative in Victoria. Operating in six sites, including primary schools and neighbourhood venues, within Hume City these hubs aim at “creating dynamic child and family services that offered a responsive range of programs that met the diverse needs of the community” (Hubs Strategy Group for Hume Communities for Children Initiative, 2007). In a report which outlined the results of service coordination in these sites, it was found that Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) population-based results in the targeted suburbs show improved numbers of children in prep who have accessed preschool or child care, and a reduced level of developmental vulnerability in children in two or more domains by 9.5% (State of Victoria, 2007).

Acknowledging the community hub model as a tool for strengthening families and communities has been fundamental in achieving outcomes. Mount Lockyer Primary School developed its own culturally appropriate space for Aboriginal families of children aged 0–5 years. Health and other service providers link in to the hub to provide information sessions and support to families.

#### **A focus on building school-community links**

Evidence shows that non-Aboriginal carers in early childhood settings need to develop close relationships with the children’s parents and the Aboriginal community as a whole to ensure continued positive relationships and enhance the care of Indigenous children (Fasoli & Ford, 2001). An important aspect of Moorditj Coolangars is the role of the Wadjella Program Coordinator (“Wadjella” is the Aboriginal [Noongar] word for non-Indigenous). The Wadjella Program Coordinator works in partnership with the Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer (AIEO) to foster relationships between Indigenous families and the school and encourage participation in the education system. The need for an outreach coordinator to build links between schools and Indigenous communities is also supported through literature from the Department of Education and Training in Western Australia. A literacy and numeracy review was undertaken by the Department in 2006 “to improve literacy and numeracy levels of achievement of those students who are struggling, particularly those not reaching the benchmarks in Years 3, 5 and 7” (Western Australian Government, 2006). As part of the review community consultation was undertaken across the state, including Albany. Feedback from the WA community on improving access and participation in kindergarten and pre-primary in schools with low rates of participation and achievement in literacy and numeracy found that:

The appointment of an outreach coordinator to manage the access and participation of four and five year olds was seen as a positive step in linking schools and the community. The ability to contact families with young children and to discuss with them the benefits of pre-school education was seen as invaluable. This was considered particularly relevant for Indigenous communities.

(Western Australian Government, 2006, p.7)

This WA Review Taskforce recommended that an outreach coordinator be employed in targeted schools to support school–community links. Mt Lockyer Primary School's adoption of this recommendation has contributed to the success of the project.

### **A culturally appropriate initiative**

Literature identifies a high level of support from Indigenous families for early education which is Indigenous-specific (Windisch, Jenvey, & Drysdale, 2003) as well as the need for schools to be safe, caring places which value Indigenous students and make them feel welcome (Bourke, Rigby, & Burden, 2000). As stated by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (2007), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander playgroups linked to existing child care, maternal and child health or child and family welfare services create opportunities for families to access information and support in relation to child health and development. Such playgroups provide a mechanism to reach out to families where centre based child care is inappropriate or unacceptable. Moorditj Coolangars demonstrates this Aboriginal-specific culturally appropriate approach. The program involves the use of multi-generational dialogue, whereby elders participate in workshops to pass on information about the importance of good health and education. It also involves the older siblings of students who encourage mothers to attend, engage in related program activities and provides a welcoming environment for their younger siblings. The necessary involvement of Indigenous Elders and other students is a recommendation made in a 2000 study into improving the school attendance of Indigenous students. This Monash University research report asserts:

That schools be encouraged to provide opportunities for Indigenous Elders, past students, and other community members, to be involved in teaching programs, and the development of a supportive atmosphere for Indigenous students. Role models within the Indigenous community should be encouraged to become mentors to Indigenous students, especially to those who have attendance difficulties. (Bourke et al., 2000, p. 5)

The involvement of Aboriginal family and community members is an important element of Moorditj Coolangars and the strategy is also utilised in other Indigenous programs operating within the school. This approach contributes to program sustainability as families continue to attend the sessions. Moorditj Coolangars is an example of an educational program, which introduces young children to the school environment as a safe space while providing the opportunity for socialisation with other children in the playgroup.

### **The importance of early childhood learning for Aboriginal children**

The West Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey 2000–2002 (Kulunga Research Network, n.d.) found that Aboriginal children are performing at a much lower level than non-Aboriginal children from the first year of school, and that this gap widens in the years following. The consequence of poorer performance is evident in the proportion of Aboriginal children in Year 7 meeting national literacy and numeracy benchmarks being at a much lower level than all Australian students (ABS, 2006). A recommendation made from the survey is that schools provide educational and learning programs for very young children to better prepare them for learning and prevent underachieving (Kulunga Research Network, n.d.).

