

Health Promoting Communities: Being Active Eating Well

Final Report Dunkley Community Kitchen

Sandybeach Centre
16th December 2010

1. Main messages

Our aim was in implementing the Community Kitchen was to undertake an activity through which we could engage with public housing estate residents in a substantial ongoing way. We wanted to make residents more aware of how to make inexpensive, nutritious meals, while contributing to social connectedness on the estates and linking residents to educational opportunities available at two community centres (Sandybeach and Hampton Community Centre).

We established the Community Kitchen early in 2009. Active facilitation and constant evaluation and oversight and support from our Community Learning Partnership Project Officer have been key factors in its success. The Facilitator kept a weekly journal of:

- what benefits were emerging,
- what participant comments and achievements were,
- what issues were arising, and
- what improvements could be made.

This journal has provided a rich source of informed person feedback about the kitchen and its benefits, which 'fleshes out' the picture provided by the participation data.

When it became clear that the complex issues facing participants were making the numbers able to participate in and sustain the Kitchen unviable, we redesigned the format into a free Community Lunch, which did not require the same level of participant commitment as the Community Kitchen but still achieved the sense of social connectedness and the awareness of inexpensive and nutritious recipes.

Key benefits arising from both the Community Kitchen and Community Lunch are outlined below.

- Residents have learned how to make nutritious, inexpensive recipes.
- A most important factor is that people come and socialise and talk. Many of the residents are isolated and shut up in their flats, and many face complex mental health and addiction issues. The sense of friendship and connectedness is valued by all the participants, and has the potential to make real differences to participant lives.
- Both the Community Kitchen and Community Lunch are incredibly valuable for the self-esteem of participants. The sense of acceptance from the rest of the group is wonderful. Participants have been able to use their skills, leading cooking sessions in the Community Kitchen and helping with preparation or cleaning up at the Community Lunch.
- It has been terrific for migrant participants to be able to share their food and culture and feel truly valued and accepted, and also to learn about how to use Australian ingredients and make Australian meals.
- The Community Kitchen and Community Lunch have served as an important 'base' for residents to become aware of the educational programs available at Sandybeach and Hampton Community Centres, and to feel confident enough to enrol in them. These are transformation actions for people who have lacked confidence and felt isolated on the estates, and for recent migrants who have not known where to turn.

2. Summary

This is a brief summary of project progress and findings, which will be reported in more detail in the next section.

Operating the Dunkley Fox Community Kitchen, which in Term 4 was redesigned as a Community Lunch, was a major, challenging and rewarding initiative.

The project has achieved its chief aims of:

- providing social contact and a sense of social connectedness on the estates, which has greatly benefited participants,
- providing a consistent presence on the estates which has demonstrated the commitment that Sandybeach has to estate residents
- linking participants to Sandybeach and Hampton community centres
- introducing participants to new recipes, increased cooking skills and nutritional awareness.

2.1. Location and target groups for project

The Community Kitchen was located in the community hall on the Dunkley Fox Housing Estate.

The target groups for the project were:

- Primary - residents of the Dunkley Fox and other the public housing estates in Bayside, and other Bayside residents experiencing significant disadvantage. 12 housing estate residents attended the Community Kitchen throughout Terms 1, 2 and 3, and 25 people attended the Community Lunches held in Term 4.
- Secondary - residents of the public housing estates who have been born outside Australia and have English as a second language. 7 of the people attending the Community Kitchen were in this category: 2 from Sudan, 1 from Somalia, 1 Polish, 1 Greek, 1 Japanese and 1 from Argentina.

2.2. Goals and objectives

We had several objectives in establishing the Community Kitchen, which included:

- providing social contact and a sense of social connectedness on the estates,
- providing a consistent presence on the estates to build a relationship and demonstrate the commitment that Sandybeach has to estate residents,
- linking participants to educational opportunities at Sandybeach and Hampton community centres
- introducing participants to new recipes, increased cooking skills and nutritional awareness.

2.3. Implementation

We distributed notices about the Community Kitchen on the estates on at least a monthly basis to encourage participation.

We had a paid facilitator who was supported by the CLP Project Officer for the Community Kitchen, as we have determined that facilitation and support are very important components for the success of the kitchen. The facilitator:

- Encouraged participants to lead sessions and make decisions about how things would be done;
- Kept consistent contact with participants between sessions eg would ring participants and follow up if they missed sessions;
- Have a back-up plan if a planned participant-led session did not eventuate

The members of the Kitchen cooked food which could be taken home, with members \$4 per serve which comprised a full main serve and a sweet.

