



Exploring the health benefits of 'safe' places for Indigenous men

Project CD219: Mibbinbah – Indigenous Men, Health and Indigenous Men's Spaces

What's the project about?

This three-year research program aims to provide an understanding of what makes Indigenous Men's Spaces safe and healthy places for men and how this might benefit families and communities. The program comes under the umbrella of the Chronic Conditions Program and can be thought of as two distinct but related projects: a Men's Spaces pilot project, and a Men's Chronic Conditions project. The first pilot project is jointly funded by the CRCAH and beyondblue and involves seven sites located mainly on Australia's eastern seaboard. It aims to identify the essential characteristics of existing Indigenous Men's Spaces through the employment of local Indigenous male Project Associates.

The second project is partially funded by the CRCAH and seeks to understand if and why participation in chronic conditions programs by Indigenous males is improved through association with safe and well-facilitated Indigenous Men's Spaces, and how this might benefit families and communities.

Who's involved?

- La Trobe University (VIC)
- CRC for Aboriginal Health
- beyondblue
- Department of Communities (QLD)
- Gold Coast TAFE (QLD)
- Danila Dilba Health Service (NT)
- Rekindling the Spirit, Lismore (NSW)
- Mununjali Housing Corp (QLD)
- Emerton Men's Shed (NSW)
- Gunditjmara Health service (VIC)
- Maya Healing Centre (VIC)
- Indigenous men at the six research sites (listed directly above)



Outcomes

The goal of this program is to gain an understanding of the barriers and facilitators to effective uptake of health promotion and self-management messages, and to explore Indigenous constructions of health and the implications for service provision, resourcing and health indicators. This will culminate in a research report for each of the program's two projects. It is hoped that the two reports' findings will be taken up by other Indigenous men's sites and chronic conditions programs around Australia.

Key milestones achieved so far include:

- Negotiation of project sites, with majority of MOUs signed
- Establishment of program office at Burleigh Heads, QLD
- Recruitment of Administration Officer
- Recruitment of Project Officer
- Recruitment of Project Associates
- Commencement of training
- Inaugural camp for Project Associates and mentors held on Gold Coast
- Several core group and quality assurance meetings
- Development of organisational project matrix relating to soliciting the support of local organisations
- Updated CRCAH program webpage. Dedicated Mibbinbah website, launched 2008

How the program will be done

The first project (Men's Spaces Pilot Project) will concentrate on forming a sustainable framework of description, evaluation and capacity exchange by identifying the important characteristics of Indigenous Men's Spaces that make them accessible and effective. Key to this project is the involvement of the Project Associates, who will be trained in the use of participatory action-research methods to help develop and sustain Men's Spaces during the research program. The project will also increase the capacity of Project Associates as health researchers and facilitators through further training in leadership, community communication, media, computer and Internet skills.

The second project (Men's Chronic Conditions) will occur in two phases. In the first phase, the various sites identified in the first project will be contacted to determine whether or not they are working with agencies or services engaged in preventing, reversing or managing chronic condition status. The next phase will then seek to discover if there is a correlation between the 'safety and facilitation' quotient of the Men's Space site and the degree of acceptance of the chronic condition programs by the men.

The overall program started in June 2007 and is due to finish in May 2010.



Getting the message out to Indigenous researchers

Mibbinbah Project Leader Jack Bulman raised the profile of Mibbinbah at a February 2008 meeting of Indigenous male researchers in Alice Springs, which he helped organise. Thirty Indigenous and three non-Indigenous men were present and effective networking resulted in increased awareness and support for Mibbinbah. The meeting was the first of its kind in Australia and has led directly to the launch of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Men's Research Council. Jack was appointed to the Council's steering committee, which augurs well for future Mibbinbah communication activities.



Mibbinbah Project Associates and mentors at their inaugural meeting on the Gold Coast



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