## **Outcomes**

A number of outcomes/impacts have been observed since the program began, which serve to contribute to the overall goal of increased literacy and numeracy skills among Aboriginal students at Mount Lockyer Primary School. These reported outcomes have been:

- parents and children feel respected, valued and welcomed at Mount Lockyer Primary School;
- increased links with parents and carers of older siblings of 0–5 year old Noongar children already attending Mount Lockyer Primary School;

- increased school enrolments;
- parents are more informed about early childhood topics;
- links are established with health professionals, education specialists and other service providers in the Albany district; and
- increased cultural awareness of Wadjella (non-Indigenous) staff.

## Evidence of outcomes

Data/information which supports the outcomes resulting from the Moorditj Coolangars program includes:

- *Quarterly evaluation sheets.* These are completed by the Program Coordinator and submitted to Lower Great Southern Communities for Children (CfC). These feedback sheets summarise the type and format of information sessions conducted, how each session was promoted to attract participants, how useful the sessions were, how future sessions can be improved and feedback given to the presenter on the day from parents and children. The evaluation reports are submitted to the CfC with individual session reporting sheets completed by information session facilitators.
- *Two evaluation surveys completed by parents attending the program.* The first survey captured demographics, level of awareness of enrolment procedures and information needed on health and parenting topics. The second survey measured benefits from the information sessions. Seven parents completed the first survey and eight completed the second. It should be noted that the school was unable to get written feedback from all of the parents as not everyone attended the information sessions when surveys were handed out. Surveys distributed to parents via other means were also not returned to the school. Parents' literacy and their levels of comfort with completing in surveys is unknown.
- *Annual review of Moorditj Coolangars from Mt Lockyer Primary School.* This was submitted to the Lower Great Southern Communities for Children (CfC). The review lists achievement of the program in 2007, challenges and limitations and strategies to ensure sustainability.
- *A submission to the WA Department of Education for the Aboriginal Education Awards 2007.* The submission outlined programs operating in the school, attendance and numeracy and literacy results. Mount Lockyer Primary School won an Aboriginal Education Awards of Achievement for most outstanding school as a result.

### **Outcome 1: Parents and children feel respected, valued and welcomed at Mount Lockyer Primary School**

In the quarterly reports to The Lower Great Southern CfC, the Program Coordinator stated the most valuable parts of the program were:

- one-to-one contact, verbal feedback and encouragement for parents and children;
- contact they have made with other parents and Mount Lockyer Primary School staff; and
- their children are well looked after, cared for and respected at the school.

The Program Coordinator also commented that:

I have received very positive feedback from both participating parents and members of the wider Noongar community about how wonderful the program has been, how welcoming the Community Room at Mount Lockyer Primary School is and the relevant topics that are being covered.

In the Aboriginal Education Awards submission it is noted that one of the mothers who had been attending Moorditj Coolangars meetings each fortnight requested to manage the Breakfast Club for children. The submission states the woman:

has never worked but has completely blossomed since her involvement in the CfC program. She says she feels so much happier and supported because she has made friends and has

something to look forward to.

The testimonial from the School Principal also illustrates that the school has made Aboriginal families welcome, with some members of the Aboriginal community attending School Meetings although they do not have children currently enrolled in the school. The Principal writes:

A number of mums who attended the sessions last year did not have their children in 4 or 5 year schooling or their children were not attending regularly, this was very quickly rectified. I noticed that the group size began to grow, we started very slowly and gradually over the year the numbers grew. At the beginning of this year when we had the first PSPI (Parent School Partnership Initiative) we had 11 people present—unheard of. Not all of those present had children currently enrolled in the school but had a connection as a family member or potentially their children would be attending.

Further she notes:

This year from day 1 we have had a number of mums asking when the [Moorditj Coolangars] sessions will recommence. We have also had a number of families who have enrolled their children in the school because they have heard that this program is operating and they are welcome to be in the school.

**Outcome 2: Built strong links with parents and carers of older siblings of 0–5 year old Noongar children already attending Mount Lockyer Primary School**

As stated, older children of the families attending Moorditj Coolangars have played a pivotal role in the program, not only through contributing to making program materials (such as invitations and Moorditj Coolangars Calendar), but also in the creation of a welcoming environment.

