

PRISM POINTS

PRISM Update Briefings

Throughout March and April, Stephanie, Creina and Rhonda visited all sixteen municipalities participating in PRISM. These visits proved to be very informative and productive meetings for us, catching up with everyone about the project and local activities in each area. We hope you also found the opportunity to meet us in person a useful one, particularly in those areas where there are new people involved in the implementation of the project.

We met with community services managers, maternal and child health team leaders, and staff responsible for PRISM data collection. In some areas participating as intervention communities, we also met with members of local steering committees, including councillors and recent mothers.



Creina Mitchell and Rhonda Small with Ann Graham and Sheila Barnett at Cardinia Shire Council.

The meetings provided an opportunity for us to update everyone on progress with PRISM, and to discuss any issues involved with extending the current data collection period to eighteen months. It was also good to hear about what's been happening in maternal and child health, in council and community services locally.

In a project as large as this, it's not always easy to feel in touch with what's happening 'out there', yet it's very important to us to have a sense of how the project has been unfolding for everyone. We found ourselves frequently saying: "Do ring us if you have any queries about the data collection or progress with the project," and we really are very keen to hear from people! So please don't hesitate if you have a question (large or small), or if anything is bothering you about PRISM – just get on the phone or email us. Here are our contact details again:

PRISM co-ordinators:

Rhonda Small 03 8341 8542 or
r.small@latrobe.edu.au ; and

Stephanie Brown 03 8341 8565 or
Stephanie@latrobe.edu.au

PRISM Data Manager:

Creina Mitchell 03 8341 8544 or
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Mothers' Day Media Releases

We recently liaised with PRISM contact people in all sixteen participating areas about a media release we were preparing for local newspapers. We targeted editions around Mothers' Day to promote the survey of mothers currently being carried out in all PRISM areas. This was a strategy to encourage mothers to complete and return the questionnaires to help us get an understanding of their experiences of life with a baby and their views about local services supporting them as mothers.

The media release was titled: "What about the other 364 days of the year?" emphasising the need for mothers to receive support every day of the year and not just on Mothers' Day. Do let us know if you saw an article in your local paper. In fact we'd appreciate a copy, so please contact Rhonda (03 8341 8542) or Stephanie (03 8341 8565) if you can provide one.

PRISM Mail Out

Data Extension

We now have agreement from all 16 municipalities to extend the PRISM data collection period for a further six months. This means the mail out six months after birth will occur from August 2000 to February 2002.



We would like to congratulate everyone on reaching half-way in the main study mail out. Thanks very much for your contribution and support to date.

Key Dates for Mail Out

Feb 2000 – Aug 2001	Births in 18-month study period
Aug 2000	Start of main study mail out six months after birth
Jan - Feb 2002	End of questionnaire mail out six months after birth
Feb 2002	Start of follow-up mail out two years after birth

Please contact Creina (03 8341 8544) if you have any queries about the mail out.

Community Updates

In this issue of PRISM Points we are featuring articles about ongoing activities in support of mothers in four of our intervention communities. We look forward to including items from the other four (Glenelg, Maroondah, Melton and Wellington) in our next issue.

City of Latrobe

Maternal Health Policy

At Latrobe City we have developed and had passed by council a policy related to mothers' health. This document takes a broad definition of health and looks at factors affecting a mother's ability to function at a normal level, not just at the physical aspects of health.

Within the document, recognition is given for services already available :

1. Other currently available services in the community have their primary goal as children's well being, and of increasing parenting skills and abilities.
2. Community groups provide support and contact with mothers, but again often with a parenting focus.
3. Availability of (mostly minimal) baby-care facilities – in Traralgon (1), in Midvalley (1), one recently installed in City office in Morwell CBD, 1 (and one kept locked) in Moe (access limited as general public is unaware of its location).
4. Pram parking - available Centre Plaza Traralgon, none known on-street. Need for audit.

But as we know there are also gaps in the services provided and this is what we have tried to address within the policy.

