Learning, Eating, Active Play and Sleep (LEAPS)
Professional Development Program:
Cape York Evaluation Report
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Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge staff across the eight sites in Cape York who supported the planning, implementation and evaluation of the LEAPS professional development program throughout between 2014 and 2016. This includes staff from Early Childhood Education and Care centres, Aboriginal Shire Councils, health services and Apunipima Health Action Teams.

The LEAPS project was funded by the Queensland Government. The delivery of LEAPS in Cape York was a collaborative effort by NAQ Nutrition, Queensland University of Technology and Apunipima Cape York Health Council. A strong working relationship was built during this time and we look forward to future opportunities to further strengthen our partnership to contribute to improved early childhood health and wellbeing in Cape York.
Executive Summary

The Learning, Eating, Active Play and Sleep (LEAPS) project is a professional development program and support service for early childhood education and care (ECEC) educators in Queensland.

LEAPS is based on the Australian Government resource Get Up and Grow, which incorporates the national healthy eating guidelines and physical activity recommendations for ECEC settings. The LEAPS professional development program aimed to build capacity and confidence of ECEC educators to implement the Get up and Grow guidelines into routine practice at their workplace as well as effectively convey this information to families to promote healthy growth of Queensland children.

The state-wide LEAPS project ran from April 2013 to June 2016 as a partnership between Queensland University of Technology (QUT), NAQ Nutrition and the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation Queensland Branch (ACPER), funded by the Queensland Government through the Department of Health. The LEAPS project partnered with Apunipima Cape York Health Council (Apunipima) for advice and support in tailoring of the LEAPS professional development program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC settings. Apunipima was also subcontracted for the delivery of the LEAPS professional development sessions across Cape York and associated evaluation activities.

NAQ subsequently subcontracted Apunipima to deliver the LEAPS professional development program at eight sites in Cape York between July 2015 and May 2016. Five sessions were run in 2015 (Cooktown, Kowanyama, Napranum, Weipa, Aurukun) and three sessions were run in 2016 (Coen, Pormpuraaw, Lockhart River).

A total of 80 participants attended the LEAPS professional development program across the 8 programs offered in Cape York. The mean attendance was 10 participants per session, with highest attendance in Cooktown (n=14) and lowest attendance in Weipa (n=2). From the sample of 63 participants surveyed, 65% (n= 41) identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Program data was collected using Keepad Interactive Turningpoint Response clickers. The majority of participants surveyed reported high levels of satisfaction with the training, either rating the training as good or excellent (98%). Nearly all (98%) of participants either somewhat or strongly agreed that the LEAPS training provided new and practical ways to communicate nutrition and physical activity with families. The LEAPS professional development program resulted in a 14% overall increase in knowledge recall about key nutrition and physical activity messages discussed as part of the LEAPS professional development program.

Key enablers for program delivery in Cape York were the community consultations conducted by Apunipima facilitators to increase engagement, as well as the face to face delivery of the professional development program. However, the delivery of the LEAPS professional development program in line with the program modification recommendations made by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group requires adequate funding that takes into consideration the additional cost of remote service delivery.

LEAPS could be considered as part of funding models for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations to deliver as part of efforts to increase opportunities to influence health outcomes in early life. This would help to further support the application of the Get up and Grow guidelines amongst ECEC staff in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
1.0 Introduction

The Learning, Eating, Active Play and Sleep (LEAPS) project is a professional development program and support service for early childhood education and care (ECEC) educators in Queensland.

The LEAPS project involved the development, implementation and evaluation of a professional development program and support service based on the Australian Government resource Get Up and Grow [1]. Get Up and Grow is based on the national healthy eating guidelines and physical activity recommendations for early childhood educators in ECEC settings.

The LEAPS project partnered with Apunipima Cape York Health Council (Apunipima) for advice and support in tailoring of the LEAPS professional development program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC settings. Apunipima was also subcontracted for the delivery of the LEAPS professional development sessions across Cape York and associated evaluation activities.

This evaluation report outlines the key strategies Apunipima undertook in delivering LEAPS as well as findings from the evaluation of the LEAPS professional development program’s delivery in Cape York. The evaluation will investigate the outcomes of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander version of LEAPS, provide insights to inform future programs in Cape York and contribute to the larger state-wide evaluation provided to Queensland Government.
2.0 Background

2.1 Program Rationale

The goal of LEAPS was to improve access to healthy food and drinks, opportunities to be physically active and decreased exposure to screen time by young children attending early childhood services across Queensland. This goal was to be reached by improving the accessibility and quality of evidence based information and resources for early childhood staff and build their capacity and confidence to implement the Get Up & Grow Guidelines and support parents with healthy eating and activity play.

