

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

 ***HEY, DAD!* Program
for FATHERS who have a
CHILD WITH A DISABILITY**

MAY 2007

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This project was commissioned by UnitingCare Burnside and Centacare.

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A report for UnitingCare Burnside and Centacare

Acknowledgement

Many fathers of children with a disability, facilitators and service representatives as well as members of the Evaluation Steering Group assisted this evaluation, by providing their time, comments, knowledge and ideas. The contribution and assistance of all of these people is acknowledged, with thanks.

Disclaimer

This report presents the results of work carried out between September 2006 and May 2007.

The information used to prepare this report was provided by stakeholders involved in the evaluation. Every attempt has been made to present their information and comments fairly and accurately.

Contents

	Page
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	VII
1 <i>HEY, DAD!</i> AND THIS EVALUATION	1
1.1 The history of Hey, Dad!	1
1.2 The new Hey, Dad! program	1
1.3 Why a group for fathers?	2
1.4 This evaluation	4
1.5 Stakeholder participation in the evaluation	4
1.6 This report	5
2 THE MANUAL AND ITS TRIAL	6
2.1 Timeline	6
2.2 What happened?	6
2.3 The characteristics of the fathers	10
3 ENGAGING THE TARGET GROUP	17
3.1 Engagement	17
3.2 Optimising conditions for engagement	18
3.3 Engaging appropriate service providers and facilitators	18
3.4 Getting dads to enrol	21
3.5 Getting dads to attend	28
3.6 Getting a representative groups of dads to attend	29
3.7 Engaging dads in playgroups	29
3.8 Engaging dads in workshops	36
3.9 Getting dads to use the skills learnt	42
3.10 Getting dads to attend again	42
4 PROGRAM OUTCOMES	44
4.1 Coverage of program outcomes	44
4.2 Communication	44
4.3 Parenting skills	44
4.4 Conflict resolution	46
4.5 Relationships	46
4.6 Connections	47
5 PARTNERSHIPS	49
5.1 The partners	49
5.2 Positive relationships	49
6 STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE SUCCESS	51
APPENDICES	57
Appendix A: Steering Group	58
Appendix B: Evaluation approach, activities and issues	59
Appendix C: Facilitators' evaluation guide	66
Appendix D: Facilitator Training Flyer	98
Appendix E: Facilitator Training Outline	101
Appendix F: References	105

Executive Summary

The *Hey, Dad!* manual for Fathers who have a Child with a Disability was developed with funding provided by the Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

The manual built on base structures, previously developed by Centacare and UnitingCare Burnside, designed for all fathers and for separated fathers, as well as Burnside's experience of delivering fathering programs in NSW since 1995 for fathers of children with a disability. This early work was also based on an original partnership between Burnside and the Northcott Society.

The manual is designed to be delivered to groups of fathers of children with a disability in a series of workshops. A playgroup involving fathers and their children is also recommended as part of the program.

The manual was trialled in early 2007 and evaluated by Dianne Beatty of *Alt Beatty Consulting*. This report presents the results of this evaluation.

What was done?

27 workers from 16 services were trained to facilitate this version of *Hey, Dad!* in February 2007. Each worker and agency was then committed to trialling at least one playgroup and one workshop by April. This timing was necessary in order for the evaluation feedback to be used to inform the production and publication of the final manual by July 2007.

12 playgroups and 5 workshops were held in locations throughout NSW from Sydney to Casino in the north, Orange in the west and Kiama in the south.

A total of 83 fathers attended, with 15 fathers attending both a workshop and a playgroup. The fathers who attended came from a range of cultural backgrounds and had a diverse profile of labour force participation, educational, age and family characteristics.

The evaluation used at least 157 interactions with stakeholders, including 85 with fathers, via a mix of feedback sheets, interviews and group interactions.

Fathers' reactions to *Hey, Dad!*

Overwhelmingly fathers greatly appreciated the chance to talk to other fathers of children with a disability, with some fathers saying that this was the first opportunity they had had to do so. And overwhelmingly, the fathers expressed relief that other fathers were experiencing similar reactions and feelings although their children may have very different abilities or conditions.

The fathers were all motivated to be involved by wanting to do their best for their child's well-being and future, and for the well-being and future of their partner and any other children. They also recognised that in doing this they needed to care for themselves, reporting that the *Hey, Dad!* groups had helped them to do this. They said that being only with other fathers helped the discussion:

(Hey, Dad! provided an) opportunity to discuss issues as fathers, with fathers only. Having done "care for caring parents" I felt that this environment was more useful and I was more open and honest than an environment in which my wife and other women were present.

While the trial only involved a limited roll-out of *Hey, Dad!*, specific evaluation questions about whether *Hey, Dad!* had enhanced their parenting, communication and relationship skills were answered by the vast majority in the affirmative.

All of the fathers asked were interested in attending further sessions or hearing about their availability.

Facilitators' reactions

Facilitators were equally positive, although issues in the recruitment, promotion and conduct of sessions were encountered.

Did I say that the Hey, Dad! sessions were the best thing I have done for a very long time. Professionally they offer something really worthwhile. Dads connected so well... At times it got quite emotional. As a group of Dads, they came, ready to talk and they did so with such openness....

Development partnership

The manual was developed, and the trial undertaken, using a partnership between Centacare, UnitingCare Burnside, The Spastic Centre and Lifestart. These partners were positive about their collaboration.

Strategies to enhance success

A number of strategies are recommended to enhance the manual and its rollout (see Chapter 6). Most of these have been incorporated into the final manual. The most significant themes are that:

- ✓ Adequate time and resources, as well as appropriately skilled facilitators, must be available for planning, promoting, recruiting fathers, and conducting sessions.
- ✓ *Hey, Dad!* is most effective when it builds on established relationships with fathers and with partner agencies.
- ✓ All sessions must be tailored to the needs, characteristics and interests of the fathers, and, when they are involved, of the children.
- ✓ The *Hey, Dad!* manual is most effective when it is used as an aid to, rather than a script for, facilitation of sessions – when facilitators complement the material with their own facilitation strengths and experience.

Recommendations

Hey, Dad! for Fathers who have a Child with a Disability offers a valuable and significant new resource to support fathers throughout Australia. This evaluation has already been used to inform the development of the final manual (see Chapter 6).

The following additional recommendations are made to ensure the manual's potential is realised.

It is recommended that FaCSIA:

1. Promotes the new *Hey, Dad!* manual for Fathers who have a Child with a Disability throughout Australia.
2. Funds the partner agencies for an initial period of three years to support, throughout NSW:
 - the promotion of *Hey, Dad!*
 - the training and networking of facilitators; and
 - as necessary, the under-writing of the delivery of *Hey, Dad!*

This funding should be sufficient to cover under-writing funds¹ as well as:

- the employment of a development worker and his/her reasonable travel, accommodation, promotion and operating expenses; and

¹ One organisation, Lifestart, estimated that they would need \$1,600 per year to run a *Hey, Dad!* workshop on the minimum recommended frequency of twice per year in one location.

