



Picture: Anne Palamountain

PECAN

Prevention & Education (Child Abuse & Neglect)

The previous article reports on the recent National Child Abuse Prevention Awards. Here, LESLEY TAYLOR writes about the work of one of the winners. The work of other winners will be described in subsequent issues of the National Child Protection Clearinghouse Newsletter.

Prevention & Education (Child Abuse & Neglect), known as PECAN, came into being on 12 February 1996 following the Northern Territory Government's endorsement of the National Strategy for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. Cabinet approved the creation of positions within the Family and Childrens Services program of Territory Health Services to undertake child abuse preventive activities in Darwin.

PECAN is a unit of two – a coordinator and community worker – currently located at Palmerston Community Care Centre, in Palmerston, a community of just over 21,000 people approximately 21 kilometres from Darwin in the Northern Territory.

PECAN develops and implements a range of primary and secondary preventive activities to reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect. Overall aims are to prevent child abuse and to create an environment which supports families and communities and helps them to meet their responsibilities to care for and protect children.

National child protection week activities

PECAN coordinates and evaluates National Child Protection Week activities by Family and Childrens Services in urban, rural and remote areas across the Northern Territory.

This is done by:

- developing an overall focus for activities in the Northern Territory in line with the national agenda and media campaign of the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect (NAPCAN);
- providing assistance and support to prevention representatives in each district to help identify their particular community's needs in relation to child abuse prevention;
- assisting staff in planning ways of approaching communities about the issue of child abuse and neglect that focus on family strengths;
- initiating regular contact with staff in assisting in overcoming the impact that isolation can have on information sharing;

- discussing ways to assist disempowered segments of the community to legitimately raise issues about factors that impact on the care and protection of children;
- sharing ideas and information with staff about child abuse prevention activities that have had successful outcomes in other localities;
- assisting staff to access resources that are needed for child abuse prevention activities/programs (eg funds, promotional material local and national);
- assisting staff with planning and evaluating their prevention activities in the face of unique problems associated with distance, cultural and language barriers;
- introduction of a prevention and evaluation training package for staff.

The Work Unit and Participant surveys were designed to collect a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data. The Work Unit survey measures input, process, impact and outcomes of

prevention activities/programs. The Participant survey measures individuals' experiences in being involved in primary and secondary prevention activities; one hundred per cent of respondents reported professional benefits in being involved, including increased work satisfaction, opportunities to develop new skills and opportunities to promote the positive side of statutory welfare work.

Positive parenting program

The Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) was initially piloted in Darwin and is now being introduced across the Northern Territory.

Triple P is a multilevel family intervention program for children with disruptive and behaviour disorders that is an initiative of the Parenting and Family support Centre at the University of Queensland. The program is scientifically validated and provides an approach to parenting which aims to promote children's development and manage children's behaviour in a constructive and non-hurtful way.

This parenting program is primarily implemented through Infant Health Clinics and Family Support Services in



The Award for Rural and Remote was accepted jointly by Bronwyn Thompson (right) and Lesley Taylor (left) on behalf of PECAN.

government and non-government agencies. (See accompanying box.)

Calendar for new parents

The Calendar for New Parents is provided through infant health clinics to all parents of newborns in the first three months of the calendar year. Funding has not been found for the calendar for year 2000 and so private sponsorship is being sought.

The calendar incorporates humour (through cartoons) to normalise the most commonly experienced difficulties in parenting; information on 12 common parenting topics – one per month; and family support services available to parents on the topic of the month.

Evaluation of the calendar indicates that the humour, content and service information is positively regarded by parents, and has assisted them in coping with the multiple demands of parenthood.

Caravan park project

Following concerns about high numbers of child protection reports in mobile communities and families residing in caravan parks, PECAN has worked with such families over the past 18 months, in liaison with the National Caravan Park Dissemination Project of the University of Newcastle.

Weekly sessions with families in group settings identified issues of financial stress, marital difficulties, inability to access services, lack of knowledge of available support services, social isolation, lack of security as tenants, and poor or non-existent facilities for young children.

PECAN & KIDSAFE NT are currently undertaking a joint research project, *The Health and Safety of Young Children in Caravan Parks and Mobile Communities*, in the Darwin, Palmerston and Litchfield Shire districts. Research findings will be used to influence future planning and design of caravan parks to be child safe and family friendly and to promote positive community interaction.

Initial funding was obtained to pilot the appointment of a paid Playgroup Coordinator at one caravan park and Playgroup NT is now looking to extend this service to all caravan parks in Darwin, Palmerston and Litchfield districts.

Local councils have made literature available on services to van park management and residents.

The initial findings report of the Darwin Caravan Park Project was presented at the 6th National Caravan Park Workers seminar in Brisbane on 18 March 1999.

NAPCAN in Northern Territory

Negotiations are well under way with the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN), local councils, social service providers and Territory Health Services for the establishment of NAPCAN NT. NAPCAN is a non profit, volunteer based organisation formed to create a national focus on the prevention of child abuse and neglect. The Northern Territory will be able to contribute our unique geographical and multicultural experiences to the national agenda.

For further information about the work of PECAN, contact Lesley Taylor, PECAN Coordinator. Phone: (08) 8999 3340 Fax: (08) 8999 3333 Email: lesley.taylor@plmccc.health.nt.gov.au

Positive parenting program

Further information about the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P), referred to in Lesley Taylor's article of the work of PECAN, can be found in the following two recent articles.

- Sanders, M.R. (1999), 'Triple P-Positive Parenting Program: towards an empirically validated multilevel parenting and family support strategy for the prevention of behaviour and emotional problems in children', *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 71-90.

This paper examines the theoretical and empirical foundations of Triple P – the Positive Parenting Program – which is a multilevel system of family intervention designed to reduce the prevalence of behavioural and emotional problems in preadolescent children. It describes the program and discusses the following issues: the model of parental competence; principles of positive parenting; distinguishing features of the program; different levels of intervention; selective prevention programs; evaluation of the program; effects of the media; effects of brief primary care interventions; and other related family intervention research.

- Williams, A. (1998), 'The positive parenting program; a behavioural family intervention to reduce the risk of conduct disorders and other mental health problems among pre-school children', *Mental Health in Australia*, vol. 8, no. 1/2, pp. 29-34.

The Research and Therapy Centre of the University of Queensland was commissioned by the Health Department of Western Australia to modify its clinical program, a scientifically validated behavioural family intervention, to a prevention program for large scale application in a general population setting, delivered through primary care. This paper describes the Triple P Program, including its rationale and issues of: conduct disorder in children; costs of the problem; identification of risk factors, and family focused prevention programs. Outcome, impact and process objectives are outlined and the target group, scale of project and the implementation strategy are discussed.