Nutrition and physical activity are essential building blocks for healthy growth and development of young children. ECEC settings include long day care, family day care, playgroup, limited hours care, occasional care and kindergarten. ECEC settings play an important role in supporting nutrition and physical activity for young children and their families. This is reflected in the commitment for ECEC settings to support good nutrition and adequate physical activity through the National Quality Framework and as part of the Early Years Learning Framework [2, 3].

The state-wide LEAPS project ran from April 2013 to June 2016 as a partnership between Queensland University of Technology (QUT), NAQ Nutrition and the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation Queensland Branch (ACHPER), funded by the Queensland Government through the Department of Health.

The LEAPS professional development program was designed for educators working in ECEC settings in Queensland. The LEAPS professional development program aimed to build capacity and confidence of ECEC educators to implement the Get up and Grow guidelines into routine practice at their workplace as well as effectively convey this information to families to promote healthy growth of Queensland children.

Through the LEAPS professional development program, ECEC educators received up to date, evidence based information about nutrition and physical activity for young children and had the opportunity to reflect on their service and identify strategies for improvements through the development of a Quality Improvement Action Plan (QIP). The QIP forms part of the process for the rating of services against the National Quality Standard. The Topics covered in the LEAPS professional development program included breastfeeding promotion, safe use of infant formula, complementary feeding, healthy eating for young children, meal planning, food safety and physical activity.

The implementation of the LEAPS professional development program across Queensland was led by NAQ Nutrition (NAQ) who are non-profit community nutrition organisation that provides education, support and training to shape the health and wellbeing of communities to make informed food choices.

2.2 Development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander version of LEAPS

The initial LEAPS professional development program was developed between April and September 2013 by the LEAPS project partners. Development included extensive stakeholder consultation and
feedback processes including two ‘mock’ training days where the program was delivered for stakeholders and then changes were made from the consensus of feedback.

In February and June 2014, QUT commissioned an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group to meet over two days to provide advice to the project team about the appropriateness of the existing program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC settings. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group had five members who were from; Apunipima, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council, Indigenous Professional Support Unit and a private Dietitian from South East Queensland. Three of the five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group members identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander including one from Apunipima.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group provided advice about what changes needed to be made to the program for it to be suitable for delivery in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC settings. The LEAPS team went through the LEAPS professional development program and its evaluation with the reference group while asking advice from the group on the program content, activities, resources, format, engagement of communities/educators, and facilitation of the professional development and evaluation methods and tools.

The reference group felt that the program was mostly suitable in its existing format; however some changes were recommended which included:

- Development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children case studies;
- Facilitators to be either from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background or well-known and trusted by the community, and to have two facilitators to provide extra support for program delivery (rather than just one facilitator);
- Engagement of participants to be through the identified facilitators (see point above);
- Engagement strategies needed to involve consultation trips and meetings with communities to talk about the program and its importance in the community;
- LEAPS sessions were to be run over two days and include support for completing module 1 and 3 which were usually completed online; and
- Catering to be provided at LEAPS sessions.

These recommended changes were planned to be incorporated into LEAPS professional development programs being delivered in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC settings in Queensland.
2.3 Partnering with Apunipima to deliver LEAPS in Cape York

The LEAPS project responded to the recommendations made by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group to train additional facilitators to deliver the LEAPS professional development program in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC settings. This included engaging Apunipima as a partner to facilitate LEAPS sessions in Cape York.

Apunipima is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation that provides comprehensive primary care services to 11 communities across Cape York. Apunipima employs two community nutritionists who lead and support nutrition projects in Cape York, with a focus on supporting good nutrition in early life and addressing remote food supply issues.

The two Apunipima facilitators provided additional input into development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children case studies, adjusted session plan and format as per recommendations made by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group, carried out pre-program community consultation and undertook pre- and post-program evaluation activities.

Apunipima was familiar with the LEAPS project through involvement in the LEAPS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group. NAQ provided facilitator training to two staff at Apunipima in April 2015; one of whom identified as Torres Strait Islander and the other had worked in Cape York for over five years and was familiar with and had existing relationships with the communities. The facilitator training included one full day of training provided by NAQ to the Apunipima facilitators, with Apunipima facilitators then co-facilitating a LEAPS training session with NAQ in Cairns.

