

## Helping young people be healthy to help stop diabetes happening

### What was this project about?

If people have a healthy lifestyle (doing things like eating healthy and being active) it can **stop type 2 diabetes and other chronic diseases from happening**. In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have more type 2 diabetes than non-Indigenous people, especially in younger age groups. Programs made for young people could **help them have a healthy lifestyle and stay well**. We wanted to make a program like this in Derby, for young Aboriginal people. We also wanted to find out how people are getting checked for diabetes, or checked for being at risk of diabetes.

### What did we do and what did we find out?

Health care numbers showed there was **a lot of diabetes** and risk of diabetes from a young age, **but a lot of people hadn't been checked yet**.

We talked to Aboriginal people who were living in and around Derby, to find out what sort of program would be good for young people. We also looked at what programs had been good for young Indigenous people in other parts of Australia and overseas.

Community members said it would be good to **have more programs to help people be healthy**, and the new program should have a lot of different things in it. They also said people need to **know more about why it is important to be healthy** — including to **stop diabetes happening**. Health researchers and the Derby Aboriginal Health Service worked together to make a new program and try it out.

The program had 8 sessions, with a group exercise circuit, cooking, stress management; and talking about healthy eating, being active and diabetes. It was good having program facilitators who were **local Aboriginal people and very supportive**. People who took part learnt new information, like how much sugar is in different drinks and the bad things that diabetes can do to the body. Participants said the program **motivated them to make some healthy changes** – stopping or slowing down on cool drink and juice, cooking healthy food at home more, and eating smaller amounts. It was hard to set this program up but now it could keep being run if it had funding.

### What does this mean?

From a young age, it is **important to get checked for diabetes** or risk of diabetes. There should be more programs run by community members to help people be healthy. Aboriginal health services like DAHS are very busy and it would be good if they had **more resources to help people stay healthy** as well as helping people when they are sick.

To make a new program, it is helpful to get ideas from other programs but change it to be good for the right age group and culture. Trying out a program is an important part of deciding how it should be run in the future. This program was a good starting point, but programs go better when they keep running again and again, and people can join in when they are ready.

**Thank you** to DAHS staff and Derby community members.

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