The funds were collected and retained by the participants who used them for the next week's shopping, delegating that duty on a rotational basis. The funds paid by the participants each week are not part of the financial acquittal of the program, as they were managed by participants as their petty cash.

When we re-designed the Community Kitchen as a free Community lunch with the objective of reaching a broader range of people, we again distributed notices on the estate to publicise the Lunch. We also contacted other organisations providing Community Lunches, such as Mack's Place, so they could let their clients know.

2.3.1. Main interventions

- Constant promotion of the Kitchen to attract participants. This included regular distribution of leaflets about the Kitchen on the estates, and visiting groups such as those participating in Family Life programs to tell them about the Kitchen.
- Following up participants who stop attending by phone, letter and email. Contacting all participants when there is a break eg for school holidays.
- Encouraging and supporting participants who initially lack confidence to lead a cooking session.
- Providing participants with information about educational opportunities available at Sandybeach and Hampton Community Centres.
- Altering the format of the activity to maintain participation, eg including market visits, changing format from Community Kitchen to Community Lunch.

2.4. Evaluation

Evaluation was done as follows:

- Facilitator journals and reflections
- Documentation of participant comments and of focus group discussions with participants
- Tracking of participant data eg attendance, number of participants enrolling in Sandybeach and Hampton Community Centre programs, number of participants having English as a second language.
- Participant case studies.

2.5. Findings

Connectedness is critical

- Weekly contact with the participants must be undertaken. If they don't attend the group, a phone call and follow up letters and emails can help overcome the many reasons why people may become disconnected or disinterested;
- Group involvement in the planning of the program and setting of the ground rules is important.
- It is important to encourage the participants to set the focus of the community kitchen and to share the load of responsibilities that participation brings, eg menu planning and shopping, but it is equally important to have a facilitator who can cover these activities and keep the Kitchen going to cover any gaps.

There are challenges

- Several participants have serious mental health issues, such as schizophrenia and severe depression. Others have drug and alcohol addictions. For these participants, even occasional attendance is a huge outcome. A great deal of time must be invested to obtain even irregular attendance from these participants.
- Keeping the Kitchen or Lunch going every week, even if attendance is low, is essential. Demonstrating the commitment of being there regularly is essential to build trust. Our philosophy is: *we turn up and stay, even if no participants arrive*. If this happens, it can be very demoralising for a facilitator, but we needed to demonstrate our commitment to the project and to the participants.
- Our group tended to be transient so we needed to put the word out about the kitchen constantly, a time consuming aspect of this project. It was challenging to do this and maintain contact consistently with the participants.
- As participants changed, the format needed to be altered in response to their differing interests and needs. Some of the changes made at different stages included:
 - Changing the format from 2 hours of cooking to 1 hour of coffee and chat – open to all – followed by second hour of cooking.
 - Ultimately changing format to a Community Lunch.

Operating a Community Kitchen or Lunch with participants with complex issues requires a Facilitator

- As outlined in the above, the complex issues affecting participant's lives meant that many of them attended irregularly. This means a great deal of time and energy is required to maintain the momentum and keep the group operating, and a Facilitator is required for this.

The program needs to be varied in response to participant interests

- We included a visit to Oakleigh Market and discussed the produce available and how to use it. Participants enjoyed buying goods to take home and the ingredients needed for the following week, and completed an activity sheet about the visit.
- We established some veggie gardens in pots with the residents.
- Ultimately we changed the format from a Community Kitchen to a Community Lunch.

3. Whole of project progress

3.1. Governance structure

The project was overseen by the partners in our Community Learning Partnership (CLP). The CLP partners are Family Life, Hampton Community Centre, Bayside Council and Sandybeach Centre. The Community Kitchen project was managed and supported by our CLP Project Officer, who met with the Community Kitchen Facilitator on a weekly basis, regularly visited the kitchen and was significantly involved in promoting and supporting it.

3.2. Activity summary

The following summary of the key participation data for the Kitchen shows that we succeeded in establishing an ongoing Kitchen, engaging with estate residents, and achieving the multiple objectives we had set for the Kitchen.

