

## **Caring Communities Program Workshop, 20-21 Oct 2004 Evaluation and Feedback Report**

### **Introduction**

The second national workshop of the Caring Communities Program (CCP) took place in Adelaide in October 2004. The event was an opportunity for networking, information exchange and support among stakeholders, including project officers and representatives of government and other agencies. CCP projects are funded under the National Palliative Care Strategy, which is designed to provide sustainable services and programs that meet the needs of local communities to support people who are dying.

Due to staff turnover and recruitment issues, for some participants this second workshop was the first opportunity to meet other project officers, government officers and members of the National Evaluation Team (NET). Themes of this workshop built on those of the first workshop, placing the CCP projects within the context of the National Palliative Care Strategy. These themes were:

- Capacity building and sustainability
- Communications and dissemination

The workshop was opened by Ms Rita Evans, director, Palliative Care Section, Department of Health and Ageing. She highlighted current issues such as continuity of care, ethical and legal questions around end-of-life decisions, community understanding, the interface between specialist palliative care services and aged care, and access for indigenous and remote communities. Activities of the CCP which addressed these national issues included training health professionals; educating volunteers and carers; developing new practice models, especially for General Practitioners; and raising community awareness of palliative care.

Professor Kathy Eagar, director of the Centre for Health Services Development at the University of Wollongong and leader of the National Evaluation Team, presented sessions on the evaluation process, capacity building, communication/dissemination and generalisability.

In small groups during concurrent sessions, project officers presented 15-minute overviews of their progress to date, focusing on:

- What they had done
- How it had gone
- Lessons learned

## Survey results

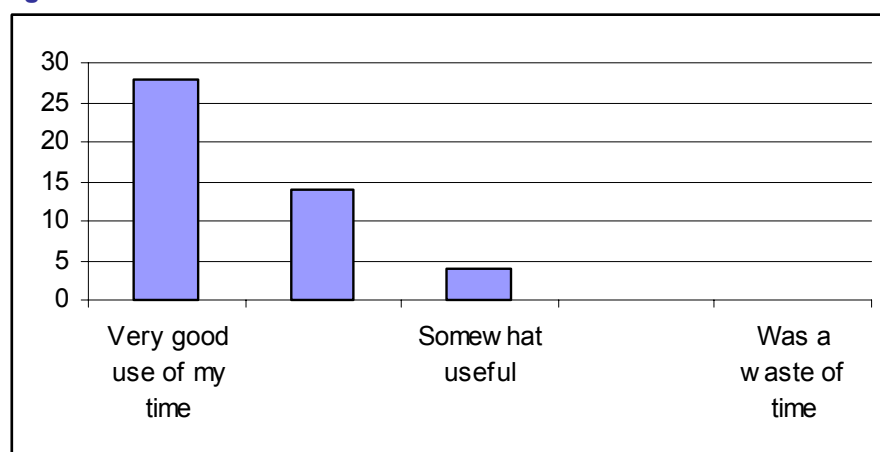
### Participants

Following the workshop, completed feedback forms were received from 35 project representatives of the 37 who attended (response rate 95%) and 12 representatives of government or other agencies of the 15 who attended (response rate 80%). The evaluation results are presented below.

### Question 1 - Overall, was the workshop a worthwhile use of your time?

The overwhelming majority (91%) of participants thought the workshop was a good to very good use of their time. The remainder felt it was somewhat useful (see Figure 1). One declined to answer the question.

Figure 1 Results from Question 1



Comments were grouped into categories and tallied. All but two comments were positive. Participants most frequently referred to:

- the benefits of networking, 'putting faces to names' and reducing the isolation of project officers (16)
- the opportunity to exchange ideas, get positive feedback and support, and seek advice/strategies for solving difficulties (14)
- the chance to hear about other projects (6)
- putting projects into a national perspective (6).