NAQ subsequently subcontracted Apunipima to deliver the LEAPS professional development program at eight sites in Cape York between July 2015 and May 2016. Five sessions were run in 2015 (Cooktown, Kowanyama, Napranum, Weipa, Aurukun) and three sessions were run in 2016 (Coen, Pormpuraaw, Lockhart River).

The LEAPS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group also recommended consultation trips as one of the engagement strategies. As a result, one of the Apunipima facilitators conducted a consultation trip to each community prior to delivering the LEAPS professional development program. This consultation trip provided the opportunity to meet with key community stakeholders.
and ECEC services about the plans to deliver the LEAPS professional development program. Key community stakeholders who were consulted within each community included the local Aboriginal Shire Council (or equivalent), Health Action Team and Primary Health Care Clinic manager. ECEC services were consulted with to provide an overview of the professional development program, negotiate suitable dates and structure for the delivery of the training. Other local services interfacing with young children such as Safe Houses, Women’s Shelters and Maternal Child Health Workers were also contacted about the LEAPS professional development program.

Apunipima worked with NAQ and QUT to put out two media releases about LEAPS in Cape York (see Appendix 1):

- Children can take great LEAPS toward a healthy life with Apunipima (July 2015)
- Kids LEAP ahead as Apunipima staff train remote educators in nutrition and physical activity (April 2016)

Rather than having a formal registration process for LEAPS in Cape York, interest from participants to attend the training was gauged at the consultation visits and a communication log maintained with key contact details. Facilitators used email and phone reminders prior to the training and completed the attendance sheet on the day of the training.

The LEAPS project team found that across the lifetime of the project there was a stronger uptake of LEAPS in regional and remote areas than originally predicted with many services from these areas reporting a previous lack of face-to-face professional development available and wanting to make the most of the opportunity.

It should also be noted that other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific LEAPS programs were delivered in remote communities in Far North Queensland not involving Apunipima, which are not within scope for this report. These programs were evaluated separately and further information about these programs can be found in the LEAPS state-wide final report.

Pompuraaw LEAPS training, April 2016
2.4 Logic model for LEAPS in Cape York

**Inputs**
- Expertise from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group
- 2 x Apunipima facilitators to deliver program in Cape York
- Training for program facilitators from NAQ
- Program support from NAQ
- Facilitator travel costs for consultation and program delivery (NAQ and Apunipima)
- Technology – laptop/projector/speakers (Apunipima)
- Training materials e.g. workbooks, case study, demonstration items (NAQ)
- Access to NAQ nutrition online training support materials
- Keeppad Interactive Tappingpoint Response clickers
- Evaluation activities planned (QUT and Apunipima)

**Activities**
- Program modified for use in Cape York by NAQ Nutrition and Apunipima
- NAQ nutrition provide training to 2 x Apunipima facilitators
- Community consultations for program conducted by Apunipima
- Program delivered in 8 communities by Apunipima facilitators
- Evaluation activities planned in partnership with QUT and Apunipima

**Outputs**
- ECEC staff attend professional development program
- ECEC staff utilise online training support materials
- Staff commit to changes through Quality Improvement Action Plans
- Evaluation data collected at training sessions by Apunipima facilitators
- Quality Improvement action plans submitted

**Participation**
- Short
- Medium
- Long

**Outcomes**
- Increased knowledge of ECEC staff
- Staff make changes to better support nutrition and physical activity at ECEC services
- Post program follow up (case studies with service and Apunipima facilitators)

Increased supportive environments for healthy eating and physical activity at ECEC services
3.0 Evaluation overview

QUT was responsible for undertaking the overall management, evaluation and reporting of the LEAPS project. A low risk ethics application was submitted and approved by the QUT Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval Number 1300000625) in November 2013.

A further full National Ethics Application Form (NEAF) was submitted to cover the evaluation component with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC services, which was approved in March 2016. As there was a delay in obtaining full ethical clearance, Apunipima submitted an application with support from QUT for an ethics exemption as a Quality Assurance activity to Far North Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee (Reference number HREC/16/QCH/52 – 1052 QA) This was to ensure all the data collected for LEAPS in Cape York was able to be included in this report.

This evaluation report outlines the key strategies Apunipima undertook in delivering LEAPS as well as findings from the evaluation of the LEAPS professional development program’s delivery in Cape York. The evaluation investigated the outcomes of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander version of LEAPS, provide insights to inform future programs in Cape York and contribute to the larger state-wide evaluation provided to Queensland Government.