- 14 sessions of the Community Kitchen and 4 Community Lunches were held between June 1 and Dec 16 2010. These sessions were held on Tuesdays on the Dunkley Fox Estate.
- 12 adults and 2 children had an involvement with the Community Kitchen and 25 participants attended the Community Lunches.
- There were usually 4 – 6 regular attendees at any given stage of the Community Kitchen, but gradually numbers dwindled, despite significant promotion and follow-up, thus we developed the Community Lunch format which did not require such a consistent commitment from participants.
- The Community Kitchen served as an important 'base' for us to provide information sessions about educational opportunities at Sandybeach and Hampton Community Centre. These sessions which were held towards the end of each community kitchen or community lunch session in the lead up to each new term.
- 5 of the Community Kitchen participants enrolled in one or more of our centre-based programs.
- 7 of the people attending the Community Kitchen were migrants: 2 from Sudan, 1 from Somalia, 1 Polish, 1 Greek, 1 Japanese and 1 from Argentina.

3.3. Local evaluation

As stated in section 2.4, evaluation was done as follows:

- Facilitator journals and reflections
- Documentation of participant comments and of focus group discussions with participants
- Tracking of participant data eg number of participants enrolling in Sandybeach and Hampton Community Centre programs, number of participants having English as a second language.
- Participant case studies.

3.4. Results/findings

The activity summary listed above in Section 3.2 outlines many of the results of the project, and Section 2.5 outlines the Findings.

The following case studies are powerful examples of some of the results achieved, and indicate the way in which the kitchen participants established a sense of 'family', which was extremely beneficial both for the Australian and migrant participants.

4. Case studies

The Kitchen has created a real sense of presence on the Dunkley Fox estate, with residents becoming much more aware of the community centres. The participant case studies tell the story- the participant names have been altered to protect privacy.

Mydet

Mydet was introduced to the Community Kitchen through other African families on the estate. She was quite shy when she first came. She offered to lead a session, then backed off and couldn't do it. This happened twice, but then she returned, determined to do it, and she did. It was a huge success – she ended up telling the others all about her culture and demonstrating some of their dancing, with all the others in the group joining in.

This proved a real turning point for Mydet. She subsequently decided to join a mentoring program being offered by Sandybeach Centre, and she identified that the area which she would like to work in is Community Development. With her mentor, she identified the relevant course and where it was offered. Her plans are currently on hold because she became pregnant, but her newfound knowledge of what is available and her increased confidence hold out significant hope for the future.

Fred

Fred is a long term resident on the estate who used to regularly drop in at the kitchen with another long term resident, Anne. When Anne moved off the estate, we were uncertain if Fred would continue, and we were very pleased when he did. Fred has usually relied on others before participating in things, but this year he decided to enrol in Literacy classes, a very big move for him. The whole group was very supportive of Fred's decision to improve his literacy skills, and the Facilitator offered to help with his homework should he ever require it. The acceptance and support that Fred has received through the kitchen seems to have definitely contributed to the positive steps he is now taking.

5. Financial report

The financial acquittal, signed by our Finance Officer, is attached.

5.1. Financial acquittal

Income	Activity- Dunkley Community Kitchen	Planned Budget	Actual Expenditure BAEW Funds
BAEW Project \$2,520	Facilitator/project officer 3 hours per week by 20 weeks @ \$45 per hour (including on-cost)	We submitted for \$2520, however we knew that the actual expenditure would be higher and it was \$2700	\$2520
Total BAEW			\$2,520

5.2. Resource use

Other income, expenditure and in-kind support

Activity	Resources used	Details	\$ spent*	Quantification of non-financial resources used**
Dunkley Community Kitchen/Lunch	Project Officer time	Participant follow up, ongoing support to engage hard to reach participants, organisation of and liaison with volunteers, provision of information sessions, development of strategies for Kitchen, promotion of kitchen including preparation and distribution of leaflets on estates, making presentations about the project, fundraising to sustain project	\$1700	2.5 hours per week for 22 weeks
	Food, sundry kitchen equipment		\$240	
	Printing of flyers – distributed at regular intervals across all Bayside estates		\$100	
	Project Manager time	Budget oversight, Project oversight, Evaluation, Reporting	\$1050	30 hours
	CLP Partner's time x 4 partner representatives	Project Meetings		1.5 hour meetings 6-weekly
Lions Club of Sandringham income \$2,500 sponsorship				

* Please provide dollar amounts where known however if unknown please provide an approximate or estimate if possible. If not available just complete what you can.

** If completing just start by giving any details you have regarding hours spent on intervention by who and/or type of resource in the details column (e.g. school hall hire) and quantification in this column (e.g. 1 hour)

6. Dissemination activity

Presentations about the Community Kitchen have been made to:

- the Project Management Group, comprising Family Life, Bayside City Council, Hampton Community Centre and Sandybeach Centre
- ACFE Community Learning Partnership Showcase – July 13
- The Lions Club of Sandringham (Several written reports)
- The Bentleigh-Moorabbin Rotary group (July 21)
- The Beaumaris Rotary group (Nov 9)

7. Lessons learned

In addition to the comments below, please refer to Section 2.5 of this report.

