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Capturing All Ages: Health Promotion Approaches in Central West Queensland

Background and context

- Central West region covers 22% of Queensland’s total land mass; 382,800km’s
- Population of approximately 12,433, with 11.2% Indigenous population
- Very remote, 17 communities with surrounding properties, 7 LGA’s serviced by NWRH Central West Office
- 27.4% employed in Agriculture
- 27.4% identified they lacked sufficient information to engage with healthcare providers; don’t have a regular provider as a source of information/advice
- 22% didn’t see their health as their responsibility, nor were engaged in their health care
- 32% have difficulties understanding most health information and get confused with conflicting information
- 47% felt unable to advocate on their own behalf; and admitted having difficulties finding someone to help them use the healthcare system

Target Areas

- High levels of preventable diseases evident in Central West region
- Health Promotion focus is on:
  - Early intervention: lifestyle related disease prevention
  - Increasing health literacy and healthy lifestyle behaviours
  - Supporting and creating healthy environments
  - Capacity building
  - Increasing access to services

Snapshot: Health Literacy

- Baseline data collected as part of NWRH’s Health Literacy Promotion (HeLP) initiative, using Deakin University’s validated Health Literacy Questionnaire (HLQ):
  - 272 responses, results comparable to national health literacy data
  - 27% identified they lacked sufficient information to manage their health; are unable to engage with healthcare providers; don’t have a regular provider and/or have difficulty trusting health care providers as a source of information/advice
  - 22% didn’t see their health as their responsibility, nor were engaged in their health care
  - 32% have difficulties understanding most health information and get confused with conflicting information
  - 47% felt unable to advocate on their own behalf; and admitted having difficulties finding someone to help them use the healthcare system

Snapshot: CWQ Health Promotion Programs

- Health Education Reaching Blokes and Sheilas program (HERBS)
- Healthy Kids program
- The Reading Bug
- The Library Pack project
- NWRH Workplace Pedometer Program
- Initiatives for creating supportive environments & healthy policies:
  - Healthy Options (HOP)
  - Edible Walkways

Program Outcomes

- Increased awareness of healthy behaviours evident in school children targeted by Healthy Kids and Reading Bug programs
- Increased access to NWRH services and referrals from harder to reach populations as a result of the HERBS program (e.g. Council work camp crews from Longreach and Diamantina shire)
- Stronger partnerships with communities and stakeholders, enabling increased uptake of health promotion activities and increased reach of services

Key Partnerships

- Fellow NWRH staff (across organisation)
- External Health Service Providers: CWHHS, RFDS, Indigenous Health Officers
- Local Multi-Agency Networks (other service providers)
- Local Government
- Schools, Child Care Centres and Playgroups
- Libraries
- Primary Health Clinics
- Community leaders and event organisers (volunteers)
- Local media (e.g. ABC, 4LG West FM, Council newsletters, local newspapers)
- External health service providers:
  - NAQ Nutrition

Future Directions

- Strengthen uptake of Health Promotion Framework across organisation
- Maintain consistent service delivery through capacity development initiatives and potential trial of volunteers and/or University student placements
- Continue to maintain strong partnerships and communication with stakeholders, to encourage unified preventative health approach across region

Strategic Approaches

- Limited and isolated Health Promotion team to cover entire area:
  - Strategic planning includes a Health Promotion Framework launched across organisation
  - Improved collaboration within team, including upskilling staff with health promotion procedures; orientation packs; working alongside clinical team, and supporting health promotion activities they have capacity to deliver
  - Capacity development in communities: upskilling DoNs and nurses to deliver health education programs with support from NWRH Health Promotion team
  - Advocating for external initiatives to be brought to Central West Queensland
    - Example: PEACH Program in 2014
  - Consistent and functioning communication plan for internal and external health professionals

- Funding variations:
  - Continuous improvements to reporting mechanisms
  - Focus on capacity development initiatives for communities as well as NWRH staff

- Transience of communities and workplaces:
  - Continuous relationship development and maintaining communication with communities and partner organisations
  - Using effective marketing mechanisms: social media, Council newsletters, radio, community events

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NWRH respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners, and Elders past and present as Custodians of the lands across which we deliver Health and Wellbeing Services.