3.1 Evaluation questions

The following evaluation questions provide insight about reach, participation satisfaction, effectiveness of the training in terms of changes to understanding of ECEC staff and application of training content at ECEC services, and resource use for the LEAPS professional development program in Cape York.

1. What were the participation rates for the LEAPS professional development program in Cape York?
2. How effective was the LEAPS professional development program to increase understanding about early childhood nutrition and physical activity requirements amongst participants in Cape York?
3. To what extent were participants satisfied with the LEAPS professional development program in Cape York?
4. What key learnings were identified as part of the LEAPS professional development program to better support Cape York educators to apply learnings about nutrition and physical activity at ECEC settings?
5. What support and resources were required for the delivery and evaluation of LEAPS professional development program in Cape York?
4.0 Methods

Pre- and post-program participant data was routinely collected for the LEAPS professional development training in Cape York using Keepad Interactive Turningpoint Audience Response clickers (http://www.keepad.com/Products/TurningPoint/). The clickers are linked with Microsoft PowerPoint and connect with participants using basic polling software and response devices which have found to be useful for engagement, audience assessment and data collection. The clickers were chosen because they provide anonymous real-time information from participants and were thought to be more interactive and less burdensome than paper based surveys. However, hard copy surveys were also available as an alternative. Data collected included:

- 3 demographic questions (pre)
- 2 current behaviour questions (pre)
- 4 service level related questions (pre)
- 11 questions measuring participant knowledge of nutrition and physical activity information (pre/post)
- 5 questions measuring self-reported confidence to provide nutrition and physical activity information and support to families (pre/post)
- 8 participation training satisfaction questions (post).

This information was de-identified and transferred to a Microsoft excel spreadsheet for analysis.

Apunipima facilitators were also interviewed by a QUT researcher to provide additional feedback about their experience with delivering the LEAPS professional development program in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Other LEAPS documentation utilised for this report includes communication logs, attendance sheets and facilitator feedback forms.

One ECEC service in Cape York was selected for a remote case study as part of the state-wide evaluation to provide broader feedback and provide reflections about how best to support nutrition and physical activity at ECEC settings. This included an interview with the ECEC service Director as well as a Professional conversation with the ECEC staff from that service which included the Director as well. The interview and professional conversation were both conducted by Apunipima.
5.0 Results

5.1 Attendance at LEAPS professional development program in Cape York

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Location</th>
<th>Number of participants (n)</th>
<th>Participant data collected (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aurukun</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coen</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooktown</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kowanyama</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lockhart River</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napranum</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pormpuraaw</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weipa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 80 participants attended the LEAPS professional development program across the 8 programs offered in Cape York. The mean attendance was 10 participants per session, with highest attendance in Cooktown (n=14) and lowest attendance in Weipa (n=2).

From the sample of 63 participants surveyed, 65% (n= 41) identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. 33% (n=21) of participants did not identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Participants reported having a wide range of years of experience working in ECEC settings, from less than 1 year (13%, n=8) to more than 10 years (20%, n=13).
The majority of participants attending the LEAPS professional development program were currently working at an ECEC service (67% n=42). Other reasons for attending included working in a support role for an ECEC service or interested in working at an ECEC service.

5.2 Nutrition and physical activity education provided by Cape York ECEC educators

Participants were asked how often they provided education about nutrition and physical activity to children and families at their service.

The majority of participants (86%, n=51) were providing nutrition education either often (weekly) or occasionally (monthly).

The majority of participants (92%, n=58) were providing physical activity education either often (weekly) or occasionally (monthly).
5.3 Feedback from Cape York ECEC educators about nutrition and physical activity at their service

The majority of participants strongly agreed that their ECEC service provided a supportive environment for nutrition and physical activity.

60.3% (n=38) of participants strongly agreed that their service provided a supportive breastfeeding environment, with a further 11.1% (n=7) somewhat agreeing.

69.8% (n=44) of participants strongly agreed that their service provided a positive mealtime environment, with a further 14.3% (n=9) somewhat agreeing.

57.1% (n=36) of participants strongly agreed that their service provided different types and textures of foods to children, with a further 30.2% (n=19) somewhat agreeing.

