

25 May 2010

The Executive Officer
Education and Training Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Parliamentary Inquiry into the Potential for Schools to Become a Focus for Promoting Healthy Community Living - Bendigo Loddon Primary Care Partnership (BLPCP) Submission

The BLPCP consists of 35 member agencies who are often the first point of entry into the health system. They include divisions of general practice, hospitals, community health services, local government, aged care assessment services, women's health services, community drug treatment services, ethno-specific health services, mental health services, disability services and aboriginal community controlled health organisations. The agencies work together and share information to enable coordinated service system responses.

The BLPCP facilitated a meeting of member agencies on Wednesday 12 May 2010 to discuss the Parliamentary inquiry into the potential for schools to become a focus for promoting healthy community living. Agencies in attendance at the meeting were:

Bendigo Loddon Primary Care Partnership (BLPCP)
Bendigo Health (BH)
Bendigo Community Health Service (BCHS)
Women's Health Loddon Mallee (WHLM)
Heathcote Health (HH)

The organisations listed above provide a multitude of health promotion programs and projects to schools in the Bendigo Loddon region. Many of these projects and programs are based on the World Health Organisation's Health Promoting Schools Framework.

Attached is the collaborative input from the above agencies addressing the Parliamentary Inquiry questions, including local best practice examples.

Any enquiries should be directed to Brett Belot, Project Officer, telephone 5448 1682, email brettbelot@bchs.com.au.

Yours faithfully



Jeanette Grant
Executive Officer



**Parliamentary Inquiry into the Potential for Schools to Become a
Focus for Promoting Healthy Community Living**

Bendigo Loddon Primary Care Partnership Submission

Agency Input into Inquiry Questions

The following is the collaborative response of Bendigo Loddon Primary Care Partnership, Bendigo Health, Bendigo Community Health Services, Women's Health Loddon Mallee and Heathcote Health to the inquiry questions:

Experience with Health Promoting Schools framework or other similar models, including best practice models:

- Mind Matters
- Kids Matter
- Bounce Back
- The Seasons Program
- Resourceful Adolescent Program
- Bluearth
- Depression and Anxiety Program (Friends)
- You can do it
- JIGSAW
- Friendly schools, Friendly classrooms
- Festival for Healthy Living
- Talking Sexual Health
- Girls in a Whirl
- Photograph (DEECD)
- Schools as a Community Hub
- Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program
- Sustainability Schools Program
- LandLearn
- Healthy Communities Project
- Walking School Bus
- Ride 2 School
- Jump Rope for Heart
- Huff ' n ' Puff

Note: Examples of Best Practice models are provided later in this submission.

Agencies working in partnership with other local agencies to deliver health promotion initiatives:

- Bendigo Community Health Services
- School Focused Youth Service (SFYS)
- Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- School Nursing Program
- Centre for Non-Violence (EASE)
- Catholic Education Office

- LandLearn
- Bunnings
- Active After School Program
- Bendigo Health
- City of Greater Bendigo
- Loddon Mallee Pre School Association
- External Schools
- St Lukes
- Country Awareness Network
- Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE (BRIT)
- Central Victorian General Practice Network
- Lead On
- Local Fruit and Vegetable Shops (supermarkets)
- LaTrobe University
- Local Sporting Clubs
- Local Gymnasiums
- YMCA
- Sports Focus
- Bendigo Historical Society
- Local Service Clubs
- Coliban Water
- Peppergreen Farm
- Local Nurseries
- Bendigo and District Aboriginal Corporation

The suitability of schools as a setting for health promotion programs and initiatives:

Comments include:

- “It depends on the activity involved”
- “Can be embedded in the curriculum, environment and community”
- “Used to establish behaviours from an early age”
- “There is a greater opportunity for resource sharing and use of facilities”
- “Be mindful that we don’t crowd the curriculum and put too much pressure on teachers”

The most difficult health issues in schools and strategies used to address them

Most Difficult Health Issue	Strategy to Address Health Issue
• Lack of Good Nutrition	• Breakfast Programs/Healthy Habits for Children Program (HHCP), Free Fruit Friday, Kids ‘Go For Your Life’ (KGFYL), MEND
• Mental Health Issues	• MindMatters, KidsMatter, Bounce Back, Solving the Jigsaw, You Can Do It, Resourceful Adolescent Program, Beyond Blue
• Dental health	• School Dental Program/Smiles 4 Miles
• Tobacco, alcohol and other drugs	• Laryngectomme Program, Critics Choice, Quit
• Bullying (including cyber bullying)	• Bluearth
• Homophobia	• Way Out Project
• Eating Disorders	• Butterfly Foundation, Community Dietitian, CAMHS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical Inactivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HHCP, NETschool MOVE, Active After School Program (AAS), KGFYL, Bluearth, Walking School Bus (WSB), Ride 2 School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poverty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AAS, Breakfast program, Understanding Poverty Training for Staff, WSB
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head Lice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head Checks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual and Reproductive Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual Health Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dehydration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KGFYL, HHCP, NETschool MOVE

Note: All of the above health issues require sound policy development.

