



The National Empowerment Project

Cultural, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Program Evaluation, Perth 2018 – 2019

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2019 Graduates

Front page and Back Page: Mural painted on the Kwinana Shopping Centre wall by the 2018 graduates for their Community Project.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Empowerment Project (NEP) is an Aboriginal led research project that was established in 2012 which was developed and led by Professor Patricia Dudgeon. The aim of the NEP was to develop a nationally applicable program to promote cultural, social and emotional wellbeing, in an effort to reduce high rates of psychological distress, self-harm and suicide within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The NEP was designed to be implemented in three stages:

1. The completion of extensive community consultations.
2. The development of the Cultural, Social, and Emotional Wellbeing (CSEWB) Program.
3. The delivery of the CSEWB Program in the initial NEP community sites.

The extensive community consultation process in eleven (11) sites across Australia in 2012 employed a Participatory Action Research methodology (Dudgeon, Scrine, Cox, and Walker, 2017), which is an approach that enables 'subjects' to become participants in the research process, and consequently, the research becomes responsive to community needs. In 2014 the CSEWB Program was developed and includes further components such as life skills and a community project.

Principles of the NEP

Informed by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation principles (2009), and the Department of Health and Ageing's Supporting Communities to Reduce the Risk of Suicide Guide (2013), a set of principles to oversee the NEP were developed.

These six principles, listed below have guided and informed the development and implementation of the NEP:

- Human Rights and Social Justice
- Community Ownership
- Community Capacity Building
- Resilience Focused
- Empowerment and Partnership
- Respectful of Local Knowledge

This evaluation report was commissioned to investigate the experiences of participants and the support systems during the delivery of the 'complete' cycle of the NEP Cultural, Social and Emotional Wellbeing (CSEWB) Programs in Kwinana, Perth. This is the fourth evaluation report of the CSEWB Program delivery nationally. The first two (2) evaluations of the Queensland sites of specific outcomes and impacts of the CSEWB Program for Kuranda and Cherbourg were undertaken in 2014 (Deshong) and 2017 (Mia and Oxenham). The third evaluation report (Abdullah and Coyne) was undertaken in Perth in 2018 (and is not yet published).

The CSEWB Program

The focus of this evaluation is to seek the perspectives of those involved, specifically the impacts and outcomes of the two (2) Kwinana CSEWB Programs. The CSEWB Program focused on different domains of Cultural, Social and Emotional Wellbeing (such as connection to culture, family, community and spirit) and restoring and strengthening self, family and community:

Self includes understanding self in the context of a colonial history and the SEWB framework. Self also involves developing greater self-awareness, assertiveness, self-esteem, empathy, positive thinking, and restoring oneself into family, community, history, and culture.

Family reviews Aboriginal family structures and dynamics, the importance of Elders, and the development of interpersonal and conflict resolution skills. Family also includes increased understanding of the history around the Stolen Generations, intergenerational trauma and positive parenting (including child development and the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents in contemporary life).

Community provides an understanding of history both at local and national levels, celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander achievements, and explores concepts of self-determination at individual and community levels. What it means to be a good community leader was also part of the Program.

The Program enhanced personal skills and increased knowledge through interactive, fun, and informative activities and content. Sessions and activities relating to stress management, problem solving, healthy relationships, managing conflict, and healthy behavior were included. There was a graduation at the completion of the twelve (12) modules for the two (2) groups at Kwinana in June 2019. Invitations for the graduation were extended to men and women's groups (where established), the Community Reference Group members, family members, Elders, community representatives, partnering organisations, and service providers.

Specific areas of focus within the Program encompassed self, family and community as follows:

1. Cultural, Social, and Emotional Wellbeing
2. Self-Empowerment
3. Nurturing Individual, Family, and Community Strengths
4. Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution Skills
5. Goal Setting
6. Communication
7. Mentoring

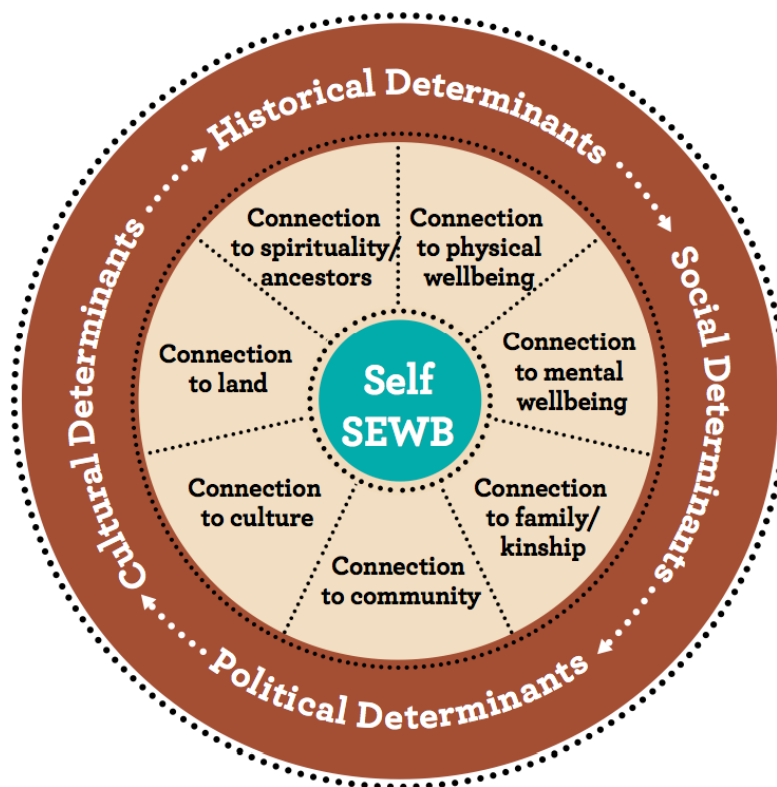


Diagram 1: Determinants of Cultural, Social and Emotional Wellbeing

Several supports were established for the CSEWB Program. Langford Aboriginal Association (LAA) staff worked closely with the partner organisation, Relationships Australia WA (RAWA), and stakeholder organisations who have relationships within the local Aboriginal community. These organisations were invited to be members of the Community Reference Group (CRG). The stakeholder organisations are recognized in having capacity to provide administrative and general project support to implement the CSEWB Program. Further, the CRG was formed to guide and support the Program. The CRG was formed from local Elders, local organisations and others who supported the NEP Project.

The above support structures (partner organisations, stakeholders organisations, CRG and others) were acknowledged as central to the implementation of the Program from the consultation phase in 2012. A total of forty (40) participants attended the consultation sessions for the Perth area in 2012. Of the forty (40) participants, thirty-three (33) were Aboriginal community members and seven (7) were stakeholder representatives.

This evaluation was undertaken by two (2) Aboriginal female consultants. Consent was given by all participants for testimonials and photos for this evaluation. Participants of the CSEWB Program included a broad reflection of age groups, ranging from young through to older Aboriginal people and a mix of male and female. The demographics of

the participants who graduated from each group at Kwinana are illustrated in the Evaluation Methodology section.

Data for the purposes of this evaluation was gathered from:

- Thirteen (13) graduates participated in focus groups/yarning circles and telephone interviews from seventeen (17) graduates;
- Zero (0) telephone interviews with those fifteen (15) participants who didn't complete the CSEWB Program and who did not respond to three (3) attempts by evaluators;
- Zero (0) telephone interviews with those nineteen (19) community members who registered but did not attend the CSEWB Program and who did not respond to three (3) attempts by evaluators;
- Two (2) interviews with Partner Organisation employees;
- Fifteen (15) telephone interviews with Community Reference Group members from a total of twenty-seven (27);
- Three (3) Facilitators participated in a focus/yarning and telephone interviews;
- One (1) Community Support Worker participated in a telephone interview and yarning circle;
- Three (3) telephone interviews with stakeholder organisations;
- Participant registration forms;
- Stories of Most Significant Change provided by participants on completion of the twelve (12) modules;
- Process and Impact Evaluations conducted during delivery of the modules at completion of six (6) and twelve (12) weeks; and
- Pre and Post Kessler-5 assessments;

This evaluation identified that the CSEWB Program had a positive and significant impact on individual participants, their families and the community. The following are the key themes that emerged from focus groups (structured yarning circles) and individual interviews.

Key Findings

The CSEWB Program focused on strengthening the cultural, social and emotional wellbeing of individuals, that has a flow on affect onto families, and the community. Thus, resulting in self-improvements and knowledge and skills to continue to develop and further support other family members and community members they either have contact with or work with.

During the Program the themes Self, Family, Community and Cultural, Social and Emotional Wellbeing emerged from the six (6) week Formative Evaluation and an Impact Evaluation completed at week twelve (12). The emergence of these themes was related to how individuals and the group responded to the Program content and the varying needs of those individuals in terms of the reason why they enrolled in the Program.

Key themes that emerged from the analysis centered around the following:

1. Personal Strength
2. Relationships, Family and Community
3. Life Skills and Life Planning
4. Cultural, Social and Emotional Wellbeing
5. Cultural Reconnection

As a collective, many participants gained a greater understanding of how to manage stress and how to better respond to conflict and develop strategies to alleviate problems in a more pragmatic way. A number of participants found the Program was able to get them out of their comfort zone, and to stop procrastinating about making positive changes for their futures. Throughout the Program, participants commenced setting goals and plans for the future. Many exited the Program feeling more comfortable in developing friendships and networks, through meeting new people. They felt contentment which helps to build self. As with previous Programs a friendship circle was developed within each of the groups, which also includes individual friendships that they wished to continue after the Program. There was also a new-found awareness of who is living in the community and ways in which individuals can/may support each other moving forward.

Participants also engaged in developing a list of local organisations and services that they knew of and accessed. This list was added to at each session. At the final session this information was distributed to the participants so that they had a resource at the end of the program of agencies and support services with contact details.

Participants also demonstrated an increased appreciation and understanding of our history and the cultural impacts and how it connects to the current circumstances of individual, families and communities. For some it was reinforcing what they already knew and for others it was the first opportunity they had to become fully aware of Aboriginal history. This created a better understanding of connection to country and the role that Elders play within our cultural construct through the cultural sessions and activities. There was also a new-found appreciation of Elders and how important they are in both being involved in the Program as well as within community and individual families.

Further, as a result, from the learnings of the twelve (12) modules, participants developed a better understanding of ways in which they can utilise their knowledge to continue to make positive changes in their own lives. Their newfound knowledge can support their families and the broader Aboriginal community.

OVERVIEW

In Perth, the CSEWB Program focused on strengthening the cultural, social and emotional wellbeing of individuals, families, and the community, which involved a number of activities with a community-wide focus. The original CSEWB Program was developed with the aim of repeating three, six-week long blocks, throughout the overarching twelve (12) month timeframe. However, in 2017/2018 the Program was delivered in twelve (12) week blocks at three (3) Perth sites. In 2019, the Program was delivered twice per week for two (2) groups of participants at the Kwinana site. All Programs are designed to meet the needs of the communities involved.

To be able to achieve the 'complete cycle' of the 2017-2018 Program, LAA applied for funding in 2018 from the Western Australian Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA). LAA as the NEP Partner Organisation, partnered with RAWA to deliver two (2) Programs in Kwinana. The CSWEB participants underwent an intensive block of twelve (12) modules delivered over twelve (12) weeks, including a cultural outing and a graduation ceremony.

LAA as a community based organisation, exists to deliver programs to the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The CSEWB Program is one of the significant Programs where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been empowered and made changes to their lives, their family's lives, and enhanced the status of the local community.

To support the delivery of the Program in Kwinana, a local Community Reference Group was established and met from October 2018 to June 2019.

Community Reference Group

The Programs at the Kwinana site was supported by a Community Reference Group (CRG) members linked to the following organisations:

- Moorditj Koort Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre;
- City of Kwinana;
- atWork Australia;
- South Coastal Babbingur Mia;
- Australian Red Cross;
- SMYL Community Services - ParentsNext;
- Department of Communities - Child Protection;
- Department of Human Services – Centrelink;
- Bridging the Gap;
- Koya; and
- PEEDAC Pty Ltd

These organisations are located in the southern suburbs of the Perth metropolitan area. Although there are differences within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia, there is a shared commonality of issues impacting on the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities (Dudgeon et al, 2014).

The CRG was established to inform and support the Programs in Kwinana. Their role was to guide and assist the implementation of the CSEWB Program delivery. Further the CRG membership brought together extensive cultural knowledge, professional experience and local knowledge, to promote the Program. Another task of the CRG was the endorsement of co-facilitators of the Program. The CRG also strengthened community ownership, avoided Program duplication, and ensured that the CSEWB Program worked alongside existing programs. Five (5) CRG members were participants in the 2018 Program. The CRG members shared the goals of the NEP Project and some CRG organisations referred their clients to the Program.

Stakeholder Organisations

Stakeholder organisations Moorditj Koort, the City of Kwinana and Yorgum supported the Program by encouraging their clients to attend, providing the resources required for participants to attend and counselling support for participants. Moorditj Koort and City of Kwinana both supported and promoted the Program in 2018 and again in 2019.

Community Support Worker

The Program involved community relationship building, where a Community Support Worker (CSW) who had completed the Program in 2018 and who was a local community member was employed for the two (2) Programs in Kwinana in 2019. The CSW role commenced in February until June 2019, to support and assist Aboriginal community members to enroll in, participate in, and to engage participants. This role also involved administrative duties including participant registration, maintaining attendance records, outcomes of Program data and liaising with facilitators and stakeholders. Other duties included development of promotional materials, coordinating meetings and appointments, prepare and organising the facilities of the Program venue, transport, creche and catering as required by participants to attend. Participants were also referred to culturally appropriate services, based on identified need.

The participants, and their supports will be discussed in the Evaluation Findings section.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The methodology applied in this Evaluation of the NEP CSEWB Program for Kwinana in Perth was to capture the journey of all participants associated with the Program. Therefore, the methodology applied for this evaluation, was aligned with the Project Brief – as outlined by LAA in order to achieve the objectives of the evaluation.

Data Collection

The data collection commenced in mid-June to late July 2019. Focus groups/yarning circles and individual telephone interviews were undertaken. Other data was also reviewed. Questions for each group are at Attachment one (1).

Participants

- Review participant Registration Forms with demographic information;
- Review the Process Evaluation at six (6) weeks and Impact Evaluation at twelve (12) weeks;
- Review the Stories of Most Significant Change;
- Review the Kessler-5 Pre and Post Assessments;
- Interview participants who completed the Program either through focus groups (yarning circles) or individual interviews, seventeen (17);
- Interview participants who began the Program but did not complete, fifteen (15) participants;
- Interview participants who registered to do the Program but did not enrol, nineteen (19) participants.

During the Program participants presentation of their Vision Board and future Outlook Maps were recorded along with their Acknowledgement to Country presentation. These are available through RAWA.

Other Informants

- Interview employees of Partner organisations: Langford Aboriginal Association (LAA) and Relationships Western Australia, two (2) informants;
- Interview employees of Stakeholder organisations: Moorditj Koort Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre (Kwinana), City of Kwinana, Yorgum, three (3) informants;
- Interview Community Reference Group members, twenty-seven (27) informants;
- Interview Facilitators and Community Support Worker, four (4) informants

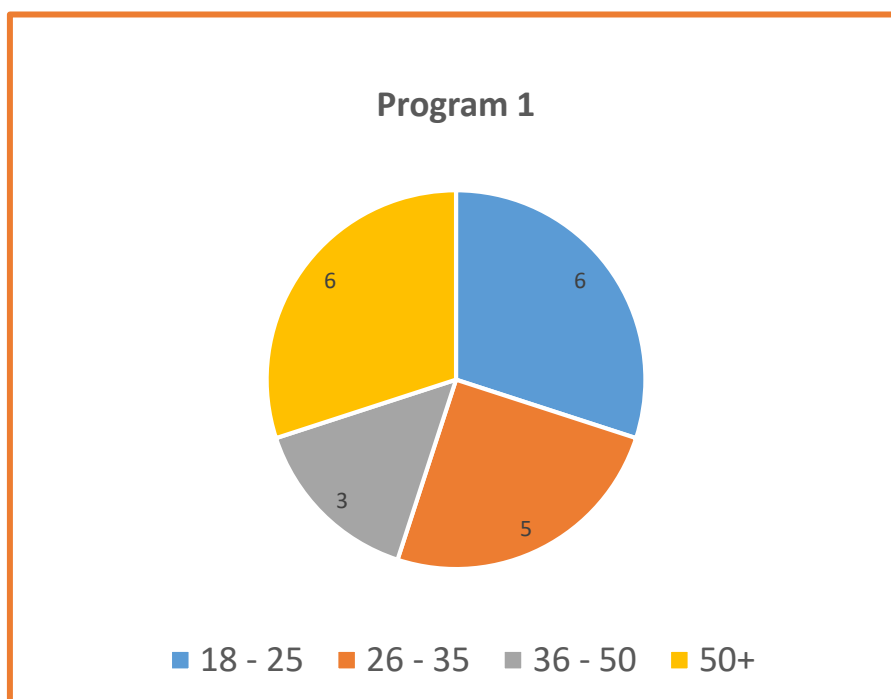
Participants Demographics

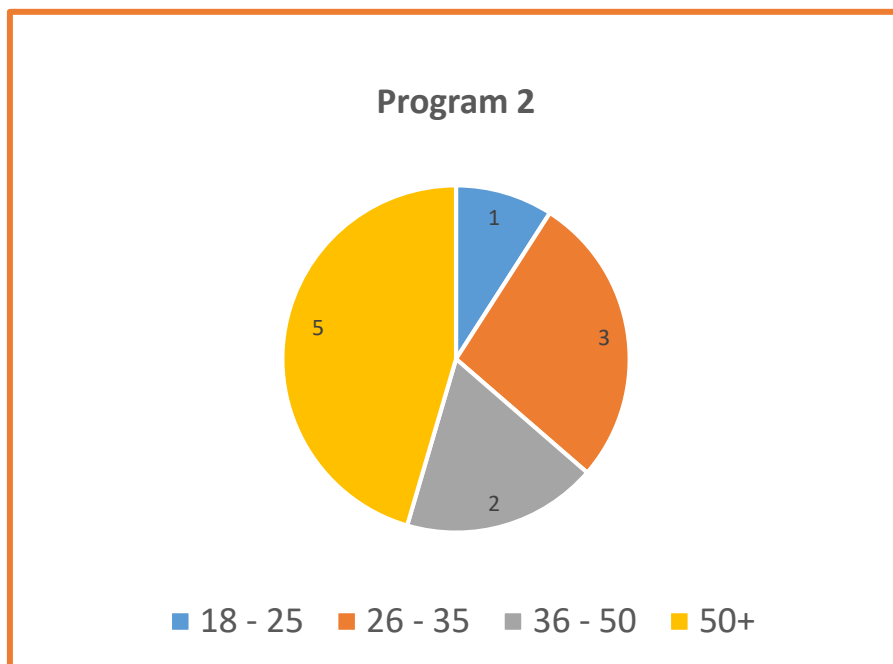
Of the thirty-two (32) participants who commenced the Program, seventeen (17) graduated. Of the seventeen (17) graduates, thirteen (13) participated in this evaluation. The evaluators had a zero response after making three (3) attempts to contact the fifteen (15) participants who commenced the Program and did not complete and the nineteen (19) who registered and did not commence.

The ages of participants ranged from eighteen (18) years to over fifty (50) years. The older participants formed the larger portion of each group.

In Group one (1) both the eighteen (18) to twenty-five (25) years and fifty (50) plus years were the highest number of participants. The twenty-six (26) to thirty-five (35) years participants were next, followed by the smallest group of thirty-six (36) to fifty (50) years plus participants. In Group two (2) the fifty (50) plus participants were the highest with the twenty-six (26) to thirty-five (35) year participants next. The thirty-six (36) to fifty-year participants followed with the eighteen (18) to twenty-five (25) year participants as the lowest.

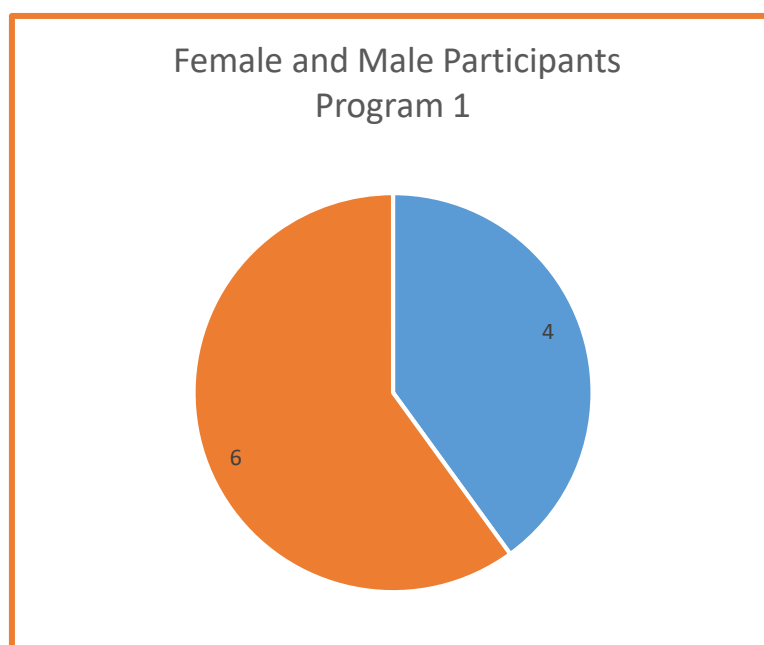
Age

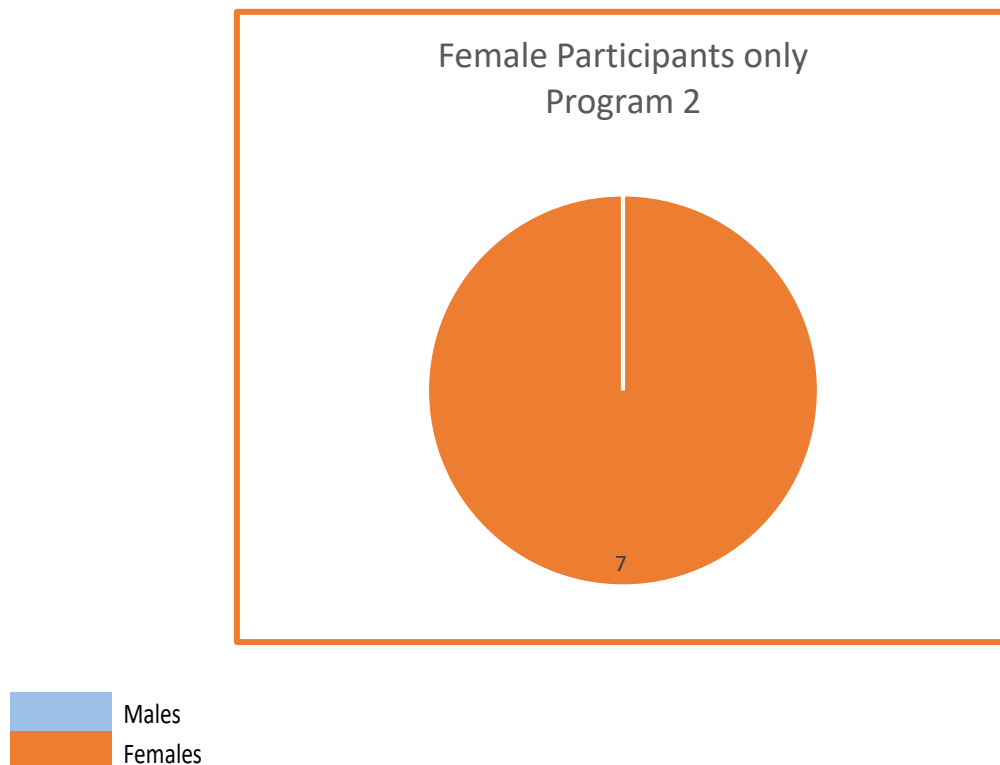




The gender of both groups represented a combination of thirteen (13) females and four (4) males. In Group 2 the total participants were all female. These graphs only represent the seventeen (17) graduates.

Gender





One of the tools used during the Program was the videoing of participants whilst they were learning. This provided an excellent resource to capture the actual classroom environment and the activities undertaken. The data collected by evaluators, was analysed through a thematic approach where common groups of information emerged into key themes and these are outlined in the Findings section.

Focus Groups (Yarning Circles)

The fieldwork process was to co-ordinate with the participants to invite them to a focus group or, more culturally appropriate, a yarning circle. As Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) suggest, yarning is a form of communication and is described as “Formal or informal conversation is involved in the production of knowledge. People talk to each other to convey information or to receive information, which once received and processed can lead to different understandings of the subject matter at hand”. They go on to add “Yarning as a rigorous and culturally safe method that is highly transferable into other contexts is an interpretive process that has a legitimate place alongside other western research methods in the gathering of data and is one of many tools enabling the application of Indigenous methodologies”.

This methodology enabled the evaluators to obtain information through the yarning circles by focusing on a series of questions and observations of the participants in the group. This enabled the evaluators to encourage the participants to recall their experiences as a collective and to probe further with individual responses.

Telephone Interviews

In addition to the yarning circles, individual telephone interviews were conducted. Some participants were known to the evaluators and readily made themselves available. Those who did not know the evaluators, were made to feel comfortable prior to the interview commencing.

All participants were engaged in a culturally safe informal way by explaining who the evaluators were, the evaluation purpose, confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and the purpose of the evaluation was provided to participants, prior to commencing the interview. The individual interviews allowed participants to reflect on their experience in the Program at a deeper level, and to identify what they have put into practice since completing the Program including other training and community activities.

Ethics and Interview Process

Ethical approval for the evaluation of the CSEWB Program was gained from the UWA Human Research Ethics Office (reference number RA/4/1/5299). Therefore, all participants who completed the Program provided their consent forms. Prior to interviewing other informants, the evaluation team either obtained verbal consent over the phone which were signed on behalf of the informant by the interviewer or the informant signed the consent form at face-to-face interviews.

Stories of Most Significant Change

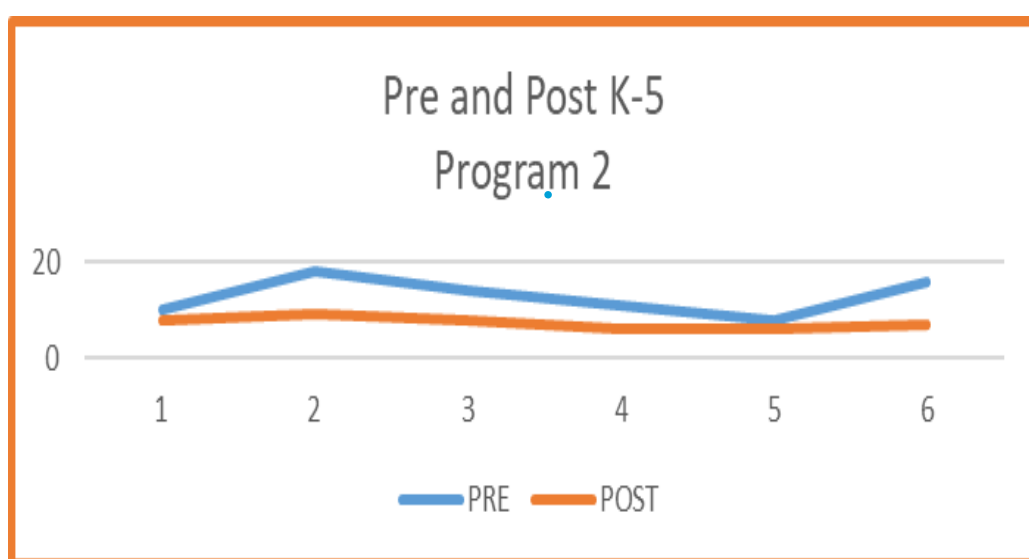
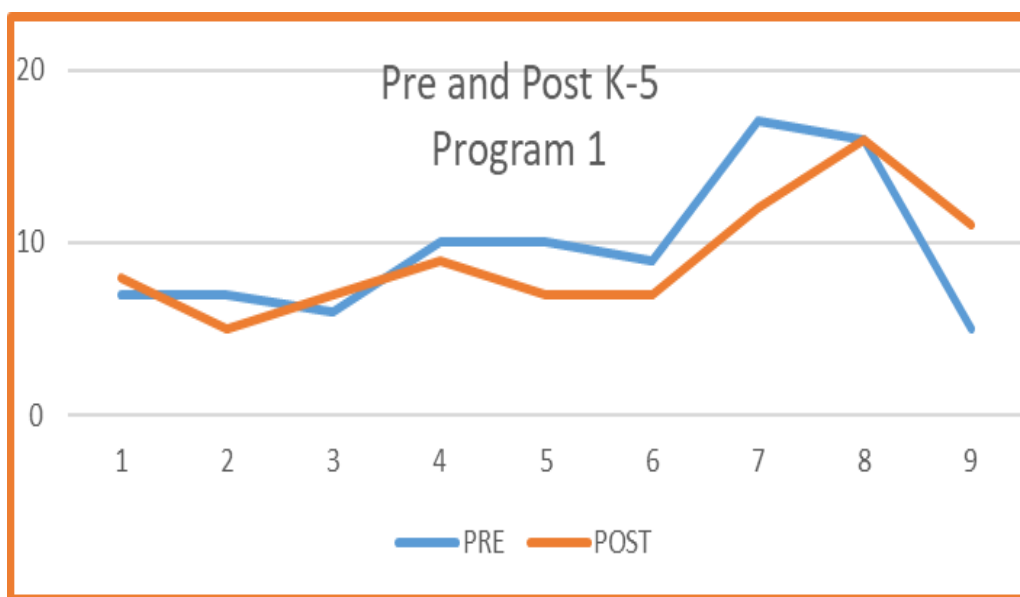
As Mia and Oxenham (2017) highlight in their evaluation of the NEP Queensland sites in 2017, the Most Significant Change (MSC) technique is a participatory form of monitoring and evaluation developed by Davies and Dart (2005). This technique enables researchers to determine and measure intangible qualitative indicators of importance. For the evaluations of the CSEWB Program, the MSC technique was adapted to Stories of Most Significant Change (SMSC) to ensure the cultural appropriateness of the evaluation methods. The emphasis on the word 'Stories' reflects Aboriginal values and enables participants to engage more openly in sharing their experiences and any unintended outcomes. Participants' SMSC are incorporated into each theme in the following Evaluation Findings.

Kessler-5 (Pre and Post)

The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K-5) is used as an indicator of psychological distress and is based on questions about the level of anxiety and depressive symptoms experienced in the most recent 4-week period. The K-5 is an instrument that is widely used to screen for common distress, depression and anxiety and is administered as a valid and reliable screening tool.

The K-5 is not a diagnostic tool but is used as a screening tool for clients. K-5 assessments form an important part of the Program content and were implemented at the beginning and end of Program delivery to all participants. If, and when high scores, were noted the facilitators had further discussion with the participant, suggesting and offering counselling from other providers. Although it is not used as a definitive tool it does indicate people's wellbeing at the time.

The graphs from Kwinana indicate that participant's post K-5 measurements had reduced from the pre-K-5 assessments, indicating that participants attained lower stress levels upon completing the twelve (12) week Program.



Evaluators Observations

During the focus groups/yarning circles the evaluators observed participants as being receptive and open to participating and providing their own personal experience. A small number of participants were known to the evaluators. All participants demonstrated a good level of confidence and welcomed us into their “space”.

Further, they demonstrated their assertiveness with other participants. This was explained to us, and it would have never happened without the Program whereby, they had become very close. Their body language was also very open and the “shame” which many of us experience became minimal. This may have been as a result of the approach and connection the evaluators made with participants either face-to-face or, over the phone i.e. through using cultural protocols in connecting with people, we do not know and linking to our own kinship and extended family.

All of the participants contacted by phone were very receptive and open to the interview process and made the time to share their journey with the evaluators. However, many of the participants could not be contacted due to disconnected phone numbers, provided to the evaluators to conduct interviews. Other informants were hard to contact to do the interviews. Although unknown, the evaluators put it down to their availability, Sorry Business, workload demands, change of job roles and or reasons unknown.

The evaluators identified during the data collection, that there were less participants that commenced from the total who registered and that the recruitment and on-boarding process should be reviewed to ascertain what changes may be implemented to ensure that the majority of those that register for future Programs are able, and committed to attend. This will ensure an increased retention rate for future Programs, so that the budget is utilised as efficiently and effectively as possible. There may be other reasons unknown to the evaluators, who only dealt with data that was provided and collected through the evaluation process.

A further observation of the evaluators was that the evaluation questions should be reviewed to ensure that they are aligned to the content and learning objectives of the Program. This will ensure that “outcomes” are captured within the report. The current questions are unable to capture the depth and breadth of key learnings, emotional and social wellbeing changes and the on-going journey moving forward for each participant, which would then indicate, significant change beyond the Program.

Overall, the evaluators obtained relevant data from the participants and informants to enable this evaluation to demonstrate a number of positive outcomes to support the continuation of the NEP CSWEB Program funding to ensure a continuation of successful outcomes.

Testimonials

Included in this evaluation are testimonials provided from individuals. The testimonials provide a reflection on the difference in individuals' lives, their families and communities since completing the Program, and these are expanded in the analysis section.

Upon completion of the analysis, the data obtained provided an understanding of the complexity of individuals and the reality of their everyday lives. In obtaining permission to include individual testimonials, the evaluators gained individual consent to include photographs as well as their statement.



I filled in the gaps that were missing in my knowledge of our culture, mental wellbeing and physical wellbeing. It opened my eyes of the use for everyday mental, social and physical wellbeing needed in our everyday lives and how our past affected our future.

Vivienne Little
NEP CSEWB Participant



*It has given me back the **DESIRE** to have a life! I haven't **WANTED** one for almost **ALL** of my 65 years. My favourite saying, my mantra has always been since the age of 5, "I don't belong" "I should never have been born" "I wasn't meant to be" "I felt like a square peg in a round hole" Well for the First Time I **FIT IN!** I **BELONG!!** 😊*

Bree Freemantle

EVALUATION FINDINGS

What did participants learn from participating in the CSEWB Program?

Resources provided for the Program included a Facilitators Guide and a Participants Handbook and other resources developed by the NEP team and community co-researchers. These included videos on several topics: Building Stronger Communities and Strong Relationships; How to Deal with Procrastination; How to Overcome Negative Self talk; Healthy Conflict Resolution and Right Way Thinking. The comprehensive Facilitators Guide was developed to assist facilitators in delivering the Program. The Participants Handbook became a very useful resource for participants to be able to reflect on and review after completing the Program.

The Program aimed to promote positive cultural, social and emotional wellbeing and mental health, build resilience and prevent psychological distress, suicide, family/domestic violence, substance misuse, and related issues. Empowerment and creating strong supportive relationships between participants were key objectives of the Program.

Throughout the Program, participants were provided information about Aboriginal history and the political systems, policies that have impacted on, and continue to impact on, Aboriginal peoples' cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing. Participants learned how this has directly impacted on them as individuals, their families, their communities, and Aboriginal peoples more broadly. Learning about past policies that governed the lives of all Aboriginal peoples, and what this meant for the wellbeing and self-determination of participants' ancestors, participants themselves, and their families and communities in the present day, was enlightening.

The outcomes of the Process and Impact evaluations are below. The participants identified the Program supported self, family and community in their learning journey. In addition, Stories of Most Significant Change highlight individual experiences. The participants learning journey outcomes commences with the first evaluation.

Process Evaluation (6 weeks)

Self

On a personal level, participants identified the Program made them more confident and feeling valued. Some participants didn't know what to expect and liked the content and were thankful for being invited to attend. They found the content informative and the teaching was at a level where they were engaged. Many learnt so much about culture and gained a deeper understanding of the importance of cultural connection.

One participant identified that learning about Noongar culture has enabled a better sense of connection since they are from another area. Another participant was able to better understand and accept their Indigenous side and through this self-identify and pride, boosted their self-esteem.

The Program has helped participants work on past inner conflict as certain things were tough to deal with and enabled the space to be comfortable talking about such sensitive issues. This has had a significant impact on participants social and emotional wellbeing. Doing things differently and having learnt calming strategies to help with looking for positives in self, such as having a purposeful and useful life.

Participants enjoyed the journaling component of the Program. Some were creative, and others found this reflective experience quite new and empowering. By documenting their journey and the provision of handouts enabled creativity with story writing, thoughts, feelings, ideas, poetry, and drawing, which participants found they were able to reflect, recount on information and express themselves. The handouts provided guidance from the previous session, contained new information and a tool to pass onto others and refer back too.

During the early stages of the Program, some participants identified they were offered opportunities to complete their Certificate II in Business through an employment provider, as a teacher in a remote community, the offering of training and volunteer work through an employment agency to work with on an Elders project and a community project. Five (5) participants in Group one (1) were supported by their workplace to attend the Program. Life changes affected one (1) participant who had to leave the Program to move to the country. Others faced separation, homelessness, and another was reincarcerated after being on home detention and had to leave the Program.

Family

The impact on families was the informal education that would flow on from the participants who attended the Program. Their new-found self-awareness of emotions and how to deal with them made participants stronger and able to manage situations better and stress less. Participants felt they had learnt and grown so much during the Program. They had enjoyed the Program because it not only had educational benefits for themselves but, allowed them to engage better with their families. The observations made by participants extended family members provides not only a testament to the Program, but also will assist in more local Aboriginal people becoming interested in attending future programs.

Community

The Program environment was comfortable and provided the opportunity for participants to comfortably mix with participants from other language groups, whose knowledge of Noongar country was not familiar to them.

All participants agreed it was a great opportunity and should be rolled out over WA. Further it was suggested that there should be more money to fund the Program to give community an opportunity to heal, socially and emotionally with their families and especially our youth.

Participants' journey forced individuals to self-reflect and develop a different perspective and life view. Thus, gaining a better understanding of their own life experiences. Others identified the Program enabled them to get out of the house and mix with other people they hadn't met or known before. This required communication skills, confidence and reflection of their previous low self-esteem. Further they learnt to "get out of their comfort zone" and be able to stand up in front of people to talk. Some participants identified that talking to Elders and hearing their stories has had a huge impact on their learning and connection to community. Mixing with younger and older people enabled the formation of new relationships. They worked together in doing the Program activities and had fun, as well as learning new information.

The first six (6) weeks was a steep learning curve for participants who not only enjoyed the Program but, had the confidence to comment on how to improve the Program for the second half of the Program. Suggestions were to have stories from past participants, more time to talk such as sharing information and personal stories, go through the Program and update it, such as spell check and have a facilitator do the Program. Many suggested the Program should be available to "youth."

Program Supports

Venue

The venue for the Program was provided by the City of Kwinana at the Ken Jackman Hall in the Darius Wells Centre in Kwinana. It was in the same building as the creche. Participants identified the venue was comfortable, close to home and the shopping centre, which is central to the hub of Kwinana and easily accessible.

Catering

The catering was provided by Grayz Catering which is an Aboriginal run business, Charne Hayden and Tess Little who are Aboriginal Community members, who catered for the graduation. The NEP team also provided the catering on a few occasions.

The food provided to participants was very well received. The children in the creche were also provided meals during the Program. Participants identified the meals were healthy and nutritious. One participant pointed out that it was easier than bringing their own food. A key issue identified by one participant was, that a lot of people cannot go home for food or, have the money to buy food. Other comments included, the quantity of food could be increased slightly, there should be cool drink cans available and sometimes there was food which was not appropriate for a participant.

Transport

Transport was supported by the City of Kwinana with six (6) participants utilising this service to attend the Program. Twelve (12) participants identified they could attend the Program if transport was not available.

Creche

The City of Kwinana provided creche facilities for participants who attended the Program. Only 5 participants from Group 2 utilised this service which was free. If the creche service was not available only 1 out of 9 participants would not have been able to attend.

Counselling Support

Yorgum supported the Program in providing an Aboriginal (male) counsellor, who attended for seven (7) weeks. The counsellor ceased attending due to staffing issues at Yorgum. A number of participants spoke with the counsellor. Participants who sought counsel, found that it was helpful, and they felt supported to help with family issues, someone to talk to, and answer any questions. Other participants chose to be positive and felt they did not need this type of support. A couple of participants who did not use his services heard a lot of good things about his work. The area of counselling does have different meanings for different people. Therefore, some people choose to use this service and others prefer to work things out themselves or, by other means.

Facilitators

Most participants agreed the facilitators were kind, patient, welcoming and supportive. Others identified that facilitators could improve on IT, more planning and co-ordinating with each other and use the agenda in the Facilitator Hand for the Program.

Impact Evaluation (12 weeks)

Self

Similarly, to the first six (6) week evaluation, the final evaluations identified that all participants thoroughly enjoyed the Program and found it an amazing experience. They

continued to state that it was more than what they expected with the information they were taught. The content was informative, and as a result, their knowledge grew so, they wanted to learn more because everything they learnt was very useful. Also, they gained so much from their participation because the topics were so relevant, valuable and meaningful, particularly the cultural information. It was well worth their time in attending and they learnt something new each week, to utilise this new knowledge and skills and transfer, into their own lifestyle and challenges. This was aligned to the social determinants of the CSEWB Program.

Participants identified that they felt better emotionally, felt stronger dealing with negatives, overcoming shyness, talking to people, being motivated, empowered to become healthier and particularly, their mental health had improved. They made new friends and were looking forward to new things. They grew in their confidence, felt strong and empowered. Key strengths taken from the learning was participants knew what to do now. Therefore, expanding their communication skills, not being so shy, and building resilience has helped many participants during the Program.

The participants found the journal useful for writing their feelings, thoughts and ideas for self and others, to record their journey. In addition, using the handouts assisted participants to increase their knowledge on what they still needed to learn. It was a great resource to reflect on their journey in their own time and look back on that information in times of need. Most participants used the journal to remember what the group learnt about and when they learnt it, and the things that had happened. The journal also helped keep participants involved and some were better at writing than drawing. Each participant used the various resources to document their journey which was unique for them in their own way.

The handouts provided what had been covered the previous week and more information on the topic. One participant identified in both the Process and Impact Evaluation that they could share with a women's group she attended. Others identified they felt like going back to school and this felt important to them.

Family

As a result of their journey, participants were very supportive of recommending the Program to others. In particular they identified, family would gain a better understanding and learn more of what participants had been through. They also agreed that it would encourage them to improve their lives, because it was such a good Program. Meeting different people and in some cases, whom happened to be family, enabled the sharing of knowledge with other participants, which contributed to their cultural safety.

The benefits from their family and friends participating enabled an understanding of the struggles Aboriginal people face. Community could learn more about Aboriginal culture, history, land and families from their participation in future Programs.

Community

Participants stated that the Program be delivered again for others to empower more community members. A participant identified they had made deeper connections with other community members as a result of the Program. Participants have become more aware of how they help family/people in the community. Thus, the Program strengthens culture, family, knowledge of ancestors, as well as improving the social, emotional and physical wellbeing. The participants now have the confidence and knowledge to educate other community members about culture and heritage.

Program Supports

The participants were supported by the Program through a reminder SMS, phone call, messenger or email, when they were due to attend the Program. Fifteen (15) participants from Group 1 and Group 2 agreed the reminders were helpful with their attendance.

Venue

The venue for the Program was provided by the City of Kwinana at the Ken Jackman Hall in the Darius Wells Centre in Kwinana. It was in the same building as the creche. Participants identified the venue was easy to get to, central and was nice and quiet. They also identified it had great facilities and more resources than they were aware of.

Catering

The catering was provided by Grayz Catering which is an Aboriginal run business, Charne Hayden and Tess Little who are Aboriginal Community members, who catered for the graduation. The NEP team also provided the catering on a few occasions. The food provided to participants was very well received. The children in the creche were also provided meals during the Program. Participants identified the meals were healthy, filling and delicious. There was a variety of meals provided.

Transport

Transport was supported by the City of Kwinana with one (1) participant identifying from 17 graduates they could not attend the Program if transport was not available. From Group 1 and Group 2 eight (8) participants identified they could still attend if transport was not available and for six (6) participants this was not applicable to them.

Creche

The City of Kwinana provided free creche facilities for participants who attended the Program. Five (5) participants from Group two (2) utilised this service throughout the twelve (12) weeks of the Program.

Facilitators

At the end of the Program, participants were very complimentary of the work the facilitators in supporting them to complete the Program and graduate. The facilitators had delivered a Program that gave participants greater confidence in themselves, the skills to speak in front of other people and provided a diverse range of information, as well as the Program material which assisted in increasing the knowledge and understanding of the subjects covered. The participants were left with wanting to find out more after the Program ended. Participants did identify that punctuality was an issue for everyone. However, the facilitators were supportive, patient, professional, cheerful, and kind which encouraged the participants to continue to engage in the Program.

Conclusion

Participants who completed the Process and Impact Evaluations provided valuable information to identify where they were at halfway through the Program and at the end of the Program. One participant followed on to gain employment, another participant who had left part way through the Program to commence work as a teacher in a remote community. Another participant was looking for work. One participant commenced training and others were involved with active community work, volunteer work and involved in the school homework group. One participant was overwhelmed with their responsibilities with work, home, caring for their nanna and attending the Program. Of particular note is the comment of one participant who stated their emotional and social wellbeing had improved significantly, compared to when they started.

To capture their journey the participants completed their Stories of Most Significant Change (SMSC). This process enabled participants to reflect on where they had come from and the important issues that had an impact on them. Their stories are aligned to the following seven key themes.

Stories of Most Significant Change

The participants' reflections in the SMSC in the 2019 Program, identified similar issues to the 2017-2018 participants. The stories that emerged are aligned to the following five (5) key themes.

1. Personal Strength
2. Relationships, Family and Community
3. Life Skills and Life Planning Community
4. Cultural, Social and Emotional Wellbeing
5. Cultural Reconnection

THEME 1: Personal Strengths

The outcomes of the data collection identified participants gained more confidence and therefore, were happier, more optimistic, now able to express themselves and did not feel "shame". This is the result of feeling stronger from doing the Program. They had a sense of pride and achievement, having completed the Program. Another important element in their stories was the zest for life and knowing they were not the only ones who have struggled with cultural, social and emotional issues. Their new-found strength and confidence enabled them to have a voice, in being able to speak up, when they felt they couldn't do so, in the past.

"...build my confidence..."

"Some confidence in myself..."

"Has given me the ability to show my confidence in groups..."

"The most significant change I have noticed about my self is that my confidence has grown..."

"The most significant changes that I have seen in myself is that I am more confident."

"I have become a stronger person..."

"Now I am more confident and outspoken, stronger, and happier."

"...wiser, more outspoken and now a positive person..."

"...be strong and positive..."

"I have done a lot of courses but it didn't feel like I had achieved anything but doing this program, I have achieved what I wanted... I felt "closed in" feeling down and unsure what to say."

"...proud of who you are, never let anyone or anything negative bring you down. Stand up for your rights!"

THEME 2. Relationships, Family and Community

A particular outcome for the participants of the Program was meeting other people, even though they felt anxious. However, during the Program they developed new friendships

and acknowledged each other when they were outside the Program. They also identified that the connection to family and community life was important to each of them. One participant realised they could be a positive role model for their children and support them in a different way. As a result, there is now a desire to be a better person and to help others such as youth and become involved in a community project. To enable participants to have a greater impact in the community, requires confidence, strength and commitment, and be able to share their learning and impart their knowledge and skills.

“Meeting other students, now being involved with them in activities and our project.”

“...I greatly appreciated doing this project, has allowed me to build a friendship with the people in my group. I thank you for that.”

“Didn’t know these students, got to know them and now enjoy their company and know them to say hello when I see them.”

: Was a bit nervous at the start with other student until we got to know them, then as the days went by, we all came together as one.”

“Got to meet new people and the class went that quick before we knew it.”

“More confident as a mum and a role model for my children.”

“Finding out more about my family and the community people and history...”

“...overcoming my fear of asking family questions of our past and the stolen generation. The course helped me do that and how to ask the questions.”

“It has given me the opportunity to continue on with this project by being involved in a community project related to Beyond Blue and loss of lives which is very significant to us.”

“I learnt that our communities and people have to stand together to achieve success for our youth and that you need to be stable emotionally and mentally to assist not only your own needs, but the needs of others.”

THEME 3: Life Skills and Life Planning

The Program provided participants with the tools for change. Gaining these tools, encourages leadership and planning for the future. Participants identified they can now organise things they could not deal with in the past and have gained an understanding of what was preventing them from moving forward in their lives such as, having goals and understanding that things don’t always go to plan. A key issue identified by one participant was if things don’t go to plan, then try again. Some barriers to their moving forward had changed, once they gained confidence and became less shy and more outspoken.

During the Program, participants were able to communicate amongst themselves and stand up in front of the Program group to share their work. The participants gained so much more than they anticipated with the skills and attributes they left with.

"Because before I would never really like to talk or organise certain things, now I can 😊"

"Before NEP, I didn't fully understand procrastination and how it affected my life. Putting things off was a big one for me, that I do a lot. I have started to overcome that now."

"If you don't achieve your goals, just have another go at it."

"I have been putting off going for my license, due to motivation and procrastinating. But now I think it's better to give things a go or give it a try no matter the outcome."

"Because I was a very shy person just lived day to day, but doing this course helped me understand more about myself than I knew."

"I am usually a very quiet and shy person; I am now able to speak up and share things about myself. I was unable to express myself before this course."

"To stand up for myself, speak my options... Because I never speak out, was always quiet and negative about things."

"For me the biggest significant change in myself is being given the skills to talk amongst the group. This is because in all activities whether its group or individual I know that I won't be judged on my answer."

"Helped me stand up in front of people and not be shame."

"...and now I am able to speak clearly and independently in front of groups."

THEME 4. Cultural, Social and Emotional Wellbeing

Prior to the Program, participants faced many issues that prevented them from moving forward. Some of the participants were having issues such as belonging and fitting in. They felt they had been on a journey of disempowerment with having to cope with many challenges that they had to overcome. However, the Program had provided the tools to cope with their social and emotional wellbeing and things had changed for the better. Many participants identified they learnt more about Aboriginal culture. Further stating that not having this knowledge has impacted on their everyday lives. They also gained an understanding of mental health issues.

During the Program participants felt culturally safe to be able to share intimate information about themselves. This enabled them to identify the intergenerational trauma that had occurred and how important it is to be culturally healthy and have a good social and emotional wellbeing to enable a better future.

"It has given me back the DESIRE to have a life!"

"I haven't WANTED one for almost ALL of my 65 years. My favorite saying, my mantra has always been since the age of 5, "I don't belong" "I should never have been born" "I wasn't meant to be" "I felt like a square peg in a round hole" Well for the First Time I FIT IN! I BELONG!! 😊"

"I find it difficult to explain the changes I have noticed within myself, over the past 3 months. Like most people, I have walked a path both rocky and painful which has affected me a huge extent and left me with a raft of both physical and psychological issues. Each and every day is a challenge – a balancing act that never levels, never lessons, never gets any easier. This program has not ONLY changed my life..."

"I filled in the gaps that were missing in my knowledge of our culture, mental wellbeing and physical wellbeing. It opened my eyes of the use for everyday mental, social and physical wellbeing needed in our everyday lives and how our past has affected our future."

"In the past 12 weeks I have been able to be taught about my culture and the main points of attaining my social and emotional wellbeing. I am now comfortable in teaching my nieces/younger mob our ways, whilst learning how to stop intergenerational trauma for my babies when the time comes to."

THEME 5: Cultural Reconnection

Some participants in the Program learnt new information, particularly Noongar culture and history. This section reinforced what other participants already knew. All participants identified they felt pride and that Aboriginal culture was alive and strong. Elders played a significant part in the participants journey of learning, which enabled an understanding that Elder's stories were crucial to keep culture alive, to pass on to the younger generations. Also, that Elders have a significant role to play now so, that individual identify and connections to family and the community, remain strong. As a result, some participants conducted Acknowledgement to Country during the Program. An outcome for some participants, has been the desire to start a family tree so, family and cultural connections, are not lost. These activities enable cultural empowerment and resilience.

"I really didn't know what to expect or of what value this course would be helpful to me, I thought I knew a lot about our culture and about our past. This course has shed light on everything I thought and knew and then some stories, activities, our past and future, culture and families."

"It has taught me that yes, we have a culture and that our culture is very strong and is still alive and it lives still within us if only we believe, we can be whatever we want to be, we just have to believe in ourselves."

"Helped me to remember the past and present."

"Being involved in the Nation Empowerment Project (NEP) has given me the opportunity to meet and learn about another country's culture (Noongars)..."

"Recognising the Elders."

"...and trust my elders and listen to their stories."

"Last year my nan passed away, she lived in Alice Springs and was born under a tree in a very traditional way. I went against my mum and decided to go to my

nans home place, I just left a bad 2-year relationship whilst working full time, only just becoming an adult and turning 18/19. I struggled to find my place and who I am.”

“Doing welcome to country, getting out the front and talking in front of the class. family tree and stolen generation because my nan was taken away.”

“Welcome to country, standing up in front of everyone, I’m more knowledgeable.”

“Gave me more knowledge, also I started my family tree because I didn’t know where to start, I had help from (the facilitators and counsellor).”

Participants who contributed to the above section were also some of those who commenced the Program but, did not complete due to a number of reasons. These reasons have been discussed in the Process and Impact Evaluations under where participants identified the impacts they experienced.

Program Graduates

The analysis of the data collected from the graduate of the two (2) Programs at the Kwinana site emerged into key themes:

1. Personal Strengths (Self Esteem and Self Confidence).
2. Relationships: Children, Partners, Family, and Community.
3. Life Skills and Life Planning.
4. Cultural, Social, and Emotional Wellbeing.
5. Cultural Reconnection, Identity, Pride and Community.

THEME 1: Personal Strengths

A key theme and one of the most notable that has emerged from the two (2) Programs has been the increased level of self-confidence of all the participants. The majority of participants identified that they were more confident talking in public. Whereas in the past, they would be too ‘shame’ to talk up or, talk to strangers, regardless of whether they were Aboriginal or not. Many participants highlighted being much more confident not only meeting new Aboriginal people but, also having conversations with non-Aboriginal colleagues and people generally, even if the subject was a bit sensitive. This came out of the conflict resolution component of the Program. One participant stated that the Program, “helped me be a stronger person at work, where I often walk a fine line, because at work it’s a non-Aboriginal society, I now know when to talk and when not to, and how to have a conversation without anger.” Another participant stated that the Program gave them the encouragement to be able to assist people that are struggling or, other family members.

THEME 2. Relationships, Family and Community

Overall the Program provided a multitude of benefits for all participants. A key theme that emerged was the parenting sessions with many participants stating that they now felt they could better communicate with their kids and take some of the learnings and apply them to assist in building stronger relationships with their children. Many believed the Program had provided other benefits not just for individuals but, for the community as a whole which brought everyone together, as opposed to people previously working in 'silo's' unaware of what was available and by whom and for those that were not working created a social support system. For many attending the Program was more for networking and socialising as a primary motivator.

THEME 3: Life Skills and Life Planning

Another key theme was a heightened level of social and emotional wellbeing and a better understanding of the impacts of mental health issues and how it affects individuals. Many participants demonstrated a better knowledge of how to manage stress and also how to assist others in the community who are under duress. One participant talked about now having the ability to pass this new-found knowledge onto other especially the younger generations.

THEME 4. Cultural, Social and Emotional Wellbeing

The cultural component of the Program was particularly enjoyed by many of the younger participants. A number of the younger participants, up until then, did not have a great understanding of what cultural connection means and further had no real knowledge of the history of Aboriginal Australia. Additionally, and more importantly many had no real understanding of the impacts of the Stolen Generations and how this has been the key contributing factor to intergenerational trauma and social and emotional wellbeing issues faced by community as a direct consequence. The Elders and cultural visits were enjoyed by all participants in the groups. However, one participant felt that the Stolen Generation session was 'uncomfortable' for them and they would have preferred to be advised prior to the session commencing, as they would have preferred not to be present for this discussion.

THEME 5: Cultural Reconnection

Many participants stated that they now felt more comfortable stepping out and getting out of their 'comfort zone.' One participant stated that the Program had "given me my life back." Another key theme was participants learnt of the different services and the people who worked in them, that were available to the community. Until this information was made available, many participants were unaware of the resources they could access to meet their needs. Many found the opportunity to network provided the opportunity to build not only a new circle of friends but opportunity to work in consultation with each other and cross match services to better service local community members.

A number of participants were of the opinion, that the Program should continue but, it should be made available for more people. A few of the participants stated the Program minimum age should be reduced to allow youth to participate. A few participants pointed out that the Program should be offered to separate audiences i.e. youth, males only and female only Programs. All participants enjoyed the Elders being part of the Program. A key theme was a new 'reborn' respect for not only the Elders who were part of the Program but, within their own families.

Community Who Registered for the Program and Those Who Commenced and Did Not Complete

A number of community members registered for the Program and did not commence in 2019. There were several participants who commenced the Program and did not complete. These participants left the Program at different times throughout the twelve (12) weeks of Program delivery.

During the data collection period, the evaluators made three (3) attempts to contact each participant from these two groups. However, due to a lack of response, there is no data for analysis. The evaluators were aware of a number of funerals i.e. Sorry Business which may have been a contributing factor to the participants non-response.

Facilitators

All facilitators stated that the Program was a great initiative and that they were amazed at the outcomes achieved, notably one of those, was the increased confidence level of participants, from commencement through to completion. Facilitators noted that the majority of participants were very unsure and uncomfortable when first coming into the Program, and over time this reduced and participants became more connected, as some had not met before. The facilitators noticed that many participants became more verbal during the sessions, more confident in speaking in public and increased participation in the Program. One facilitator stated that many of the participants improved in their commitment to attend, despite many external/outside issues occurring at the same time i.e. sorry business, illness and family problems. Another facilitator highlighted another support that the Program offered to participants. A resource document of local and metro wide programs and services, identified by participants throughout the Program This document was distributed at the conclusion of the Program.

Facilitators identified that the Program delivery had improved since last year based on improvements made from feedback from last year's evaluation. In particular the increased preparatory training provided for facilitators who had been involved in previous Programs as well as the new facilitators. This included 4-5 preparatory

sessions and a further briefing session conducted at the half-way point, to discuss issues/concerns and develop and agree on strategies to implement remedial action as required. The preparatory training for this year's Program, was conducted prior to delivery, to ensure that everyone was clear on the content and had all the resources they required. Further based on feedback from last year's evaluation the Program power point presentation and participant workbooks were reviewed to ensure that the books were consistent with Program content.

One facilitator stated that the pre delivery training was equivalent to 1.5 days and that this included going through the Facilitator Handbook and associated paperwork. They stated that this did not include going through the power point presentation and felt that this should have occurred earlier. Throughout the delivery of the Program, there were inconsistencies and that it took time to cross match the information. They felt that the pre-delivery training should be for at least three (3) full days to enable new facilitators to be able to get a thorough understanding of the Program and to ensure that the books were consistent with the power point. Further they advised that during the delivery of the Program there were issues between a couple of the participants that they were not aware of, at the commencement of the Program. When the impact of this escalated into the classroom, it had a negative impact on the other participants. They believed that in the future, this should be addressed early on, in the recruitment, to ensure that facilitators are aware upfront and are able to address issues through the content i.e. the ultimate outcome would be the resolution of differences. The facilitators in 2019 felt that the training was sufficient. However, one facilitator did not have the benefit of being involved in last year's delivery, to be more aware of what expectations were, when recruited. Two (2) of the facilitators thought the Program could be extended because there is a lot of content to go through in the time allocated. At times there was insufficient time to cover topics in the detail required.

The Community Support Worker was included in the preparatory training provided to the facilitators to ensure that they were across the Program content as well and understood their role. They stated that they thought it was going to be a lot less work and time consuming (they were a participant last year).

They now realised that behind the scenes the work is a lot more intensive than they first thought. In particular, they had to ensure participants were on time, and managing reminder messaging, which took more time than anticipated and assisting with other Program supports provided. They further stated that they were unsure as to how participants would react if and when they had to discuss issues/concerns with them or participate in briefing sessions with facilitators. They knew it was going to be busy, but, not as challenging. Overall, they had learnt a lot from transitioning from a participant last year into the Community Support Role.

The new facilitators stated that the Program was not what they expected which was the same for participants. The experienced facilitators mentored those who were not confident and lacked presentation skills both during the preparatory training and throughout the training period. Throughout the Program they gained confidence in delivering the Program and this strengthened them as individuals. One facilitator stated that being involved in the Program had opened up many doors, boosted self-confidence, improved their ability to speak up and are now much more confident in presenting. They further stated they were able to deal with their own daily routine and family issues that impacted on all Aboriginal people on a daily or regular basis. This was a result of being both a previous participant and on this occasion, a facilitator.

All facilitators agreed that the content within the cultural sessions should be aligned to Noongar/Aboriginal people and that additional resources should be sought or produced for future Programs to make it conducive to place. One facilitator stated that they felt running two (2) Programs concurrently placed increased administrative and support demands and impacted on facilitators. Also, facilitators suggested that for future Programs, they should be run one at a time, to avoid this occurring again. They further stated that they wholeheartedly believed in the Program and thoroughly enjoyed being part of the Program deliveries again this year.

One facilitator stated that they had learnt to be more flexible and to not expect things to always go smoothly. Consequently, for future Programs, there needs to be time to 'think ahead' to anticipate issues that are likely to occur. Further, that each facilitator needed to concentrate on their role and let others take charge of theirs, as they had a tendency to try and assist with the roles of others. For future Programs, they would take that on board and focus on the role of the facilitator and allow others to take responsibility for their own tasks/duties. The new facilitators stated that being part of the Program had improved their own confidence, especially, presentations, and planning skills, which would help them both in future Programs, if they are to be involved and, in their current or future employment.

The journaling and handouts had an impact with facilitators. They identified that these resources assisted them with their writing skills and detailing their own stories in their own words. The journal included photos, and memories on what happened and how they felt that day. One facilitator loved the diary. The facilitators also learnt a lot and the journal and handouts assisted in reflecting on what was happening for the upcoming session. The handouts also helped with what the participants had done and when they did it. Facilitators also commented they were unaware of the Elders in the community and organisations that had been here for a long time, including local history. For one facilitator, the history provided a refresher that their Nan had started a local Aboriginal organisation. It was the first time they had done their family tree, which was one of the activities the facilitators participated in, with participants. They are now able to look

back and see what they achieved, and with their own family, they can now finish their lifeline. One facilitator stated that the Program should look to create a video that includes both previous participants and the Elders involved, to talk about their experience and how it has helped and changed them and use this to promote the benefits when recruiting new participants for future Programs. Further, that more Noongar specific resources should be utilised in the cultural teachings.

Another facilitator stated there was too much written content within the Program and thought there should be more consideration given to embed cultural learning styles into the content for future Programs.

The facilitators commented on the journey of participants and that the participants were dedicated and wanted more opportunities for information and learning. Common themes in relation to what facilitators noticed both during and on completion of the Program was the increased self-confidence of all participants and how the Program had brought people out of their shells and addressed the 'shame' factor. All stated that at the beginning of the Program most participants were reluctant to speak and very shy, over the first few weeks this changed dramatically. One facilitator said they were so impressed with the two female participants who were jointly Masters of Ceremonies' at the graduation. What a brilliant job they did.

Likewise, facilitators also wanted to facilitate more Programs. Their suggestion was to have at least two (2) days per week to focus on cultural values when teaching topics and talk more with the participants to get as much feedback to be responsive to their needs. One facilitator suggested the Program should be extended to expand on topics delivered. The Program was empowering for families to support each other and young people entering into work and other Programs.

The Program venue was easy to access for everyone, comfortable, roomy, and air-conditioned, which encouraged everyone to attend. Likewise, the meals were delicious for those involved in the Program and the children in the creche.

The facilitator's experience enabled them to reflect on what they had been through and also what they would like to see for the future. They suggested there should be more funding for more Programs to be available more often and that the Program should be open to everyone. It was an important tool for young people and for other community members whose families struggle through hardships. These particular themes keep emerging for each group who participated in the Program whether as a participant or, a facilitator.

Community Reference Groups

The Community Reference Group (CRG) was made up of a diverse range of agencies and community members. The CRG met seven (7) times from October 2018 to June 2019. One member commented the structure was of a high standard and better than some agency meetings they attended. The number of members was very high for this group. However, during the period of the meetings, some agencies had staff changes and so, the CRG not only had varied numbers of members but, varied levels of experience and input into the meetings. One Elder attended one meeting and felt they could no longer attend due to their strong ancestral ties to the Kwinana area. They felt other Elders had come into the area to live and did not have the appropriate local cultural experience to draw upon.

All members who were interviewed for this evaluation were very enthusiastic and some were willing to refer their clients and their staff. Members were keen to find out what was happening in Kwinana because not all agencies were located in Kwinana but, required to service this area. Their commitment to participate as members emerged from not only in their professional roles but, from, their personal commitment to support the NEP for the good of the community. Elders and young members were keen to have their grassroots input to the meetings and Program. Two Elders and one young person had completed the Program in 2018 and understood the need for other community members to go through the process of empowerment. Being on the CRG in 2019, they could see things from both sides. However, some members could not attend every meeting and therefore, those who attended regularly, felt that there was a lack of commitment from other members and some complacency. Their expectation of the CRG, as a professional group whereby, members would commit to attend regularly. They felt this would breed complacency in the Program instead of, empowerment.

The reason for so many members who represented so many agencies, was to ensure both the participants and other CRG members knew what services were available and what supports the agencies provided for the whole community. During the Program, participants could self refer if there was a need, and/or facilitators, counsellor or Community Support Worker could suggest to participants what was available to them.

The other reason for agencies attending was to provide feedback to their staff. One CRG members suggested feedback should occur, particularly for Aboriginal staff, who could become guest speakers on how they gained employment and talk about their journey. It was suggested that Centrelink and Job Service Providers, support their clients referred to the Program by having the CSEWB Program certified as an approved activity.

Members of the CRG were able to contribute suggestions to ensure the content was appropriate for the two (2) groups in 2019. Aboriginal voices are integral in the CRG meetings and Program.

The CRG member who referred their employees to do the Program, identified the Program had enabled their employees to build confidence, develop links to the local community and build their local knowledge and networks. Also, to become familiar with local Aboriginal protocols, meet Elders and learn about Aboriginal history, culture and community history, to be able to work more effectively in schools, and in the community.

Another CRG member was concerned with the high number of Aboriginal children in and out of home care and wanted to empower families to be able to stay out of the child protection system, which can contribute to a loss of culture and identity. Having participated as a CRG member they felt the Program could support individuals and families to reconnect and build networks, to become resilient and able to avoid their complex and vulnerable situations. For some members, their focus was on targeting youth to do the Program, for early intervention to address issues, such as hanging out in parks, not being at school, in and out of jail and or homeless. They wanted to help young ones so, they are always aware of their cultural background.

One CRG member pointed out that the Program had a good track record and proven from the 2018 experience of participants. As a result, some of last year's participants have been employed, undertaken training or, studying which may not have happened if they hadn't attended from the Program and developed the connections to the CRG members. A CRG member knew of graduates who had jumped through huge hoops to complete the Program and mentioned that even one participant, had broken the negative cycle they were in. The CRG member was keen to consider Program participants for employment opportunities and the goal was to seek funding to support salary costs and increase their workforce.

The CRG members felt the participants had gained the tools they need to meet their future aspirations. Their input had provided the members with a much in-depth understanding of the local community needs and what they could do to support participants upon their graduation.

Stakeholders

The three stakeholders had diverse roles prior to and during the NEP CSEWB Program at Kwinana.

- The City of Kwinana
- Moorditj Koort
- Yorgum

These three (3) stakeholder organisations supported the Program that enabled, participants to attend. One stakeholder found there was a need in community and realised people were not getting help. They were sitting back and not doing anything and needed help to get to the Program. In 2018, the stakeholder got about twenty (20) people signed up, both young ones and Elders. Have to get people motivated and thinking differently. By promoting the Program, encouraging people in the community to participate and then referring clients, they were able to get people on board and support them. Some participants were clients of the stakeholder organisation and others were from the local community.

Resources were put in place to ensure participants were able to attend. Yorgum were requested to provide a counsellor for each Program on Mondays and Wednesdays. The role was to be available and provide confidential support if participants found topics or conversations and group discussions confronting and emotional. The participants could access the counsellor for personal issues. The Monday group was more engaging. However, the Wednesday group had more females and preferred a female counsellor. At the time, Yorgum had no female counsellor available and so it was suggested by the counsellor to the facilitators to attempt to engage a local female counsellor to support the female participants. The lack of a female counsellor was also identified by another stakeholder. They suggested the male counsellor was complacent with attendance, not taking into account, the counsellor also had to manage his already full caseload. Consequently, counselling was unable to be provided for the second half of the Program.

The City of Kwinana provided the venue, transport and creche at no cost to support the Program. The City of Kwinana had a heavy involvement and were committed to ensuring the success of the Program. The City advised that were range of communication issues in relation to managing the bus service. This included, the participants were either not ready or had found alternate transport and failed to advise the driver.

The difference in the community is changing where a lot of people don't want to stay home and want to volunteer, participate in events and look for work. Some young ones wanted to work and volunteer in community. The stakeholder noticed that after each Program, people have got jobs and if already employed, they got better jobs. Young people were confident and empowered and more vocal. Personal growth in social skills was very obvious in one participant. In fact, proud of last year's mural by the 2018 participants.

The stakeholders were advised through feedback that there were some issues during the Program. In response to the feedback, they recommended that there should be more time allocated for discussions to give participants the ability to finish one topic and

provide more facts and information. Also, to give participants more context to the topic e.g. Rosalie Kunoth-Monks topic so that the full story is known, not partial story.

One stakeholder identified that the communication for all the components of the Program could have been improved and that at the time this was not undertaken effectively. Overall stakeholders were very engaged and observed the progress of the implementation of the Program and the participants journey.

Partner Organisations

The partner organisations (LAA and RAWA) had different roles to play in the implementation of the Programs in Kwinana. RAWA were clear about their expectations as a partner organisation with an MOU with LAA. The MOU is important to ensure both LAA and the contractor (RAWA) understand their responsibilities. RAWA added that the partnership worked well with LAA.

LAA as the lead agency for the NEP identified there is a need for LAA's inclusion in CRG meetings and to be able to undertake adhoc visits during Program delivery. This is a consequence of role reversal of both organisations, whereby this year LAA became the lead and RAWA took on the responsibilities to deliver the Program because they already had a footprint in the local Kwinana area.

As the lead organisation, LAA stated that the distance between Langford and Kwinana was a barrier to obtaining first-hand information and updates of the Program and participants. It was recommended that in future, debrief meetings and regular reports to LAA by RAWA to discuss progress and issues, would be of benefit.

This year there was a delay in commencing the implementation due to the delay in funding which became available in mid-November 2018. The partners expect funding to be timely in the future so that staff recruitment from local community can commence. More lead time for induction of new staff, training of staff and facilitators and implementation including the re-establishment of the CRG. When LAA attended the graduation, they were in awe and realised the scale of the Programs in Kwinana.



***Some confidence in myself and
trust my Elders and listen to
their stories.***

Dylan Taylor-Thorpe
NEP CSWEWB Participant



***In the past 12 weeks I have been
able to be taught about my
culture and the main points of
attaining my social and emotional
wellbeing. I am now comfortable
in teaching my nieces/younger
mob our ways, whilst learning
how to stop intergenerational
trauma for my babies when the
time comes. I learnt that our
communities and people have to
stand together to achieve
success for our youth and that
you need to be stable emotionally
and mentally to assist not only
your own needs, but the needs of
other to.***

Amber Rose Murray-Nannup

CONCLUSION

The NEP CSWEB Program since its inception has produced significant outcomes that have been proven in assisting Aboriginal people to have the ability to better manage their own social and emotional wellbeing, that of their families and local community. Driven and born out of an idea to provide a fit for purpose and “culturally appropriate” Program to assist in the empowering of the community and address social and emotional wellbeing as a primary initiative. This initiative, driven by the Aboriginal individuals whose commitment to seeing through and implementing change within the Aboriginal community, has been extended to include the return of facilitators to deliver the Program, and participants in job roles to ensure the benefits extend to as many in the community as possible. These Aboriginal individuals continue to push for the continuation of this Program to prevent further and unnecessary loss of Aboriginal lives. Further, to ensure that as many Aboriginal people are able to access this Program. A facilitator suggested the reach needs to extend to regions of the whole of Noongar country.

Further the Program aims to provide the opportunity for healing to occur. More importantly, for individuals to be able to identify what their issues are. Many participants found having access to the counselling services beneficial, even though some were hesitant at first, but this is demonstrated in one participant’s comment, “getting me out of my comfort zone”.

Participants have advised that since completing the Program not only are they able to better manage their own issues as they arise but, they now feel empowered to extend that help to other family and community members. The content of the CSEWB Program enables people to grow, be nurtured in their journey to become culturally, socially and emotionally empowered.

In the collection of data all facilitators, participants, CRG members and stakeholders spoke highly of the outcomes that are visible, demonstrated by participants from commencement to completion and after the graduation. Although the data collected provides both qualitative and quantitative information, evaluators feel that the evaluation questions could be improved to draw out other outcomes that are currently not identified, due to the limitation of the questions. The information or data presented in this evaluation is only provided by what participants recognise themselves whereas further probing could outline many more significant outcomes. As with all new initiatives, consideration should be given to explore how accurately the data collection relates to the expected learning objectives aligned to the course content. From previous Programs ‘learnings and suggestions for improvement’ have been implemented, but the true value of the Program presented through the current methodology can be improved.

Whilst the Program continues to demonstrate significant changes in the lives, of participants, as the Program evolves and there is a continuation of adapting the Program based on key learning and suggestions, the outcomes will be further enhanced and demonstrated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommended for future NEP CSEWB Programs which meet both the organisational, operational requirements and community needs.

1. To have available at each session consistent counsellors both male and female so that participants can build rapport and access counselling when required to deal with issues that arise and require immediate support.
2. Encourage and support an increased participation of males in future CSEWB Programs. It might also be worth considering an all “male” program, as a trial.
3. Undertake a review of the Program to identify the time allocated for each module and consideration of allowing more time for some sessions especially when sensitive issues are emerging or, participants are engaged and gaining valuable knowledge, skills and empowerment.
4. Identify post Program training opportunities for participants to support their personal and career development aspirations.
5. Undertake a review of the training time required to orient CSEWB Facilitators of the Program content.
6. Deliver to youth and young working people – might well be better to target intakes to certain age groups/gender, which may then lead to slight changes in delivery and content.
7. Deliver more Programs.
8. Follow up evaluation of past participants.
9. Consider two (2) days for each Program per week to allow time for participants to reflect and participate in more sessions and be able to ask questions and complete the Program in a shorter time frame.
10. Stolen Generations – advise participants whom may have had a more direct or personal experience and were emotionally impacted, of the session content prior to delivery so they have the opportunity to leave if they wish.

11. Selection & Recruitment Process – due to the large number of participants who registered and did not attend or who commenced and did not complete, it is recommended that the way in which participants are selected be reviewed.
12. Conduct Information Sessions – conducting information sessions that provides an overview of the Program to community members within the locality of proposed NEP Program as a way to select and recruit participants onto the program.
13. The evaluation period be extended to produce a more comprehensive and detailed report.
14. Evaluators be involved in the pre, mid-way and the post Program assessments.
15. Ensure that the interview questions are aligned to 'content' to demonstrate that Program produces the desired learning objectives.
16. Continue to review and implement 'continuous improvements'.

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ATTACHMENT 1 – Interview Questions

Questions	
Group 1 (Participants)	
1.	Why did you participate in the program?
2.	In what ways, if any, did doing the program change things for you, have other people seen changes in you?
3.	How do you think participating in the program helped you?
4.	What was the most useful part of the program for you and your family?
5.	What was the least useful part of the program for you and your family?
6.	Do you think the program has helped the community and how?
7.	Did you tell others about the program?
8.	Did people comment about differences in you during or after the program?
9.	Was there anything you didn't like about the program?
10.	Is there anything else you would like to share about the program and how it has made a difference in your life?
11.	If this program was offered again who would you recommend to attend?

Group 2 (Non-completing Participants)	
1.	Why did you begin to participate in the program?
2.	What benefits do you think you got from the time you did participate?
3.	Was there any particular reason why you did not continue?
4.	Is there anything else you would like to share about the program and how it has made a difference in your life?
5.	If the program were to run again, would you like to attend?

Group 3 (Registrations)	
1.	We have your name as a registration for the NEP program, was there a reason you were unable to attend the program?
2.	Have you heard any feedback about the program?
3.	If the program were to run again, would you like to attend?

Group 4 (CSEWB Training Facilitators)	
1.	What changes did you see in individuals who were involved in the program?
2.	What was your expectation as your role as a facilitator?
3.	Do you have any suggestions on ways to improve the program?
4.	What pre-delivery training was provided, please explain?
5.	In what ways, if any, did delivering the program change things for you?
6.	What changes did you see in individuals who were involved in the program?

Group 5 (Community Reference Group (CRG) members)	
1.	Please tell us why you participated as a CRG member on the NEP?
2.	What has your experience been with the Project over this time?
3.	Have you noticed any difference in community since people completed of the program?
4.	Is there anything else you would like to share about the NEP CRG?

Group 5 (Stakeholder Organisation members)	
1.	Please tell us why you participated as a CRG member on the NEP?
2.	What has your experience been with the Project over this time?
3.	Have you noticed any difference in community since people completed of the program?
4.	Is there anything else you would like to share about the NEP CRG?

Group 6 (Partner Organisations)	
1.	What has your experience overall been with the NEP?
2.	Do you have any suggestions on ways to improve the implementation of the NEP?
3.	With regards to the partnership arrangements, please share your comments?

ATTACHMENT 2 – KESSLER 5 Pre and Post Questions

NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale – K5

(Pre)

Name: _____

Date: _____

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale K-5 (pre)					
For all questions, please fill in the appropriate response.					
	1	2	3	4	5
In the past 4 weeks	None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	Most of the time	All of the time
1. About how often did you feel nervous?					
2. About how often did you feel without hope?					
3. About how often did you feel restless or jumpy?					
4. About how often did you feel everything is an effort?					
5. About how often did you feel so sad that nothing could cheer you up?					

Total Score _____

Scoring for K-5

Minimum score 5, indicates no distress.

Low / moderate distress 5 – 11

High / very high distress 12 – 25

Maximum score 25, indicates severe distress

NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale – K5

(Post)

Name: _____ Date: _____

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale K-5 (post)					
For all questions, please fill in the appropriate response.					
	1	2	3	4	5
In the past 4 weeks	None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	Most of the time	All of the time
1. About how often did you feel nervous?					
2. About how often did you feel without hope?					
3. About how often did you feel restless or jumpy?					
4. About how often did you feel everything is an effort?					
5. About how often did you feel so sad that nothing could cheer you up?					

Total Score _____

Scoring for K-5

Minimum score 5, indicates no distress.

Low / moderate distress 5 – 11

High / very high distress 12 – 25

Maximum score 25, indicates severe distress

Session and Cultural Outing Photos

