

PRISM POINTS

Local Launches of PRISM

Local launches of the project have been held over August/September. We were delighted with the energy and enthusiasm for the project shown by the many local councillors, steering committee members, voucher sponsors, health professionals, representatives of community organisations and mothers we met and talked with in Mornington, Bendigo, Melton, Heywood, Morwell, Sale, Yarram, and Ringwood. We are looking forward to the Bayside launch on 16th September.



Maroondah launch held at Eastland Shopping Centre, Ringwood, 26 August 1999

Here are some excerpts from talks given by Julie Vandermaat, PRISM Steering Committee member, City of Greater Bendigo, and Michael Kennedy, CEO, Mornington Peninsula Shire.

Julie Vandermaat spoke at the City of Greater Bendigo PRISM launch on behalf of the three local mothers on the Bendigo PRISM Steering Committee:

"Being a mother is a very demanding job and one that women often feel very unprepared for basically.

You realise how important little things can be — the attitudes of people in general, businesses, and decisions that are made about policy and planning — like fences in local parks.

PRISM is trying to put the focus back on the mother, and create an awareness among businesses and places in our city about how important it is to make life as a mother a little bit easier — fences around parks, places for kids to play, hot water and all the facilities that mothers really do need.

The resource kit being launched today has a list of resources and services available in our community for mothers. It focuses on opportunities for mothers to have some 'time out'. It is really important that this is seen as acceptable — as a social norm.

When I was reading the PRISM resource kit this morning I found a tear in my eye when I read the bit about being at home with a new baby, feeling like you are the only person at home, and thinking "how will I get through this day?". PRISM is about encouraging mothers to meet other women and form friendships with women who have children the same age. When I came here to live five years ago everyone said "won't it be marvelous to be at home full time", but everyone else was busy doing other things and I needed people to say "come over and have a cuppa, how are you getting on, how was your night?"

PRISM is really formalising what's been helpful to me as a mother and saying this needs to happen for everybody to have a decent experience of mothering, for it to be the enjoyable job that it should be.

There are lots of issues for women post-birth it isn't just the first 6-12 weeks, it's two years before you feel like a normal person again.

The PRISM Steering committee has been a fabulous experience — a group that meets regularly, meets on time, finishes on time, and has all these people who are extremely busy and doing valuable work."



Melton launch held at the Woodgrove Shopping Centre, Melton, 5 August 1999

Michael Kennedy spoke on behalf of the Mornington Shire Council at the launch in Mornington on the 4th of August:

"When my first daughter was born I was 26 years old and I was working my way up umpiring the ranks in VFA/VFL. On the day Elysia was born I was lucky because it was the only Tuesday in the football season when there was no training. My second daughter was born on a Saturday in August. I took my wife to hospital and went to Gippsland to umpire a match. I'm pleased to say I had learned something by the time my son was born (in January); I was actually there!

My wife has no brothers and sisters. Neither of us has a close relationship with our parents. Her 'support network' was three other expecting mums with whom she shared pregnancy and what followed. Twenty years later, these three remain my wife's closest friends. One has been through a bit of 'family drama' and my wife has been there for her. One has since returned to Canada, but my wife remains in contact, and has twice visited her in Canada. The third remains a very close friend, her son and ours, despite having moved, play footy together and are best mates.

I tell this story against myself, because it amply demonstrates: you don't need to be from a non-English speaking background, you don't need to be a sole parent, you don't need to be married to an inveterate gambler or alcoholic to need support as a new mum.

I was a hard-working, non-drinking, non-smoking, conscientious young dad whose childhood had provided no models for how to be a supportive father. Fortunately, I've learned a lot since!

This real life story also demonstrates the value that my wife placed on her 'support network'. In her case she was very lucky, BUT that support is far too important to be

left to 'luck'. The opportunity, the potential, for those important connections, must be accessible to all.

ALL new mums need support. PRISM, to me, is a "vegemite" program. It is not a big money program. Financially, it's "a little bit, spread thinly", but that relatively small amount will go a long way, and achieve a great deal for the present, and — through learning (through the research project) — for the future.

PRISM is not government telling people what they need. And it's not the government providing it. PRISM is an excellent example of what 'new local government' should be. It's about developing a better understanding of the needs of our community. It's about developing social networks. It's about ensuring new mums in the community are aware of the support and resources available to them. It's clearly an excellent example of the Shire working with the community, to the benefit of the community. That's precisely what we're meant to be doing!

I'm a wiser man now than I was twenty years ago, anyone with an appreciation of the importance of the early time in a child's life, of the needs of the child, and the needs of the mother, would welcome this initiative, and so I'm pleased to declare it launched."



PRISM launch held in Mornington, 4 August 1999

Maternal and Child Health Training in PRISM

Between March and June 1999, eighty-one maternal and child health nurses participated in two full days of training as part of PRISM. Training for

primary health care professionals (maternal and child health nurses and general practitioners) is one of the four key elements of the intervention program within PRISM. Training for general practitioners is being undertaken separately, commencing recently and continuing over the coming months.

The aims of the maternal and child health training days were:

1. To strengthen the capacity of the maternal and child health services in each of the intervention communities to support mothers in relation to physical and emotional health issues in the first year after childbirth, in particular by:
 - ## enhancing recognition and treatment of emotional and physical health problems
 - ## promoting listening skills and offers of time to talk
2. To assist the PRISM research team to build an understanding of the local context and issues currently affecting maternal and child health services in each of the intervention communities.

