

INALA, QLD

What has the project been doing since its last Bulletin report?

The Steering Committee found that the size and range of the project, both geographically and in terms of target groups, needed to be narrowed to an initial focus on four key priority areas. The four key areas are a geographic area (named Carole Park and one of 12 suburbs covered by the project), families of children with a disability, Indigenous groups, and young parents. Some of the exciting activities that have been undertaken in these areas are as follows.



National Families Week Stall held at Inala shopping centre.

At Carole Park

Carole Park is physically isolated from surrounding suburbs with few community facilities. A meeting designed to generate involvement in Carole Park identified difficulties in communication between the local primary school and parents, poor attendance at a local Playgroup which resulted in its cessation and infrequent bus services which created difficulties for children relying on this means of transport to access school.

A reference group was formed to run a community festival. The festival, called "Bring It On", was held at the state school and by all accounts was very successful in bringing the community together. Buoyed by this success the community then decided to run a second festival which they called "Shining On". Towards the end of 2003 a third festival event was held - this time at the local swimming pool. It was appropriately called "Splash It On". The festival committee is now well established and self sufficient and is able to sustain its activities without further support from FACET.

Chatting Chicks is a group that meets weekly. It aims to break down isolation

by providing opportunities for women to meet and share stories and develop networks.

Work with Indigenous groups

The Murri Family Support group is a joint project between Pathways to Prevention (a member of the Project Steering Committee) and FACET. The Indigenous worker from Pathways facilitates a weekly group which combines information on parenting issues with creative arts. The ten session group has been documented in the Yarning in Art report which is on the website. This was followed by eight sessions which used art to focus on strengths of children and carers.

Work with young parents

A Parent Peer Support group of young mums meet each Thursday in support of each other; this group provides intimate sharing of issues affecting the young women's lives.

We have also supported the Inala Young Mum's Program (a member of the Project Steering Committee) particularly when they were threatened with closure. A FACET project worker has formed relationships with the young women and their children who access this service and managed to keep people involved through a period of transition that has resulted in the appointment of a new worker.

Working with families with children with a disability

A workshop was held with families with children with a disability. From the parents attending the workshop the project learned more about they wanted out of getting together and this is being followed up.

Brokerage

FACET has been able to use brokerage money to develop parent and child care worker support materials for children with challenging behaviours. FACET has also funded a person who is responsible for locating, recruiting and organizing training for Vietnamese members of the community to work as Bilingual Community Advocates.

What has been learned since the last report that might be of interest and value to other developing projects?

At the time of our first report we were just beginning. We have found we

needed to start small and gain understanding and then develop further. Once we were able to get going we found the action research cycle enabled more detailed actions to emerge. It is difficult to make detailed plans early on.

When working with Indigenous communities time needs to be taken to build a trusting relationship with a commitment to culturally specific practice and sensitivity to cultural issues.

When running a parents' group it is important to organise good child care in a well set up space that is not so close to the parents that the children can see or hear them, but close enough that they do not feel too far away.

When working in partnership with other community organisations it is not always easy to coordinate the timing so that both workers are available to be involved in a new project.

In targeting some groups you cannot assume that they will want the group to be exclusive. In our case families with children with disabilities felt it was important for their children to interact and experience being with children of all abilities. However, the parents wanted a peer support group with other parents going through similar issues.

Many different factors impact on forming partnerships. Partnerships are often made between organizations on a management level and enacted by community workers. There needs to be good communication about expectations of the partnership and ways in which managers can revise their expectations in response to what is happening.

How has the community responded to the project so far?

It takes time for communities to get to know about a new project and it helps to be able to build and strengthen existing networks. New networks need to then be build that provide a bridge further in to the community. This has happened with the Murri community who have been very positive and have invited further participation from FACET both in running additional parenting groups using art to facilitate participation and in becoming involved in other community programs.