- the support by partner agencies of facilitator networking and training, including the development and maintenance of a website or other communication strategy to allow facilitators to share lessons and suggestions.
3. Considers providing similar funding to support the promotion and development of *Hey, Dad!* in other States and Territories.

1 *Hey, Dad!* and this evaluation

1.1 *The history of Hey, Dad!*

The *Hey, Dad!* manual was initially developed in 1995 by Centacare as a general parenting program for men. Since that time it has been produced in a number of other languages. In 2002 a new manual focussing on separated fathers was produced by Centacare and UnitingCare Burnside.

1.2 *The new Hey, Dad! program*

In 2006, Family Relationship Service Program (FRSP) funding was received from the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) to develop two further *Hey, Dad!* manuals: a manual for Aboriginal fathers to be produced by Centacare and a manual for fathers of children with a disability to be produced by UnitingCare Burnside.

The manual for fathers of children with a disability builds on the original *Hey, Dad!* base as well as Burnside's experience of delivering fathering programs in NSW since 1995 for fathers of children with a disability. This early work was also informed by an original partnership between Burnside and the Northcott Society via which regular three-monthly Saturday (1-day) workshops were conducted for this group of fathers.

The new *Hey, Dad!* manual for Fathers who have a Child with a Disability is comprised of:

- Ideas for developing Dads and Kids Activity Workshops (or playgroups); and
- 12 sessions for Dads' Workshops.

The Dads' Workshops provide workshop-style sessions that can be used over a long period of time to promote discussion about issues that are relevant to fathers who care for a child with a disability. This range of session content will allow services to provide at least 18 months of program material for fathers and their children before any materials need to be repeated. It is designed for fathers to be involved in selecting the issues most relevant to them.

Like all *Hey, Dad!* manuals, it is premised on strengths based practice.

1.3 Why a group for fathers?

As a basis for the development of this new module, staff of the Spastic Centre prepared a scoping study of existing research and programs (Sharp et al, 2006). The research outlined found that the best interests of children, including those with a disability, are promoted by having the support of both parents, with engaged fathers more likely to have “better overall health, higher self esteem, more positive self image and greater work satisfaction” (Children’s Trust Fund quoted in Sharp et al).

The provision of services to particularly support parents of children with a disability was endorsed by a number of authors because of their research findings, including that these parents have elevated stress levels, feelings of self blame, relationship difficulties and restricted family and community lives.

Stakeholders’ comments to this evaluation as well as the testimonies of British fathers of children with a disability in the 2007 publication, *Different Dads – Fathers’ Stories of Parenting Disabled Children* (Harrison et al) raised common themes:

- The current health and community service systems for children with a disability focus heavily on mothers.
- Fathers have difficulty participating because of work commitments, with most services not geared to after hour or weekend support.
- Fathers often feel excluded and report that, even when they can be present, workers may still direct their communications to the mother.
- Men find it difficult to speak openly and freely about their feelings and concerns.
- Fathers of children with a disability have few confidantes with whom they can discuss the issues which arise for their child, their family and themselves. A common experience is that former friends fall away.

- Fathers often therefore feel cut-off from services, friends and the community.
- Many fathers find it difficult to speak openly about their worries and fears when their wives are present.
- Many men find it difficult to seek help or to attend their first support group.
- Once they have taken the first step to participate in a discussion with other fathers, fathers of children with a disability find it particularly helpful sharing experiences, feelings and strategies with each other.
- These fathers consistently express surprise at the extent of common feelings, concerns and experiences.
- These fathers feel reinforced and “less guilty” when they discover they are not the only fathers with such concerns and feelings.

It was good just having Dads there. I think the men could be a lot more open. If their wife was there, I think they may not have been so open. The wives may not have wanted others to know some of the things discussed.

It was good that there was recognition of the need for a men's group. You go to meetings and there are hardly ever any men there. And sometimes it seems that groups with a lot of women are trying to look to miracle cures. I just want to say: "Let's get on with it". I need a strong sense of reality... I like getting good information from other Dads. And the ideas just start to roll out. And the way it is presented makes it easier.

Dads can get a bit isolated... Generally the mum does all the stuff.

It was good to sort of discuss these things with other men... I wouldn't normally talk about things.

There's no-one really nearby who I can really have a chat with.

From the research and the Steering Group's and facilitators' experiences of the initial *Hey, Dad!* modules and other service delivery, fathers only groups seem to offer an effective and useful complement to the existing array of support available. This evaluation looks at whether the new *Hey, Dad!* manual further complements this service model.

1.4 This evaluation

The 2006 FaCSIA funding was also to cover an evaluation of the two new manuals. This report outlines results from the development and trialling of the manual for fathers of children with a disability. A separate report will be prepared on the Aboriginal program.

In September 2006, UnitingCare Burnside contracted Dianne Beatty of *Alt Beatty Consulting* to conduct the evaluation. The terms of reference were for the consultant to identify how effective the use of each manual was in achieving the FRSP outcomes and in engaging its target group, and to evaluate the partnership between Centacare and UnitingCare Burnside.

The FRSP outcomes are:

- *Increased communication skills (in the context of family relationships)*
- *Increased parenting skills (both parents have parenting skills and are involved in their children's upbringing)*
- *Increased family and social connections (improved help-seeking behaviour/able to identify support people and services)*
- *Improved conflict resolution skills*
- *Increased community participation, within the community of interest to best support and address the needs of families.*
- *Increased knowledge in the community in maintaining strong and resilient relationships. (Evaluation brief, 2007)*

Some additional outcomes about partners, stress, child development and special needs, were added to the evaluation questions to reflect the extent of the *Hey, Dad!* material.

The final report of the evaluation was due by the end of May 2007²

An Evaluation Steering Group was responsible for oversight and support of the consultancy. The members of this group are listed in *Appendix A*.

Information about the evaluation approach, activities, challenges, constraints and issues is provided in *Appendix B*.

1.5 Stakeholder participation in the evaluation

The evaluation was based on the feedback resulting from at least 157 evaluation interactions. Some stakeholders may have been involved in more than one type of evaluation strategy.

² Because of delays in the Aboriginal program a separate evaluation report is now due on 1 July 2007.

Table 1.1 Stakeholders consulted by method

Mode	Type of stakeholder			Total
	Fathers	Facilitators	Other	
Training feedback sheets		26		26
Activity session feedback sheets	43	10		53
Workshop session feedback sheets	23	6		29
Group consultation	7	4	2	13
Individual interviews	12	9	4	25
Email/mail		10		10
Total feedback responses	85	65	6	157

1.6 This report

The next chapter describes what sessions were conducted in the trial and the characteristics of the fathers who attended.

The following chapter describes the issues encountered by the organisers and fathers and their reactions to the sessions.

Chapter 4 describes available results in relation to the outcomes desired from projects funded under the FRSP and Chapter 5 looks at the reactions of program partners to the partnerships formed for the development of the module and the trial.

The final Chapter, 6, outlines evaluation lessons, many of which have already been used to inform the revision of the *Hey, Dad!* package.