In support of this outcome, the Program Coordinator commented that:

Participating siblings at the school are usually my best asset in getting mothers to attend; they are very keen and happy to know “if Mum is coming today?” They love to show off their little brothers and sisters to the group.

**Outcome 3: Increased school enrolments**

As stated in the Annual Review of the program and Aboriginal Education Awards submission, two families who attended Moorditj Coolangars meetings enrolled their children into Kindergarten as a result of their participation. Another three families also enrolled their children into Pre-Primary after attending the program.

It should be noted however that the school was unable to access data on attendance at Pre-Primary and Kindergarten due to its non-compulsory nature.

**Outcome 4: Parents are more informed about early childhood topics**

Feedback obtained from the seven surveys completed by parents at the beginning informed content and format for the information sessions held throughout the year. Based on the needs assessment 12 information sessions were delivered in 2007. Over 70 adults and 47 children attended throughout the year. The numbers of parents attending information sessions also increased throughout 2007. While only one parent attended the first meeting, two attended the second, and by Week 6 of Term 2, six young mothers with children ranging in age from two weeks to four years attended.

Evaluation surveys were completed by eight parents who attended the sessions. When asked if they were more informed about early childhood topics, six parents indicated yes (75% of the sample), while the other two respondents did not provide an answer. When asked what they know more about their comments were:

“Making toys, making games, speech, healthy ears.”

“Updated information I already knew.”

“How important ear health is.”

“There are groups in the community to help with parenting.”

“The children now eat more fruit and health food. Their behaviour has changed by using some of the ideas I’ve been given.”

**Outcome 5: Established links with health professionals, education specialists and other service providers in the Albany district**

As stated in the Moorditj Coolangars Annual Review:

Cross promotional opportunities were also undertaken with Great Southern Aboriginal Health, Coolangarras Barmah Kindergarten, Rainbow Coast Neighbourhood Centre (which) have been vital to staying in touch with some families. There is an abundance of community support through these agencies and families.”

The Annual Review states that the program “established connections with Great Southern Aboriginal Health workers and community nurses.”

**Outcome 6: Increased cultural awareness of Wadjella (non-Indigenous) staff**

The coordinator identified a number of cultural awareness outcomes, which she has outlined in her testimonial. These relate to respecting the knowledge of the AIEO, the importance of observing rituals and processes, how to communicate effectively, the importance of looking after children across families and the Aboriginal understanding that all life is part of an interconnected system.

The School Principal also indicated an increased understanding about Aboriginal culture as a result her involvement in the program:

Culturally many issues in the community impact on the program, so for me and the Coordinator, we have personally grown in our understanding (which has) greatly influenced and guided us in our practices in the school.

*Challenges and limitations*

The program also faced challenges throughout 2007. These were:

- mothers unable to attend due to work commitments;
- lack of transport in the families and no home phone;
- inclement weather, particularly in Term 3;
- social pressures and family issues;
- community and family responsibilities; and
- change of time for sessions disrupted attendance for parents and presenters.

Structural issues were clearly more difficult to address. However, where possible strategies were put in place to encourage attendance. These included colourful, fun and photographic invitations to information sessions, age appropriate door prizes that were linked to the topic being presented, transport if required and follow up phone calls the day before the meeting and on the day to confirm attendance.

Mount Lockyer Primary School will also be consulting with the Communities for Children Local Evaluator, Curtin University of Technology on ways to integrate data collection processes that are non-threatening into the program for 2008.

**Policy analysis**

The project demonstrates that the school community hub model delivers positive results in strengthening relationships between Aboriginal families and the school. The model is replicable as evidenced by its introduction into two other schools in the Albany district. While the community hub model is not new in itself, the approach of involving the whole school and in making the practices culturally appropriate for Aboriginal families is innovative. The approach is seen as sustainable and is one of five projects addressing literacy and numeracy within the Mt Lockyer Primary School. It draws on existing evidence and contributes to the evidence base.

<b>Project evaluations</b>	The project is being internally evaluated by the facilitating partner, Great Southern GP Network. Development of the PPP and associated data collection and literature review was undertaken by the CfC Local Evaluator, Curtin University of Technology, Perth (Dr Amma Buckley and Ms Anita Lumbus).
<b>Project related publications</b>	Aboriginal Education Awards (WA) submission 2007
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<b>More information</b>	More information on Moorditj Coolangars (Solid Kids) Community Hub Project and Promising Practice Profiles can be found on the PPP pages of the Communities and Families Clearinghouse of Australia website at <a href="http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/ppp/ppp.html">http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/ppp/ppp.html</a> .



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