
2015 PLAY YOUR PART AWARDS FOR INSPIRING PREVENTION INITIATIVES NORTHERN TERRITORY

To: Malabam Health Board Aboriginal Corporation
For: "GREATS" Youth Services

An aboriginal elder Mr A Millren wrote a hand written letter to the Federal Government in 2005 about the youth of the Maningrida community, Arnhem Land region, Northern Territory, having no proper youth service to keep them occupied, which led to the establishment of "GREATS" Youth Services (GYS).

GYS aims to improve the health and wellbeing of young people aged 10 to 21 years in Maningrida and its surrounding outstations through services and programs that promote strong peer and family relationships; improving personal capacity, self-esteem, resilience and social connections.

The services include back to country bush trips for young men and women who have become disengaged from school, training and or employment. These bush trips give them time out from the community and provide a cultural learning class with elders to build on youth leadership and mentoring skills.

Education and awareness training is provided by GYS in healthy eating and personal care, conflict resolution, proper use of social media, cyber safety and bullying-prevention workshops.

The service centre also delivers a ten session Mooditj program, which educates young people about sexual health, safety, wellbeing, relationships, feelings and emotions etc.

Education services further feature the sniffing and the brain Burarra flip chart, drug and alcohol intervention through workshops delivered in partnership with the Alcohol and other Drugs unit and suicide/ self-harm prevention.

In the past three years Maningrida community has not been affected by any youth suicides. This is a significant achievement in a complex environment.

The service centre reduces the impact of barriers relating to isolation by providing appropriate referrals and assistance to meet the needs of young people, including supporting a holistic approach to accessing community resources and services.

The centre is the hub of community activity for young people with up to 75 young people attending the nightly drop in evenings, designed for young people aged over ten to keep them engaged and socially active, including Wednesday youth movie nights.

Noeletta McKenzie, manager of GYS said that the grass roots program 'is staffed by our community mob'.

"All GYS staff are local community people with a passion for keeping young people safe and happy and they build relationships with the youth," said Ms McKenzie.

"Young people come to the youth centre which provides a safe environment for them away from the grog that can expose them to unexpected dangers."

GYS coordinates a ten week On Track program for clients who have come in contact with the police on first and minor offences. According to Ms McKenzie the program sees young people develop more confidence and usually deters them from re-offending.

The service also provides targeted diversion activities and case management for young people at risk of entering/ re-entering the criminal justice system and supports the provision of improved pathways for returning from juvenile detention and drug and alcohol rehabilitation services.

Youth workers undertake a survey and whole of Maningrida consultation every two years to capture what the community sees fits best in the service and the best ways to cater for the youth within the community.

Participation rates for youth services are captured through a log book which records the details of the young people and what language group they belong to ensure that youth services are capturing all of the 16 language groups at the centre. The measure of change in participants is noted by anecdotal evidence such as reduction in reports of sexually transmitted infections, petrol sniffing, drug taking, teen pregnancy and youth criminal activities.

Ms McKenzie said that she is most proud that 'the legacy of the old man Mr Milren (deceased), [which he] created and fought for, this youth centre, is still alive and powering along'.