82.6% (n=52) of participants strongly agreed that their service had adequate physical activity facilities and equipment, with a further 15.9% (n=10) somewhat agreeing.
5.4 Cape York LEAPS Pre and Post changes to knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question asked</th>
<th>Pre correct (n)</th>
<th>Post correct (n)</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How long should babies have only breastmilk (or a suitable alternative) for?</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
<td>+1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If a baby less than 12 months of age is not being breastfed, the most suitable alternative to breastmilk would be…</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
<td>81.5%</td>
<td>+4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. At what age should babies start to be given solid foods (first foods)?</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
<td>+20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What foods are recommended to be given to babies as a first food?</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
<td>98.2%</td>
<td>+9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What texture of food is recommended for a 12 month old child to be eating?</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>+11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. At what age should children be offered cow’s milk as a drink?</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
<td>+8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How should children be supported at meal times?</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
<td>91.1%</td>
<td>+0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. A ham, cheese and tomato sandwich has been left on the bench covered for 2 1/2 hours. In terms of food safety, what should you do with it?</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>+17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. How many hours of active play time per day is recommended for children aged 1-5 years?</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>+32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What is the maximum number of hours of screen time that children less than 2 years of age should spend watching each day?</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>+31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. What is the maximum number of hours of screen time that children aged 2-5 years should be watching each day?</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
<td>+15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total mean pre + post</strong></td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>67.8%</td>
<td>+14.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average for participants answering the range of pre knowledge questions correct was 53.8%. The average of participants answer the range of post knowledge questions correct was 67.8%, which represents an average knowledge increase of 14.0% across all questions. The greatest knowledge increase was around recommended active play time (32.3%), screen time for young children (31.9%) and the age at which it is recommended for babies to be offered solid foods (20.9%).

The highest knowledge overall was how children should be supported at meal times (91.1% post), and the most suitable alternative to breastmilk for infants under 12 months of age (81.5% post). Lowest knowledge overall was around the food safety question (32.7% post) and the recommended texture of foods for a 12 month old child (45.5% post).

Feedback from the LEAPS facilitators was that participants reported to be cautious with their food safety practices given the tropical climate. It is unclear why the percentage of correct responses for the recommended texture question remained so low and thus requires further investigation.
5.5 Cape York LEAPS Pre and Post changes to confidence

The majority of participants reported a high level of confidence (either somewhat confident or very confident) in providing nutrition and physical activity information before the training, and this further increased post training.
5.6 Participant satisfaction with training

The majority of participants reported high levels of satisfaction with the training, either rating the training as good or excellent. Nearly all (98%) of participants either somewhat or strongly agreed that the LEAPS training provided new and practical ways to communicate nutrition and physical activity with families.
6.0 Evaluation outcomes

6.1 What were the participation rates for the LEAPS professional development program in Cape York?

A total of 80 participants attended the LEAPS professional development program across the eight programs offered in Cape York. The mean attendance was 10 participants per session, with highest attendance in Cooktown (n=14) and lowest attendance in Weipa (n=2). The average number of participants attending each of these sessions was lower than the required 15 outlined for a LEAPS session to be run. However, the project team decided that it was important to run these sessions even with lower numbers to ensure that educators from smaller communities did not miss out on the training.

Program data was collected from a sample of 63 participants across Cape York. From this sample, 65% (n=41) of participants identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Across Queensland, 3.4% of ECEC educators identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander [4]. Considering these figures, the LEAPS project had a significant impact on this priority population across Cape York.

Participants who attended the program had a wide range of experience working in ECEC settings, with 13% of participants (n=8) reporting less than one year of experience to 20% of participants reporting greater than 10 years’ of experience (n=13). The majority of participants attending the LEAPS professional development program were currently working at an ECEC service (67%, n=42), and the program was also attended by staff working in a support role for ECEC services and participants interested in working at an ECEC service.

Flexibility with program plans is an important consideration for delivery in Cape York. It was identified that weather events during the wet season in Far North Queensland meant that sessions could only be booked outside of this season, and that unforeseen circumstances such as Sorry Business in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities meant that some sessions had to be postponed until a later date to respectfully follow community protocol.

Kowanyama LEAPS training, August 2015
6.2 How effective was the LEAPS professional development program in increasing understanding about early childhood nutrition and physical activity requirements amongst participants in Cape York?

A high proportion of surveyed participants (86%, n=54) reported providing nutrition and physical activity education or advice to children and families at least monthly, while 92% (n=58) of participants reported providing physical activity education at least monthly. This shows that educators are seen as key people within the community for providing information on nutrition and physical activity, not only to children but also to their families.

Consistent with the state-wide findings, participants also reported a high level of confidence in providing nutrition and physical activity information before the training. Despite this, an average of only 53.78% of the pre-knowledge questions were answered correctly. This increased by 14.02% to 67.8% of post-knowledge questions being answered correctly. The greatest knowledge increased was around recommended active play time (32.3%), screen time for young children (31.9%) and the age at which it is recommended for babies to be offered solid foods (20.9%).