2 The manual and its trial

2.1 *Timeline*

The anticipated timeline for the development of the manual and its trial, as outlined in the evaluation brief, was:

July 2006

- scoping report prepared;
- focus group to inform design conducted;
- development of initial draft manual;

September

- feedback on draft from stakeholders;

November

- development of second draft of manual;
- evaluation begins;

February 2007

- training of facilitators;

March

- pilot of session based on manual conducted

May

- evaluation report due

June

- launch of manual.

The most significant changes to this timeline were that the manual's drafting continued till January 2007, the evaluation commenced in September with the development of a detailed evaluation plan, and the time allocated for the pilot was extended from mid February to late April.

2.2 *What happened?*

The focus group session was conducted with the help of Lifestart, a community based organisation for people with a disability.

Recruitment of organisations

Flyers seeking expressions of interest from organisations interested in having workers trained to facilitate *Hey, Dad!* for Fathers with a Child with a Disability were circulated widely throughout the NSW disability and community services sectors (see *Appendix D*).

Conditions were associated with the offer of free training including that:

Within six weeks of the completion of the training, the facilitators are required to facilitate the Hey Dad Program (which involves providing a two hour Dads and Kids Playgroup and a five hour Dads' Workshop) in their own organisation. It is anticipated that these events will occur on weekends

The facilitator will distribute an evaluation forms and provide feedback to an independent evaluator of the program

As a result of this process, 16 services throughout NSW expressed interest in having workers trained – see Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Locations of organisations trialling Hey, Dad!

Area	Number of locations	Locations
Metropolitan	6	Kingsford; North Sydney; Ryde; Thornleigh; Bankstown; St. Marys South
Major regional areas	7	2 Newcastle services; 1 Hunter (Croudace Bay & Raymond Terrace); Orange; Taree / Forster; Port Macquarie; Wagga Wagga
Smaller towns	3	Forbes; Kiama; Casino

The services came from 12 different organisations – see Table 2.2.

Facilitators trained

An outline of the training is provided at *Appendix E*.

27 facilitators were trained in February 2007. 26 feedback sheets were received: 16 of the facilitators thought the training was very good, 9 good and one rated the training as OK. A detailed report of the facilitators' feedback was provided to the Steering Group and forwarded to participants by Burnside.

The feedback showed that facilitators' major motivator to do the training was that they were looking for new ways of engaging and supporting fathers of children with a disability.

I've been looking for a framework to work with dads so it is fantastic to have something solid to take away.

Our parents are requesting this constantly.

Interest in providing support to dads. Believe this is an unmet need.

The planning and conduct of *Hey, Dad!* sessions

Following the training and their commitment to conducting sessions as soon as possible, the facilitators and their organisations proceeded to plan and promote their *Hey, Dad!* sessions and to enrol fathers. A number of obstacles were encountered, which are described in the next chapter, which meant that the number of fathers who actually attended sessions was less than the number who expressed interest in attending.

We actually got ten people interested in it. But when we rang the day before, they couldn't, unexpectedly, make it.

Also, some services found it hard to recruit sufficient numbers of men to conduct the sessions. Twelve Dads and Kids Playgroups and five workshops were conducted – see Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Activity and Workshop Sessions conducted by characteristics

Session (topics held in time for evaluation highlighted)	Organisation	Town/ Suburb	Dads & Kids Playgroups	Workshop group	Feedback forms received	Facilitator Input (interview, meeting &/or email)	Sample of fathers inter- viewed
My Child and Me	Eastern Respite & Recreation	Kingsford	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
My Child and Me	The Spastic Centre	Orange	✓	Postponed till June	✓	✓	✓
Juggling your family, work and own needs	Early Ed. Inc	North Sydney	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Working in partnership with service providers	Centacare	Forbes	Cancelled	Cancelled	NA	✓	NA
Working in partnership with service providers	The Family Action Centre	Newcastle	✓	Date still to be set.	✓	✓	Forms received after deadline
Juggling your family, work and own needs	The Spastic Centre	Kiama	✓	Postponed till late May#	✓	✓	✓
Balancing the needs of other family members	Casino Family Disability SS	Casino	✓	✓	✓*	✓	No fathers agreed.
Balancing the needs of other family members	Family Support Services	Taree / Forster	Cancelled	Cancelled	NA	✓	NA
Maintaining positive adult relationships	Burnside Hastings FSS	Port Macquarie	Cancelled	Postponed till June	NA	✓	NA
Maintaining positive adult relationships	The Spastic Centre	Ryde	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Managing behaviour	Kurrajong Early Intervention	Wagga Wagga	✓	Cancelled	✓	✓	✓
Encouraging your child's emotional growth	The Spastic Centre	Valentine	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Building relationships through play and friendships	Star Association	Thornleigh	Postponed till later in year	Postponed till later in year	NA	✓	NA
Stress management	Centacare	Bankstown	✓	Cancelled	Not completed.	✓	Not possible as no forms.
Using your own strengths and solutions	Lifestart Nepean	St. Marys South	✓	Cancelled	Not completed. "Positive verbal feedback"	✓	Not possible as no forms.
Focussing on the future	Newcastle Temporary Care	Newcastle	✓	Cancelled	✓	✓	✓

* Forms received only for workshop

This workshop was held after this report had been written. It was reported that six fathers attended, only one of whom had previously attended the playgroup session. The men responded "really well" and plan to meet again for a playgroup.

This table also shows the distribution of stakeholder evaluation feedback by location and topic. The five workshop topics covered are highlighted, noting that each of these groups commenced their workshop by completing the manual topic "*Making Connections*" before moving onto their delegated topic.

Number of fathers who attended

A total of 83 men attended either a playgroup or a workshop, with 15 of these men attending both (Table 2.3) - 98 attendances in all.

Table 2.3 Numbers who attended as reported by facilitators

	Activity session only	Workshop only	Both activity and workshop	Total attendances	Total men
Rosehill	7	2	2	13	11
Maroubra	2	1	6	15	9
Raymond Terrace*	2	4	2	10	8
Ryde	2	4	2	10	8
Casino	0	3	3	9	6
Newcastle	12			12	12
Wagga	9			9	9
Orange	6			6	6
Kiama	5			5	5
Nepean	4			4	4
Eleebana	4			4	4
Bankstown	1			1	1
Total	69	29	15	98	83

* Workshop conducted at Croudace Bay and playgroup at Raymond Terrace.

2.3 The characteristics of the fathers

Although 83 men participated in some way, enrolment forms were received for only 62 men. Of these: 40 had attended playgroups only, 10 had attended both playgroup and workshop sessions, and 12 had attended workshops only. The enrolment forms are the only source of information on the characteristics of the men, so this section describes the characteristics of this subset of attendees.

Birthplace

Table 2.4 shows the birthplace of the fathers for whom enrolment information is available by the group they attended. The majority of participants were Australian born, with one playgroup participant also identifying as being from an Aboriginal background.

