Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people are advised that the following presentation may contain images of deceased persons.
Indigenous Australians, who constitute 3% of the Australian population, are the most disadvantaged group on virtually every social and economic scale and indicator. Respiratory and Kidney disease, cardiovascular disease, infant mortality rates, suicide rates, and a wide range of illnesses are 2 to 3 times more prevalent in the Indigenous population compared to the non-indigenous population.

Diabetes levels among Indigenous people are 3.3 times higher than among non-Indigenous people.

In 2012, Indigenous people died from diabetes at almost 7 times the rate of non-Indigenous people.

Mortality rates for Indigenous men and women are on average 20 years below the rest of the Australian population.

Khoury, Peter., 2015, p473
StrongBala origins

- Born from dreams of local men over 20 years
- A culturally safe place for men to meet and heal
- One of them became CEO of Wurli Wurlinjang AMS
- The project was originally known as the Wurli Male Health Countryman’s program – the StrongBala name was adopted approximately in 1995
- 2009: Minister Warren Snowden (OATSIH) funded the Healthy 4 Life StrongBala program
- Currently Funded by the Office of Prime Minister and Cabinet
Community development vs. Community engagement

Community engagement = asking what a community wants

Participation in the Katherine Community Living Areas

A community development program aims to:
- facilitate the empowerment of a community
- ensure its goals reflect community needs and aspirations
- be a process that is organic (not prescriptive)
- provide healing through community participation
StrongBala Vision

StrongBala is a health focussed cultural centre for Indigenous males in Katherine. The priority of StrongBala is to engage Indigenous males and to improve health outcomes for these males in a culturally sensitive manner.
StrongBala_Mission

• Through the provision of culturally appropriate health care to the indigenous male population of Katherine, it is envisaged that health outcomes can be optimised for this marginalised and disadvantaged group.

• Through the strengthening of cultural ties to the region it is hoped that Indigenous males can take their rightful place as leaders, Elders, and valued family members within the community.

• Using a holistic and culturally sensitive approach to health and wellbeing, it is planned that the male population of Katherine’s Indigenous males can be engaged to foster capacity building and the development of an economic base from which to build upon and is sustainable.

• Through the provision of novel and innovative strategies, programs and activities for the Indigenous males of Katherine at StrongBala we can build upon a strong cultural identity and positive health outcomes achieved.
Referrals into the StrongBala Program

• Courts – Magistrate
• North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA)
• NT Department of Children and Families
• NT Correctional Services
• Kalano RJCP/Jobfind
• NTLAC, KWILS & other Legal Professionals
• Ormonde House (St. Vinnies)
• Wurli Wurlinjhang Well Being Services & GP Clinics
• Self-referral clients
• PHAMS (Red Cross)
• Good Beginnings
• Somerville
• Other Allied Health & Community Services….
Referrals out of the StrongBala Program

- Wurli-Wurlinjjang Health Service
  Incl. Well Being/SEWP, Intensive Family Support & AOD Program, Gudbinji (Chronic Disease Program), Dietician, GP & Aboriginal Men’s Health Clinic
- Relationships Australia,
- Venndale (Kalano),
- CAAPS,
- Banyan House,
- Forw.a.a.r.d,
- Caaapu,
- Bradaag,
- Red Cross- PHAMS Program,
- Good Beginnings (positive parenting),
- Kalano RJCP/Jobfind,
- Mission Australia (Literacy & Numeracy)
- Somerville (Money Management), ……
Benefits of the StrongBala Men’s Health Program

• Non-threatening, peaceful, safe place
• Men with similar issues
• Learning opportunities free from drugs and alcohol
• Education
• Friendship
• Families -> “a place where our men found other people who cared about them and believed in them.

StrongBala has provided critical support and opportunity for their men to ‘turn their lives around’.
“StrongBala’s skilled and dedicated staff is its greatest resource”

“Staff must demonstrate flexibility, respond to immediate needs, provide care beyond the scope of their normal duties.”

“Strongbala draws strength from being an integral part of WWHS which enjoys a high profile in the community...”
StrongBala – what works

FOCUS ON CORE BUSINESS

• Tendency to overreach at times – staff stress/dangers of burn-out

• The organic nature of a community development program sees it expand and contract with varying needs, resources and collective energy

• Culture underpins all programs – connection to culture engenders feelings of self-worth, pride, hope and healing.
StrongBala – What Works

UNIQUE MODEL OF SERVICE PROVISION

* Flexible, organic, holistic program evolves through community need and appropriate response
* Culture heals spirit and is key to success
* Behaviour = sober, no tolerance of violence
* Strong community support and commercial goodwill among stakeholders
* High demand for services
Australian Government Report recommendations:

1) Formally recognise the social and economic determinants of harmful uses of alcohol namely poverty, mental health, unemployment, an ongoing sense of grief & loss, alienation, boredom, cultural acceptance of drunkenness, ease of access and cost of alcohol, peer pressure ‘to drink’ and epigenetics in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and for some individuals.

2) That all strategies developed or funded by the Commonwealth or other Governments are developed in partnership with the relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and/or organisations.

7) That Government at all levels:
   • Prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community driven strategies to reduce the harmful effects of alcohol
   • Ensure that communities are empowered to develop the strategies that will work for their communities, and
   • Cooperate and facilitate any work in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities which aims to change the liquor trading hours in their community.
**Australian Government Report recommendations:**

13) That the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet ensure that a full range of evidence-based, best practice treatments are available in order to meet the needs of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, regardless of where they live. The treatment services should provide for families, follow-up services, and include detoxification and rehabilitation.

14) That Commonwealth, States and Territories, through the COAG process implement justice reinvestment to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people incarcerated as a result of harmful alcohol use.

The 2015 report generated by the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs titled:

*Alcohol, Hurting people and harming communities: Inquiry into the harmful use of Alcohol in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.*
Current StrongBala Men’s Health, Justice & AOD Program site
23 Third Street, Katherine, NT. 0850
StrongBala
“Stop the Violence” Promotion

Photo taken at the ‘Ross River Aboriginal Men’s Health Summit, 2013, Alice Springs – with Ingkintja Men’s Health Program
Wurli Wurlinjang, StrongBala, AFLNT and Clontarf Academy
“Come in for a Health Check”
Promotion
Thank you

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wurli@wurli.org.au
www.wurli.org.au

Special Thanks to the NT Government, RAODW, Community Safety Branch, Indigenous Affairs Group / Dept. Prime Minister & Cabinet for your ongoing support and funding for the StrongBala Men’s Program.

Wurli-Wurlinjang is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service
References

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