Any health promoting equipment, infrastructure or resources that are provided to schools or could be beneficial to schools:

- Various folders and 'kits' were suggested, including: KGFYL Award Program folder, HHCP resource kit, Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program folder.
- Infrastructure such as the AAS sporting equipment was suggested.
- Resources suggested were: Web based (HHCP), networking opportunities, professional development opportunities, knowledge/information sharing, consultation (individual and group), assistance with funding opportunities, media and promotion.

Factors essential to the success of partnerships involving the health and education sectors:

- Respect
- Trust
- Communication (two way)
- Honesty
- Joint Planning
- Consultation
- Networking
- Relationship Development
- Time
- Funding
- Negotiation

The effectiveness of current government policies and programs surrounding health promotion:

Comments include:

- "it is linked to effective planning and evaluation, need to get this right".
- "there is sometimes a limitation on reporting requirements, not capturing the heart of a project or program".
- "there can be an issue of Government policy not translating into effective action on the ground in regional areas".
- "funding and sustainability should always be considered in the development of effective projects and programs".
- "policy sometimes needs to be flexible to meet the 'real world' requirements".

Ways in which the long-term sustainability of health promotion programs can be achieved:

- Long term funding as an option.
- Use of best practice, evidence based programs.
- Re-orientation of the agency or service that is delivering the program, making it their core business.
- Capacity building for staff.

Best Practice

Agencies provided a list of Health Promoting School models currently being facilitated in the Bendigo Loddon region. Best practice models include:

Bendigo Health: Healthy Habits for Children Project

Project Background:

This project was developed in 2006 in response to a need's analysis carried out that highlighted the need by school communities for increased support in the provision of physical activity and good nutrition for students. This project has now developed into one that now not only supports schools, but also early childhood service providers.

The project aims to increase schools and early childhood services capacity to provide health supporting environments and the creation of health supporting habits amongst their students (and their families).

Partnerships:

Schools, Kids - 'Go for your Life', Loddon Mallee Pre-School Association, Catholic Education Office.

Project activities summarised:

1. Provision of a network meeting quarterly that enables schools to access service providers, education and informal network opportunities that increase school leader's capacity to create health sustaining environments within schools.
2. Increased access to supporting resources, through an online website directory and a resource kit that provides them with a range of health promoting materials.
3. Increased resources and skills sharing amongst local schools.
4. Provision of a canteen manager's network which enables schools to provide nutritious food to students.
5. Support in completing the KGFYL award program.

Project information for contribution to the submission:

1. Teaching and learning - all areas of the curriculum, training for staff, knowledge and skills for students and families:

Nutrition and physical activity education and skill development for:

- training for local primary school teachers (eg about the Health Promoting Schools Framework initially, then later training has included promoting the KGYFL award program and recommendations);

- The formation of the Bendigo Health 'Healthy Habits for Children' Network to promote healthy eating and physical activity strategies for primary schools and recently this network has extended to early children's services (ECS) including preschools. Network sessions are held four times a year. This network has an email group, which is used to inform network members of new opportunities, grants and other relevant information.
- Developing local resources including:
 - a Bendigo Health 'Healthy Habits for Children' healthy eating and physical activity website reference document - a directory of relevant websites aimed to improve schools (eg teachers, parents and children) and early children's services (eg preschools) access to information ,
 - The development of the Bendigo Health 'Healthy Habits for Children' resource kit (of useful healthy eating and physical activity resources) – a kit for primary school staff and early children's services staff (eg preschools). This kit was updated in 2008 to comply with the KGYFL award program.

2. Supportive school policies and environments:

The network sessions have provided guest speakers and information about writing policies to support schools and ECS to write nutrition and physical activity policies.

The network sessions promotes the KGYFL award program which guides school to make positive healthy changes within their school environment.

3. Community links and partnerships:

The 'Healthy Habits for Children' Network strengthens relationships between schools and assists them to share ideas about healthy eating and physical activity for children and families.