Table 2.4 Group location by birthplace of its participants

	Croudace									Total
	Eleebana	Orange	Rosehill	Maroubra	Wagga	Kiama	Bay*	Newcastle	Casino	
Australia	4	6	6	3	8	4	4	6	6	47
England							1	1		2
Uruguay			1	1						2
Afghanistan			1							1
India			1							1
Lebanon			1							1
Malta			1							1
UK				1						1
Pakistan				1						1
Wales						1				1
New Zealand							1			1
Samoa								1		1
No reponse			1	1						2
Total	4	6	12	7	8	5	6	8	6	62

* Although the organisations who ran the Croudace Bay and Casino workshops, also ran playgroups, they only provided fathers' feedback forms from their workshops.

The table also shows that the most racially diverse groups were those in the city, Maroubra and Rosehill. No enrolment information was provided for the Ryde group.

Table 2.5 provides the ages and birthplaces of these men by whether they attended a playgroup, workshop or both. It suggests that that Australian born men may be more likely to attend playgroups or both playgroup and workshop sessions, than workshop sessions only (78% for the playgroups only, 80% for both and 67% for workshop sessions only). The numbers are too small to draw any inferences in relation to men from other birthplaces.

Table 2.5a *Participants by age group and birthplace who only attended playgroups*

	Under 30	30 to 34	35 to 39	40 to 44	45 to 49	50 to 54	55 & over	No response	Total	%
Australia	1	8	8	5	3	3	1	2	31	78%
England				1					1	3%
Uruguay								1	1	3%
Afghanistan								1	1	3%
India								1	1	3%
Lebanon			1						1	3%
Pakistan				1					1	3%
Samoa		1							1	3%
Wales							1		1	3%
No response								1	1	3%
Total	1	9	9	7	3	3	2	6	40	100%
%	3%	23%	23%	18%	8%	8%	5%	15%	100%	

Table 2.5b *Participants by age group and birthplace who attended both playgroup and workshop sessions*

	30 to 34	35 to 39	45 to 49	50 to 54	55 & over	Total	%
Australia	1	3	1	1	2	8	80%
Uruguay		1				1	10%
UK					1	1	10%
Total	1	4	1	1	3	10	100%
%	10%	40%	10%	10%	30%	100%	

Table 2.5c *Participants by age group and birthplace who attended only workshop sessions*

	Under 30	30 to 34	35 to 39	40 to 44	45 to 49	50 to 54	No response	Total	%
Australia	1		2	2	2	1		8	67%
England				1				1	8%
Malta		1						1	8%
New Zealand		1						1	8%
No response							1	1	8%
Total	1	2	2	3	2	1	1	12	100%
%	8%	17%	17%	25%	17%	8%	8%	100%	

Table 2.5d *All participants by employment status and highest qualification*

	Under 30	30 to 34	35 to 39	40 to 44	45 to 49	50 to 54	55 & over	No response	Total	%
Australia	2	9	13	7	6	5	3	2	47	76%
England				2					2	3%
Uruguay			1					1	2	3%
Afghanistan								1	1	2%
India								1	1	2%
Lebanon			1						1	2%
Malta		1							1	2%
New Zealand		1							1	2%
Pakistan				1					1	2%
Samoa		1							1	2%
UK							1		1	2%
Wales							1		1	2%
No response								2	2	3%
Grand Total	2	12	15	10	6	5	5	7	62	100%
%	3%	19%	24%	16%	10%	8%	8%	11%	100%	

Age

Men who attended only playgroups or only workshop sessions were younger than other participants, with an average age of 40. Fathers who attended both types of session were on average older, 45. The youngest father aged 27 and the oldest, aged 68, both attended playgroups only (Table 2.6).

Table 2.6 Participants by average, maximum and minimum ages

	Playgroup	Playgroup & Workshop	Workshop	Total
Average age	40.2	44.9	39.6	40.9
Oldest participant	68	56	52	68
Youngest participant	27	34	29	27

Table 2.5 also shows that the most common age groups by workshop type were:

- 30 to 34 and 35 to 39 for those who attended playgroups only, representing 46% of these participants;
- 35 to 39 for those who attended both types of sessions (40% of participants); and
- 40 to 44 for fathers who only attended workshops (25% of these participants).

Family composition and age of children

50% of participants had one or two children, with two fathers having 9 (Table 2.7)

Table 2.7 Participants by their number of children and age of their youngest child

Age of youngest child	Number of children										Total	%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	No response		
Under 1		2	1	1							4	6%
1	3	2	2	2	1					1	11	18%
2	3	6	2	3			1			1	16	26%
3		4	3								7	11%
4	2		1	1							4	6%
5	2	2	2					1			7	11%
6			1	1							2	3%
8	1										1	2%
9	1										1	2%
12		1			1						2	3%
13	1		1				1				3	5%
14		1									1	2%
16			1								1	2%
No response											2	3%
Total	13	18	14	8	2	1	1	1	2	2	62	100%
%	21%	29%	23%	13%	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	100%	

The average number of children of all participants was 2.9, with the average for both playgroup-only and workshop-only attendees being 3. However, the average for fathers who attended both playgroup and workshop sessions was less at just over 2. Perhaps lower time pressures due to smaller family size and/or level of parenting experience may be predictors of repeat attendance?

Other family size, composition and child age characteristics included:

- 50% of their youngest children were aged 2 or under, with the eldest of the youngest children aged 16;
- Of the 49 fathers who had more than one child, the youngest of their eldest children was 2 and the oldest eldest was 42;
- 57 of the 62 fathers had their children living with them full-time;
- 9 of the fathers had step-children living with them full or part-time;
- one father identified in his interview that he was fostering his child with a disability;
- the vast majority of these fathers said they lived with their spouse/partner (54) with 3 of the fathers living alone at the times when they did not have part-time care of their children; and
- three of the fathers were sole parents, each with full-time care of their three children.

Qualifications

The qualifications of participants varied widely, with 53% having post school qualifications and 26% not reaching Year 12 (see Table 2.8).

This table also shows that fathers who only attended playgroups were least likely to hold post-school qualifications (33% of this group), compared to 60% of fathers attending both types of sessions and 50% of fathers who attended only workshop sessions.

Table 2.8a *Participants by employment status and highest qualification who attended only playgroups*

	Post grad	Tertiary degree	Diploma	TAFE/TRADE	Year 12	Year 10	Year 9	Year 8	No response	Total	%
Employed	3	10	1	4	6	6	1		3	34	85%
Not in labour force				1		2		1		4	10%
Unemployed			1							1	3%
No response									1	1	3%
Total	3	11	1	5	6	8	1	1	4	40	100%
%	5%	18%	2%	8%	10%	13%	2%	2%	6%	65%	

Table 2.8b *Participants by employment status and highest qualification who attended both playgroup and workshop sessions*

	Tertiary degree	Diploma	TAFE/TRADE	Year 12	Year 10	Total	%
Employed	2	3	1	1	1	8	80%
Not in labour force					2	2	20%
Total	2	3	1	1	3	10	100%
%	20%	30%	10%	10%	30%	100%	

Table 2.8c *Participants by employment status and highest qualification who attended only workshop sessions*

	Tertiary degree	Diploma	TAFE/TRADE	Year 12	Year 10	Year 9	No response	Total	%
Employed		2	3	1				6	50%
Not in labour force					2		1	3	25%
Unemployed	1						1	2	17%
No response							1	1	8%
Total	1	2	3	1	2	1	2	12	100%
%	8%	17%	25%	8%	17%	8%	17%	100%	

Table 2.8d *All participants by employment status and highest qualification*

	Post grad.	Tertiary degree	Diploma	TAFE/TRADE	Year 12	Year 10	Year 9	Year 8	No response	Total	%
Employed	3	12	6	8	8	7	1		3	48	77%
Not in labour force				1		6		1	1	9	15%
Unemployed			2				1			3	5%
No response									2	2	3%
Total	3	14	6	9	8	13	2	1	6	62	100%
%	5%	23%	10%	15%	13%	21%	3%	2%	10%	100%	

Labour force status

Available enrolment figures show that 77% of the fathers were employed, 15% were not in the labour force and 5% were unemployed (see Table 2.9).

