Environmental Health in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Communities

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Overview

- Introduction
- Strategic Directions
- EHW Program
- Animal Management Program
- Community Benefits
What is Environmental Health?

- The cornerstone of public health practice and is about creating and maintaining environments that promote good public health.
- Concerned with the study of all physical, biological and social factors which have an effect on human health.
- Targeted towards preventing disease, promoting and creating healthy, supportive living environments.
- Incorporates assessment, intervention, control and prevention of environmental health factors that have the potential to adversely affect human health.
- Relates to the factors that need to be addressed to advance the health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
“Substantial inequalities exist between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians, particularly in relation to chronic and communicable diseases, infant health, mental health and life expectation.”

1 Social Determinants of Health
Our Vision

What are we trying to achieve?

A standard of environmental health that supports the achievement of quality health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland.
Why?

Environmental Health Factors

- Safe and adequate water and food supplies
- Housing and shelter
- Control of environmental pollutants and waste management
- Animal and pest (and vector) management
- Infrastructure - electricity and roads

Links with Disease

- Pneumonia
- upper respiratory tract infections
- Scabies
- Skin infections
- Hepatitis
- Trachoma
- Gastrointestinal disease
- Mosquito borne diseases
What are the Strategic Directions for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander EH?

- Improvement of environmental health in communities through the development, implementation and support of culturally appropriate strategies and programs at both a strategic and local community level.

- Implementation of the QHATSIEH Plan 2008-2012 which identifies key strategic directions and actions that must be addressed to improve environmental health conditions.
QHATSIEH Plan 2008-2012

Strategic initiatives of the 2008-2012 Plan

- develop, implement and build on successful and sustainable community based environmental health programs in both discrete and non-discrete Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities

- make Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander environmental health a priority for community health and other services in the government and non-government sectors

- promote, develop and support a sustainable environmental health workforce
Strategic initiatives of the 2008-2012 Plan

- Strengthen partnerships across government and non-government organisations to support investment in and effective delivery of environmental health services

- Effectively communicate information on programs and achievements in environmental health to promote environmental health practice

- Develop and maintain reliable reporting systems that will assist in monitoring and evaluating environmental health programs
Groups & Stakeholders

- The HIT team! Indigenous Environmental Health Implementation Team (IEHIT)
- The NIEHRF - Northern Indigenous Environmental Health Regional Forum
- The SIEHCG - Strategic Indigenous Environmental Health Coordinating Group
- The GAG - Indigenous Environmental Health Government Agencies Group (IEHGAG)
- The WGATSIEH - Working Group on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health
Our EH Program Officers

- conduit between QH and communities
- provide a voice through the IEHIT & the SIEHCG
- resources & support
In April 2002 the State Government released the Meeting Challenges, Making Choices (MCMC) response to the Cape York Justice Study. MCMC identified a range of reforms and initiatives in several key areas. One such initiative to help meet the health needs of people of Cape York was a focus on Environmental Health. The Environmental Health Worker Pilot Project was implemented in 2002 to enable Aboriginal Community Councils located in Cape York region to employ a full-time EHW.
EHW Expansion Project

- In 2005, QH received funding to expand the EHW Program to include all 34 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Councils.

- We provide support through:
  - Training on the job
  - Provision of resources
  - Reports & recommendations to Council

- EHWs need training and professional mentors

- We’ve come a long way and continue to work towards even better EH outcomes.
The growing EH workforce is helping to increase community awareness of EH & relationship to promotion & prevention of disease.

Much greater understanding now of links between hygiene & health.
Animal Management Program

- This project is the first to be undertaken on this level in Australia
- Widespread animal ownership
- Perception and reports of problematic animal numbers
- Some reports of animal neglect
- Some reports of animal attack
- Little or no resources & capacity in communities
- Local Government responsibilities:
  - Public Health Risks [Public Health Act 2005]
  - Pest Management Plans [PMP’s] [Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002]
  - Animal Welfare [Animal Care and Protection Act 2001]
Successful DOG programs...
The Action Plan


- To coordinate animal management programs;
- To improve health and welfare of animals;
- Increase council capacity for animal management;
- Facilitate a whole of government approach;
- Assist councils to be accountable.
Current status of AMP

- 19 Service Agreements totalling $774,385 in employment and operational and $779,000 in infrastructure
- 22 employees within communities throughout the state working on Animal Management
- All employees enrolled in Cert II Rural Operations (Animal Care and Management)
- All soon to complete Cert II
- AMPA employed by QH:
  - Coordinate project activities according to the Action Plan
  - Internal and external relationships state-wide
  - Provide strategic and operational advice
  - Collect data on existing animal management
  - Assist with on-ground activities
  - Assist communities to maintain/develop sustainable programs
Future Challenges

- Ensure funds enhance existing programs
- Facilitate the development of new programs
- Development of sustainable community based programs – build on positives
- Develop locally relevant action plans
- Ensure funds lead to achievement of the Action Plan objectives including increase council capacity for environmental health management
Where to from here?

- Keep building and extending on:
  - Training
  - Interagency collaboration & coordination
  - Career paths
  - Employment of EHWs in places outside Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Communities

- Needs to be done in consultation with stakeholders

- Needs to be aligned with national strategies & the direction of the enHealth Working Group on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health
Community Benefits
Grease traps

Before...

After!
Housing - Out with the old...
In with the New...!
STREETS
Before...

After - Streets paved!
Tidy Town!!!
Picnic Areas with Secure Bin!
Rubbish Tip
Any Questions?

THANK YOU