

SMS4 DEADLYDADS



HEALING THROUGH COMMUNITY DECEMBER 2023 Overview Northern QLD

WORKSHOP & COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

In December 2023 more than 40 participants representing community-controlled organisations, Health Services, NGOs and Government agencies gathered at the SMS4DeadlyDads workshop and community consultation held at Wuchopperen Health Service in Cairns.

The representation and engagement of participants highlighted an eagerness to involve and better connect with Aboriginal and Torres Islander dads and dads-to-be in the perinatal phase.

The positive reception towards SMS4DeadlyDads was heartening. And the concept of developing text messages especially for First Nations dads when things don't go to plan during a pregnancy or around the birth was well received.

"SMS4DeadlyDads is a new concept to me, but since learning all about it, I can really see the importance of the program and the tools that you're using to connect with dads – particularly for dads who are feeling anxious about becoming a parent or dads who are a bit unsure or may not be confident in their parenting style. I can really see the value of it (SMS4DeadlyDads) and how we can get that messaging out to dads and even our young men."

RACHEL HAM, DEPUTY CEO WUCHOPPEREN



Thank you to the team at Wuchopperen for hosting us and to the key community members who attended and presented their work and shared their insights and feedback on this work.

PICTURED LEFT TO RIGHT: Richard Fletcher, Peter English, Louie Hahn, Bernard David, Rachel Ham, Mick Adams and Uel Bani



Participants agreed there is not a lot out there for First Nations men when things don't go to plan during a pregnancy or birth – and that support and resources like SMS4DeadlyDads would be an important and useful service.



IN PARTNERSHIP

HIGHLIGHTS

Building on the SMS4DeadlyDads visit to Cairns and Thursday Island in September last year, services in Northern QLD were invited to join a discussion of possible messages for First Nations fathers who are grieving a loss.

Highlights from the workshop included the cross collaborations we witnessed between organisations and participants who attended the workshop and community consultation.

Organisational representatives learnt more about each others services, how to refer clients, met new staff and heard about upcoming events and programs taking shape – such as the Strong Men's Yarning Circle and Mookai Rosie's opening of their services to encompass men.

On the final day of our visit to Cairns there was indeed A LOT happening: emergency drills; contingency planning meetings; industrial generator testing; risk assessments; all amidst end-of-year Christmas celebrations and festivities. With tensions rising due to the anticipated weather events along with the buzz of Christmas closures and the management, facilitation and care of many for whom the festive season poses additional stress – we were sent off with many a "Too goods", hugs and excitement for things to come for dads and men and their families in the communities of Northern Queensland.

We've been thinking of you all in Northern QLD this past couple of months whilst dealing with the impacts of cyclone "Jasper" and "Kyrily." Thank once again for your contribution and we look forward to looping back on this feedback as SMS4DeadlyDads progresses.

AN ELDER PARTICIPANT COMMENTED

"My theory has been, as long as I am on earth, I want to teach the young fellas everything that I know before I die. So, I've got to hand over and pass on critical and vital information for our wellbeing as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. And this SMS4DeadlyDads is just another part of that – I am really happy to be part of it."

And we are delighted you are all a part of building the SMS4DeadlyDads service too.

SUPPORT FOR DADS

"A lot of community-controlled organisations may be offering more culturally appropriate services but a lot of the time they still don't have gender-appropriate services.

So now they are looking at ways that bring the male-female parenting services together and offer services to both parents, or Uncle and Aunties.

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT

MEN'S GRIEF

"I think it's good to have some of those conversations about when things don't go to plan with a pregnancy or parents have a loss. It's important to keep it appropriate and in the right context.

I think it's not well understood and that a lot of people don't know their way to grieve for a start (in general). That extends to grieving an early loss of a little one.

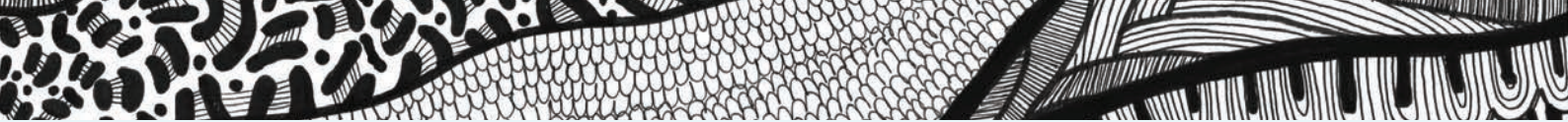
If we can open up awareness to people about how they grieve and then extend that onto how they grieve for losing a little one early, then that is going to spark them to keep in that routine and do similar ceremonies – to keep it in line with how they would normally grieve."