Policy

1. That the City of Latrobe recognizes the population of recent mothers as having significant health issues which are of importance, and which affect a considerable demographic group.
2. That the City of Latrobe seeks to identify and implement local strategies designed to improve the health and well being of mothers in the City. We will develop local strategies planning for the health and well being of mothers, and in particular recent mothers, in consideration of such matters as:
 - 2.1. community safety (e.g. road crossing designed for mothers with strollers)
 - 2.2. transport and access
 - 2.3. accessibility of hospital services
 - 2.4. health
 - 2.5. recreation (including playgrounds, pathways, facilities and opportunities for leisure activities for recent mothers)

- 2.6. community information (including signage of baby-care facilities and Maternal and Child Health Centres)
3. That the Council of the City of Latrobe will take into consideration the above issues for mothers in all tenders and planning, and will include encouragement of private organizations to consider, for example, provision of recreation activities for recent mothers, provision of baby-care facilities, provision of adequate car-parking, design of stores so that parents prams and strollers can access the store and goods, play areas, breastfeeding facilities, etc.
4. The City of Latrobe will include the needs of this group in overall planning for disability services (bearing in mind that mothers may have difficulty in access to facilities similar to those in wheelchairs)

We are still working on promoting this policy to other departments for their planning processes. However since the policy has been passed we have had some pram parking spaces installed which is a small but important step.

Mornington Peninsula Shire

'Mums in Action on the Mornington Peninsula'

'Mums in Action' is a project based in the Mornington Peninsula Shire which is focused on putting physical activity for mothers on the agenda in our local community.

Background

Inadequate physical activity is becoming a growing problem amongst Australian women. Women are less active than men. Mothers of more than one child under school age are only half as likely as other women to be getting enough physical activity to maintain their health. Recent research suggests that many women drop out of physical activity during the early years of establishing a family and once they lose the fitness, confidence and social support which helps to maintain the habit, this pattern of inactivity can last for many years.

Regular, moderate activity can help to prevent illness, overweight, poor body image, low self esteem and the

common problems of early parenting such as anxiety and depression, low back pain and extreme fatigue. Yet when women are socially isolated, tired, depressed, uncomfortable and feeling self-conscious about their bodies, they are unable to be active without considerable social and environmental support.

What is Mums in Action about?

'Mums in Action' aims to strengthen support for mums wanting to participate in sport, recreation activities or to get out walking. It is a collaborative project based on research by Belinda Lewis, a PhD candidate from Deakin University and it has developed through partnerships with PRISM, the Mornington Peninsula Shire and the local community. The project has involved in-depth interviews with a broad range of mothers, health professionals, fitness and recreation workers, local government workers and community groups.



With funding support from the Mornington Peninsula Shire, 'Mums in Action' ran a series of community workshops across the Peninsula which brought the different stakeholder groups together to work on an issue which has long been recognised but rarely approached in a co-ordinated, systematic way. We received great interest and support from local media who helped to raise community awareness about the difficulties faced by mothers wanting to get out and be active.

What have we achieved so far?

The workshops generated a whole range of practical possibilities for change. The links – formal and informal – between health services, fitness and recreation workers and community groups are continually growing and, at last, decision-makers seem ready to listen. New links are being forged, alliances are developing and barriers are gradually being overcome through these collaborative efforts.

Shire recreation services have provided funding to assist instructors to attend the VICFIT Pre and Postnatal training course to improve the support they can provide for new mothers. Several centres are using the 'More for Mothers' Guide developed at the workshops to make their facilities and programs more mother-baby friendly. A low-cost, 6-week 'Mums in Action' course will run at local community houses later in 2001. Fitness leaders will be getting out into the community helping mums return to activity in a relaxed, supportive atmosphere; trying new activities (belly dancing is the current hot tip); and doing workshops in partnership with local community health physiotherapists, podiatrists and counsellors. Maternal and child health nurses have attended professional development workshops and information posters have been produced for Centre waiting rooms.

Mothers making a difference

One of the greatest strengths of the project has been the involvement of mothers from our local community; they have spread the word amongst themselves and they are continually coming up with creative ideas for change. Already the PRISM Mothers' newsletter includes a regular 'Mums in Action' page with details of informal walking groups run by mothers, a new mothers' yoga group and the newly formed *Venture Out* group. This group was initiated by an enthusiastic mother of three looking for other women to share ideas about childcare and get involved in adventurous outdoor activities like bushwalking, climbing, surfing and snorkelling.

Mothers have participated in a range of related community action groups which include:

- š A mothers' review of local parks with recommendations to council for improvements to their 'mother-baby friendliness'
- š PRISM Business Liaison group - which developed a guide for mother-baby friendly local businesses
- š Shire Road Safety Strategy meetings - mothers highlighted traffic safety, crossings, footpaths, playgrounds and cycleways as priority issues to discuss with council

- š Shire Road Safety Strategy - a working group of mothers and a disability representative worked on a collaborative submission which was presented to the Shire council
- š Mornington East Community Planning Forums - mothers raised issues regarding lack of safe, attractive public open spaces and facilities in new residential developments.