The network sessions have provided guest speakers and information about local services to assist schools to link up with local agencies, eg just add fruit business.

The network meetings help schools to:

- promote their achievements and lessons learnt,
- share ideas to make gradual healthy changes without 'reinventing the wheel',
- overcome barriers by gaining ideas that other schools have already tried, and
- Keep up to date with information, resources, training, and funding opportunities.

They also increase access to local support for schools.

Key findings highlighting the success of the project:

There has been an increase in KGYFL member schools in the region, which has resulted in increased attendance by schools at the Healthy Habits for Children network.

The network has strengthened relationships between schools and the sharing of resources, ideas and information, has resulted in schools having more consistency in their approach to addressing children's nutrition and physical activity.

All of those involved in the evaluation indicated that the Bendigo Health 'Healthy Habits for Children' resource kit and website reference document had supported them in the provision of physical activity and/or healthy eating activities and information to their students and families. All indicated that as a result of having access to the resource kit and website document their knowledge and awareness of how to obtain information and resources had improved.

Findings have also indicated that the Bendigo Health 'Healthy Habits for Children' resource kit and website reference document were used in the development and delivery of classroom activities, whole school themed days, and newsletter inserts.

Recommendations include:

- Ensure ongoing funding.
- Funding of 1 EFT for a health promotion worker to work in schools to run programs for not only students, but teachers, parents and community members.
- Be mindful of the pressure that teachers are already under, ensuring that we do not negatively impact on teacher health. Encourage the use of school facilities by the wider community.

Bendigo Senior Secondary School: NETschool MOVE Project – Healthy Lifestyle Project for Disadvantaged Youth

Project Background:

The project has been funded by the Federal Government through its Healthy Active Australia, Community and Schools Grants Program. The project commenced in 2009 and is auspiced by the NETschool program of Bendigo Secondary College.

The project aims to 'equip' marginalised young people with the tools and motivation to pursue good practices in health, nutrition and physical activity. The model is based on using a collaborative approach to integrate the actions of a number of stakeholders involved in the project.

NETschool Coordinator:

Julie Connell, PO BOX 170 Bendigo 3552, phone 5441 8504.

Partnerships:

NETschool (Bendigo Senior Secondary School), Bendigo Health Community Dietitian Service, Central Victorian General Practice Network, and Huff 'n' Puff Personal Trainer.

Project Activities Summarised:

- Provide suitable access to local health professionals.
- Provide young people with knowledge and experience of changing their health and physical activity.
- Provide education and experience of financially sustainable practices in health, nutrition and physical activity.
- Provide suitable role models for young people who often lack healthy adult relationships.
- Increase the Bendigo community's engagement in and responsibility for marginalised young people.

Project information for contribution to the submission:

This NETschool MOVE project incorporates the health promoting schools framework, including:

1. Teaching & learning - all areas of the curriculum, training for staff, knowledge and skills for students and families:

Nutrition and physical activity education and skill development for:

- NETschool MOVE Mentors (group and individual education and skill development)
- NETschool MOVE students (group and individual education and skill development)
- NETschool MOVE student's parents (group education and skill development)

2. Supportive school policies and environments:

NETschool has exercise equipment available for NETschool MOVE students to access in their familiar NETschool school setting.

NETschool MOVE has organised the local Bendigo Health Community Dietitian Service and the local Personal Trainer to provide access to students both group and individual services in their familiar NETschool school setting.

3. Community links and partnerships:

NETschool MOVE has formed partnerships with the local Bendigo Health Community Dietitian Service and the local Personal Trainer to provide access to students both group and individual services in their familiar NETschool school setting.

NETschool MOVE has formed partnerships to organise each student access to a local General Practitioner.

Key findings highlighting the success of the project:

Majority of NETschool MOVE students indicated they have:

- gained more knowledge about how to eat healthier and be more physically active.
- improved their level of physical activity.
- gained more confidence in being able to achieve and maintain healthier eating and physical activity habits in the long term.

Majority of NETschool MOVE students indicated they are:

- choosing to eat healthier foods more regularly than previously.
- choosing healthier eating options more regularly.

Majority of NETschool MOVE students indicated access to the Community Dietitian and Personal Trainer (group and individual sessions) to be very worthwhile.

Suitability of schools for health promotion:

This project has indicated the school setting to be appropriate and beneficial to reach disadvantaged students and their families. Students chose to access both the local Bendigo Health Community Dietitian Service and the local Personal Trainer.