Labour force characteristics varied by location. Organisations drawing their clients from rural areas having the lowest proportions of employed participants (Casino, Kiama and the Croudace Bay workshop which had participants from throughout the lower Hunter).

Table 2.9 shows that Casino stands out as having by far the lowest proportion of fathers employed (17%) with 67% not in the labour force. This was explained by the Casino organiser as possibly resulting from two factors: Casino's rural economy and, perhaps more significantly, as a result of her organisation being a family support service. She said she was surprised that in such a small town so few of the fathers had previously known each other, which reflected their level of social isolation. Two of the fathers also had an intellectual disability.

Table 2.9 Percentage of participants by location and labour force status

Location	Employed	Not in labour force	Unemployed	No response	Total
Orange	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Rosehill	92%	0%	0%	8%	100%
Wagga	88%	13%	0%	0%	100%
Newcastle	88%	0%	13%	0%	100%
Maroubra	86%	0%	0%	14%	100%
Eleebana	75%	25%	0%	0%	100%
Croudace Bay	67%	17%	17%	0%	100%
Kiama	60%	40%	0%	0%	100%
Casino	17%	67%	17%	0%	100%
Total	77%	15%	5%	3%	100%

Industry

The employed fathers reported a wide range of positions in all major industry sectors. Occupations included professionals (general practitioner, accountant, solicitor etc); tradesmen (butcher, plumber, builder etc); IT workers; farmers and other agricultural workers; management and clerical workers; and labouring / service employees (truck driver, cleaners, retail etc).

3 Engaging the target group

3.1 Engagement

Effective engagement of clients always requires care and effort.

The scoping study identified a range of ways services can make their environments father friendly (Sharp et al). Suggestions included making sure that there are visual clues at service venues that indicate that men are welcome; including specific references to, or developing specific information for, fathers; targeting fathers in service promotion and language; including fathers in service design, planning and delivery; and making it clear that confidentiality is respected.

However, such suggestions to a large extent are focussed on existing services. This pilot was about setting up a new service model to support fathers. For *Hey, Dad!* therefore, successful engagement is likely to need more effort including the following steps:

1. making sure that overarching conditions for the conduct of groups are optimal;
2. engaging agencies and facilitators likely to promote the engagement of fathers;
3. getting fathers to enrol by good promotion and recruitment;
4. getting fathers to actually attend sessions for which they have expressed interest;
5. getting a representative group of fathers to enrol and attend considering demography, geography and other needs and characteristics;
6. keeping fathers engaged during playgroups;
7. keeping fathers engaged during workshop sessions;

8. getting fathers to use the skills learnt at sessions with their family and community; and
9. getting fathers to attend more than one session or gaining their interest in hearing about further sessions.

The rest of this chapter discusses results and stakeholders' reactions in relation to each of these steps.

3.2 *Optimising conditions for engagement*

The process involved in recruiting services and training facilitators to conduct the pilot of *Hey, Dad!* for Fathers who have a Child with a Disability was described in the previous chapter. The timing and topic for each service grouping was broadly prescribed by the requirements of the pilot and its evaluation.

As a result, the **timing** of the sessions may not have been optimal for effective planning, preparation, promotion, recruitment and facilitation. Certainly very few of the services had the time to effectively involve fathers in their planning and few had time to develop relationships with the fathers before the sessions, if they did not already have these. Stakeholders believed that adequate lead times were required for this planning and promotion to be effective.

Further asking each service to deliver a **prescribed topic** meant that some topics were delivered out of what would seem to be the natural order of topics. It also meant that topics were delivered without reference to the interests, needs and characteristics of local fathers. For example, the Casino service's topic was *Balancing the needs of other family members*, yet of the six fathers, two were single fathers and another father only had one child, the child with a disability.

3.3 *Engaging appropriate service providers and facilitators*

The types of services involved

The services which expressed interest in running *Hey, Dad!* sessions were of two broad types:

- organisations with disability or special education experience; and
- general community, family support or men's services.

However within these groups, some had ongoing direct relationships with fathers of children with a disability while others did not.

The facilitators

Skills and experience

The facilitator recruitment flyer requested that:

The facilitators have group work experience and are currently employed to work with families where there are children with disabilities.

However, it became apparent that the extent of experience in these requirements varied widely across the group. These are some of the responses when facilitators were asked about their group work experience:

Very little

At college 20 years ago – feel the need to refresh to be confident in how to deal with what may be revealed.

Facilitation of groups but little experience working with families with a child with a disability.

Run Triple P programs; Run 123 Magic programs; Run parent outings; Run siblings groups.

I run 2 mothers' groups and have done for a year; Plus a fathers' group for 6 months. I'm a qualified counsellor and am currently studying group therapy using Psychodrama.

Have facilitated a fathers' group in Redfern / Waterloo around being a father and children's needs. Attended forums on providing appropriate access and services to fathers.

Facilitation of groups for families of children with a disability; Training students in Cert IV Disability; Coordination of parenting programs.

While, as described in the previous chapter, the facilitators' reactions to the training were very positive, a number, seemingly the less experienced group of recruits, expressed some nervousness about their facilitation of sessions.

However, all of the fathers involved in this evaluation who commented on the facilitators were positive about their facilitation.

Suggestions for improvement of training for playgroups

After their training, facilitators made the following suggestions for its improvement:

- more links to resources and reading material;
- expanded workshop activities and ideas for playgroups;
- explanations of the intended objectives or outcomes of each section;
- more on the modules; and
- from the less experienced trainees, more on group work.

Suggestions for improvement of training for playgroups

After their playgroups, facilitators were asked whether they now had any suggestions about how their training could have been improved.

Six facilitators reinforced post-training suggestions that more was needed on the planning and conduct of activities appropriate to children with a disability:

For the playgroup session, I guess facilitators might need to have some training in communication with children etc - not an issue though in our group.

Include children's activities training, or at least discussion on what could be done. Invite early education / people who work with children, to speak at training.

Activities for playgroup - especially across a wide range of disability.

Further play therapy training may be useful to some facilitators - disability specific.

Discuss more about what activities to use. We had an educator work with us which was a blessing. Not sure how confident I would have been without her (especially with using visuals for children with autism).

