

2015 PLAY YOUR PART AWARDS FOR INSPIRING PREVENTION INITIATIVES QUEENSLAND

To: True Relationships and Reproductive Health (formerly Family Planning QLD)

For: Wellness and Well Being Project

The Wellness and Well Being project has increased the overall well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the Rockhampton local government area, through initiatives such as the publication of stories by local Indigenous children to build the confidence, knowledge, communication skills and cultural understanding of children, their parents, carers and support workers.

Wellness and Well Being is a four pronged project for Indigenous children and their families in the Rockhampton Regional and Livingstone Shire Council districts. Each aspect is held annually, with the project having commenced in April 2013 and the most recent component held in April 2015. Each component was provided at no charge to the participants.

One of the components is the annual Indigenous Wellness and Well Being professional development/networking conference for local support organisations who work with Indigenous families. The keynote speaker in 2015 was, Aboriginal speaker and performer Jeremy Donovan descending from KuKu-Yalanji tribe. Up to 140 people in total attended the three annual conferences. Feedback from participants included: "Jeremy was truly a powerful speaker" and "all speakers were magnificent".

Two story books were published, titled Ngathu Bimbi Bulba (My Safe Place) and Yimbagu Ngaliranga Gandanu (Listen to Us Kids), about personal safety featuring writing and art by local Indigenous children, and text in the Dharumbal language.

The storybook's development included narrative art sessions for Indigenous students, aged 5-12 years, with Dharumbal elder and author, Nhaya Nyoka Hatfield and Indigenous Artist, Caroline Cox.

The young people's expressions through narrative art included a drawing of a hand with 'nan+pop, dad, teachers, at home and school' text on the fingers with the caption: This is where and who keeps me safe.

Another young person's contribution was: *I feel safe with teachers because they're big adults and they know what to do. I feel safe with my dad because there is no danger at my home.*

Six school holiday sessions were held at the Dreamtime Cultural Centre, for 134 Indigenous children in total aged 5-12 years. The sessions were designed for the students to reconnect and engage in traditional Indigenous culture, which included a tour and private sessions with experienced Indigenous specialists.

Three family weekend retreats around the theme of opening channels of communication were also held. Activities included art, narrative, dance, music and physical challenges, led by local Indigenous elders and identities.

Feedback from the retreat - at the Capricorn Caves in 2014 by a parent was that: *'it was a fantastic opportunity for my child to reconnect to culture'*.

The services are focused on vulnerable families and children with each component designed to improve child wellness and well being. According to Bronwyn Gibbins-White regional education coordinator for True Relationships and Reproductive Health (True), the children and families involved in the project demonstrated improved knowledge and understanding of key personal safety concepts, as well as a greater sense of connection and cultural understanding.

"The element of this project that True are most proud of is its connectedness with the Indigenous families in the Rockhampton and Capricorn Coast regions. The project enables Indigenous families to connect with other families and local community service organisations. Indigenous children are also able to connect with other children and support workers," said Ms Gibbins-White.

"It also allows professionals from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds to network with each other and refer clients to other services. It is this connectedness that guarantees the ongoing success of this initiative. The more families that engage in this project, the more children will learn about personal safety messages."

This inspiring initiative is increasing the well being and safety of children through culturally appropriate and proactive activities.