By generating community action to change to social and physical environments to support mothers' physical activity there have also been flow-on benefits for a range of other community members. These include action to :

- š Improve pram access which also facilitates improved access for disabled people
- š Change the culture of fitness & recreation facilities so they are more supportive of people of a wider range of ages, sizes, shapes, & fitness levels
- š Increase the availability and safety of parks and playgrounds which benefits a wide range of community members, and the elderly in particular.

For more details about 'Mums in Action' contact PRISM Project Worker:

Debbie McGorlick Appleman: 59 860 980 or
Belinda Lewis: 59 831 609 / 0419 38 66 33

City of Greater Bendigo

Multi-disciplinary collaboration on maternal emotional health: a successful first step in the City of Greater Bendigo

On 1st May 2001, the City of Greater Bendigo hosted an evening information session, 'Emotional Health Post-Partum.' The aim of the evening was to bring together primary care providers (general practitioners, maternal and child health nurses, midwives and community health nurses), mental health professionals (psychiatric nurses, psychologists and psychiatrists) and other interested health professionals, all working with women experiencing emotional health problems after the birth of their babies. The evening was planned as a "next step", following on from the education programs provided for maternal and child health nurses and general practitioners as part of PRISM during 1999 and 2000, where there had been much discussion about the need for better collaboration between service providers.

The forum was a collaborative venture organised by the local Division of General Practice, Bendigo Health Care Group - Psychiatric Services and the City Of Greater Bendigo's Children and Family Services. The primary focus of the evening was to explore the emotional needs of recent mothers in the immediate weeks and months after birth. The challenge extended to those who attended was how to support mothers more effectively by developing a more interdisciplinary approach to the emotional health needs of mothers with new babies.

The response to the evening was overwhelming with more than sixty people attending. What was even more exciting was that every sector was well represented, ensuring a wide range of service perspectives on mothers' emotional health. This was highlighted in the first segment of the evening which involved a short mapping exercise of what local services are involved in supporting the emotional health needs of mothers.

The evening's keynote speaker was Dr. Jane Gunn from the Department of General Practice at Melbourne University. Jane will also be known to most readers of PRISM Points as the chief investigator of the GAPP GP educational program in PRISM. Jane spoke about evidence-based best practice in relation to depression after childbirth and she then presented three case studies for participants to discuss in small groups. Discussion of the small group feedback then took place with a panel of experts, comprising a number of local professionals in the field including an Associate Professor of psychiatry, an obstetrician & gynaecologist, a general practitioner, a maternal and child health nurse, a midwife and one of the PRISM co-ordinators.



The interactive nature of the evening promoted lively discussion. It demonstrated a strong level of commitment within the professional sector to think

more inclusively when exploring service options for recent mothers who may present in varying degrees of distress as they adjust to life with a new baby.



In Jane's presentation and in the discussion that followed, the importance of continuity of care and collaboration was stressed, especially between primary care providers who might simultaneously be having contact with the same woman. The importance of acknowledging and validating the experiences of each individual mother and of helping her to make informed decisions about service options were also common threads in the discussion. The shared responsibility of professionals to ensure that no woman leaves a consultation/session feeling disempowered, frustrated or confused was also agreed to be a critical component in improved care of women postnatally.

City of Bayside

Jennifer Stone and Serena Everill, the PRISM Project Officers, completed their involvement with the project in March 2001. Council voted to accept the recommendation of the PRISM report to appoint a Family Services Officer (Community Development Officer) and are in the process of recruiting. One of the tasks will be to develop the family with young children advisory committee.

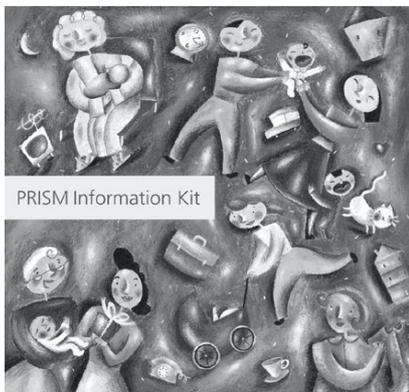
Flow on effects from the project have been: improvements in recreational facilities, installation of shade and fencing in the playgrounds at one of the parks and recommendations in the disability action plan have been identified eg. improved facilities for wheelchair/pram access to beaches, shops and parking. Our team of "Bayside for Mothers" volunteers, led by Margie Read-Flavell, have enthusiastically written articles for the fortnightly newspaper column and have managed to complete the April-May edition of the newsletter.

