

**Physically Active Koori Kids (project: Kinder gym)
Health Promotion Project with a budget over \$75,000 which has a primary focus on physical activity.**

Executive summary:

Since 2003 the partnership between Gippsland Lakes Community Health (GLCH) and Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust, Bairnsdale West Primary School, Kilmany Uniting Care, YMCA and Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative has successfully run Koori swim programs in Lakes Entrance and Bairnsdale.

The multi agency partnership is well established and has been pivotal in further developing and expanding the Koori Bubs Swim program and the establishment of the **Physically Active Koori Kids (PAKK)** project.

The **PAKK** project aims to increase the level of physical activity in indigenous young children (under 5 yrs) from the communities of Lake Tyers, Lakes Entrance, and Bairnsdale by running a series of kinder gyms operating out of local facilities. The model is both responsive to community need and is culturally appropriate.

PAKK runs kinder gyms at Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust (Bung Yarnda child care), Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative (Boorai play group), GLCH and in early 2008 at Bairnsdale West Primary School Hub. The project employs a part time Allied Health Assistant and a Koori Health worker to coordinate and run the project.

Children and their parents/carers participate together in an hour session with a qualified staff member. The program focuses on exploring movement and stimulates gross motor development through play experiences and activities. Children develop body awareness, coordination and self confidence as well as building the basic foundations for balance, agility and physical strength. Parents/carers are encouraged to learn along with the children and are given training on activities that can be played at home or in the child care facility.

The children attending the Kinder Gym also have access to the Koori Bubs Swim Program (2006 winner of the Victorian Public Healthcare Awards for Excellence in Prevention and Early Intervention www.health.vic.gov.au/healthawards) and the Koori Family Swim program. The combination of these programs assists the local Koori pre school community to move closer to the levels of physical activity sufficient for real health gain as per National Physical Activity Guidelines for Australian Children.

PAKK project staff work with partner agencies to ensure safe, active play areas are developed at each site and that Koori workers and parents have opportunities for training, education, mentoring, and support.

The program will be further strengthened by the establishment of the PAKK regional reference group supported by Gippsport and the signing of partnership agreements by the participating agencies in 2008. This will ensure that the project has community ownership and has the capacity to be sustainable.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Contribution to new health promotion knowledge and evidence:

The PAAK program has been built on solid evidence for promoting and enhancing physical activity opportunities for community health gains.

Significant to the success of the program has been its community consultation at planning, implementing and evaluation stages. Initial community consultation identified the need for increased access to activities and facilities that supported increased physical activity and enhanced community cohesion. The combination of the two foci, in particular the need to strengthen opportunities for the community to be together, is essential for successful Indigenous health promotion programs.

The PAKK program built on the success of previous (and current) physically active programs such as the Koori Family Swim and the Koori Bubs Swim programs. This building of a 'suite' of physically active programs accessible to the local community and in particular children and their parents is fundamental to the local Koori pre school community moving closer to the level of physical activity sufficient for real health gains.

The 'suite' approach is attempting to establish patterns of physical activity for children under the age of 5 years that can be sustained as children enter the school community. One off or singular programs are not sufficient for long term health gains for communities with limited access to resources required for health.

While the PAKK program and other health promotion programs have focussed on service provision GLCH has also worked on increasing governance and community engagement strategies to underpin present and future Indigenous Health programs. The support and resourcing of the Lakes Entrance Koori Elders Health Group has been part of the broader engagement strategy undertaken by GLCH and has seen increased level of access to services by Koori clients, increased funding for Koori health services, emerging signs of greater harmony within the community, and moves towards local reconciliation. This approach we believe is vital to ensuring that Indigenous Health programs are well received and utilised by the community.

Contribution to new practice in community settings:

Two of the current kinder gym sessions being run (with a third to open) are being conducted in a Koori community facility. This outreach model is addressing some of the identified barriers to participation by the Koori community eg transport, cost, and Koori friendly or culturally appropriate environment. This outreach model encourages participation and has improved communication and relationships.

The provision of the Lakes Entrance Kinder Gym from the Allied Health facility of GLCH has contributed to increased health promotion roles for Allied Health staffing; built informal relationships with parents of the Kinder Gym children and clinicians such as Speech therapists, Dieticians and Physiotherapists. This program also provides transport to and from the program for parents and children.

Value for money-which encapsulates efficiency and cost effectiveness:

The model on the whole is able to utilise existing staff within partner agencies to staff the program. Parent's staff and carers also have access to training and through this increased knowledge and skill they can take on more responsibility for the running of the sessions over the next three years. Equipment is shared between the partners, reducing costs and also allows a rotation of equipment throughout the sites.

Utilising Koori facilities and staff brings a level of efficiency /cost effectiveness that GLCH cannot hope to achieve because of the nature of relationships and community knowledge required to effectively implement this type of population health approach.

Demonstrated potential for attracting ongoing support and funding, and potential for attracting funding from other sources:

The PAKK program has attracted support from the Regional East Gippsland Healthy for Life program a partnership between GEGAC, LTAT, Moogji and GLCH and the Communities for Children project auspiced by Kilmany Uniting Care.

The establishment of the Regional reference group for PAKK underpinned by a memorandum of understanding between the PAKK partners will place the program in a stronger position to attract further funding.

Demonstrated capacity to catalyse change:

The establishment and resourcing of a formal engagement structure – the Lakes Entrance Koori Elders Group, supported by a formal partnership protocol has enabled a strong partnership to be developed between GLCH and the Lakes Entrance Indigenous community. This platform has enabled a number of new Indigenous health programs to be developed.

The PAKK initiative initially started as a program operating from the GLCH facility in Lakes Entrance. The successful implementation and with strong local community support led other agencies to approach GLCH and LTAT to assist with the development of the Kinder Gym program in their communities.

The approach taken by GLCH in partnership with the local Indigenous community aimed to provide greater access to community health and support services delivered in a way that the local community felt supported, listened to, involved in and respected.

We have begun to see ongoing community engagement; re-shaping of service delivery, increase in access to services provided by GLCH, increased Indigenous employment and governance within GLCH operations.

Specifically through the Koori kinder gym project we are seeing an increase in participation and ownership, an increase in number of Koori children attending mainstream kinder, and developmental problems in Koori children attending the program are being identified earlier and referrals where appropriate are being made.

Physically Active Koori Kids Program Budget allocation

2007/2008

INCOME

VicHealth ¹	\$ 60,755.00
Kilmany UnitingCare – Communities 4 Children	\$ 5,000.00

TOTAL **\$65,755.00**

EXPENDITURE

Salaries ²	\$ 39,424.00
Business Support	\$ 14,466.00
Staff training	\$ 1,200.00
Transport & food	\$ 6,865.00
Network meeting costs	\$ 300.00
Equipment	\$ 3,500.00

TOTAL **\$65,755.00**

Notes:

1. VicHealth funding received in May 06/07 and carried forward into 07/08. Includes initial planning component of \$5,000.00
2. Salaries consist of Coordinator position 0.5ft and an Aboriginal Allied Health Assistant position of 0.4ft both who started in July 07.

Comment:

GLCH pilot site for the Kinder Gym program was established in 2006/2007 and initially funded through Community Health and Disability Services one off funding. The success of the project has enabled the roll out of the program to other facilities which forms the PAKK project funded by VicHealth.