GROW WELL

a practical example of community engagement and capacity building to empower women in remote Indigenous communities

Culturally Responsive
Grow Well is auspiced by the Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Health Corporation.

Artist-Linda Dobbs, Imangarra (Murray Downs)

ANYINGINYI HEALTH ABORIGINAL CORPORATION
SOUTHERN BARKLY communities

- EPENARRA
- OWAIRTILLA (Canteen Creek)
- MUNGKARTA (as yet, informal)

AHAC Grow Well Program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing [DoHA]
The Grow Well Program came about as a result of a 2001 needs assessment in the Southern Barkly when communities identified the need to address:

- nutrition-related disorders in young children (anaemia and failure to thrive)
- Improving the nurturing practices of mothers (particularly young mothers)
- The passing on of traditional parenting, nutrition and cultural practices.
Guiding Principles

Are characterised by “sharing power”, “community ownership”, “flexibility”, “diversity” and “respect”.

As articulated by the women - programs need to be “their own, for women only” and premised on “keeping their culture strong”.

Community control means community driven programs.
Provides families on communities with an opportunity to be more in control of their lives by creating choice and allowing them to work out their priorities and procedures for their health programs and activities in their women centers.
Women’s HEALTH COMMITTEES are

- planning forums
- an oversight body for the refurbishments of the women’s centres
- organisational hubs for activities and training workshops;
- focal points for preparing correspondence, grants and submissions
- representational groups for official requests and complaints
- “owned” by the women where the will to attend or not is dependent on the importance/significance of each individual woman
The zone committee has representatives from each of the communities and meets to talk about what is happening in the region and to share experiences.
Grow Well responds to the needs of local children and families at risk.

- a team approach has been taken to the GAA and HSAK screening days, involving a range of health staff
- feedback of the GAA and HSAK data to the communities

Supporting and assisting with GAA

Supporting and assisting with HEALTHY SCHOOL AGED KIDS Program
Child Protection Day

Supporting and Assisting Family and Children’s Services (DHACS).
FIRST STAGE of the Grow Well program has included the refurbishment of the women’s centres.

Old Kitchens  →  New Kitchens
WHILE WE HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR THE NEW KITCHENS...

These are some of the activities the Health Committees decided to do.
Imangarra School Lunch Program

With assistance from the Barkly District Nutritionist (DHACS), and DEET. Received a grant to buy more utensils to make healthy lunch options.
TOMATO AND CHEESE SANDWICHES

With the assistance of the Barkly District Nutritionist (DHACS) and DEET.
Grow Well assists and supports the Strong Women Strong Babies Strong Culture’s (SWSBSC) bush medicine program at Canteen Creek
Supporting Training Requests

- Attendance at the Strong Women Strong Babies Strong Culture workshops
- Driver Education Training
- Sewing Classes
- Domestic Violence Workshop
- Horticulture Program
- First Aide Course

with the support of DEET, DHACS and Charles Darwin University.
SEWING CHILDREN’S CLOTHES

With Canteen Creek (Owairtilla) Association and assisted by DEET

Straight from the machine to the wearing the finished product!
BUSH TUCKER TRIPS

‘s tre ng th eni ng c u lt u r e’
‘m ai nt a i n i ng l i n ks’
Bush Cooking Classes

With the assistance and support of the Nutritionist (DHACS)
Supporting art classes

- Pottery
- Screen Printing
- Curtain Making
- Tie Dying

With the support and assistance of World Vision Australia, DEET and Barkly Regional Arts.

Information Technology

- Digital Camera lessons
- Internet learning activities
- Resource Development

With the support and assistance of the Institute for Aboriginal Development and the Nutritionist (DHACS)
Too much responsibility for coordinator – need to share key and money
Equipment missing “vanishing”
Training Timetable

Too much responsibility for coordinator – need to share key and money

Play equipment & sand pit changed
Lower slide and Relocate under trees
Baby bath & change table
Cooking equipment labeled
Office equipment, computer, Fax
Rules for Centre
Safe for money
“Haven” - welcoming
“Homely” Centre with Pot plants
Hanging baskets and Outdoor private area
Training for women only
Move telephone (stop vandalism)

OWN PROGRAMS
WOMEN ONLY
- KEEP CULTURE STRONG -

Funding submissions
Bush medicine business
Sewing business
  • Old people’s program
  • Breakfast program (0 - 5 kids)
  • Washing for old people
    • Employment
Priority times
  • Cooking meals
  • Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture Program
Bush medicine trips
Bush tucker trips
Computer classes
Strengthen local playgroup
  • Local employment
No waiting for visitors
  • Play Group
Cooking classes
Bring smoko program back to Centre
Sewing classes
Art classes

“Stuck trying to go”
some practical examples of community engagement and capacity building from some very empowered women!

• women approach me and say what they want; demonstrating both a trust in the relationship and a self-confidence that had not been evident earlier in the program
• the health committees interviewed me to decide if I was a suitable candidate for this position. They felt respected and empowered.
• Women ask that all their ideas are documented and that Grow Well assist them to identify the appropriate funding sources to achieve their goals.
• Canteen Creek women recently prepared a letter to the Capital Works builders and designers, outlining all the problems they identified with the refurbishments. Stated that ‘their voice had not been heard’ and requesting and receiving a prompt response to address the issues!
• Having the opportunity to work along side the women in these communities and to assist and support them to achieve their goals is such a privilege.