The training program incorporated:

- ## an overview of the research literature regarding the prevalence and natural history of emotional and physical health problems in the first postpartum year
- ## discussion of strategies that may assist women in dealing with physical and emotional health issues in the postpartum period, with particular attention to research evidence regarding the effectiveness of a range of approaches
- ## discussion of research documenting women's views and experiences of the first year after childbirth
- ## review of the skills involved in active listening, with opportunities to practise these skills
- ## discussion of strategies for fostering intersectoral collaboration within local communities, in particular linkages between maternal and child health and local general practitioners
- ## consideration of ways that PRISM can support maternal and child health activities in each locality.

A report on the training has now been produced and distributed to all members of the MCH teams involved. We asked the nurses to provide feedback on the program and evaluations were received from 53 (65%) of the participating nurses. Feedback about the training has been very positive overall and comments about sessions and ideas for further training will be incorporated into our planning of the half day continuation/refreshers training to be held next year. A summary of the feedback has also been distributed to MCH teams



Maroondah launch held at Eastland Shopping Centre, Ringwood, 26 August 1999

Data Management Update

Creina Mitchell, PRISM Data Manager, has been travelling Victoria to meet with representatives of all 16 municipalities participating in PRISM. These preliminary discussions provided an opportunity to discuss the implementation of the rolling mailout of questionnaires and reminders.

The mailout will be based on notifications of livebirths to women living in each municipality. Questionnaires will be sent out on a weekly basis, along with a cover letter explaining the project and a reply paid envelope for women to return the questionnaire direct to the research team. Two weeks after the questionnaires are sent, each woman will be sent a reminder postcard.

The proposed timelines for data collection are:

Feb 2000	Births to mothers participating in the trial
Aug 2000 for 12 months	Data collection six months after birth (main survey)
Feb 2002 for 12 months	Data collection two years after birth (sub-survey)

Please do not hesitate to contact Creina if you have any questions about the proposed mailouts. She may be contacted:

- by email on C.Mitchell@latrobe.edu.au or
- by telephone on 03 8341 8544.

EcoPRISM: progress of organisational survey

The survey of organisational networks in each of the 16 municipalities has been completed and is currently in the process of being analysed. Over 300 organisations participated in the survey, which will play an important role in measuring whether the implementation of the PRISM intervention increases inter organisational collaboration at the local level. The survey will be repeated in two years time and will provide a quantifiable picture of non-health related PRISM effects. The process of undertaking the survey has also provided an opportunity for the research team to better appreciate the challenges facing health and community organisations in the current climate. Any queries regarding the survey may be directed to Therese Riley on 03 8341 8547



Melton launch held at the Woodgrove Shopping Centre, Melton, 5 August 1999

A Councillor's View

In recent weeks I have been touring the Mornington Peninsula with our PRISM Project Officer Melanie Sanders, meeting with our community and business groups who have contributed to the voucher system. What I was most struck by was the overwhelming goodwill and enthusiasm shown by our voucher contributors. Over and over again I heard comments that reflected a genuine hope on behalf of the contributor that mothers will take advantage of their offer - massage, child minding, movie tickets,

yoga lesson, free cappuccino - for the benefits it would provide for the Mother *and* her baby. Irrespective of age, locality, or gender, people wanted to provide opportunities for mothers and their babies to have better experiences at this very important time of their lives.

The PRISM Project has made such a positive start and our Steering Committee now has as one of its tasks to make sure that mothers take full advantage of what is so generously available. Whilst driving from one end of the Peninsula to the other, Melanie and I jotted down a few ideas as to how we might help:

- ## Making businesses aware of each other so they can refer Mums to each other, eg. the Jellybeam Gym instructor suggesting that Mums might like to have a cuppa together at the nearby contributing cafe.
- ## Media releases depicting a day in the life of a Mum using her vouchers
- ## Prompting MCH nurses to remind Mums of the voucher system

Judith Couacaud Graley
Councillor, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council
Chairperson, PRISM Steering Committee

GAPP Update

Guidelines for Assessing Postnatal Problems (GAPP) is an exciting, new educational program for GPs in the use of a simple evidence-based approach to maternal health.

As part of the program, evidence based guidelines for maternal health have been developed along with reminder stickers to reinforce GAPP strategies. During August and September the first of the two planned GAPP interactive workshops will take place. Following the first workshop, GPs will receive skills practice with trained simulated patients. To date, workshops and visits have been successfully completed in several municipalities. GAPP workshops have proven to be a great networking night for GPs, Divisional representatives, PRISM Project Officers, and maternal and child health team leaders. There is a lot of enthusiasm to make maternal health a priority.

Any queries regarding GAPP may be directed to Jane Gunn on 03 9344 4530

PRISM MILESTONES

1999

March - June	Maternal and Child Health Nurse Training in all the PRISM Intervention communities
April - June	Kits developed and finalised, including the local guide to services and vouchers
August - September	PRISM Launches
July - September	Organisational survey completed in 8 Comparison Communities
August - September	GAPP Training



Wellington launch held at the Federal Palace Café, Yarram, 19 August 1999

Centre for the Study of Mothers' and Children's Health, 251 Faraday St, CARLTON, 3053.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us:

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