Examples of comments made were:

*"Fantastic! Well worth coming together and learning about the other projects, discussing difficulties and strategies to overcome those difficulties."*

*"Common learning, creation/development of connections between projects, active involvement of evaluators."*

*"Have picked up all sorts of useful tips."*

*"Personally (useful) but difficult to justify to employees when CCP is only a small part of your work. Puts pressure on colleagues."*

*“I wish I’d had access to the first workshop. I wasn’t employed at the very beginning and the auspicing bodies were the primary attendants at that workshop.”*

**Comparison with the first workshop:**

Networking was also the focus of many comments from the first workshop. The other comments, however, reflect the different emphasis and content of the two workshops. Feedback from the first workshop was more likely to mention that it provided a good understanding of project management and evaluation, and set a clear overview of the Caring Communities Program.

**Question 2 - Overall, what were the strengths and weaknesses of the workshop?**

Participants were also invited to identify strengths and weaknesses of the workshop. They could name as many as they wished. The strengths largely reflected the comments made in the earlier question, falling into the following categories:

- networking (24)
- exchange of ideas, feedback, support and advice (18)
- hearing about other projects (12)
- putting own project into national perspective (9)
- content was timely, useful, relevant, practical, stimulating (7)
- workshop was well facilitated (5)
- helped clarify my thinking (5).

Other aspects of the workshop that were considered strengths included the involvement of the government officers and national evaluators, the information about report writing, and the enthusiasm and commitment of participants.

Examples of comments made were:

*“Mix of project staff, bureaucrats, UOW is a significant strength in integrating and modelling a Caring Community concept into a reality. Well done!”*

*“Attendance by Australian Government representatives both National and State, PCA. This makes us feel valued and that our project work has been important.”*

*“Useful to meet with jurisdictional groups. Useful to hear presentations of like projects.”*

*“Good opportunity to share resources and ideas. Well organised, good travel arrangements. Thanks!”*

Many participants would have liked the opportunity to hear about more or all of the other projects (17). People were also critical of the accommodation and food (10), the venue for the workshop sessions, including the way the main room was set up (9), and the ‘patronising tone’ of some participants (2). Equipment problems were mentioned, and one survey respondent suggested the presentations should be loaded onto the laptop computers in advance, to avoid wasting time at the start of the concurrent sessions. Others also suggested ways to improve the workshop, such as: providing more information about project presentations, to help people choose which to attend; providing advance notice of the government and other representatives likely to attend; and setting aside time for government officers to meet.

Examples of comments made were:

*“The venue was poor. The dinner was well facilitated. The motel was not worth the money. The food was not very good.”*

*“Time travelling etc versus effectiveness?”*

*“Poor set up of room (hard to hear and connect with others).”*

*“Agree listening to all 37 presentations would be too much, but eight weren’t quite enough.”*

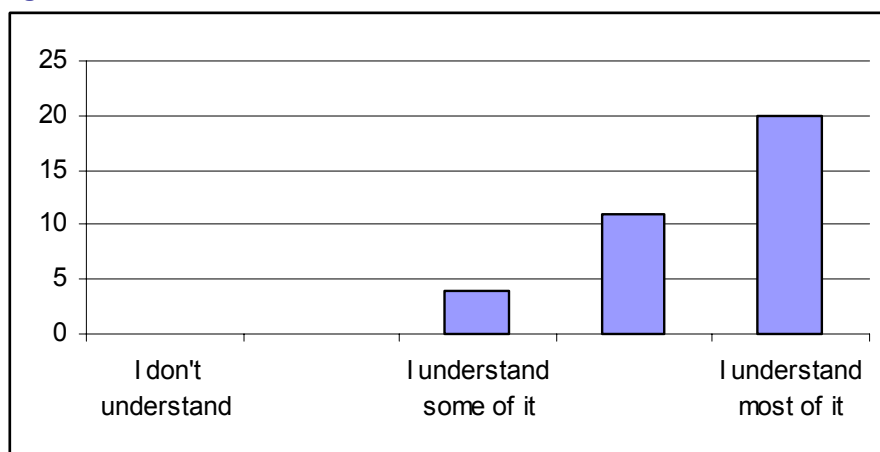
#### **Comparison with the first workshop:**

In contrast to the feedback from the first workshop, none of the participants at the second workshop said there was too much/not enough information provided about evaluation or the evaluation toolkit. Taken together with verbal comments to NET members at the workshop, this suggests that project officers are now much more comfortable with the concepts and methods of evaluation and have a better understanding of what they need to do.

