

‘Mibbinbah’

The generally poor health of Indigenous people is well documented and known. Indigenous men are particularly at risk of premature death and disability. To date there is little evidence that would support specific approaches to increasing the engagement of men in programs. However, there is a real sense among workers and researchers that Indigenous Male Spaces may be effective and culturally supportive ways of connecting men with one another. This in itself can be healthy.

Men’s spaces can also provide men with the means of connecting with those people who might provide them with the resources they need to improve or maintain their health and wellbeing. There is also the possibility of moving forward to a place where many more Aboriginal men are in a confident and strong position to make significant contributions to Indigenous communities. ‘Mibbinbah’ (Men’s Place) is a part of this movement.

‘Mibbinbah’ comes under the umbrella of the Chronic Disease (Conditions) Program of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal health (CRAH). It can be thought of as two distinct but related projects: *Men’s Spaces Pilot Project* and *Men’s Chronic Conditions Project*. The first is a pilot project which seeks to identify, celebrate and explore existing Indigenous Men’s Spaces. Specifically, the project will seek to discover why men might feel that certain Spaces are ‘safe’ and how they can be ‘well facilitated’.

This will be done through the employment of Local Indigenous Male Project Associates. These Project Associates (PAs) will be trained in the use of participatory action research methods. These will help in developing and sustaining these Spaces during the research program. Further training in Indigenous leadership, community communication and media, and computer and internet skills, will enhance sustainability. Initially, the pilot phase will involve seven sites jointly funded by the CRAH and *beyondblue*.

The second project will seek to understand if and why participation in chronic conditions programs by Indigenous males is improved through association with ‘safe’ and ‘well facilitated’ Indigenous Men’s Spaces.

The research program has been developed and deployed under the joint leadership of Jack Bulman and Rick Hayes. Jack and Rick are leading researchers with regard to health promotion approaches that avoid making men problems to be solved. Instead, they work on the basis that men are potential partners for creating new possibilities in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Men’s Spaces.

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