

The left side of the slide features a decorative design consisting of several vertical stripes of varying shades of grey and blue, and a cluster of five dark blue circles of different sizes arranged in a roughly diagonal pattern.

LET'S GET CONNECTED FACILITATED FORUM SERIES

**Working to improve access for Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander families to mainstream services in Metro
West**

Presented by Jackie Stewart

COLLABORATIVE PROJECT:

- Families NSW (FNSW)
- Aboriginal Child Youth and Family (ACYFS)
- Auspiced by Family Worker Training and Development Programme (FWT+DP)

FNSW Facilitated Forums project 'Let's Get Connected' forum series for workers across Metro West to discuss ways to improve access to mainstream services for Aboriginal families with children.



PARTICIPATING SERVICES

- Aboriginal workers working in local services – both Aboriginal and Non Aboriginal services

- Mainstream service providers in the Metro West region already working or wanting to work with Aboriginal families



- The first 'Let's Get Connected' Forum was held in October 2009 and was attended by Aboriginal workers and service providers
- Identified 'What works' for Aboriginal families and 'What's not' working for Aboriginal families concerning access to services.
- One recommendation of action from this forum was to hold a similar forum for mainstream services to map what they are currently doing and to identify ways they can improve Aboriginal families' access to their services.



- The second 'Let's Get Connected' Forum was attended by mainstream workers and service providers.
- Small group discussions were based on a strength based approach to identify 'what is working well' and 'what needs improving'. These discussions produced a group of strategies and priority actions to improve access.
- At the third 'Lets Get Connected' Forum the Aboriginal workers who attended the first forum were invited to review the strategies identified from the mainstream forum and provided feedback to the main discussion points.



MAIN DISCUSSION POINTS:

- What we know about how to facilitate change effectively
- Where mainstream services and workers are in terms of willingness to change
- Where are the strengths and how can we make best use of these strengths and build on them
- Process and timing actions for best effect.



DEVELOPMENT OF ACTION PLAN

- The Aboriginal Access Working Group developed the Metro West Aboriginal Access Strategic Plan – coordinated by Marilyn Fischer
- The Working group compiled strategies for improving Aboriginal access to mainstream services into two overarching parts.



Part 1:

Mainstream services work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and families to ensure the social and emotional well being of their children, family and community and to stay strong in their culture.

Outcome 1:

Mainstream Services (Non - Aboriginal Services) explore cultural immersion processes to improve their ways of working with Aboriginal families.



Part 2:

Mainstream organisations take responsibility to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people “build their capacity and sustain their strength to support healthy relationships, families and communities, and to raise their children to be strong in their culture” (SNAICC – Working and Walking Together.)

Outcome 2:

Mainstream services adopt inclusive practices through trusting relationships with Aboriginal service providers and Aboriginal communities.



SUCSESSES

- The forum series began in October 2009 and is still going - the commitment from all workers and services to attending over this period of time and to continued input into this Metro West strategy has been exceptional.
- The forum series have provided many opportunities for both Aboriginal and mainstream workers to build relationships and trust, and to form partnerships and work collaboratively.
- Development of Metro West Action Plan provides a framework of outcomes and objectives required of mainstream services to improve access



CHALLENGES

- Maintaining the ongoing interest and participation in the forums – worker turnover, 3-6 months between forums
- Ensuring that we achieve our intended outcomes
- Sustainable and achievable strategy



WHAT'S NEXT?

- 'Getting started on your RAP' workshop
- Support mainstream services to complete agreed actions
- Build capacity of Aboriginal workers to work more effectively in partnership with mainstream services
- Promote and support services to continue building on work achieved