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT

GENERATIONAL SHIFTS

"There has been a generational shift in Cape communities and in the Cairns region too. I've noticed in the last ten or so years that there seems to be more fathers who are willing to 'push a pram.' You wouldn't have seen that type of thing in my father's day."

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT



BUILDING SUPPORT FOR DADS

"If things don't go well during a pregnancy, SMS4DeadlyDads – with the messages here and there – they will help fathers and help their families. It can guide them on their way through. To guide them towards where to seek help and importantly to even recognise when you do need help."

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT



REINSTATING MEN'S ROLE

"One of the main angles we come from is going back to rediscovering our heritage – our identity, our culture. A reconnecting of the self to that person and who you are. It's all about restoring the man within, that structure, with your community, your family... your responsibility and connection. To be a beacon for your family and your missus, and the kids and providing for them and also looking after yourself."

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT



MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BUSINESS

I've been looking at the cultural protocols and recognising the impacts of colonisation and modernity and how dads can support their women and newborns. That's what I'm looking at with my brother here – how to engage men respectfully and base it on culture and social and emotional well-being. WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT

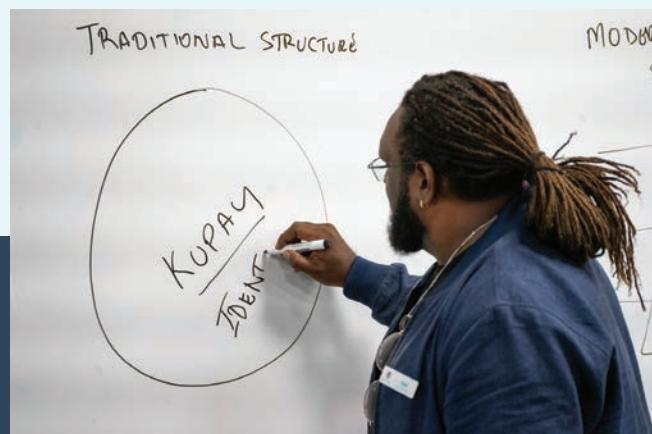
BUILDING A BOND BY BEING HANDS-ON

There are some ways that we get fathers involved, especially if they don't know how to engage. For example, it might be taboo for a dad to wash their baby – to bath their baby – but it doesn't mean they can't get the baby bath ready. Other things like being involved when mum is breastfeeding – so after mum has finished feeding, dads can take the baby, burp the baby. To learn and start being involved – that's how you start building that bond. WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT

CULTURAL PRACTICES

Kupay is really important. That is actually the name for the belly button, where you are joined on the inside. We have that belief "from womb to tomb".

All men have got a responsibility in the Torres Strait and in the Northern Peninsula... We've got a responsibility as men "from womb to tomb."





EVENT SNAPS



YARNING UP & DEEP LISTENING



CONNECTING WITH NEW & OLD FRIENDS



SHARING KNOWLEDGE



SEEKING IDEAS, COLLABORATION & INSIGHTS

WORKSHOPPING THE MESSAGES

A selection of sample messages were workshoped in teams of participants leading to robust conversations, the offering of new ideas, feedback and suggestions, with nuances and input based on participant experience and their work with dads in their communities.

Many of the participants were familiar with the mainstream message set of SMS4dads and the SMS4DeadlyDads messages, having seen them in the professional taster and having looked through examples online previously.

There was a positive response to this new area of work and the need for resources, awareness and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dads when things don't go to plan with a pregnancy or birth.

In general the importance of keeping the messages brief, using simple English without medical terminology and the strength of using localised lingo and phrases to connect with Torres Strait and Northern QLD Aboriginal dads was highlighted.

For example, "Too good" and "Which way bro" and avoiding abbreviations such as "GP" that may not be used in these regions.

SAMPLE MAINSTREAM MESSAGES WERE DISCUSSED FOR FEEDBACK & REVIEW

Here is info you can share with your family, friends and work mates. It will give them an idea of what you are going through and what they can do.

Parents sometimes feel guilty that they couldn't protect their baby. Guilt is a normal part of grief. If it's overwhelming call Red Nose on 1300 308 307

Talk to family and friends who are close to you and who you respect, who will not judge you.

Many dads try to keep it together while their partner grieves. Feel your grief and acknowledge it. It will help you cope while you care for those around you.

You are likely to be your partner's most important supporter. She needs to know you have got her back and that she is important to you. Remind her often.

SUGGESTED MESSAGE ADAPTIONS INCLUDED

"Which way Bro. Do you want some info to yarn with your mob?"

"Which way Bro. Don't forget to check in with baby's mother. She be feeling it too."

"Sad time? You might be like a Bala yarning"

"Thinking of you in this sorry time. Losing a little one early can feel lonely. Don't be frightened to reach out to your supports for yarning."

"It's important to know you or baby's mother did nothing wrong. If you feel shame connect with supports in your area."