Facilitators also endorsed the need for good group work skills:

Definitely group work skills and the needs of families with disability training for those who require it.

Ongoing mentoring and professional development support was also suggested.

Suggestions for improvement of training for workshop sessions

Following the workshop sessions, one facilitator commented favourably on how the training had prepared facilitators:

Training equipped us well for the importance to dads that this opportunity will be and also how deeply emotionally dads may be affected by their experience.

However another thought that training on the modules would be beneficial:

More training on each of the modules would be beneficial particularly where they are information based.

Again, others reinforced the necessity for the facilitation team to have good group work skills as well as disability experience.

Geographic accessibility

The locations of services conducting sessions in the pilot were provided in Table 2.2, showing that a good range of geographic locations was involved in the pilot. Two points in relation to geography were raised by stakeholders:

- one father in the Hunter would have preferred a closer location (with some men in his group having to travel for more than an hour each way); and
- one facilitator from a town of about 8,000 people, who cancelled his trial playgroup and workshop sessions, noted one of the difficulties he faced was getting an interested group of men from a small population base.

3.4 Getting dads to enrol

The literature

The scoping study (Sharp et al) reported strategies to maximise the involvement of dads in services including:

Invitations to participate should be made where possible from the children - knowing their child wants them to participate is often a strong incentive for fathers (Fletcher, n.d.).

Invitations should be personal, relate the activity to their children and detail what will happen and how long the activity will take (Fletcher, n.d.).

A survey of 82 family services identified strategies to increase uptake of services by fathers. These included:

- *Employing male workers*
- *Forming men's groups*
- *Making direct contact with families to actively encourage father's involvement*
- *Providing after hours service*
- *Responding to the needs of men already accessing services*
- *Offering activity based services*
- *Providing services in places where men congregate, e.g. clubs*
- *Incorporating social components, e.g. BBQs*
- *Encouraging male volunteers (Fletcher, Hahn, & Gifford, 2002)*

Other strategies included getting feedback from men already involved in services about their motivations and including fathers in information and advertisements.

History of involvement with fathers

As already discussed, the organisations who ran the sessions had a mix of experience with fathers of children with a disability. A clear trend was that the organisations who already had established relationships with fathers of children with a disability, a subset of the organisations involved, found it far easier to recruit fathers to enrol in their *Hey, Dad!* sessions. For example, one facilitator described how their organisation had been running a successful social group for fathers but needed to work out “how to take the group to the next stage”. *Hey, Dad!* provided a great vehicle to do so. The

men in her group were in agreement with trying out a new approach, although still retained some anxieties about what the change would entail.

The organisations without an established relationship with the targeted fathers had a far rockier path to navigate.

Session planning

Irrespective of their history with targeted fathers, organisations in the trial worked through a logical series of steps to plan and conduct *Hey, Dad!* sessions:

- Trying to get an understanding of the needs and interests of local fathers of children with a disability.
- Recruiting partner agencies when the organisation itself had no established relationships with targeted fathers.
- Trying to plan appropriate times and venues.
- Developing and distributing a flyer about the sessions, based on a model in the *Hey, Dad!* manual.
- Speaking to workers of partner agencies and/or mothers' groups to seek their assistance in promoting the sessions and in recruiting fathers to participate.
- Individually explaining the nature of the sessions to interested fathers, as well as providing written material.
- Revising times and other arrangements when initial plans seemed no longer suitable.
- Checking with enrolled fathers as to their actual availability just prior to each session.
- Re-scheduling sessions if unexpected changes prevented fathers' attendances.

One agency,, with established relationships with fathers, talked about trying to get fathers to identify the sorts of areas they wanted to cover in sessions, only to find that the fathers could not readily identify what it was they wanted. Many fathers identified that they had not previously attended fathers-only groups.

By far the most common difficulties encountered were, for the organisations without established relationships with the fathers, recruiting fathers, and for all organisations, then finding times which suited the men.

Engaging partners and wives

The organisations without established relationships with this group of fathers described their efforts to work with local organisations who did, usually early intervention or other disability groups. Some, such as a Newcastle men's worker who sought and received the assistance of the special education team at Newcastle University, were very successful in this.

However other organisations encountered resistance:

In this town, unless (name of service) is doing it, they are not really helpful...I went and spoke with them. And went and spoke to all of the wives...

This facilitator described how possible partnership arrangements were suggested to this service, but none seemed acceptable to the service. On the flip side, the second service's suggestions did not seem to suit fathers ("Let's do it on a Wednesday" when the fathers were working). This facilitator also reported receiving referrals for fathers who had only very recently been told that their child had a disability. These fathers, when rung by the facilitator, seemed far from ready to be recruited into such a group.

Another worker described similar efforts with similar services with similar results. After an initially positive response from one worker from a partner agency, he then encountered opposition from another worker of that agency:

She let me know up front that she was not keen for me to be doing playgroups with Dads. She said they wouldn't go very well because the Dads wouldn't want to do it..... She then reported that she had discussed the idea with mothers in her service and said that the Mums won't agree to this happening. She said that the mothers were quite happy for me to hold a barbeque on the weekend to which the whole family could come. And that I could then talk to the Dads for half an hour. But they were not keen on Dads being involved in sessions on the weekends. They wanted them home looking after the kids.

The worker got a similar reaction from another local agency in town. It remains unclear how much of this reaction was a result of the feelings of the mothers, or the way the workers put the proposal to the mothers, or indeed the way the workers communicated the mothers' reactions back to the facilitator.

As a result, the planned sessions of both of these facilitators were cancelled, with both still intending to pursue alternative avenues to initiate *Hey, Dad!* in their communities.

However, the experience of these two facilitators does not seem to coincide with the experience of other groups. Certainly, men who did attend other sessions spoke about how such sessions cut into their family time. And some men, including lone parents, needed respite to attend. But for other sessions it seemed that wives actively promoted and supported their husbands' involvement in groups. One mother interviewed talked positively about her partner's involvement and the impact of his involvement on his

relationship with their daughter. Other men indicated that they had learnt about the sessions via their wives.

On this basis, it seems that inter-agency tension may be a more plausible explanation for the negative reactions in the two communities described above.

Time constraints

As mentioned, agencies found it difficult to select times when a group of fathers would be available.

We tried a range of different times, weekends and evenings, and found the fathers working all over the place. There is no typical pattern of working Monday to Friday from 9 to 5 anymore.

Organisers found time difficulties across the range of communities from metropolitan to country. Some put it down to city mortgages. Others put it down to the fact that as many mothers of children with a disability don't work because of the time demands of supporting their child, there is pressure on fathers to work extra shifts or sometimes more than one job. Organisers reported difficulties right across skill levels.

We came to the conclusion that some dads don't have a lot of time with their kids.

Out here, Mums don't work as their child has so many special needs. This means that the fathers particularly take an extra financial load, working extra shifts and Saturdays and Sundays. Some have two jobs and in the evenings just eat and sleep. Sunday can be their only free day... To then ask them to allocate five hours of this for Hey, Dad! is a little bit daunting.

