

NCNS NEWSLETTER

HOW OUR CLOSING THE GAP PROGRAM HELPS IMPROVE THE LIVES OF THOSE LIVING WITH CHRONIC DISEASE

As we talked about in our November newsletter last year, the Aboriginal community, and the number of people we support through our Closing the Gap team, are increasing dramatically each year. From 2020 – 2024, we had an increase of 81% of active clients on our register.

With the increasing Aboriginal population in Penrith, as well as the increasing cost of living, the biggest challenge for the team is meeting the financial requirements of the program. The funding provided to pay for specialist appointments, medical aids, transport, allied health appointments, assisted breathing equipment and more, is no longer sufficient to service our clients to the best level, meaning our team need to triage our clients and their needs, to determine the best use of the funds we have. Funding is essential to make sure we can take the best care of our clients however we are limited with the current funding and ever-growing client list.

Let's look at how our team has managed to help clients within the Closing the Gap Program recently and why this program is so important for our community.

Belinda Shipley, NCNS Aboriginal Health Outreach Worker explained, "We have had a beautiful family move into their new house! After being diagnosed with cancer, my client Teresa found it extremely hard to go up and down her stairs, in her townhouse and this was causing her great stress and anxiety.

I have helped Teresa collect all her medical documentation so that we could put in an application for a transfer with the Department of Housing. Teresa's children are so much happier, and Teresa is now able to sleep in her own bed. With a larger modified bathroom, she is now able to shower with ease and they now feel like they really have a place they can call home.



Another Elderly client of mine has recently received her mobility scooter from Independent Living Specialists Penrith.



This client had great difficulty navigating the My Age Cared systems, so I have assisted her to complete her My Aged Care application and she is now on a level 4 package with Annecto, an Aged care and disability support services provider. Through this, she has now been able to purchase not only the mobility scooter, but also a medical alert watch, that will contact her family and 000 if she falls and requires help.

She also has been able to purchase a recliner lounge that assists her to stand up, a mobile phone to communicate with specialists, walking and shower aids and an ipad for keeping up with all of her medical appointments. This client is now more independent and is now better able to connect with her community which is amazing for us to see.”

Michael Field, NCNS Aboriginal Health Outreach & Promotion Worker, delivered a brand-new walker last Thursday to a Closing the Gap Integrated Team Care (ITC) client, the first walker that this client has ever had. This client is severely vision impaired, a diabetic and a partial amputee.

Michael shared, “I removed the plastic wrapping and adjusted the handlebars to suit my client’s liking. They threw their walking stick aside and proudly did laps of the lounge room and kitchen. They were so happy to receive their new walker and could not stop thanking me. Their eyes lit up and their whole being was elated! I felt humbled to be able to provide this service to my client. It was a great reminder to me of why I come to work each day!”

These moments are so rewarding for our workers who work with clients dealing with chronic diseases every day. Our team take pride in the work they do and are passionate about being there to support their clients through their difficult health journeys.

Would you like to know more about this program?

Contact our Closing the Gap team on:
02 4706 0299
or ctg@nepeancommunity.org.au

Click [here](#) to see our Closing the Gap Brochure.

PLAYGROUPS: BUILDING BLOCKS FOR SUCCESS

Article Written by: Sussan Omar
NCNS Parenting Facilitator



Playgroups play a significant role in giving your child the best chance at successful happy transition to school. Children who attend playgroups generally adapt to school life more easily having better social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills.

Impact on Brain Development

The first 3-5 years of life are vital for brain development, this is the time the neural pathways that create the foundation of our brains are built. The first three years are signified by rapid development, and during this time, every child needs to feel secure attachment to their primary caregivers, and supported by their community environments, including playgroups.

Playgroups support brain development by providing an interactive and stimulating environment. One of the ways they achieve this is sensory play, where children are exposed to touching and exploring different things, and physical play, which enhances sensory and motor skills.

Language and Cognitive advantages

Language and vocabulary develop through play and communication with others, listening, and following instructions in playgroup.

Cognitive skills are developed through exposure to activities like puzzles, games, and activities, encouraging critical thinking, memory and problem solving. These building blocks are appreciated by schools when the children start Kindy.

Social and Emotional Development

One of the key advantages that schools report for children attending playgroups is the impact on social and emotional development. Exposure to playgroups and interaction with other children and caregivers provide opportunities for children to practice sharing, co-operating, and navigating emotions in a safe environment. In addition, children benefit emotionally as they learn to express feelings like sadness, fear, anger, and joy, all in the context of play in a nurturing environment.

Children also benefit from the structured nature of playgroups that can help with practical tasks at school like lining up, sitting down, and following instructions.

Research consistently highlights a distinct advantage that children who attend playgroups have over other children when it comes to future academic outcomes. Playgroups provide a safe and nurturing environment to explore, play and practice a range of social, emotional, and cognitive skills that are building blocks for healthy relationships and ensure a smooth transition to school.

For more information on playgroups and to access NCNS local playgroups click below.

NCNS Playgroups [here](#)

NSW Playgroups at www.playgroupnsw.org.au

THE PHASES OF FUNCTIONAL FAMILY THERAPY (FFT)

Article Written by Monica Purcell
NCNS- Family Practitioner



Functional Family Therapy- Child Welfare (FFT-CW) is a therapeutic intervention aimed at building safety and keeping families together. FFT-CW works with the whole family in the home over a period of 4-6 months and is comprised of three phases.

Engagement and Motivation:

The first phase of therapy is all about relationship building. A family's connection to their practitioner is crucial in supporting change. Families often present to us at the worst moments, so our job is to find a spark of hope that we can use to move them towards change. We focus on the family's strengths and help them to see each other differently, in a more positive light. While connecting and building hope, the practitioner will build a picture of the ways in which family members typically interact with each other in times of stress or conflict.

Behaviour Change:

FFT is unique from other forms in therapy in that we do not make any suggestions for change until a family feels hopeful (enough) and connected with us. We know if we rush in too soon, it may not help the family move forward.

Practitioners then consider which skills the family could learn to improve their situation. Skills can cover areas such as emotion regulation, communication, conflict resolution, behaviour management or parenting.

Generalisation:

After the skills training, practitioners stay connected with families to check in on progress and help family members implement what they have learned across more settings and situations outside of the home. It is also our opportunity to address any issues that are still un-resolved and fill in any gaps with any additional relevant services.

We 'step out' once safety has been increased and there is a shift in the family dynamics towards a more positive, productive, and hopeful way of being together. There are no perfect families, so we aim for 'good enough' family functioning. Small changes can make a big difference in a child or teen's life.

NCNS delivers FFT-CW across Penrith, Blue Mountains and Lithgow. Visit our website to find out **more**

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