7.1. *What were the critical factors that supported the program's achievements?*

The critical factors which supported the program's achievements were that:

1. We provided a Facilitator for every session and ensured that there was always a second person present, both as a security measure and to make it possible for participants with children to attend.
2. We stayed connected with participants through weekly contact, following them up if they did not attend.
3. We employed a Project Officer who worked with the Facilitator to develop, document and review the strategies being used, organising volunteers to provide child care and 'back-up' for the Facilitator at the Kitchen, to follow up and maintain contact with hard-to-engage residents, and to develop and regularly distribute promotional leaflets about the Kitchen.
4. We changed strategies when the ones we were using no longer seemed to be working, and redesigned the Community Kitchen as a Community Lunch.
5. We provided 'pathways' from the Community Kitchen, linking participants to educational courses and mentoring opportunities available at Sandybeach Centre and Hampton Community Centre.
6. We committed to the Community Kitchen/ Lunch and kept it going even when participation levels became very low.
7. We secured a sponsor, the Lions Club of Sandringham, so that the project could be sustained.

7.2. *Challenges that the program faced*

The key challenge facing the program was maintaining participation. Although people liked coming, the commitment – given the difficult circumstances of many of their lives – was too much for some participants to maintain. Some participants have struggled with alcohol and drug addictions, others have experience severe mental health issues such as schizophrenia. For these people, even turning up occasionally to the Community Kitchen was a major achievement, and feeling accepted by others and connected to the community extremely beneficial.

The challenge for us was to maintain the momentum of the Community Kitchen, given the issues affecting participation, as there needed to be a regular core present for the Kitchen to operate. Ultimately we decided that we would reach more people by reducing the level of commitment required and so redeveloped the Kitchen as a free Community Lunch. There are still opportunities for individuals to contribute to the Community Lunch, assisting with the food preparation and other activities. The great benefit of the Community Lunch is that it does not require a commitment to regular participation and it can operate effectively even if a totally different group of people attend from one week to another. With the presence of the Facilitator and support volunteers, the Lunch does create a warm, accepting environment and establish the sense of social connectedness achieved by the Kitchen, while being accessible to a much broader range of people.

7.3. *How could the activity be improved on?*

As outlined in other sections of this report, we incorporated improvements as we went along. This included:

- working consistently to keep people connected between sessions.
- Encouraging and responding to participant input and varying the sessions accordingly.
- Redeveloping the Community Kitchen as a free Community Lunch.

8. Sustainability

We have secured a sponsorship from the Lions Club of Sandringham and the Bentleigh-Moorabbin Rotary Group to sustain the project in 2011.

9. Conclusion

We are very grateful to have had the BAEW funding to establish and maintain this important Community Kitchen/ Community Lunch initiative, which we will be sustaining in the future. The project has increased the awareness of many participants about how to prepare nutritious and cost-effective meals. The initiative has also made a very important contribution to social connectedness on the Dunkley Fox estate and has succeeded in linking a number of residents to education opportunities which have the potential to significantly improve their lives.

Attachment 1

Intervention Activity Form to capture information about intervention activities (implementation) and sustainability.

This form is required by the statewide evaluation plan. An example has been provided to assist you to complete this form for your activity.

Dunkley Community Kitchen

Nature of initiative	Setting influenced by initiative				
	School	Workplace	Organisation	Home	Community
Awareness raising				Participant discussion about the nutritious, cost effective meals they prepared in the Kitchen. Participant interest in the recipes provided by the Facilitator and those from other participants and other cultures.	Regular distribution of leaflets about the Community Kitchen/Lunch on the Bayside public housing estates. Presentations made to Bayside Lions and Rotary groups.
Information/Education				Provision of recipes to participants and feedback from participants that they had tried these recipes at home.	Presentation of information about education opportunities at local community centres, and subsequent enrolments there.
Behaviour change				Participants who initially lacked confidence to demonstrate recipes and lead sessions ultimately did so.	Weekly participation at Dunkley Fox estate community kitchen
Sustainable environment change - physical - policy - economic - curriculum - program					Ground rules developed and implemented by participants with support from facilitator. Program varied in response to input from participants. Friendships developed and social connectedness established.