The highest knowledge overall was how children should be supported at meal times (91.1% post), and the most suitable alternative to breastmilk for infants under 12 months of age (81.5% post). Lowest knowledge overall was around the food safety question (32.7% post) and the recommended texture of foods for a 12 month old child (45.5% post).

Even though there was an increase in knowledge across all questions overall, there is still significant room to improve participant knowledge in nutrition and physical activity content in line with the Get up & Grow guidelines. These results paired with the finding that educators are regularly providing education or information to children and families about nutrition and physical activity show the importance of programs such as LEAPS being available to ensure that the information provided by educators is in line with guidelines. As knowledge did not increase equally across all areas of nutrition, it is important that further support and professional development is made available on a regular basis to ensure that educators’ knowledge of guidelines continues to increase.

6.3 To what extent were participants satisfied with the LEAPS professional development program in Cape York?

The feedback from participants around satisfaction with the training was overwhelmingly positive. 79.6% (n=43) of participants reported the LEAPS training to be excellent with a further 18.5% (n=10) of participants rating the training as good. 74.5% (n=38) of participants strongly agreed that LEAPS provided new and practical ways to communicate nutrition and physical activity with families, with a further 23.5% (n=12) somewhat agreeing.

81.1% (n=43) of participants rated the amount of information provided to be excellent, 67.9% (n=36) of participants rated the level of information provided to be excellent, and 70.6% (n=36) of participants rated the relevance of information provided to be excellent.

QUT interviewed the two facilitators about how the LEAPS Professional Development program had been received in Far North Queensland. The facilitators felt that the changes made to the program made it suitable for the communities and that they received positive feedback after the sessions from participants. Participants were pleased to have the opportunity to attend face-to-face training locally that was discussion based and taught practical ways of implementing guidelines. The facilitators thought that face-to-face training is important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators as it provides a richer experience with two-way communication where experiences can be shared in a respectful way as well as promoting training attendance. The style of delivery focused around
participant discussion and practical activities with the use of case studies provided lots of opportunities for participants to share knowledge.

“Personal face to face interaction it's how things work in communities up here, it's how you get things done. It's so much richer than interacting with the computer” LEAPS facilitator

6.4 What key learnings were identified as part of the LEAPS professional development program to better support Cape York educators to apply learning about nutrition and physical activity at ECEC settings?

In the pre-professional development survey educators reported that their services provided supportive environments for breastfeeding, positive mealtimes, types and textures of food provided and adequate physical activity facilities/equipment.

The evaluation activities for the purpose of this report did not directly measure the extent to which ECEC services in Cape York who engaged in the LEAPS professional development program were making changes to better support nutrition and physical activity. A six-month follow up survey and/or observational study would need to be conducted to show detail on this. However, some insights can be provided from the director interview and staff professional conversation from the remote case study as well as the Apunipima LEAPS facilitator’s interview.

From the case study and facilitator interview, the following enablers and challenges were identified from the delivery of the LEAPS professional development program in Cape York:

**Enablers:**

- Services appreciated the opportunity for consultation, face-to-face training and ongoing support around nutrition and physical activity;
- The need for strong relationships between ECEC staff, families and the community in order to support healthy behaviours from a young age;
- Fostering opportunities for communication, learning and mentoring between ECEC staff;
- Responding to the needs of the child in a holistic way and role modelling by ECEC staff;
- Having broader community support, including from health service staff.
Challenges:

- High staff turnover within Cape York ECEC services;
- Competing priorities and lack of time for staff to attend training;
- Community issues that are external to the ECEC setting.

“Especially with the bottles stuff, the breastmilk and the formula, the milk, making sure that our families aren’t introducing cow’s milk at a very young age. And that stood out quite a bit” ECEC educator

“We all know that stuff with Indigenous people and their health and diabetes and all that sort of stuff that impacts on our people, so if we nip it in the bud and teach them young, you just hope that it continues when they are older. So we teach the kids for the kids to teach their parents”. ECEC educator

“I suppose looking at the whole thing on health with the kids so not just the healthy eating but the activeness, with supporting the nose blowing and handwashing” ECEC educator

“Including the family and the community too, you know showing them healthy food to take it home” ECEC educator

Cooktown LEAPS training, July 2015
6.5 What support and resources were required for the delivery and evaluation of LEAPS professional development program in Cape York?

