

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS ANALYSIS



Children With Additional Needs
Working Group



Bushfire Resilience and Recovery
Building Project (BRRBP)



BACKGROUND

The Bushfire Resilience and Recovery Building Project (BRRBP) is funded through Bushfire Recovery Victoria's Local Economy Recovery (Round 1) grants program. The BRRBP has been in operation since 29th April 2021 and has undertaken several key projects to help with identifying the needs of communities in East Gippsland.

The BRRBP has used several different mediums to communicate with families, service providers and communities to connect them with what is happening and to share some of the work that has been undertaken to date. A Media and Communications strategy was developed as a part of the governance documents for the BRRBP. This evaluation provides insights into the use of the different communication methods and makes recommendations to the Children with Additional Needs Working Group (CWANWG) for future consideration to support families and services providers throughout East Gippsland.

To this end, the Media and Communications Strategy and this evaluation meets the following two objectives:

- 1) Build capacity of parents of children with additional needs across East Gippsland; and
 - 2) Map and document pathways for children/families in ways that are easy to understand.
- Using various communication platforms has provided opportunities to explore how successful the mediums have been and recommendations for future consideration by the CWANWG.

COMMUNICATION PLATFORM

- Email
- Social media (Community Facebook pages)
- Newspapers/local community newsletters
- Face to face meetings (1:1 and group)



TYPES OF INITIATIVES

- Sensitive Santa
- Protective Behaviours training
- Early Years Autism workshops (face to face and online workshops)
- Association for Children with a Disability online workshops
- NDIS 101 Bespoke Training (Mallacoota)
- Journey of Hope
- Gippsland Disability Advocacy Carers Days
- GippSport Golf Day for children with a disability (Bairnsdale)



OBSERVATIONS AND RESULTS

SOCIAL MEDIA

Month and number of
workshops/interests shared 2021

June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
3	5	5	2	2	2	3

Shared across nine East Gippsland Facebook pages including NDIS in Gippsland, Carers and Support Network and local “Chatterbox” pages in Orbost, Lakes Entrance, Bairnsdale and Mallacoota.

Social Media Page Name	Membership #'s
Lakes Entrance Chatterbox	6.8K
Orbost Chatterbox	3.8K
Bairnsdale Chatterbox	2.1K
NDIS in Gippsland	776
Mallacoota Community News	10.3K
Special/Additional Needs Parent and Carers Support Group	144
Bairnsdale Mums	1.9K
Lakes Entrance Noticeboard	11.4K
MyTime/PlayConnect - Bairnsdale	120

In comparison -
organisations pages consist of:

Social media Page Name	Membership #'s
Uniting Vic/Tas (State)	5.5K
Save the Children (National)	166K
PlayConnect (Victoria)	64
Gippsland Lakes Complete Health (Local)	2.7K
Noah's Ark (State)	2.3K



The likelihood of locals on State or National Pages for information about local events would need to be further investigated. If the assumption is that courses/webinars/workshops etc. are being run and people are engaging with the content on the State and National pages to attend, it would be good to do further work in to engage families for their content and support, especially through fires.

Anecdotal evidence (from organisers of content) suggests that the uptake of attendance was between 25-75% due to social media presence on local pages.

Overwhelmingly, the biggest success was Sensitive Santa where most of the participants saw the flier on the Facebook pages across East Gippsland.

Depending on the amount of information to share, it could take up to 1.5hrs to post across the nine Facebook pages per month. If the CWANWG is going to sustain this option, acknowledgment of the time it takes is important. Identification of one or two people within the CWANWG (preferably a paid position) to send information too will be beneficial.

The sharing of information on Facebook pages has been beneficial to families who source a lot of their information from this platform, particularly if it is community focussed. It has also had the added benefit of continuing a community conversation about children with additional needs and their families being supported in a more open manner in each community. Comments have been received “what a great idea” and then tagging families has been an unexpected but positive outcome allowing us to reach families who we may have not had previous connection with.

As an example, the sharing of Sensitive Santa on at least 9 East Gippsland Facebook pages meant that all 15 places face to face were filled and a further 6 were available for online zoom sessions across East Gippsland. These are families we may have not met if this platform was unavailable.

The BRRBP has played a strong role in coordinating the distribution of the information – which will become unsustainable as the grant ceases. Other methods will need to be considered to ensure the sharing of knowledge is continued in an objective way (see Recommendations).



