

Queensland Suicide & Self-Harm Prevention Conference 2006:

Sharing learnings from practice & research

Brisbane 30 – 31 March 2006

Liz Archer and Katie Allen report

THANKS to MHACA, Waltja was able to send two delegates (Liz and Katie) from our youth team to the Queensland Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Conference 2006. MHACA paid for one of us to go given that no one from Life Promotions was able to attend. The conference was organised by the Qld Government as part of their suicide prevention strategy and attracted about 450 participants.

There was a broad range of topics to choose from and, even with two of us there, it was sometimes hard to know what to go to. Some presentations were full of statistics and numbers, some full of stories, some came from remote communities and some from towns, and there were presenters from New Zealand as well as Qld, NSW & Victoria.

Highlights included:

- ◆ **Professor Judy Atkinson** from Southern Cross University: Judy gave a keynote presentation “I can’t stay sober cos I’d Kill Myself: Indigenous Australian Peoples and the links between childhood trauma and suicide.” She also talked about work she had been doing with young people and families in some remote communities.
- ◆ **Nyrell Patel, Program Director & Therapist** with the Far North Queensland Consortium for Social and Emotional Health and Well Being. Nyrell gave a presentation on “Aboriginal

collective reality and self”, looking at Aboriginal world views, experience of transgenerational trauma and ways of communicating well cross culturally.

- ◆ **Professor Graham Martin, Director of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry**, University of Qld, who gave a keynote presentation on understanding self harm: This invited us to look more closely at what self harming behaviour is and what it means for the person doing it. Working from the client’s perspective helps us to understand their behaviour and feelings and hence to help them to find (hopefully) less destructive ways of coping.
- ◆ **Networking with others in the field.** Hearing how things are in Qld and seeing what sort of resources Qld is spending and in what ways to address suicide and self harm

Biggest insights included:

- ◆ Hearing about three “suicide prevention” networks and strategies that are really similar to our Central Australian model. Some have better resources and some, like United Synergies, are also well connected to suicide bereavement groups. However, we can be genuinely proud of what we are already doing (with stretched resources) in our region.
- ◆ Hearing about a strategy with a research component

trialled in Aoteoroa, where they put in additional support for clinical workers via email and telephone “supervision” which has led to better support in turn for clients.

- ◆ Also a practical research project by Diego de Leo and others, where they increased client support, especially where patients were released from hospital (weekly counselling session plus additional telephone support). This greatly improved client wellbeing after discharge. In other words, its not just grizzling for more money from government: extra resources applied well do help heaps!

Recommendations are:

- ◆ Liz to follow up with several of the Indigenous presenters about their courses, availability and costs of training, including “distance learning.” Maybe Waltja could also support students/participants from our region.
- ◆ Consider what we can do to improve our local suicide prevention network without necessarily trying for a partnership with a group like United Synergies.

A copy of the conference program and other literature we brought back is available at MHACA (Life Promotions) for anyone who is interested in checking it out. Liz will also be providing a report to the next LPP Steering Committee. Liz and Katie are also happy for people to call us on 8953 4488 if you want to discuss anything related to the conference or our work. ☒



Katie Allen and Liz Archer from Waltja