Partnerships between organisations

A key enabler for the delivery of the LEAPS professional development program in Cape York was the partnership approach between QUT, NAQ and Apunipima. This allowed Apunipima to provide advice and support in tailoring of the LEAPS professional development program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators. In line with the recommendations made by the LEAPS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group, subcontracting Apunipima to deliver the program in Cape York ensured that the facilitators were either Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and/or had existing relationships in Cape York communities to support the engagement in the program.

_It’s been such as great partnership like we’re really lucky you guys came on board and were so keen to do it and so supportive in terms of sharing a huge part of the cost with getting out and about to all the different areas as well”_ QUT

_“It’s mutually beneficial for us because it’s nice to be able to run something that’s happening in other areas across that state and be involved”_ LEAPS facilitator

Additional time for engagement, consultation and training delivery

Prior to the delivery of the LEAPS professional development program in each Cape York site, an engagement/consultation trip was conducted, as outlined in section 2.3 of this report. This engagement/consultation trip allowed facilitators to connect with key community stakeholders and staff at ECEC services to plan for the delivery of the LEAPS training.

This engagement process was more labour and time intensive than the common approach used for other LEAPS trainings across the state, which relied on participants pre-registering their interest online. NAQ would schedule in a training when there was an adequate number of interested participants from a particular area.

_“Face to face is a lot better, and all the hands on tools that are used. You get a lot more out of talking to people than on the phone or just sitting on a computer and doing it, and just having the conversations with whoever’s delivering the training”_ ECEC educator

Utilising innovative ways to collect data

As outlined in section 4.0 of this report, Keepad Interactive Turningpoint Audience Response clickers were used to collect pre and post participant data for the Cape York LEAPS professional development program. The clickers were chosen because they provide anonymous real-time information from participants and were thought to be more interactive and less burdensome than paper based surveys.

Of the 12 participants who were asked, 11 participants rated the clickers as excellent and 1 as good. Further pilot of the Turningpoint response clickers is required for professional development programs in Cape York.

Ongoing tailored support for ECEC services in Cape York

Through delivering LEAPS the facilitators felt that their relationship with the communities had been strengthened and that the ECEC services could also see what role their organisation could play in supporting educators and services further with healthy eating and physical activity.
The facilitators thought that it would be important to make programs like LEAPS available to the community every couple of years to ensure new staff are trained and to accommodate staff turnover.

After the LEAPS training, the facilitators commonly received requests from ECEC staff for additional nutrition resources. Apunipima has also supported the development of an educational poster to raise awareness about healthy drinks and recommendations around cow’s milk consumption in young children. Support with healthy menu design has also been provided at one ECEC service.

**The higher cost of delivering services into remote areas**

NAQ was responsible for the implementation of the LEAPS professional development program, and the tender/predicted costs to deliver 30 sessions in Far North Queensland and Central Queensland was estimated to be $41,100 in 2013 and updated to $36,990 in June 2016.

Changes to the delivery of the LEAPS professional development program as per the recommendations made by the LEAPS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group incurred more costs than the original model. Additional costs needed to be factored in for community consultation, training of additional facilitators, training running over two days with two facilitators, and catering, in addition to extra expenses for delivering training in remote areas (where flights, accommodation and car hire are more expensive than for regional or metropolitan areas).

In this circumstance, Apunipima saw the value in this professional development program and were prepared to redirect nutrition staff capacity to support delivery in order to ensure Cape York communities did not miss out on this state-wide investment due to remoteness. However, there was an opportunity cost as other nutrition priorities were postponed to free up nutrition team capacity.

The current purchaser provider model for government funded state-wide organisations to deliver health programs rarely factors in the additional local partner agencies (e.g. Apunipima) that need to be engaged in order for programs like LEAPS to reach into remote areas. This warrants further attention to improve the design of the funding arrangements to ensure equitable access to government funded initiatives regardless of geography.
7.0 Recommendations

1. Use program modification recommendations made by LEAPS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group as a blueprint for planning and implementing future professional development programs in Cape York, including prioritisation of face to face training opportunities.

2. Investigate opportunities to further increase knowledge and application of Get Up and Grow guidelines and the National Quality Framework, as part on an extension of LEAPS professional development program or alternative.

3. Ensure that future ECEC nutrition and physical activity professional development programs in Cape York include post program follow up for provision of tailored support to implement changes identified in Quality Improvement Action Plans.

