



Newsletter No.10, November 2007

Mentally Healthy WA....over 3 years in WA!

I first heard about promoting mental health in early June 2004 when a position was advertised with Dr Rob Donovan at the Centre for Behaviour Research in Cancer Control. Cancer Control was a bit out of the area that I thought was important for mental health promotion but I had worked with Rob a number of times over the years and was sure that he would pursue something a bit different than typical cancer control.

I dropped my CV and some notes off regarding work I had done with different towns and different regions in WA and within a week or two they called and offered me a position. I had been working at the Institute for Child Health Research for the last three years and I needed to finish some work I had been doing for them so I negotiated with Rob to work 0.5 time for the first six months while we met interested people in regions, did some data collection, started to plan an intervention, and filled in grant applications to fund the project.

A lot of our work was based on the study of mental health promotion initiatives that was studied and reported in 2002 but lay dormant in the Mental Health Department.

Late in 2004, Rob and I applied to the Health Promotion Association for a six month scholarship for a person to assist us plan and implement our mental health campaign. We interviewed three people who had just graduated and we decided to go with Colby Sidebottom as our main candidate. Colby won the scholarship and came to work with us at Shenton Park offices in February 2005.

Rob, Colby and I needed to plan the mental health intervention, the resources, the staff, the newspapers, the logo, and other messages...within 6 months. We decided to work in six different towns. And we had to make sure that the Country Health Services appointed someone as a project officer in these towns and that we would hire a person as an evaluation person (also 0.5FTE).

During this time we appointed 10 people; we were short one in Karratha and had one person working two 0.5 positions in Northam. We started by talking with new staff, producing resource materials, writing newspaper ads and helping with other press releases. We also encouraged each team to have a community meeting close to the October-November dates that overlapped the actual mental health day and encourage events to lead to their over all plan for mental health activities in their towns.

The discussions and meetings with our local project officers and people in each of the six towns were very successful. We soon started supporting the local Mentally Healthy WA project officers in each of the towns regarding their support for various campaigns and activities. During this time Geoffrey Jalleh did a survey of 200 people in each intervention town (n=1200) and 1000 in four non-interventions towns, including metro and rural centres. We have published reports every six months and have four published papers on the first year of Mentally Healthy WA intervention. We will soon complete survey of year two and publish report before Christmas, December 25 2007. Look up our website www.actbelongcommit.org.au if you would like any of our papers, ads or reports.

We are now waiting to hear from Healthway and Lotterywest about support for the Mental Health WA Campaign Phase II in 2008. We hope go state-wide and 35 towns and health centres have indicated an interest in promoting positive mental health in their area.

We hope to hear some positive news after the federal election November 24th 2007.

Dr Ray James: Project Manager A-B-C



UPDATES FROM THE REGIONAL SITES

ALBANY

"My involvement in the A-B-C project has been a rewarding and challenging experience. With a background in Nutrition (and winemaking), the content of the project (ie mental health) was new and time-consuming to get up to speed with. However, working alongside Trish Travers has been an enlightening experience. Never have I witnessed a more organised, more dedicated hard-working professional. Trish also has a way of bringing people on board and getting them to take on roles and responsibilities that they may not otherwise put their hands up for. Sure, things may not always be done exactly the "right" way, but her strategy enables an enormous 'multiplier' effect to occur. Albany's inaugural Relay For Life event (which raised a record amount of money for the Cancer Council) is a testament to Trish's skills and abilities. I know several people who were on the Relay committee with her (Trish was the Chairperson) and all remarked about her capacity to get things done.



This may sound like a personal reference for Trish, but this has truly been the most rewarding aspect of the ABC project for me, particularly as my modus operandi is quite different. I have learnt not only new knowledge, but also new strategies and community development skills, and new ways of doing things. It is also worth adding that being involved with the project locally enabled me to easily overcome a couple of significant health issues that challenged me over the past two years".

Pam Lincoln, Evaluation Officer

The Campaign had significant impact on increasing community groups and organisations capacity to be involved with mental health promotion activities. The VicHealth's 'Partnership Analysis Tool' (2003) was a useful instrument for the Mentally Healthy WA project. It assisted the local management committees to audit their partnership strengths and weakness and provided direction to improve the level of cooperation and collaboration. What was significant with the Albany Management Committee was that the Albany committee was very stable and was actively involved with the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Albany project. Thus Management Committee members in Albany were active community champions working on the project alongside the project staff. The Albany staff would like to acknowledge the fantastic commitment of their local Management Committee.

Trish Travers, Project Officer



ESPERANCE

Mentally Healthy WA has been a fantastic campaign to work on in our community of Esperance. As project officers for the campaign we have made a number of lasting partnerships and networks that have made this successful. Not only has the campaign raised awareness of keeping Mentally Healthy in our community but it has also allowed other agencies and groups to partner up with MHWA and its messages, something that they would have never considered before. The best part about the MHWA messages are that we are encouraging people to do what they love doing and what makes them feel happy. It is a wonderful message to sell!

Sonia Commisso, Project Officer

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time working as an Evaluation Officer for the Mentally Healthy WA Act-Belong-Commit campaign in Esperance. Not only has this role allowed me to support and encourage people to become more active and involved in the community, but I have also found myself becoming a more pro-active community member. The variety of events and activities that Act-Belong-Commit has been involved with during the past two years has been amazing and the commitment and dedication of the variety of people that I have worked with has been truly inspiring. The Act-Belong-Commit message is simple and yet so effective in promoting ways in which people can look after their mental health. I believe that people in the Esperance community have embraced the message which has had positive spin-offs both for themselves and the community at large.