Most difficult health issues in schools:

The target group of students are considered to be 'at risk' due to their non connection with mainstream schooling. The NETschool MOVE project has achieved improving access of these 'at risk' students to local health professionals such as the Bendigo Health Community Dietitian Service and the local Personal Trainer within their familiar NETschool school setting. This has resulted in improved knowledge, skills and healthy eating and physical activity habits.

Success of partnerships with health and education sectors:

The health professional's time to be involved in projects is often limited and this can be a barrier to the success of partnerships. To assist, approaching the health professional early can enhance their ability to prioritise being involved in the longer term future.

Regular contact and effective communication to ensure all parties maintain up to date knowledge of the progression and plans for the project.

Long term sustainability of the health promotion programs:

This is supported by the health professionals agreeing to maintain this service in the familiar NETschool school setting in the future.

Bendigo Health: Critics Choice Program

Any experience you have had with the Health Promoting Schools framework or other similar models:

Critics Choice a DVD program for schools is to prevent young people to start smoking/passive smoking, and cessation of tobacco. Quit Victoria has assisted with the development, facilitated and distributed this resource to be used in schools.

Any best practice models for health' promotion currently operating within your local community:

This model is best practice model and has been promoted and evaluated in schools in Victoria, and supported with education and resources for Quit Educator and/or teachers health workers to facilitate the program.

Any partnerships you have with other local agencies to deliver health promoting initiatives within schools or other community organisations:

- BRIT, Netschool Mentors (teaching staff)
- Partnerships with Bendigo Community Health Services Quit Educator

The suitability of schools as a setting for health promotion programs and initiatives:

This is a suitable resources to use in **secondary schools** with a trained facilitator, and ongoing up-to-date resources from Quit Victoria Prevention Program Coordinator who works in youth and tobacco prevention/cessation.

The most difficult health issues to tackle within schools, and any strategies used to address them:

- To access the private schools, as they appear to only use their own staff who may not be trained in the area of tobacco prevention/cessation.
- Public schools have their own school nurses who have some trained Quit Educators.
- To ensure the program meets the needs of students and teachers and is appropriate to the needs and age of students.
- For the school to have the time to have community programs integrated into their curriculum.
- To ensure there is a system in place that students have the opportunity following the presentation to speak to Quit Educator, trained facilitator, or appropriate referral and that this is offered at the end of each presentation.

Any health promoting equipment, infrastructure or resources that you provide to schools or which you think would be beneficial within schools:

- The latest tobacco cessation resources. There is very little youth specific resources available from Quit Victoria.
- Quit Pack Information Resource
- Quit Posters clearly outlining the health effects of smoking.

Quit Victoria provides resources at no cost.

Any factors essential to the success of partnerships involving the health and education sectors:

Bendigo Community Health Services Quit Educator for Critics Choice Program presentation and discussion has been engaged, however, due to their workload commitments this is not always possible. Health Promotion Bendigo Health has a trained quit educator.

The effectiveness of current government policies and programs surrounding health promotion:

Government policies need to include more time built into programs to discuss if any concerns and to assist students **at the time**. Referring to Quit Educator or Quitline as an action is helpful, if requested, but may not be what the student needs right at that time. Teachers or mentors may not have the time to address the students concern straight away, which may be upsetting to the student.

Ways in which the long-term sustainability of health promotion programs can be achieved:

Employ more Health Promotion Workers and Quit Educators and ensure the person coordinating such a program is enthusiastic, motivated and ongoing sustainability is established, evaluated and regular updating and reviewed.

Staff working in acute services have strategies and guidelines to follow to encourage more health promotion knowledge, referrals and to provide information to assist in improving clients lifestyle and health outcomes.

Any recommendations that you would like the Committee to consider:

- Consulting staff who are actually involved with these programs and can identify needs is an excellent way to obtain information, starting bottom up instead of top down. Congratulations on that positive strategy.
- Introduction of a yearly consultation of Health Promotion Staff at the ground level as there are many recommendations and cost cutting, time management that could be suggested and considered.
- The priority areas of Health Promotion could be broader to include more identified health promotion areas required in the community, with the goal of preventing disease and illness, and improve mental health.
- Quit Trained Health Workers (skills maintained) in the health promotion area expanded from what they can only do at the present time.