4. Undertake further negotiations with state funders and state-wide organisations at the time of contract or tender negotiations to ensure that training opportunities reach remote areas and are funded at the true cost of delivery.

5. Continue to trial the use of Keepad Interactive Turningpoint Response clickers for professional development programs in Cape York.

8.0 Conclusion

A tailored LEAPS program delivered by Apunipima staff who were trusted by communities increased the knowledge and confidence of educators to implement the Get Up and Grow guidelines in order to improve the nutrition and physical activity opportunities in services. This was only possible due to the thorough community consultations prior to training occurring which increased engagement with the program. Partnership models such as the one between Apunipima, QUT and NAQ should be considered best practice. However, appropriate funding needs to be provided to ensure maximum engagement and limited resources are not directed away from other nutrition interventions. LEAPS could be considered as part of funding models for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations to deliver as part of efforts to increase opportunities to influence health outcomes in early life.
9.0 References

Appendix 1: Cape York Leaps Media Releases

Press Release
31 July 2015

Children can take great LEAPS toward a healthy life with Apunipima

Good nutrition and physical activity early in a child’s life are essential for learning, healthy growth and development. Apunipima’s Community Nutrition team will focus on this by offering the LEAPS (Learning, Eating, Active, Play, Sleep) professional development program in Cape York communities.

Apunipima will offer LEAPS training to staff at early childhood education and care services in Weipa, Cocktown, Aurukun, Napranum and Kowanyama from August through to September.

Apunipima is working in partnership with NAQ Nutrition to ensure this high-value training reaches communities in the Cape. LEAPS is a collaborative project between Queensland University of Technology (lead agency), NAQ Nutrition and the Queensland Branch of the Australian Council for Health, Physical Activity and Recreation and is funded by the Queensland Government.

LEAPS is based on the Australian Government resource, Get Up and Grow, and aligns with the National Quality Standard and Early Years Learning Framework.

Community Nutritionist Kirby Murtha said the program is an invaluable opportunity for staff working in remote early childhood education and care services to improve their service through better understanding of the roles of good nutrition and active play. Educators can then share this information with families.

“This training will provide up to date information about nutrition and physical activity for children aged from 0-5 years and is an opportunity for educators to come together to share ideas around some of the ways good nutrition and physical activity can be supported in early childhood settings/services.”

ENDS

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QUT contact: Phoebe Cleland 0410 262 138; phoebe.cleland@qut.edu.au
Press Release
April 11, 2018

Kids leap ahead as Apunipima staff train remote educators in nutrition and physical activity

An apple a day may keep the doctor away but a variety of fresh fruit, vegetables and activity will keep kids healthy in every way!

Nutrition coupled with physical activity will be the focus of the LEAPS (Learning, Eating, Active Play, Sleep), a professional development program that Apunipima’s community nutrition team will deliver to additional Cape York communities in 2016. Apunipima will offer LEAPS training to staff at early childhood education and care services in Coen, Pormpuraaw and Lockhart River in Term 2, which builds on the success of five previous LEAPS training which were delivered at selected sites in Cape York during 2015.

LEAPS provides practical information to Early Childhood Educators on how they can communicate with parents about issues relating to children’s food choices, eating behaviours and physical activity. Lunchbox and snack ideas are explored in a fun and engaging environment for educators to then imbed practices within their early childhood centres.

“Based on the Federal Government’s Get Up and Grow guidelines and aligned with the National Quality Standard and Early Years Framework, LEAPS provides educators with information they can share with families.”

Apunipima has been working in partnership with NAQ Nutrition to ensure this high-valued training reaches communities in the Cape. LEAPS is a collaborative project between QUT, NAQ Nutrition and the Australian Council for Health, Physical Activity and Recreation (Queensland branch). It is funded by the State Government.

Community Nutritionist Kirby Murtha said the program is invaluable.

“It’s an opportunity for staff working in remote early childhood education and care services to improve their service through better understanding of the roles of good nutrition and active play,” Ms Murtha said. “The training is fun and engaging and provides relevant information for children aged from birth to five years. It is a good opportunity for educators to come together to share ideas around some of the ways good nutrition and physical activity can be supported in early childhood settings.”

LEAPS training will take place in:
COEN – April 12-13, 2.30pm-5.30pm at the Coen Kindergarten; PORMPURAAW – May 6-10, 12.30pm-4.30pm at Pormpuraaw Childcare Centre; LOCKHART RIVER – May 19 (12noon-5pm) and May 20 (8.30am-12.30pm) at Kuuku Yalanji Centre

ENDS

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