Reliance on the ongoing existing relationships is important to ensure information that is distributed through email reaches the intended audience. Having contacts lists (with permission and centralised) would be helpful to ensure continuity of help and assistance with families in case individuals leave their roles in the organisation.

A small number of families prefer text, newsletters and emails over Facebook. During the BRRBP, efforts to be inclusive of those preferences did take extra time to ensure the same information was being shared to everyone. While no 'official' contact list has been formed to continue integration with families who have come forward as a part of the grant, some **interest in continuing with the work undertaken by the CWANWG** has become strong, especially in those areas not traditionally serviced by the CWANWG members, including far East Gippsland. Many families had not heard about the CWANWG, or its work so there has been major benefits to increase the profile of the work being done by the CWANWG and the types of things that can help families going forward. An 'information hub' to share what has been collected and developed because of the feedback would be an excellent opportunity for ongoing assistance to families who are unable to make it to meetings.

There are several resources that have been shared to date including the Person-Centered Emergency Planning document and more recently, the CFA Carers' Planning Guide through verbal communication. Many families are unaware of the existence of the documents and to have these **centralised in one spot** (or reference to where it can be found) would be of great benefit, particularly as communities continue the conversation about emergency preparedness.

One media release (shared through newspapers and local community newsletters) was distributed and introduced the launch of the project and how to access the Service Provider list. Families engaged through the BRRBP have indicated that they are aware of the Service Provider list and either had a copy, or requested a copy be sent to them via email.

Face to face meetings were the most popular across East Gippsland. Many meetings were held (over 300) in 6 months with families, organisations and not for profits who had interactions within community. For families, many have been reluctant to share their own stories more broadly with others within a group environment. While this meant more time meeting one on one, the level of interactions were much more positive with more information gathered out of the engagement.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Organisations are equipped in their policies to share information on community Facebook pages to reach wider audiences being distributed through the BRRBP. Overwhelmingly, families and providers look to social pages like chatterbox or carers pages instead of individual organisation pages unless the families have a direct affiliation with them. Members of the CWANWG can continue the current approach as an interim measure however it will require an ongoing presence and commitment. Suggest nomination of several paid representatives to continue with the sharing of content across social media.

2

An information hub is created online because of the concentrated work undertaken by the BRRBP in the form of a website which ‘connects’ families to what may be happening in their community in addition to continuation of a facebook presence. The information hub can house information currently developed by the CWANWG including the Education One Stop Shop and Service Provider List as examples. It is important that these documents (and others including governance documents, agenda’s, minutes, and **emergency resources**) can also be housed and made available to families at any time. Undertaking this will create a sustainable and cost-efficient model to keeping families informed of what is happening in their community at any given time. It will also ensure documents can be ‘version controlled’ as information in key information is updated at least quarterly. As one family remarked “while the Service Provider list is an excellent document, I cannot trust that the version I have is the most up to date”. Information and linkages to websites like the **CFA for preparedness planning would also be of great benefit.**

In times of emergency, the information hub can hold the most up to date and important information for families (signposting to Carers Gateway/Carers Victoria, NDIS and other pathways for support).

3

Having a centralised administration team who can access contact lists would be beneficial to ensure continuity of service in case individuals leave organisations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4

Creation of a contact list to capture families as a part of the BRRBP and ensure they have inclusive access to all events and outcomes because of the BRRBP. Permission of the families to have their data collected and shared will need to be obtained.

5

Meetings with families to be led by families. Where there is a need (and when families are ready), the formation of a facilitated group should be supported (examples Mallacoota Mytime and Orbost Carer Group) have been created as a direct result of the work of the BRRBP and can be used to implement planning sessions for Emergency response and preparedness conversations.

6

Investigation of a newsletter connecting all events – perhaps Noah’s Ark. The CWANWG then creates a pathway for a newsletter to be shared more broadly to families and community members and keeps information on the ‘information hub’. OR a review, conversation between the CWANWG and Noah’s Ark position to determine the role and it’s relationship with the CWANWG and how both can work together to signpost local events for local community.

7

Strategic Relationship Mapping undertaken by CWANWG. Service Providers local to the community who have Facebook pages may also be used to share important information (emergency related, workshops etc) to help with information distribution to families who we may not pick up through normal channels.

