



Walgett Aboriginal Medical Centre's Goonimoo Mobile Children's Services is going to run child injury prevention programs this year, including focusing on water safety.

Pool Day is cool way to learn about child safety



A PREVENTION Centre project looking at Aboriginal child injury launched its first community event on Saturday, November 30, at Walgett Swimming pool.

Focusing on water safety, nearly 400 people gathered at the pool to swim, talk, play and focus on the wellbeing of their young people.

The Walgett Pool Day was led by local Aboriginal community-controlled organisations as a fun and positive day for families to be together and safely enjoy the pool.

There was free entry to the pool for a day of yarning, talking about what Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service (WAMS) Goonimoo Mobile Children's Services will be delivering this year, a barbecue, salad, fruit, iced water and the chance to win a family pool season pass.

Injury is the leading cause of death in Australian children. Programs targeting parents of young children offer an opportunity for engagement and improving health literacy around injury prevention throughout children's lives.

Goonimoo child injury prevention educator Tara Smith said programs also need to target community-level factors that affect injuries like the physical environment and policies.

"Parents are really keen to get involved to keep their kids safe," she said.

"They have ideas about what can be done at a community level and they're also keen to learn more about what they can do to prevent injuries."

"They also want to learn first aid – things like CPR and first aid for choking and snake bites – because we're often a long way from help out here. Snake bites are a big issue in our community, so this is a priority area. Parents are keen, and always encouraged to have a say about the sorts of activities they



Robyn Morgan and Aly enjoy Walgett Pool Day.



The line-up for iceblocks at the Walgett Pool Day. It was 38°C.



Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in Walgett have organised pool days over summer to help the community come together and talk about preventing injury to children.

want to do at Goonimoo's playgroup."

Amy Townsend, manager of WAMS's Goonimoo Mobile Children's Services, said the Child Injury Prevention Program (CHIPP) had been developed by working closely with local community groups.

"We've been having lots of informal yarns with parents during playgroup about the sorts of activities they want to do," she said.

"We also held some formal research yarning groups with Nellie and Mel from UNSW at Goonimoo, with WAMS health personnel and other local children's services. We asked parents what sorts of injury issues they are concerned about and the topics they'd be interested in covering."

Tara's focus in 2020 is on delivering and refining the CHIPP program. Tara is currently studying to become an Aboriginal

health practitioner.

"I'm learning a lot about child injury," she said. "For example, I've just been to Sydney to start the Austswim Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety course so we can do 'parents and bubs' water familiarisation play sessions at the pool. Aboriginal families don't really have access to these sort of water activities in Walgett at the moment."

Tara also co-presented about CHIPP with Dr Melanie Andersen at the Australasian Injury Prevention Network Conference in Brisbane in November.

Walgett is situated at the junction of the Barwon and Namoi rivers, and the community has a healthy respect for the importance of water safety. CHIPP's focus on water safety in term one was the result of community consultation.

Walgett's pool has always been a strong focus for the community to come together, exercise and get some welcome respite from its long, dry summers, particularly now that the rivers are very depleted due to the drought.

"The turnout was great and we think that was a result of a long period of promotion by Goonimoo, and combining forces with Yuwalya

Ngarra-li and Dharriwa Elders Group, so families had transport to and from the pool," Dr Andersen said.

The success of the Walgett Pool Day is down to the strong local Aboriginal community-controlled organisations who collaborated to bring people together.

The day was such a success that Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service decided to hold two additional community pool days this summer to promote community-building, togetherness, health and wellbeing and as a forum for health promotion activity.

"CHIPP will begin again in earnest next year at Goonimoo, aiming to start off in term one at the pool with parents and bubs water play sessions. The program will focus around activity and play," Dr Andersen said.

"So, for example, while Goonimoo staff teach parents water familiarisation activities to do with their kids that build water skills, staff will also yarn about drowning prevention. Each school term will have a different injury prevention focus, including sport and physical activity, home safety and road safety."