Fathers also mentioned time pressures in the interviews conducted for this evaluation, often seeing attendance at sessions as taking away from already limited family and recreational time.

Organisers also said that previously agreed session times were disrupted by fathers having to work extra shifts or having unexpected roster changes. One facilitator reported, after a very successful playgroup, her reasons for postponing her planned workshop:

We had our Kids and Dads workshop and the Dads workshop just a week apart. This was due to time constraints as Paul is running the workshops with me and as you are aware he is also assisting two other ... workers. I think this was a factor. The reasons were very genuine: - working, son's birthday, about to leave for overseas trip, renovating. I did try lots of other dads after these had cancelled and it was very short notice so reasons tended to be sport, wife working, racing pigeons!! (That must be a new one!)

And similarly for two others who cancelled or postponed their workshops:

We had four dads at our playgroup. But then when it came to the workshop, planned for four weeks later, we had only one taker. One Dad said he could come. One was at a swimming championship and the other two were working.

We had established clients although we do focus on children.... Some of the fathers had done a Positive Parenting Program and said they were very interested in this program. However when it came to the day too many had unexpected work commitments and weekend shifts..... They did say they wanted to attend another time and we are still hoping to set another date. But I must say we had a couple of very disappointed Dads.

However when fathers made the time to attend, they commented on this and that they were pleased that they had done so:

It was really good. I was really glad I made the effort to do it.... I would encourage other people to do it.

I do a lot of regional and interstate travel. And I like to put my family first in the little time I can have with them. But in saying this, it was really good. I suppose I would say two things: The pity number 1 was that there weren't more dads there. And the pity number 2 was that I don't go to more.

Another facilitator mentioned that her area had a high Jewish population so that holding the workshop on a Saturday almost certainly excluded the involvement of interested Jewish fathers. She thought she would revert to Thursday night sessions, when her service had previously conducted social events for the fathers.

Two men, of the 12 interviewed, who had attended playgroups only, said they would not be particularly interested in attending workshop sessions, both having similar reasons for this: because they did not have a need to talk to other dads as they were coping or getting private individual help; and because the workshops cut into their limited family time:

I would find it very hard to find time for a workshop. I am very busy. I have two other children younger than my child with a disability. And while she had a pretty good time at the session, allocating more time would be difficult.... I don't really think I have the need to talk with anyone, not really. I think we are coping pretty well.... And I see myself as being taken away from my family. These workshops take a big chunk of my limited family time.... My wife is sick – she has a bad back and can't lift the younger girls... I need to be home to help her whenever I can. But I definitely would be interested in at least hearing about any further playgroups planned in the future.

Lead time

A number of facilitators mentioned the rush to conduct sessions, arising from the timeline for the evaluation. They felt a longer timeline would have considerably assisted their planning, promotion and preparation and would have boosted numbers:

A longer lead time. This way we could have advertised the event more widely other than our existing consumers' parents.

We needed time to establish trust.

Fathers' anxieties

However a number of comments by the fathers suggested that promotion needs to target their anxieties about groups and what the sessions may entail:

I was somewhat apprehensive before coming today but I'm glad I did. I found it very helpful and I was able to publicly say how I really feel.

Probably let us know a bit more about what the day would involve. There was nothing to be scared of once we were here!!

I was a bit apprehensive.... But I got to see that other people are having the same thoughts and issues... That I am not alone... I think everyone was pretty apprehensive... But it was nice and you didn't have to explain yourself or your child... It was the first time I had met other Dads in that sort of setting.

I wouldn't say that I was worried... Just perhaps that I didn't know what to expect.

Social groups and playgroups

A number of organisations had already, prior to *Hey, Dad!*, organised social activities, such as fishing trips, for fathers of children with a disability. These groups found it easier to recruit men to the program. One such group of fathers, after their first workshop, was very pleased that these new group discussions had been initiated, although they still wanted to retain social activities as well.

Other facilitators reported that they planned to initiate social activities or regular playgroups with fathers as a way of setting up relationships with the fathers and to act as a lead in to *Hey, Dad!* sessions.

One plus from one of our Dads' playgroups and barbeques was that one family invited all of the other families to their house.

Session rescheduling

Four planned playgroups and 10 planned workshop sessions were either postponed or cancelled because insufficient numbers of fathers expressed an interest in attending or because some fathers, after expressing interest, could not attend. In one case a workshop was cancelled because it conflicted with the date chosen for a *Hey, Dad!* playgroup being conducted by another organisation, involving some common clients. In another:

We had a terrible time with it. Three times we tried to run a session and had no takers.

Men's motivation to enrol or attend.

Fathers attending sessions were asked on their enrolment form what skills and information would they like to get from the sessions. Responses from the 62 enrolment forms received included:

- develop skills to assist child (13) with seven of these men wanting very specific information or skills - for example, more information to assist child with autism; signing skills;
- information / greater understanding (10);
- discussion with parents and workers; networking (10);
- social skills for child (6); and
- individual time with child (2).

Table 3.1 Fathers motivation to attend sessions

Motivation	Playgroup	Playgroup and workshop sessions	Workshop	Total
Skills to assist child	10	1	2	13
Discussion with, & support from other parents / workers	6	3	1	10
Information / Understanding	8	1	1	10
Specific disability skills e.g. signing	7			7
Social skills for child	5	1		6
1:1 Time with child	2			2

Facilitators' feedback

Facilitators reported that the major improvements they would make to the recruitment process were having a longer lead time in order to develop a pre-session relationship / contact with the fathers, expanding the target group beyond a single service focus, and providing fathers a clearer outline of the structure and likely content of the sessions.

How men found out about program

The enrolment forms also asked the fathers how they found out about the program with the bulk finding out about it via contact with services or via their wives (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 How fathers found out about sessions

	Playgroup	Playgroup and workshop sessions	Workshop	Total
Service contact	21	4	9	34
Wife	8	1		9
Mail	2		2	4
Phoncall	1	1		2
Facilitator			1	1
Peak body	1			1
Professional referral	1			1
Verbally	1			1
No response	5	1	3	9
Total	40	7	15	62

3.5 Getting dads to attend

Even with re-scheduling, fewer men than were expected attended sessions. One group expecting four fathers had one attend, although the group proceeded.

We held a playgroup... however, only one father attended with his two children. We still ran some activities with the children and this particular father was very motivated and involved and keen to see us set up a Hey, Dad! program. He even offered us some great tips on initially engaging fathers and what keeps him engaged in such groups. So, although not a great turn out it was a beneficial afternoon.

Another:

We had our Dads and Kids group on Saturday. Originally had 13 dads and their kids booked in - only had 4 dads and 5 children (attend). I was a bit disappointed with that. The day though went well.... Hopefully word will now spread for future events.

Again the organisations with established relationships had the largest proportion of expected men attend, but even they expressed some anxiety about attendances:

I am unsure as to whether the fathers will turn up for the second session mainly because they are really keen to do things with their kids but not so keen to talk about things. I need to promote the day further and see what the response will be. Maybe I'm being a bit pessimistic but we will soon tell. I think it takes the fathers some time to reach a point where they want to attend such a program. We are trialling My Child and Me which is one of the more emotive topics so this may also be more of a reason (not to attend).

