

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Dilly Wanderer initiatives – Wollondilly Health Alliance

4th World Congress on Integrated Care, Wellington, NZ, 23-25 Nov 2016

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Introduction: The Wollondilly Shire Local Government Area is a peri-urban area located on the south west fringe of the Sydney Metropolitan area facing increasing challenges associated with population growth, health concerns and service provision. Residents have access to local primary care but must travel outside the region for higher level health services. Compared to NSW, there are higher rates of obesity, alcohol consumption, smoking and lung cancer.

Short description of practice change implemented: The Dilly Wanderer is Wollondilly Shire Council's mobile mini bus community engagement and information service. It visits towns and villages in Wollondilly Shire providing information to community members and activities for children and families to participate in.

Aim and theory of change: The vision for Wollondilly is that the community is healthier, finds it easier and quicker to access services, enjoys quality services and has a say in the development and provision of health services that affect them. Consistent with the WHO Draft Framework for Country Action across Sectors for Health and Health Equity (2015) the Dilly Wanderer is an exemplar of "action initiated at the local government level...various sectors working together to address public health and health equity issues...through community-based or setting-based health promotion activities."

Targeted population and stakeholders: Potentially isolated individuals and families at risk of poor health due to deficits in social connectedness, health literacy, nutritional choices and physical activity.

Timeline: The Dilly Wanderer enhancement commenced in May 2014 and is currently funded to 2017.

Highlights: Since May 2015, the following enhanced activities have been delivered via the Dilly Wanderer, all evaluated through satisfaction survey or client experience interview:

- Kiosks

In addition to the regular Dilly Wanderer timetable, a specific schedule has been established which ensures the Dilly attends a predetermined location each week with the aim of promoting healthy messages and activities.

- Special events

Due to the increase in the hours of operation, the Dilly Wanderer has been able to attend community gatherings and events not previously attended, boosting overall community awareness and creating a positive brand association.

- Workshops/education sessions

Information sessions have been delivered to several Wollondilly villages on the topics of child development, parenting skills, healthy eating for families, how to access and identify the need for Allied Health services and basic first aid. The program has been enthusiastically received with all agreeing they would recommend the program to family and friends, 43% confident in making changes to their lifestyle, 63% enhancing their parenting skills and knowledge and 50% feeling a lot more connected to other people in their community.

- Walking and exercise groups

Walking and exercise sessions have been provided in several Wollondilly villages. The sessions have been well received with over 60 participants to date.

Conclusions: Over a short period the Dilly Wanderer has generated positive community engagement, raised awareness, attained solid attendance, expanded its reach and tailored services to health need.

Discussions: Community engagement, health literacy and social connectedness can be rapidly improved through mobile mini bus health promotion messaging.

Keywords: family engagement; connectedness; child development
