

Media statement

15 July 2015

Two Indigenous communities shaping their future

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of Cherbourg and Kuranda have focused on identity, family and wellbeing to shape a more positive future for themselves and their children.

Queensland Mental Health Commissioner Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck said the National Empowerment Project, with the local support of Ngoonbi Co-operative Society, has made a positive difference in these communities in less than two years.

Dr van Schoubroeck said their achievement deserved recognition to continue celebrating the successes of NAIDOC Week.

“This is a program that recognises that change can only take root if it is strengths-based, grounded in the community, owned and guided by the community,” Dr van Schoubroeck said.

Mrs Glenis Grogan of Ngoonbi Co-operative Society and the NEP’s Queensland Coordinator, said the training program was informed by Aboriginal people across the country.

“Just knowing it comes from Aboriginal people, for Aboriginal people and more often actually delivered by Aboriginal people, I believe it makes a difference,” Mrs Grogan said.

“I’ve seen it. It actually does make a big difference.

“It’s an empowering program. It actually gives people the tools and the skills to be able to address situations.

“When you know who you are that makes you stronger in yourself, so you become a strong, empowered and proud Aboriginal person.

“It’s about their own self-realisation and knowing their responsibility and their family and their community, and what they can do to change it, but having the understanding on how they can change it, like drugs and alcohol,” she said.

Bronwyn Murray, NEP consultant at Cherbourg talked about the ‘hard yarns’ happening about family and community issues.

“They’re working on family. They’re setting rules in family and boundaries, and building stronger foundations, better communication with the family.”

She said: “It takes a community to build a community, it takes a community to raise a child”.

Mrs Grogan and Mrs Murray, along with Kuranda community member Mr Walter Brim, have talked about their experience in a film clip that celebrates the success of the NEP in their communities.

Community changes include people getting their children back, better community connectedness and independent living.

The NEP is an initiative of the University of Western Australia, led by Professor Pat Dudgeon.

Over the life of the NEP in Queensland, the Queensland Mental Health Commission has invested \$510,000 for support services, community worker training and healing program development.

Dr van Schoubroeck said: “The Commission is happy to support great programs like this that are Aboriginal-led, show positive results and that change people’s lives.”

View the film clip at: www.qmhc.qld.gov.au

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About QMHC: *The Queensland Mental Health Commission was established to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders by driving ongoing reform.*