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# 2015 PLAY YOUR PART AWARDS FOR INSPIRING PREVENTION INITIATIVES QUEENSLAND

**To: Mackay Child Friendly Community Action Group**

**For: Inspiring advocacy in promoting the safety and wellbeing of children**

The Mackay Child Friendly Community Action Group (MCFCAG) has demonstrated that 'building a child friendly community is everybody's business' by forming a partnership between community-based agencies, local and state government and child protection super heroes to promote the safety and wellbeing of children.

Since 2008 the group has organised free, fun and educational opportunities for families and community members to come together and acknowledge the importance of Mackay being a safe and friendly place for children and families to live in.

Some of the activities that MCFCAG is involved in each year are for special weeks: Under 8's, NAIDOC, Children's, Seniors and Child Protection Week. They also promote child friendly communities for special days, such as for the 'Day for Daniel' the group hosted an outdoor movie night.

This year for Child Protection Week the group is 'calling all heroes who promote the wellbeing and safety of children and young people', said Jaime Pick, coordinator MCFCAG.

"We are celebrating that superheroes come in all shapes, sizes, ages, abilities, ethnicities, cultures, genders, religions and of course super powers. MCFCAG will have a number of free activities for families to enjoy such as face painting, jumping castles, Didgeridoo workshop, games and a mask and costume parade," she said.

The members of the MCFCAG are treated as equals with no lead agency, and includes the George Street Neighbourhood Centre Association Inc, Centacare, Queensland Health – Child Youth and Family Health, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, Churches of Christ Care, Townsville Mackay Medicare Local, Mackay Regional Council, Mackay Children's Contact Service, Inclusion Support Agency and the Department of Education, Training and Employment.

MCFCAG members have established and nurtured partnerships to develop innovative strategies for building safer, friendlier and more rewarding communities such as building links between professional services and social networks that support all aspects of a child's life – enhancing their development, wellbeing and resilience against harm.

An initiative undertaken at each event this year, is to actively involve child participants by asking them: 'What do you like most about living in Mackay?' (with the option to draw their answer).

Parents and adults will be asked: 'When you were growing up, what did you like most about the community you lived in?'. The responses will be collated and uploaded into a 'Word Cloud' to highlight the key themes and concepts that are important to children and families for Mackay to be child friendly. This will inform ongoing advocacy in the area.

The group hosted events such as a Children's Expo and Movie Night with children's activities including play gym equipment, colouring in, reading corner, fitness and wellbeing demonstrations. Information and market stalls represented group members and organisations such as Family Relationship Centre, Mackay Family Day Care, Let's Read, Child Youth and Family Health, *Smarty's Fit, Food and Fun* and the Queensland Police Service. Up to 97 per cent of families identified that they enjoyed the variety of stalls at the expo.

MCFCAG also produces media releases and information on a range of topics about ways everyone can contribute to a child friendly Mackay.

MCFCAG members said that they were proud of the group's work.

"Most importantly, we take pride in the diverse cultures and family structures that make up the Mackay community," said Terri Cox, Liaison Officer, Townsville Mackay Medicare Local.

Jenny Corbett, Foster and Case worker with Churches of Christ Care, said that the commitment of organisations to allow their staff to participate when it is not their core business, the ability to provide enjoyable free events for families with the aim of having a positive impact on the community, and the commitment of long standing members to keep coming up with different and novel ideas to promote children's wellbeing "makes me very proud".

The ongoing commitment and inspiring advocacy of this group is to be commended.