

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – Sharing the Learning Report

- The *Promoting Mental Wellbeing in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD)* Project was undertaken by North West Area Mental Health Service (NWAMHS) and community partners between July 2012 and June 2014. The project aimed to strengthen community capacity for mental wellbeing in three vulnerable and socio-economically disadvantaged CALD communities actively *with* our CALD communities, not just *for* them, in the local government geographic areas of Hume and Moreland.

### What

- The Wellbeing in CALD communities project had three objectives:
  1. To establish a local community partnership group to collaboratively develop, implement and evaluate the project:
  2. To engage, empower, socially connect and consult people from four identified local CALD communities about their individual and cultural beliefs and practices, about factors that contribute to positive mental health and about the types of strategies used to better cope with everyday stress in life.
  3. To develop an accessible, evidence-based public health message about individual mental wellbeing protective factors, and two communication and engagement tools (a short multi-lingual film and a community-translated hand-out resource) to help disseminate the key messages (beyond the life of the project) as part of a long term mental wellbeing community awareness campaign, to be rolled out by NWAMHS and interested community partners both with and for the identified target CALD communities and potentially beyond.

### Why

- The impetus for this project was the recognition that:
  1. Prevention is better than cure. Simply and solely ‘treating’ people (with a mental illness) without changing what makes them sick (social determinants) is not acceptable from a social justice, economic or other standpoint.
  2. Together we do better. Despite the high quality services NWAMHS provides, no one service has all the resources it needs to address the complexities of mental illness and health issues and reach our diverse community. The expertise of our community can be tapped in the tailoring approaches to better meet community needs in addition to that of allied health professionals.
  3. Knowing what you can do to help keep yourself **mentally healthy is just as important as** knowing what you can do to help keep yourself physically healthy. A local review of health literacy information about mental wellbeing protective factors and awareness campaigns encouraging people to be pro-active for their mental wellbeing identified a gap that was not addressed through current physical health programs, health promotion strategies or awareness campaigns.
  4. One size does not fit all, strategies need tailoring and to be inclusive of the needs of CALD communities. An existing mental health promotion strategy ‘Act-Belong-Commit: Mentally Healthy Hume and Moreland’, tackling stigma and targeting vulnerable and mentally healthy populations with its prevention-focused and awareness-raising message, was found **not** to be accessible to Hume and Moreland CALD communities, though better suited to English speaking populations.

### Who

- A partnership group comprising North West Area Mental Health Service and 10 organisations with strong links to local CALD communities was established to manage the project. The Arabic, Assyrian, Chaldean and Turkish communities were identified as target populations for the project based on the size of these populations and vulnerability to mental health problems in Hume and Moreland. The Bhutanese community, as a smaller and more recently arrived population group were also considered however were found not to have sufficient 'community readiness' in terms of addressing their most immediate needs.

## How

- **A search of the international literature** identified that the 'Five Ways to Well-being' campaign, though not specifically targeting CALD communities, was a potentially suitable framework to communicate information about evidence-based mental health protective factors that are within the control of an individual to modify (for increased exposure) and thereby also increase their odds for sustained good mental health. The main advantage of the 'Five Ways To Wellbeing' was the use of language that avoided a negative association with mental illness and that its concepts appeared to be easily understood across a range of cultural groups and those with low literacy skills.
- **To understand the ways in which different communities made sense of concepts** related to promoting mental well-being and to test the applicability of the 'Five Ways' campaign messages, a series of consultation and two-way education sessions called 'Happiness in Life' sessions, with the target communities was undertaken. This approach was also seen as a means of promoting interest and ownership amongst the participating communities. Community and religious leaders and helping professionals from the four CALD groups were also consulted. These meetings generated important recommendations relating to; the provision of separate sessions for women; the use of terms to describe well-being; the use of a doctor's endorsement to give the message authority and to ask questions about coping strategies rather than 'prevention' strategies.
- **Four 'Happiness in Life' sessions were conducted with the three communities.** These sessions involved; use of a local theatre group to facilitate discussion about wellbeing, small group discussions facilitated by bi-lingual project partners; the use of professional interpreters and a presentation on the evidence about protective factors using the Five Ways to Well-Being framework. These sessions resulted in generating a list of behaviours participants used to better cope with stress in life. Significantly many participants noted that they had not realised prior to the sessions that many of the behaviours were actually helpful to their mental well-being or had previously considered as some of these behaviours as 'strategies' they could call upon (pro-actively) to build resilience or to better manage stress in life.

## Results

- **The project was a significant and effective process of community engagement.** 310 people participated in the project overall, of which 270 individuals participated in the 'Happiness In Life' sessions and a further 40 people participated in the production of the short film about the 'Five Ways To Strengthen Wellbeing'. Most of the people (280 individuals) who participated were from the targeted Arabic, Assyrian, Chaldean and Turkish communities with a further 30 people who participated from other diverse cultural backgrounds. This level of participation points to success in engaging CALD communities.

- **The process developed invaluable knowledge and a partnership approach to building individual and collective capacity for optimal mental wellbeing in CALD communities that can be effectively replicated in other settings, geographic areas or CALD or demographic sub-populations.**
- **On the basis of participants feedback it was concluded that the Five Ways to Wellbeing campaign fitted well with the needs of the target communities.** Participant evaluation indicated recall and understanding of the Five Ways to Wellbeing key messages. Three focus groups were conducted with a cross section of professionals and community members to test and refine the wording of the Five Ways to Wellbeing campaign.
- **A productive agency partnership was created.** The partnership of the 11 community agencies provided a diversity of skills and knowledge as well as the commitment of time to the project. Beyond the delivery of the project outputs, over two thirds of the partners who completed the VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool believed a genuine collaboration had been established.
- **A valuable mental health promotion resource was developed and disseminated.** A 10 minute film was produced and released on YouTube. The film was called *Five Ways To Strengthen Wellbeing* and can be accessed via the weblink: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3t2aZUA9n2s> Since its release in October 2013, 1,770 hits have been recorded. This has been without further promotion since the launch. The multi-lingual film has also been produced as a DVD. The film communicates the message of the Five Ways To Wellbeing through the stories of local CALD community members and local facilities. A community-informed translated handout that outlines the Five Ways To Wellbeing campaign message and suggested examples for action have been translated into two languages (Arabic and Turkish) in addition to English.
- **An inclusive, respectful and meaningful approach (and tools) to effectively engage and empower people and strengthen local partnerships was developed, with scope for easy replication**

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Permission to adopt, adapt the Five Ways to Wellbeing health promotion campaign to the Australian and diverse cultural context granted by the New Economics Foundation and the U.K. Government.

#### PROJECT PARTNERSHIP GROUP MEMBERS

1. Commonwealth Department of Human Services, Centrelink
2. Gambler's Help Northern
3. Hume City Council
4. Moreland City Council
5. Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre
6. Migrant Resource Centre, North West Region
7. Meadows Primary School
8. Dallas Neighbourhood House
9. Victorian Arabic Social Services
10. Women's Health In the North
11. North West Area Mental Health Service - Lead organisation (Health Promotion Coordinator, Doris Sant)

#### CONTRACTED COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

Promoting Mental Wellbeing In Hume and Moreland CALD Communities Project

1. Brunswick Women's Theatre
2. Bentwheel Productions

## **VOLUNTEERS & OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS AND GROUPS**

Not listed in available space

## **For more information**

- about this health literacy improvement in CALD communities project or
- the development of the 5 Ways To Wellbeing Victorian website or
- Victorian collaboration for the wellbeing of all health promotion campaign called 5 Ways To Wellbeing

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