Baby Basket Program

What is the Baby Basket Program?
The Baby Basket program was developed by the Apunipima Cape York Health Council (ACYHC), a community controlled Aboriginal health organisation that provides comprehensive primary health care to 11 Cape York communities. The program was developed in 2009 to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who are expecting a baby to have earlier and more frequent engagement with antenatal and postnatal health services.

The Baby Basket program aims to achieve better maternal health, reduce complications during and after pregnancy and increase the proportion of normal weight babies and thriving infants. The program is based on knowledge that a healthy start to life should help reduce the gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and non-Indigenous Australians.

What Does the Program Involve?
The program is facilitated by the delivery of three Baby Baskets, with practical gifts for mum and baby, health education material and food vouchers to purchase fruit and vegetables. The baskets are delivered in the first trimester, immediately prior to birth and six months post birth. While delivering the baskets, Health Workers or clinicians have the opportunity to engage with women, their partners and families about issues that affect the growing baby such as healthy choices around smoking, alcohol and diet. Program evaluation shows Health Workers find the baskets a useful way to engage with women and their families on pregnancy and postnatal health issues.

The program is led by ACYHC, Queensland Health and Royal Flying Doctor Service staff. The program includes home visiting, the provision of social and emotional wellbeing care and involvement of extended family members. There are advantages to home visits, such as allowing more personal care, women not having to worry about transport to the clinic, enabling healthcare workers to better assess living conditions and protecting the anonymity and confidentiality of women and their families. However, the program is always delivered according to women’s needs.

Really comes in handy for mothers, especially for first time mums, they don’t know what to expect. They know babies are babies, but they don’t know what they need. The Baby Basket has got everything, cream, wipes, nappies, powder, shampoo, and yeah it’s come in really handy.

(PREGNANT WOMAN, SECOND BASKET BEING RECEIVED)
This is What We Found

An evaluation of the program was conducted in 2014. At a cost of a modest $874 per participant, the program was considered to be good value for money. Data routinely collected from One21seventy showed that a higher proportion of antenatal visits occurred in the trial sites, compared to control sites, along with an increased frequency of antenatal visits. Pregnant women in the trial sites were also less likely to be iron deficient, were more likely to have risky behaviours (particularly smoking) detected and be provided with brief intervention on the issues of alcohol and smoking.

On surveying the women who received the baskets, nearly 80% of the women rated the baskets as ‘very useful’ and the majority of the respondents in the evaluation said the contents of each basket was useful.

Over 98% of basket handovers were reported to have been accompanied with advice on smoking, alcohol, nutrition and SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). Women reported that they passed this health information on to other pregnant women.

Through ACYHC’s empowering family centred approach, women were making healthy choices such as eating fruit and vegetables and quitting smoking, becoming more empowered health consumers and becoming advocates for change in their communities.

Whilst it is likely that a combination of factors, including routine maternal health services, have all contributed to the positive improvements in the trial sites, the quantitative evaluation found that it is both feasible and likely that the Baby Basket program had contributed to improvements. Qualitative findings support this view.

For Further Information Contact

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Basket 1
Delivered by health workers in the community as early intervention. Includes safe baby sleeper, health education information, booklet on pregnancy written by Indigenous Health Workers, fresh food voucher.

Basket 2
Delivered prior to the birth of the baby, when the woman presents in Cairns at 36 weeks. Includes nappies, baby clothes, personal hygiene items for the mother.

Basket 3
Delivered in the community six months after the birth of the baby. Includes postnatal information, toys, a toothbrush and toothpaste.

This is Where We Are Going

The Baby One Program (BOP) is the next phase of Apunipima’s successful Baby Basket program. The program supports a holistic, family centred model of care, led by Health Workers and family/community. The program continues as a home visiting program that begins in pregnancy and extends up to the first 1000 days of the child’s life. BOP will use the community accepted baby baskets to:

- Increase engagement of mums, kids and families with Health Workers and health providers; and
- Provide an opportunity for Health Workers to share timely health promotion messages during the antenatal period and early years of the child’s life.

The BOP vision is to empower Cape York families to grow their babies up to live long healthy lives through strengthening their culture and regaining their spirit by embedding social and emotional wellbeing into every step of the program.