### **Question 3 - I understand how my project fits in with the National Palliative Care Program and the Caring Communities Program**

Of the 35 project officers who responded to the survey, 31 (89%) said they now had a good to very good understanding of how their projects fit into the National Palliative Care Program and the Caring Communities Program. The remaining four said they had some understanding of their project’s national context (see [Figure 2](#)).

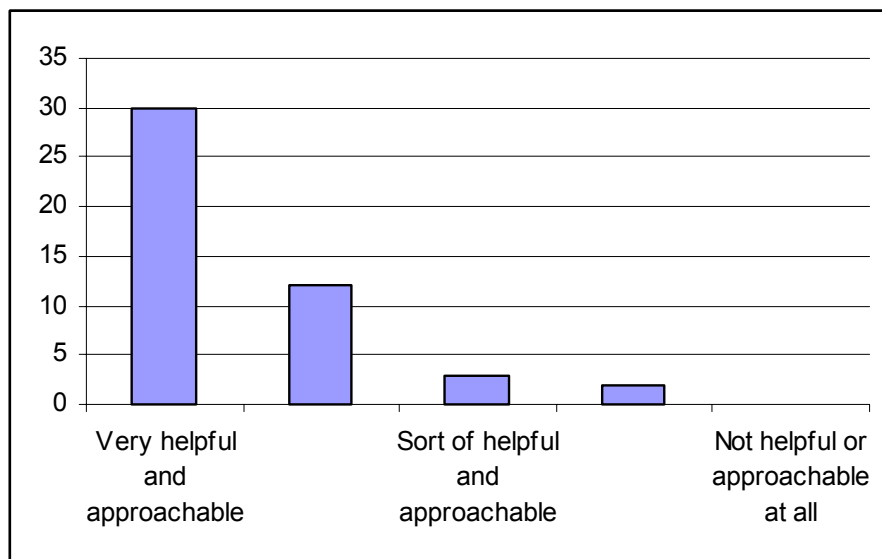
**Figure 2 Results from Question 3**



### **Question 4 - I found the organisers and presenters to be**

Feedback on specific aspects of the workshop was overwhelmingly positive. [Figure 3](#) highlights that most participants (89%) said they found the organisers and presenters ‘helpful and approachable’ or ‘very helpful and approachable’.

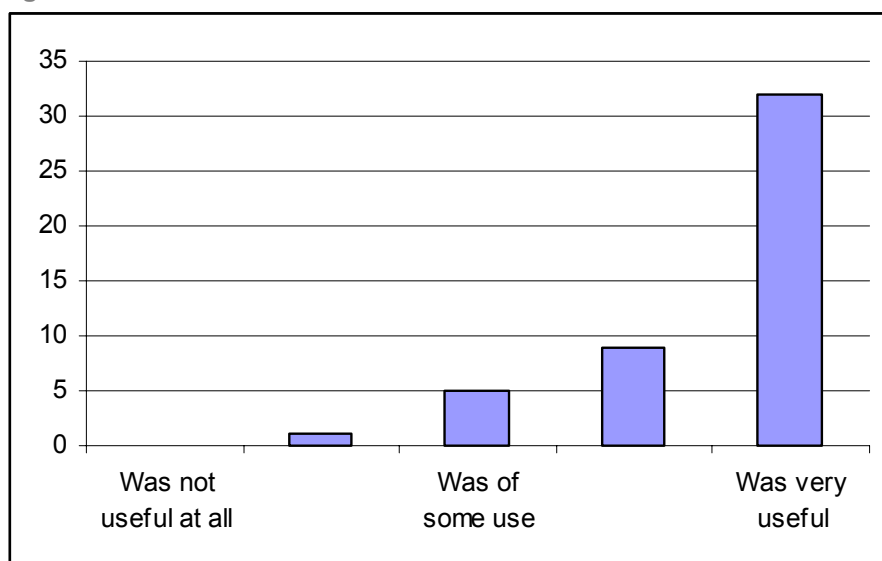
**Figure 3 Results to Question 4**



**Question 5 - The networking and collaboration with other projects was useful**

As would be expected, given the previous comments made by participants, 41 of 47 (87%) felt that the networking and collaboration with other projects was useful (see Figure 4). Only one person felt this was not a useful aspect of the workshop.