"If you lose little one early, it is important to grieve your way and stay in touch with your supports. Grieve together."

THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE & CREATING SAFE SPACES

Participants noted how speaking gently with dads who may be doing it tough in their grief is important, and not being too directive in the texts.

The importance of giving men time and space and offering a range of suggestions or ideas was raised. However this needs to be done gently – in a way that doesn't put pressure on dads or make them feel shame/guilt if they do not take a suggested action.

"The idea of the messages on the phone is that it is a safe space. It is just you and the phone. You don't have to front up to anybody or show anybody what you're thinking or feeling. It can also be a place where men can ask questions without feeling shame... Maybe they think they have a silly question – but if it's going to somebody they don't know and a response comes back then that's OK. They don't have to feel shame. No-one's looking over their shoulder saying, "Oh, you should already know that" So, the text service can be a safe place for them to receive information."

"It's important to acknowledge a loss. You can hear it (that he has had loss) in his voice."

FEEDBACK AROUND GETTING THE MESSAGES RIGHT

Replace 'talk' with 'yarn', 'respect' with 'trust', replace 'who will not judge you' with 'Yarning helps...' Replace 'navigate' with 'go through', or 'journey', replace 'you can share' with 'you can share or not share'

Rather than 'keep it together' use 'many dads feel they need to be strong' 'It's OK to reach out for support'

Consider links for alternate Indigenous language translations

Voice message options instead of SMS
– Black fella voice

Pictures may be useful – visual and practical

Voice to text and adding visuals or animations eg GIFS



Specific, thoughtful, clear and direct feedback was suggested in regards to the language used to both promote SMS4DeadlyDads and in the messaging. This engagement was extremely welcomed throughout the workshop.

"He should rub her back and ask 'Ya right Bub?'"

ADDITIONAL AREAS FOR EXPLORATION

The following issues have been consistently raised in our community consultations highlighting areas of work which may be further explored:

KINSHIP CARE & REMOVAL OF CHILDREN

How might we support dads who have children taken away / children removed or fear this happening

WORKING WITH DADS IN PRISON

How might dads maintain a sense of their role as fathers and connect with their baby and partner while in a correctional facility and in their transition to being released

SEPARATED DADS

How might we include messages for dads who are separated from their partners

TEENAGE FATHERS

With an increase in teenage pregnancies, how might a text message set be adapted to include content and issues specifically for younger dads

MESSAGE TRANSLATION

The diversity of lingo and cultural references used by dads throughout Australia was raised. How might the SMS messages be tailor-made to engage and connect with various language groups.

GRANDPARENTS' ROLE & SUPPORT

How might we tap into ways that acknowledge grandparents' grief and the role they play in comforting children after a loss



SMS4DeadlyDads core messages focus on bonding and attachment, being a supportive partner and dads being mindful of their own health, well-being and accessing support. With the new grief and loss messages for Deadly Dads when things don't go to plan during a pregnancy or birth, it is hoped that these areas of need raised by community will be explored through:

- Continued conversations with health services, community workers, leaders and dads
- Applying for additional specific funding to develop appropriate SMS4DeadlyDads support
- Further collaborations with services, health workers, community members and leaders in specialty areas such as Child Protection Services, Out-of-Home Care, Youth Services and Corrective Services





BUILDING SUPPORT FOR DADS

"If things don't go well during a pregnancy, SMS4DeadlyDads – with the messages here and there – they will help fathers and help their families. It can guide them on their way through. To guide them towards where to seek help and importantly to even recognise when you do need help."

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT

NEXT STEPS



The SMS4DeadlyDads team is looking forward to taking on this feedback and input into the messages.

Over the coming months we will be speaking with health professionals, community members and dads in other states and territories for additional suggestions and information on specific cultural considerations. The final set of messages will be brief texts with links to online resources and services.

Upcoming consultations on messages for grieving fathers will be taking place in Queensland (Northern Queensland and Torres Strait), New South Wales (Hunter Valley and regional centres) and in South Australia (Adelaide and regional centres)

DEVELOPING MESSAGES FOR FIRST NATIONS FATHERS IS A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SMS4DEADLYDADS AND RED NOSE

THANK YOU

We would like to thank the following services and organisations for releasing staff to take part in the consultation in Cairns. We would like to acknowledge the support received from Wuchopperen in hosting the consultation.

IMAGES & VIDEO FOOTAGE
Phil Schouteten, Phisch Creative

Apunipima Cape York Health Council
Cairns and Hinterland Hospital & Health Service
Mamu Health Service
Mareeba Community Centre
Mookai Rosie Bi-Bayan
Mulungu Care Service
Mura Kosker Sorority
Queensland Center for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health
Queensland Health
Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service
UnitingCare Community Queensland
Wuchopperen Health Service