

DEADLY GRANDMOTHERS; PROPER WAY PARTNERSHIPS, SUPPORTING ELDERS WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN COMMUNITY

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Background:

Deadly Grandmothers began with Indigenous grandmothers of the Scenic Rim Region approaching Hepatitis Queensland about a lack of support for Elders in the community. The grandmothers voiced concerns that, when dealing with hepatitis, drug use, and mental health issues among young Indigenous people, many programs focused on youth, while it was Elders (specifically grandmothers) who usually were responsible for social and health concerns in the homes. Elders also raised their concerns that, by educating only youth or youth workers, appropriate internal lines of authority and community structures were being ignored. Hepatitis Queensland obtained a grant to provide support and education to Elders of the Scenic Rim: To train Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders around hepatitis, drug use, mental health, and how to utilise support systems better-support young people at risk of, or affected by, viral hepatitis.

Methods: Consultations and focus groups were conducted with the Grandmothers. These consultations significantly changed the direction of the planned education.

Results: Mainstream design and planning of a conference were unsuitable. In order to build appropriate cultural process, new relationships were formed, utilising the Grandmother knowledge as a driver. The Grandmothers designed their own conference that encompassed strengthening cultural, parenting, and family connections.

Conclusion: The Deadly Grandmothers project found that, for appropriate outcomes in Indigenous community, it is crucial that holistic non-Western models of communication, planning, relationships, and process, need to be included at all stages of the project. This presentation covers learnings about cultural protocols and processes for mainstream services working within Indigenous communities, and the importance of re-thinking what may be considered 'normal' process. Mainstream services cannot simply provide education, but must be self-reflective and form real relationships involving trust, time, and flexible process.