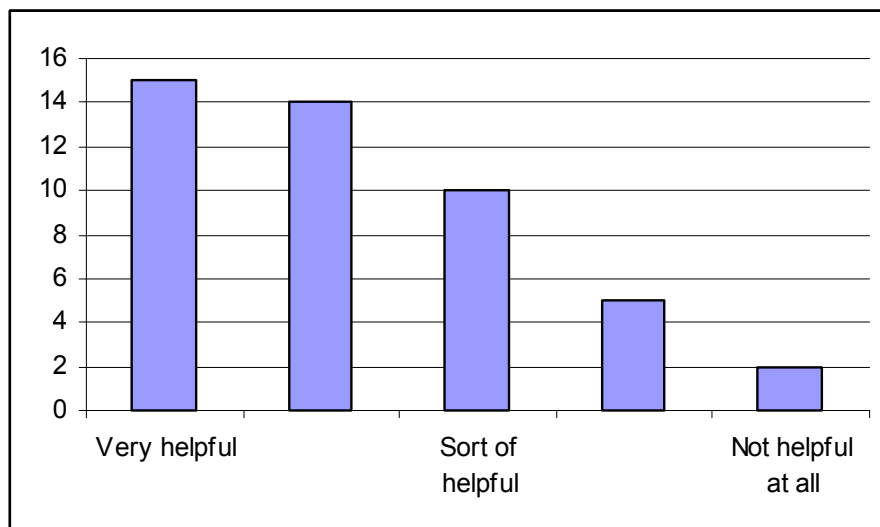
**Figure 4 Results to Question 5**



**Question 6 - I found the concurrent/jurisdiction sessions to be**

Opinions of the concurrent and jurisdictional sessions were more mixed. Twenty-nine participants (63%) found these helpful or very helpful, and 10 (22%) said these were ‘sort of helpful’ (see Figure 5). The rest of the participants (15%) did not gain much or anything from these sessions, however, and one person declined to answer the question.

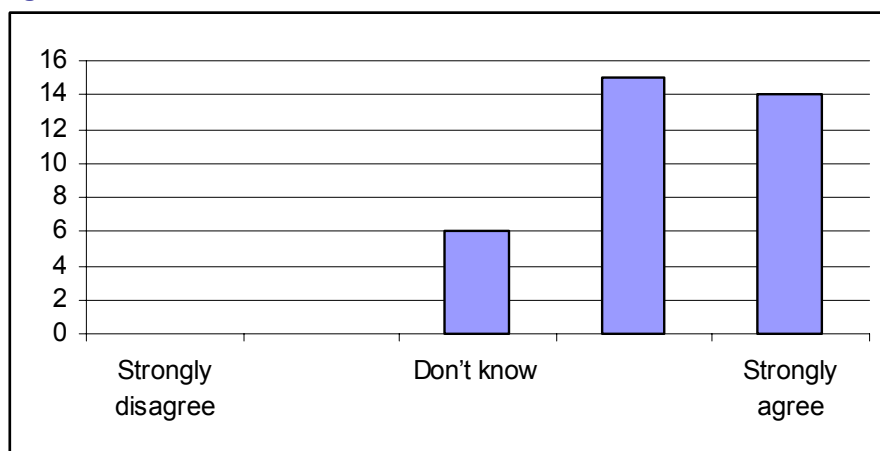
**Figure 5 Results from Question 6**



**Question 7 - My project will produce clear evaluation findings**

Project officers were, in general, very confident about the evaluation process. Of the 35 project officers who provided feedback, 15 (43%) agreed and 14 (40%) strongly agreed with the statement, “My project will produce clear evaluation findings” (see Figure 6). This is an interesting contrast to the first workshop, at which just five project officers (21% of those present at the time) strongly agreed that they had a clear idea of how their projects could be evaluated.

**Figure 6 Results from Question 7**



**Question 8 - Do you see any value in holding a final workshop?**

Most participants (91%) thought a third workshop would be worthwhile. One did not answer the question, and three saw no value in holding another workshop.