Any other issues relevant to health promotion within schools and the community:

Some suggestions for consideration under the Health Promoting Schools Framework of supportive school environments, teaching and learning, and working in partnership include:

- All programs include physical, emotional, spiritual , intellectual aspects of school /life
- Consult families, children, teachers, and community in regard to health promoting in schools and for the community.
- Physical activity include daily exercise program for all schools
- Parents, grandparents, carer of children work together in schools on programs, e.g. students could work on the computer with a program that was fun and interesting involving nutrition cheap nutrition recipes etc, physical activity, and how to avoid smoking and other street drugs, older people could learn about computers from their grandchildren.
- Self esteem programs could be included in all programs, how to manage feeling sad, assertiveness, how our mind works when we think negative compared to positive thinking etc.
- After school programs for grandparents and carers include information that provides healthy lifestyle, involving activities and reducing children just sitting in front of TV or playing video games etc.
- Basic First Aid Awareness sessions, include students family support people.
- Grandparents /Carer Day an opportunity to provide information and gain information what needs families have on Health Promotion and Health Lifestyle.

Bendigo Health: Laryngectomee Visits in Schools Program

Partnerships:

Bendigo Health, Weroona College, Bendigo South East Secondary College, Crusoe College, Eaglehawk Secondary College, Laryngectomee Association of Victoria and Bendigo Community Health Services.

Program Aim:

Members of the Laryngectomee Association regularly visit schools in the Loddon Mallee Region to educate the students about risks of smoking and give students the opportunity to witness first hand the devastating effect that smoking can have on the life of an individual.

Alignment with National Framework for Health Promoting Schools:

The program:

- promotes the health and wellbeing of students by educating them about the dangers of smoking.
- provides a safe and supportive environment as the school nurses prepare the students confronting images of smoking related damage on the health of the individual.
- addresses the health and wellbeing of staff as staff who attend are involved in the evaluation process thus the program.
- collaborates with the local community in that the program is presented by volunteers.
- is integrated into the school's ongoing activities as the visits have become a regular yearly expectation for the schools and is followed up by the QUIT program.
- sets realistic goals, ie for children not to begin smoking.
- involves parents and the general community by promoting the event and its outcomes in the press and school newsletters.
- acknowledges the cost-effectiveness of the prevention of potential tobacco related harm.
- acknowledges early school leaving is also associated with risk behaviours such as smoking.
- improves the health literacy of students by empowering their ability to make informed choices.
- targets school-aged children relation to the National Tobacco Strategy.
- is holistic in that the program acknowledges that some students may become upset as a result of the program and support is offered to those students by the school in terms of student preparation and post support.

Program background and suitability of school setting for delivery:

The volunteers give up their own time to deliver these information sessions to students, using their own vehicles to drive from Melbourne and sometimes even further afield. Their objective is to prevent children from taking up smoking and to warn them of tobacco related harm. The volunteers, school nurses and teachers consider that the school is a suitable setting for this type of health promotion preventative session.

Health promoting equipment, infrastructure or resources:

- Audio visual equipment is provided by the school and microphones are especially important for the speakers.
- Bendigo Health health promotion workers provide QUIT information.
- Referral pathways to Quit educators is provided.
- Follow sessions using Quit material is offered by the schools.

Factors related to the success of the partnerships:

- Effective communication and negotiation between the parties is essential.

- Acknowledgement that the program is delivered by volunteers who have suffered the cancerous effects of smoking whose aim is to prevent young people from being exposed to the dangers of smoking.

Factors related to the success of the program:

The personal contact with victims of cancer directly related to tobacco seems to have a strong impact on students, eg witnessing a person who has had a laryngectomy sneeze through a stoma.

Funding:

- Bendigo Health has arranged and funded overnight accommodation for the laryngectomees and mileage allowance has been paid at current rates to subsidise travel expenses.
- In 2010 funding was obtained from School Focussed Youth Services to run the program for 2010.

Delivery:

- In 2009 the group of volunteers visited Crusoe College, Eaglehawk Secondary College, Weerona College Bendigo and Bendigo South East Secondary College and presented to years 7 and 8 students.
- Sessions are arranged around class timetables and are usually of around 100 minutes per session.

Program Evaluation:

- Evaluations of the visits have found that Laryngectomy visits are an effective means of increasing rates of smoking abstinence amongst thirteen and fourteen year olds.
- Up to 100% of students agreed that they never wanted to smoke as a result of the visit.
- A post evaluation revealed that over 90% of students remembered key messages from the visit over a year later; that none of the students present at the visit had started smoking on a regular basis since the visit; all of the students surveyed remembered the visit enough to give descriptive answers about the visit; and that all students surveyed did not plan to smoke in the future and this included the 8% students who had tried a cigarette in the last 12 months.