Initiatives that are continuing are, *Lets Do Lunch*, which will be held again in May at the Marine Hotel, with invitations going out to over 370 of our recent families. Tweddle Parent Education Seminars are being held in Bayside monthly at the Sandringham Maternal and Child Health Centre. These sessions are held on a Saturday morning. Joint training/educative sessions are continuing between the Maternal and Child Health Nurses and General Practitioners in Bayside. Support and Friendship Groups running are: Mums in their 20's, Young Mothers Group, Mums on their own, Playgroup for 2 Year Olds, African Mothers Group, Mums with Twins, and Post Natal Depression Group.

The Home Cleaning Service is a service for all recent mothers to aid their emotional and physical recovery after childbirth and is being used by 45 recent mothers. The service is income assessed and families can access 12 hours of home cleaning within 12 months of their baby's birth.

Ongoing Distribution of PRISM Kits

As you will all be aware, we sought and received extra funding last year to update the PRISM Mothers' Information Kits and a further six months supply of kits was distributed to maternal and child health services in each PRISM intervention area at the end of 2000.



In our discussions at the recent PRISM briefings we talked about the ongoing distribution of the updated kits and most areas had commenced distribution of the new supply of kits earlier this year. The new kits include the updated locality guides for mothers and the new voucher cards and revised voucher offer sheets, replacing the old voucher booklets.

We'd like to recommend that *only* the new kits now be distributed to mothers having babies in your area, maximising the potential use of the new voucher offers and ensuring women get the updated information about local services included in the new locality guides.

If you have copies of the old kits left, we have a suggestion. Take out the information booklets on maternal emotional and physical health and the booklets for fathers, and display them in your waiting room, give them to mothers with older children, or give them to families who have just moved into the area.

PRISM Community Forum

We're planning to hold another communities get together later this year. The purpose of this event is to provide an opportunity for you all to get together with other areas involved with implementing PRISM, and the continuation of a range of activities to promote maternal health.

After discussion at our recent meetings, we are planning to hold the forum in November in Melbourne. We would like to thank the City of Greater Bendigo for their generous offer to host this event. However, as there was an overall preference for the meeting to be held in Melbourne, we won't be able to take up this offer. The forum is planned for **Monday 19 November 2001**, so please keep this date free.

We would like to encourage you to make a contribution to the day. To facilitate this, we ask that each area nominate one person who could co-ordinate your area's contribution. If you are interested please let your local PRISM contact person, and us know. We look forward to hearing from you. If you have any questions about what may be involved, please contact Rhonda (03 8341 8542) or Stephanie (03 8341 8565).

EcoPRISM News –

Key Informant survey

EcoPRISM is stepping out of the office and into the intervention communities!! The economic ecological evaluation of the PRISM project, EcoPRISM, is about to embark on interviews with key informants in the intervention communities. These interviews are integral to our understanding of how PRISM both existed and was experienced by a range of stakeholders in the community. We want to explore (critically) the nature of PRISM successes and failings, or things that could have been done better and expect to hear a wide range of views. As a result this is a very exciting time for EcoPRISM.

Economic Evaluation

The economic evaluation of PRISM is well underway. Lisa has been collating data collected from several sources on the resources used by PRISM that will contribute to our understanding of the breadth and depth of costs and benefits arising from such a programme. Work is also underway on the design of a postal survey, to be conducted in all communities in 2002, that will help us to understand the values communities place on the benefits that arise from PRISM.

What would we do without Bree?

Bree Rankin has been working with EcoPRISM on a casual basis for the past 18 months or so. She is currently undertaking a degree in Commerce at Melbourne University. Bree works on the data that is collected from our community documenters who are our “eyes” and “ears” in the intervention communities. When it was brought to our attention that we hadn’t profiled Bree in PRISM Points we were horrified, because we just don’t know what we’d do without Bree, so here she is!



PRISM Milestones

2000-2001

Dec 2000– July 2001	Updated Mother's information kits available for distribution
April – May 2001	PRISM Update briefings held in all 16 local government areas
May 2001	Agreement to extend six month data collection period from 12 to 18 months
Sept - Oct	Follow-up Maternal and Child Health Nurse interviews
Nov 2001	PRISM Community forum



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

PRISM

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