There was remarkable agreement on the timing for the proposed workshop. Seven participants asked for ‘same time next year’ or ‘12 months’ time’, which corresponds to October 2005. A further two suggested ‘late 2005’. Twenty respondents liked the idea of the ‘80/20’ rule discussed in the final session of the workshop – that is, holding the workshop when most (around 80%) of the projects had concluded. In fact this would be in May 2006, at the end of the program, when the final six projects are due to report. It is possible that people actually meant when the program was 80% finished, which would be October 2005. One participant noted, however, that organisers:

*“Need to consider that many projects will be busy late next year, finalising projects and looking at sustainability.”*

A few put forward earlier dates: March 2005 (3), June 2005 (1), or ‘early in the next funding year’ (1). Others suggested a later workshop: May 2006 (2) or ‘in 12-18 months’ time’ (1).

Those who offered ideas for the content of the next workshop focused mainly on sustainability (13) and evaluation outcomes and feedback (11). An opportunity to debrief and exchange ideas (9) and guidance on writing the final reports (6) were also requested. Sessions on dissemination and generalisability were also suggested, while one person said they would like more opportunities for networking and another wanted similar content to the second workshop.

### **Question 9 - Further comments?**

Thirty people made final comments on the feedback sheets. Most were positive, for example:

*“Greatly appreciated. An opportunity to get away from the project but in a way that will contribute to it.”*

*“Well done. Assistance and encouragement from the department at the conference was genuine and very useful.”*

*“Great to be able to see, hear and meet these wonderful people.”*

*“The workshop was fantastic, however I think it must be said that the facilities were very, very poor. Had I realised we were having a ‘70s theme for the dinner, I would have worn my kaftan!”*

Several people offered ideas for the program or for the next workshop, such as:

*“Develop a project officer register; include an exit management process in contracts; inform CCP projects of expectation of DHS involvement in CCP upfront.”*

*“Would have liked to have seen a report writing workshop.”*

*“Can we do posters next time?”*

*“Repetitive big picture. Would like to hear more about individual projects (positive and negative). Information about more opportunities for funding in the future.”*

*“Would be good to have more clarity regarding roles of State health departments at next workshop, especially regarding options of sustainability/ongoing funding.”*

## **Summary**

The second Caring Communities Program workshop has provided the project officers with an opportunity to network, share their progress and lessons learned and prepare for the final reporting of their projects.

The evaluations show that the participants were, on the whole, satisfied with the workshop.....

The recommendations from the workshop to address the issue of learning about all the projects are as follows.

1. Distribute a revised contact list of participants which includes names and contact details.

2. Share information about the projects by posting the one page project summaries and project presentations.

Three recommendations arise from the workshop evaluation.

1. Hold a third CCP workshop in approximately October 2005.
2. The workshop should focus on sustainability, evaluation outcomes and feedback, and provide an opportunity to debrief and exchange ideas, and guidance on writing the final reports.
3. Configure the main room at the venue to facilitate interaction and ensure all participants can hear each other's contributions.

### Appendix 1 – CCP National Workshop Feedback Form

We are interested in your opinion regarding the workshop over the last couple of days.

**Please tick which group you represent:**

CCP Project Representative

CCP National Reference Group

Palliative Care Australia

Other  .....

Dept of Health and Ageing State/Territory Officer

Palliative Care Inter Governmental Forum

Dept of Health and Ageing Central Office

1. Overall, was the workshop a worthwhile use of your time?

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Was a waste of time
Was somewhat useful
Was a very good use of my time

Comments:

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.....

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2. Overall, what were the strengths and weaknesses of the workshop?

Strengths:

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Weaknesses:

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**Please tick the box that best indicates how you feel:**

3. I understand how my project fits in with the National Palliative Care Program and the Caring Communities Program

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I don't understand
I understand some of it
I understand most of it

4. I found the organisers and presenters to be:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very helpful and approachable		Sort of helpful and approachable		Not helpful or approachable at all

5. The networking and collaboration with other projects was useful

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was not Useful at all	Was of some use		Was very useful	

6. I found the concurrent/jurisdiction sessions to be:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very helpful	Sort of helpful		Not helpful at all	

7. My project will produce clear evaluation findings:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly disagree	Don't know		Strongly agree	

8. Do you see any value in holding a final workshop?

Yes  No

If 'Yes' when should this workshop be held and what should be the focus of this workshop?

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9. Further comments?

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