



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

WELLBEING CENTRES

The latest Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey indicated that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 18 years and over were nearly three times as likely as non-Indigenous people to have experienced high or very high levels of psychological distress.¹ For this reason, social and emotional wellbeing services are among the most important for Commission clients in the welfare reform communities.

In Mossman Gorge, Hope Vale, Coen and Aurukun, these services are provided by the Royal Flying Doctor Service through Wellbeing Centres. In Doomadgee, wellbeing services are delivered by North and West Remote Health.

These services usually focus on individual and family counselling for issues such as drug and alcohol misuse, gambling, family violence and mental health and wellbeing. Wellbeing Centres also provide group therapy, such as facilitating men's and women's groups, deliver community education sessions and take an active role in ensuring community connectedness.

Interagency relationships and cooperation are critical to ensuring effective delivery of services to the welfare reform communities. Government and non-government service providers need to share information, intelligence and integrated planning initiatives to form a united front. There are several key elements that are pivotal to ensuring that every opportunity has been afforded to the client to increase their capacity to manage their own behaviours. The Commission considers that the following elements are crucial:

- engagement of the client in a timely manner
- good local knowledge in order to assess the client
- appropriate support services to refer the client and/or the client's family to
- consistent and continuous engagement
- appropriate monitoring of the case plan and
- community engagement and education regarding the reform initiatives.

The FRC refers clients to Wellbeing Centres for assistance with a range of issues. In the 2015-16 year, 127 clients were referred to Wellbeing Centres on case plans. This year, Wellbeing Centres are working closely with the Commission to establish a shared vision of client engagement in the community context.

The Mossman Gorge Wellbeing Centre has worked extremely hard to engage, and re-engage members of the community referred by the Commission. Through proactive engagement strategies, individualised care plans and working closely with Local Commissioners to understand community needs, attendance of Commission clients at the Mossman Gorge Wellbeing Centre has increased dramatically. The attendance rate of Commission clients was 0 percent in January 2016, and has risen to 92.31 percent in the month of June 2016. The Mossman Gorge Wellbeing Centre makes the following comments about their work and collaboration with the Commission in Mossman Gorge.

2016 is an exciting time to deliver services in alliance with the Kuku Yalanji Nation. Our service is inspired by Bama Bama Dukul Ngulkurr (Clever Kuku Yalanji People). Wawu Ngulkurru Bungka (Good Spirit Place) Mossman Gorge Wellbeing Centre is delighted to work alongside of the Family Responsibilities Commission. Our evolving collaborations continue to provide cutting edge programs within our unique context. Our service takes inspiration from the FRC team's strong and successful support of Kuku Yalanji people's self-determination;

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013, Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey: First Results, Australia, 2012-13, cat. no. 4727.0.55.001, viewed 30 August 2016, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/9F3C9BDE98B3C5F1CA257C2F00145721?opendocument>

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this is evidenced by the consistent employment of Local Commissioners. These Commissioners have demonstrated an amazing capacity to lead their people, contributing vitality and meaning to their community.

Significant longitudinal research supports the importance of autonomy, empowerment and human freedom. The amazing story of the Kuku Yalanji Nation's strength and adaptability in the face of adversity embodies these principles and provides an impetus to manifest these desired qualities of ongoing action within Wawu Ngulkurru Bungka service delivery.

Once the cultural assets of the Kuku Yalanji Nation are strongly established within Wellbeing Services, the expression of each service participant's worth and potential is communicated so clearly that the individuals see it in themselves and their community.

The richness of the Kuku Yalanji cultural assets can only be manifested within Wawu Ngulkurru Bungka through the community members themselves. Since the beginning of this year thanks to the motivation and commitment of local people the service has tripled its local staff contribution to service delivery with roles in operations and group facilitation.

Wawu Ngulkurru Bungka is committed to local control and we know that this starts with supporting local people into meaningful activity and enhanced remuneration. While still in its infancy an example of the program's success is the story of a young Aboriginal woman who started working with a girls group at the centre and now has progressed to permanent employment with a local child care service.

Interested service participants are no longer just clients of the service. Through gradual exposure to workplace environments and support from counselling staff in minimising employment barriers, the development of a learning alliance builds confidence and capacity as participants become active players in service to their community.

The synergy of such approaches means that the cultural knowledge local community members bring to their roles transforms the service, enhancing the centre's goal of cultural proficiency while maximising the benefits of a social learning model.

In the eyes of children and young people the examples of adults experiencing success facilitates intergenerational change. Children and young people continue to be a key focus of the service, and in the words of Bill Neidjie from the Gaagadju language group, "The future is behind us, in our children." This sentiment is echoed across the Kuku Yalanji Nation and children remain a wonderful way to work with the whole family. In conjunction with the families and stakeholders we remain determined to build bridges between generations to support cultural knowledge transfer and successful futures for the inspiring leaders of the future.

An overview of 3 monthly reports indicates that the service has almost tripled its service contacts in the first 3 months of this year and is well on track to progressing beyond its 6 monthly targets.

The success of Wawu Ngulkurru Bungka, lies squarely in the hands of the Kuku Yalanji people and the stakeholders of Mossman Gorge, in particular the flourishing collaborations with the Family Responsibility Commission.

The future is an exhilarating time for service provision on the Kuku Yalanji Nation. The magnanimous cooperation between our programs gives rise to a shared meaning that enables greatness in our services and most importantly the people we serve. Thanks to the FRC team for their perseverance and belief in Wawu Ngulkurru Bungka.

Wellbeing Centre staff perform an incredibly challenging and valuable role, providing much needed social and emotional wellbeing services to vulnerable people. The Commission commends and thanks all Wellbeing Centre staff for their hard work, and looks forward to continuing to influence change in the welfare reform communities together.