

Not Just Play

Indigenous Playgroups as an
Early Intervention Strategy



Aims of Workshop

- ❑ Background of Playgroup Queensland Early Intervention Strategy
- ❑ Strengths of an Indigenous Playgroup
- ❑ Playgroup as tool for working with marginalised families
- ❑ Impact of Playgroup services
- ❑ Models of Indigenous Playgroup
- ❑ Community Consultation
- ❑ Support from Playgroup Queensland



Playgroup Qld Early Intervention Strategy

- Since 1970 Playgroup Queensland peak body for community based parent driven Playgroups.
- From 2001 reform program in partnership with government and community groups.
- Early Intervention Services
 - Indigenous Playgroups
 - Supported Playgroups Programs
 - Sing and Grow Music Therapy Program
 - My Time Programs



Why Playgroup?

- ❑ Queensland has entrenched level of overrepresentation in child protection system
- ❑ On June 30th 2006 there were 1577 Indigenous children in out of home care
- ❑ 3 times the Queensland rate



Strategies

- Service providers engage in cooperative effort to achieve child protection by
 - Strengthening Indigenous families and communities
 - Indigenous children seen in context of their family
 - Needs of community or family must also be met
 - Partnerships between mainstream and Indigenous agencies
 - Result in delivery of appropriate and effective services

(Cadd, 2002)



Appropriate early years message

- Research on values of urban Aboriginal parents
 - Parents spoke of importance of keeping their children safe
 - Concern that welfare people would come and check them out
 - Reflects literature regarding lack of security felt by Aboriginal people toward mainstream services as a result of past policies
 - Strong emphasis on value of social relationships and involvement within family

(Nelson & Allison, 2002)



Strengths of an Indigenous Playgroup

- ❑ The Playgroup concept fits well with Indigenous family ideas, that is family looks after children and family members can attend Playgroup with the children.
- ❑ Playgroups provide an opportunity for facilitators to model positive and appropriate parenting skills to the families.



Strengths of an Indigenous Playgroup

- ❑ The Playgroup provides opportunities for families to access local family support workers in a non threatening environment.
- ❑ The Playgroup provides an opportunity for children's developmental needs to be informally assessed.



Examples

- Playgroup attended by aunties and grandmothers along with mothers and children.
- Mothers reluctant to take babies to Child Health – felt they would be seen as ‘bad’ mothers – Child Health now visits the Playgroup



What about Queensland?

□ Kowanyama

- Late 2005 Cairns RFDS applied for and received funding from Golden Casket Rainbow Kids
- Established Playgroup and early intervention activities at Mother and Baby Centre
- Operated concurrently with RFDS Child Health Clinics
- Now run by local community



What about Queensland?

- Knyitty Jundhu Mackay
 - Started over 10 years ago by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Centre
 - Started with nothing but now receives funding for coordinators
 - Currently 15 parents attending twice a week



What about Queensland?

- Indigenous Playgroups in Queensland schools
 - Developed by Education Queensland and the Learning and Engagement Centre at Nambour
 - Developed by Education Queensland and the Learning and Engagement Centre Townsville with the Kirwan State High School
 - Partnerships with Playgroup Queensland



Supported Playgroups

- January 2006 FaCSIA funding
- To establish 13 Supported Playgroups per year in Queensland
- Indigenous Supported Playgroups established:
 - Thursday Island
 - Cunnamulla
 - Oakey



Supported Playgroups – Accessible Playgroup Initiative

- April 2007 Queensland Government Department of Communities funding
- To establish 15 Supported Playgroups per year
- Major target vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families



Supported Playgroup – Accessible Playgroups Initiative

- ❑ Funding includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Playgroup Unit
- ❑ Indigenous workers employed in Brisbane and Cairns
- ❑ Provides support and assistance to communities



Supported Playgroup – Accessible Playgroups Initiative

- Indigenous Supported Playgroups established so far:
 - Mossman Gorge
 - Manoora Cairns
 - Beaudesert
 - Mt Morgan
 - Acacia Ridge Brisbane



Transition Model of Supported Playgroup

- Supported playgroups
 - Usually meet once a week for about two hours
 - Are facilitated by a coordinator
 - Aim to empower families to support young children's development through provision and participation in a variety of developmentally appropriate play experiences and activities



Transition model of Supported Playgroup

- Provides opportunities for parents and children who would not normally access a playgroup to
 - Enhance their relationship in a supportive environment
 - Increase their parenting skills and confidence
 - Develop valuable social and family support networks



Transition model of Supported Playgroup

- Helps families develop the skills to participate in and run the Playgroup independently by
 - Involving families in all playgroup processes
 - Discussing processes for transition
 - Developing written transition timeline with families
 - Playgroup Coordinator scaling back involvement



Community Consultation

- ❑ Need for time for communities to consider the service offered, reflect upon the benefits to the community, and come to a decision.
- ❑ Time taken varies with each community.
- ❑ Grass roots consultations with potential Playgroup families.
- ❑ Use of video/dvd to explain Playgroup concept.
- ❑ Decision not made *for* the community but *by* the community.



Community Development

- Previous Indigenous Playgroups established have led to:
 - Women's support group formed.
 - Men's support group formed.
 - Local network formed.
 - Incorporation of local network.
 - Unmet needs of community members highlighted.



Playgroup Queensland Support


- Membership
- Resources
- Training
- Information
- Mentoring of workers
- Visits to playgroups



Further information

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