Kylie Ryan, Evaluation Officer



KALGOORLIE-BOULDER

Implementing the Act-Belong-Commit Campaign in Kalgoorlie-Boulder has been a real challenge over the past 2 years. All challenges have been learning curves and I have seen first hand how the Campaign has positively influenced members of our town. A particular highlight has been the continuing support from local key stakeholders and community members who have developed the campaign, provided feedback and have actively embraced the A-B-C message. Local community member Robin Lonsdale expresses her understanding of the Campaign in the local newspaper in 2006 "Being involved in community groups is a great way to prevent depression and supports the Mentally Healthy WA's Act -Belong-Commit concept which aims to promote the sense of well being delivered by helping others in the community" (Kalgoorlie Miner, 4th march 2006 pg. 24).



A major strength of the campaign has been promoting the A-B-C message through local Healthway sponsorship. Sponsorship allowed local community groups to become actively involved in taking ownership of the A-B-C message and promote it among people within Kalgoorlie-Boulder. I believe that the campaign will go on to bigger and better things beyond 2007.

Liane Auld, Project Officer

Kalgoorlie has posed a unique challenge for the Mentally Healthy team but the rewards have been well worth it. Every time I've thought the challenges insurmountable, the amount of support shown by colleagues, and more importantly the community members themselves, has really shown through and ensured the success of all activities and events. Though I've only had the pleasure of working on the campaign for 7 months, I've been lucky enough to have ample opportunities to see the positive effect it's had on the community first hand and now I look ever forward to seeing these positive outcomes continue in the future. Long live the mighty A-B-C!

Mark Sorensen, Project Officer



KARRATHA

The Act-Belong-Commit campaign has been a beneficial addition to the Karratha Community. The project has enriched the community spirit and engaged many residents to Act-Belong-Commit. PhotoVoice participant Shirley Simpson-Nicholls summed it up perfectly with "these workshops showed me there is community spirit".

Colby Sidebottom, Project Officer



The impact of the Act-Belong-Commit campaign in the Karratha community is always surprising me. We have really made a difference and have become a first point of contact when residents wish to find out about community organisations and activities.

Philippa Ives, Project Officer

NORTHAM

It has been an absolute pleasure working with individuals, organisations and groups who are committed to improving the health and well-being of the Northam, York and Toodyay communities, and who have whole heartedly embraced the mentally healthy message. Their readiness to collaborate, share ideas, resources, networks and links has enabled a wide array of events and activities to positively influence the community. I sincerely hope the momentum of the campaign is sustained post pilot, and the Act-Belong-Commit message continues to resonate in the communities of Northam, York and Toodyay.

Amberlee Laws, Project Officer



SOME OTHER COMMENTS

"I have experienced depression on and off for many years, but the Act-Belong-Commit Campaign has really helped me to take charge of my own life and happiness. I now do a lot of walking, I stay connected to friends and family, and I get involved in as many community activities that I can. I have found the A-B-C message to be very motivating, and putting the suggestions into practice have made a big difference to my personal wellbeing and I now also do some volunteer work for the Campaign"

Community member (female, aged 30) – Albany

I have used the campaign in every aspect of my work as a community nurse since it began and have had great feedback from people introduced to it. I have promoted it in all my primary schools with children responding really well to the concept of looking after yourself mentally as well as physically.

Ali Hooper, Community Nurse, Esperance Community Health Centre - Esperance

Dr Ray James wins Award!

Ray James is one of the most experienced figures in community-based public health in Australia. He began work in 1980 with the GP Division in Claremont, working with groups of people with headaches related to stress. After two years in Perth he returned to USA to work but was very disappointed in job opportunities due to the Ronald Regan Government. He then applied and was successful as the first general manager for allied health and health promotion in Byron Bay, NSW where he worked for six years, then moved back to Perth in 1990 to work with the Drug Research Centre for two years. Next he was at Health Promotion Services for three and a half years, Main Roads for one year, and then directed the Bunbury Community Health for three and a half years. In 2001, Ray returned to Perth to work with the Institute for Child Health Research for three and a half years and is now finishing his career as the Project Manager for Mentally Healthy WA at Curtin University.

As one person has said: *'Ray has made an outstanding contribution to the implementation and practice of health promotion in Western Australia.'*



Ray James awarded
Public Health Association award 2007



Jim McGinty MLA and award winners

Nominated for WA Mental Health Good Outcomes Award

Mentally Healthy WA was nominated for an award given on 6 November at the Health Department: Mental Health Promotion and Prevention. We did not win the first place award but the work of the regional officers in the six towns was recognised and short listed.

Successful Sponsorship Grants for Trans-Cultural Events in Mental Health Week 2007

The executive team was successful in gaining a \$5,000 grant from the Department of Communities for sponsorship programs that activate trans-cultural events during Mental Health week in 2007. Albany, Esperance, Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Karratha and Northam were all successful in getting \$1,000 each to do some community activities during Mental Health Week.

- Albany ran a Multicultural Cooking Series
- Esperance ran an Indigenous Youth Dance Concert
- Kalgoorlie-Boulder ran a Well Whole of Wellbeing Event at St Barbara's Square
- Karratha did a town wide photo-voice series, a photo show and will produce a calendar for 2008
- Northam did a Cultural Heritage Tour: Story Telling of the Dream Time.

This was a great way to involve our regional M H officers with local groups.

How to find out more about the Act-Belong-Commit Campaign

For more information about our regional activities, project officers, advertisements and local press articles, please check out our web site or contact our Project Team in Perth on 08 9266 4648 or ray.james@curtin.edu.au.



**Seasons Greetings and Best Wishes for 2007 from
all the Act-Belong-Commit team!!**

