

Rethinking health in our communities – exploring a community-driven, integrated approach.

Human, animal, environmental and social health in remote Indigenous communities – feasibility of developing an integrated approach which brings benefit to all users.

Background

Our starting point:

- Our definition of health is broad, including human, domestic animal, wildlife, social and environmental.
- Health is a complex interplay between many factors.
- Each community has its own health priorities.
- To maintain and improve health, we first need to understand the complex problems.
- Good data are vital if we want to understand and improve health.
- Data is more useful and powerful if it is interconnected because it allows us to understand the full complexity better.
- New technology allows us to interconnect data much better.
- The most useful data is generated by the people “on the ground”, individual community members, community workers, field service providers.
- If the data matter to that community, it will be
 - more accurate.
 - more carefully maintained.
 - more valued.

Health is complex.

The health of a community is a complex thing. It isn't just about how ‘well’ people are according to the medical professionals. It's a complex interplay between our social, environmental, economic wellbeing as well as the actual health of the humans and animals in our community. It is all interconnected.

If we really want to understand the full scope of health in our communities then we need to keep good information about these different aspects and connect or integrate it all so that we can see the big picture.

Information about health is much more useful and powerful if it reflects this complexity.

The systems we have now don't help us fully understand or respond to the “whole health” of a community and loads of opportunities are lost, money and hard work are wasted and progress is slow.

Each community is different and each has its own priorities.

Community based activities and data capture will only work if the data are relevant to real issues in each community. There has to be flexibility and responsiveness to focus on the main problems identified by each community, not a broad-brush approach. *Data security and privacy issues are also of major concern.*

Workshops held in Cairns and Darwin:

Workshops were held to discuss a new approach which allows us to collect and connect broad information from different sources to build a better understanding about the real health of any community, and empower that community to use those data to take action. The approach has the capacity to interconnect any amount of information from multiple sources and services and build a big picture about the real wellbeing of any community. *The community own the data and only the data the community wishes to share will be made available to those people/organisations requiring them.*

The workshops aimed to start a different conversation about community health. The idea involves turning the old way of providing service on its head, encouraging the community to drive its own activities, identify its own priorities and help us to build a new system together using our collective expertise, integrating and sharing information better, and making it possible for everybody to use the information to make a difference at a local and wider level.

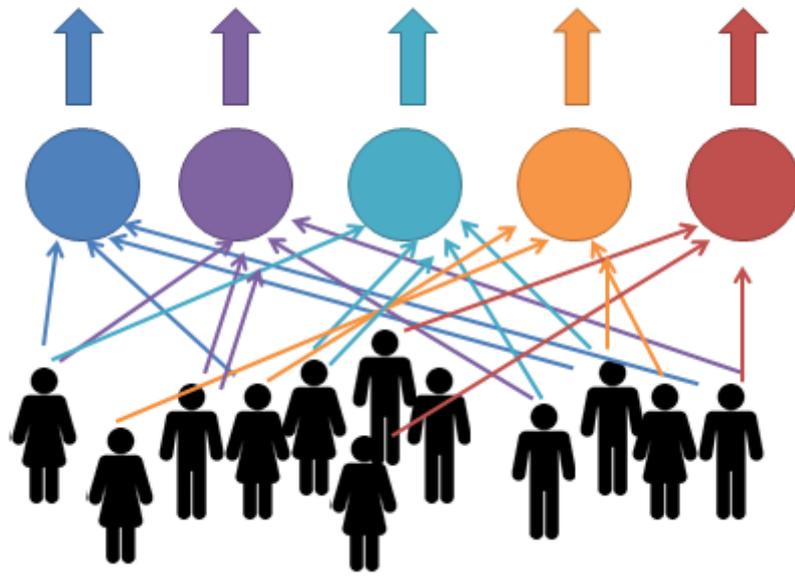
The workshop seeks to engage everybody involved in our broad definition of health to discover more about this new approach and assess its feasibility in Indigenous communities. It is an approach which puts the community at the centre, gives benefit and provides real service.

The new approach has been applied with great success overseas, but to assess options for remote Indigenous communities, we need the input and experience of all the local stakeholders who understand the issues which are most important in different communities. We would like to share some of our insights but mostly we would like to listen and learn how we can put our expertise to best use so that you can meet some of the highest priorities.

With leadership from the communities, and our collective knowledge and experience we hope to be able to assess the feasibility of this approach during the workshop and follow-up consultations.

For further information please contact Cassandra Wittwer on 9194 1224 or Cassandra.Wittwer@agriculture.gov.au or Marianne St Clair on 0427 555 484 or marianne.stclair@cdu.edu.au

Current model of service delivery:



Proposed model of service delivery:

