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Newsletter No.11, May 2008

A SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH!

Thursday, April 24 2008 marked a milestone for Mentally Healthy WA as the Act-Belong-Commit Campaign was launched state-wide. The event at Grace Vaughan House was attended by partners, funders, key stakeholders and the general public with an impressive turnout of 50 people. Professor Rob Donovan welcomed guests and provided a brief background on the Campaign followed by a personal anecdote from Northam community member Caroline Barr, which was kindly presented by Lorraine Powell, a member of the Act-Belong-Commit Steering Committee. The Hon. John Hyde released the results from the pilot study and officially launched the state-wide expansion of the Act-Belong-Commit Campaign.

The Act-Belong-Commit Campaign aims to improve population mental health in Western Australia by increasing individual resilience and building community cohesion. Phase II is funded by Healthway, Department of Health, Lotterywest, local government councils and Curtin University who will work together to implement the community-based mental health promotion campaign in metropolitan and regional sites across WA. Funding from other organisations is currently being sought.



The Hon. John Hyde

NEW AND EXISTING SITES

Sixteen sites across WA have already joined the mentally healthy movement. These sites include the existing WA Country Health Service (WACHS) sites from the pilot study – Albany, Esperance, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Karratha and Northam and new WACHS sites - Moora, Narrogin, Merredin, Newman, Hedland, Katanning and Denmark. In the metropolitan area, the City of Rockingham and two organisations in the Gosnells region (City of Gosnells and Gosnells Women’s Health Service) have committed to promoting Act-Belong-Commit messages in their communities. Further discussions are currently underway with various local governments and health services to further expand the Campaign.

MEDIA & PUBLICITY

Have you seen our TV ad? The Act-Belong-Commit 30 second animated television advertisement is airing on Channel 7 and GWN from 4th May through to the 12th June 2008. The advertisement states that “*Keeping mentally healthy is just as important as staying physically healthy – and its easy as A-B-C...*” Already the television advert has generated interest amongst individuals and organisations in metro and rural locations.

A series of print advertisements will compliment the television advertisement, further raising awareness of the types of things you can do to keep mentally healthy. Print advertisements will be published in The West Australian on Saturday 17th May 2008.



Act-Belong-Commit TV Advert



RESULTS FROM PILOT STUDY 2005-2007

A telephone survey was conducted at the end of the two-year Act-Belong-Commit Campaign. Approximately 1,200 intervention town residents and 1,000 metropolitan residents and non-intervention rural town residents were surveyed. In each rural town and in the metropolitan area, respondents were recruited in two age groups (i.e., 18-39 years, 40 years and over), with approximately equal representation of males and females in each age group.

Overall awareness of the Act-Belong-Commit Campaign was 65% in the intervention towns. In the intervention towns, respondents who were aware of the Campaign were significantly more likely than those unaware to do more exercise (71% vs 56%), socialise more (52% vs 42%) and volunteer or take up a good cause (44% vs 37%).

Among intervention town respondents who were aware of the Campaign, 29% reported that they have changed the way they think about mental health as a result of the messages in the Campaign's advertising and publicity, with females more likely to do so than males (32% vs 23%). Also the younger age group was more likely than the older age group to change the way they think about mental health (32% vs 24%). The Campaign increased awareness of mental health in general, increased belief that people can do things to keep mentally healthy and reduced the stigma associated with mental illness.

Ultimately what we wanted to see was people actively engaging in mentally healthy activities. Seventeen percent of respondents in the intervention towns reported that they changed their behaviour as a result of the Campaign, with females somewhat more likely than males to do so (18% vs 15%). There was no difference by age group. Respondents mentioned participating in activities related to the Act-Belong-Commit message, being more accepting of people with mental health problems and having a more positive outlook on life in general.

The data demonstrates that mental health promotion campaigns not only encourage people to proactively do things to improve their own mental health, but also, reduce the stigma associated with mental health problems.

FAREWELL AND WELCOME

On behalf of the Act-Belong-Commit team, key stakeholders and the wider Western Australian Health Promotion profession, we would like to say farewell and happy retirement to Dr Ray James. A small 'surprise' party was held for Ray at the Curtin Health Research Campus with his friends and colleagues. Tributes were paid to him by Rob Donovan, Peter Howat and Billie Giles-Corti on his health promotion career that has spanned for nearly 30 years in Australia. Ray has been a determined, motivated and inspirational leader in health promotion and has laid solid foundations for the state-wide success of the Act-Belong-Commit Campaign. We wish him the best.

We would like to welcome Amberlee Laws who has taken over from Ray on the Campaign at the Perth Hub. Amberlee has worked on the Campaign throughout the pilot study and was the intervention and evaluation Project Officer in Northam. She brings her success, experience and knowledge of working on the Campaign in a regional community setting that will be an asset as we go state-wide with the Campaign.

How to find out more about the Act-Belong-Commit Campaign

For more information about the Act-Belong-Commit Campaign, or to see how your organisation or community can get involved, contact Mentally Healthy WA 9266 1709, email a.laws@curtin.edu.au or visit the website: www.actbelongcommit.org.au