In the event, this facilitator's fears were largely unfounded as seven men attended the workshop (of which six had attended the playgroup) and all

were very positive about the workshop and the new direction for their group.

3.6 Getting a representative groups of dads to attend

The characteristics of the fathers who attended *Hey, Dad!* sessions were described in the previous chapter.

Given the restricted locations of the sessions in the trial, the small number of men who attended each and the limited range of options open to them in this trial, it would not be appropriate to undertake detailed comparisons to consider how adequately the fathers represented the demography of their local communities.

However their characteristics do show that the program attracted a wide range of men including men of varying ages, from at least 13 cultural backgrounds, and with varying qualifications, vocations, labour force, family size and household characteristics.

The vast majority of this diverse group welcomed this *Hey, Dad!* initiative and ranked the sessions they attended positively (described later in this chapter). Most also indicated to facilitators or to the evaluator that they would be interested in attending other sessions. All said they would at least be interested in hearing about future sessions. It is therefore reasonable to assume that a wider roll-out of the program would be successful in attracting a representative group of men in the future, particularly when the lessons from this trial are embedded into the program.

3.7 Engaging dads in playgroups

Fathers' feedback

79 feedback forms were received, of which 50 were for Dads and Kids Playgroups.

Ranking of playgroups

42 of the 44 men, asked to provide an overall ranking of the playgroup they attended, scored it as good or very good (98% - Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Participants' overall ranking of what was talked about or tried

	Dads and Kids Playgroup	Child and Me	Juggling your family, work and other needs	Balancing the needs of other family members	Maintaining positive adult relationships	Encouraging your child's emotional growth	Total	%
Very good	31	6	3	2	5	6	53	73%
Good	11	1	1	4	1		18	25%
OK	2						2	3%
Total	44	7	4	6	6	6	73	100%

48 or 96% of 50 participants said the playgroup they attended was well run (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 Participants' overall ranking of how the session was run

	Dads and Kids Playgroup	Child and Me	Juggling your family, work and other needs	Balancing the needs of other family members	Maintaining positive adult relationships	Encouraging your child's emotional growth	Total	%
Very good	35	7	3	2	4	5	56	71%
Good	13		1	4	2	1	21	27%
OK	1						1	1%
No response	1						1	1%
Total	50	7	4	6	6	6	79	100%

Some fathers also brought siblings of their child with a disability to the sessions, with this being supported by facilitators.

Fathers' qualitative comments

53 men wrote comments on their feedback sheets. Table 3.5 categorises these comments with the most frequent comment being that the fathers liked meeting and talking with other fathers (33 comments, 19 of which were from playgroups).

Very interesting meeting different fathers with children that have different disabilities but have the same concerns.

Great effort initiating this group. Fantastic to meet other Dads experiencing similar issues / feelings.

The next most frequent comments from playgroups were positive comments about the day and comments about the fathers liking the one to one time they had with their child.

Great day. We all had fun.

Relaxed atmosphere; coordinators genuinely listened; food good.

A well constructed day that was helpful and fun.

I really enjoyed the experience and the opportunity to do something different with my son. They wanted to do more.

These types of comments only slightly outnumbered comments about how the session was good for their children and that the fathers liked observing their children's weekday program.

Thank you very much. My daughter needs exposure to different situations and this helped a lot.

More quality time with teachers, support staff, parents and of course Dimitri!

Table 3.5 Types of comments added to feedback sheets by participants

	Playgroup	Workshop	Total
Liked meeting other dads	19	14	33
Generally positive comments about day	16	12	28
Liked opportunity to talk about needs, feelings, experiences	3	14	17
Liked one on one time with child	16		16
Session was positive for child	13	1	14
Liked finding that other fathers had similar experiences and feelings	3	10	13
Liked observing weekday program and talking to workers	12		12
Liked group interactions	6	5	11
Liked knowing dads' needs were being considered	5	4	9
Liked having a good time and trying /learning something new	5	3	8
Liked discussion of fathers' diagnosis experience		5	5
Liked messy play	5		5
Liked discussion of changing roles of Dads		4	4
Liked discussion of finding acceptance		2	2

Interviews were also conducted with 18 of the participants and one of their partners. Seven of these were as a group after a workshop with the remaining 12 by phone.

Of these interviews, 7 fathers had attended a playgroup only and 6 had attended both playgroup and workshop sessions. Their comments reinforced the comments provided in feedback sheets, with no fathers, on reflection, expressing a different view from that presented in their feedback.

Facilitators' feedback and rankings

11 facilitators' rankings of playgroups were received, with 9 or 81% ranking the sessions as going well or very well (Table 3.6).

It went well. All the fathers and kids enjoyed it. The activity was geared to all different children's needs and so I was happy with the event.

Facilitation was comfortable and basically let the dads interact and participate as they themselves wanted.... It went really well. Dads were natural in the supportive role. Dads liked the opportunity to have a hands on role with their children to help them do something they enjoy.

Table 3.6 Facilitators' rankings of sessions

	Playgroup	Workshop	Total
<i>Number</i>			
Very well	5	3	8
Well to very well		1	1
Well	4	2	6
OK to well	2		2
Total	11	6	17
<i>Percentage within sessions</i>			
Very well	45%	50%	47%
Well to very well		17%	6%
Well	36%	33%	35%
OK to well	18%	0%	12%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Facilitators also provided feedback via interviews, emails and participation in a May discussion (see Table 1.1). One facilitator reported that she would be very reluctant to facilitate a playgroup again as the initial session for *Hey, Dad!* because of the issues which follow.

Issues and suggestions for improvement of playgroups

Facilitators and fathers were asked in interviews and in feedback sheets to suggest improvements. Facilitators were particularly asked to comment on what improvements could be made to the *Hey, Dad!* package, their training or to other planning and support for the program.

Some of the suggestions are particular to individuals and highlight the difficulties faced when trying to meet individual interests via a group mechanism, particularly when the session is targeting a reasonably sized geographic catchment and often a small population of men.

Major concerns and suggestions included:

Impact of a range of abilities on sessions

A number of facilitators expressed concerns about the impact on the fathers of possibly being able to compare for the first time the abilities and disabilities of their child with those of other children with a disability. It was suggested that a number of fathers seemed to be favourably or less than favourably making comparisons. For fathers whose children were particularly limited in their ability to participate in chosen activities, there was concern that the session was too confronting, with some suggesting that:

- the playgroup should be optional or postponed till the fathers knew, and trusted, each other and the facilitators better; and/or
- the facilitators needed to be supported to better plan and prepare for the range of abilities likely in the children attending, with this planning to include preparing to discuss this issue with the fathers if necessary.

Comments included:

The wide range of ability between the children may have been an issue for 1-2 participants. It's hard to see very mildly disabled kids when your child is quite severely affected and may prejudice participants against what other say about their feelings and experience. Optimally it would be good to have similarly affected children in the group.

Ideas for dealing with issues that arise within playgroup such as wide disparity in children's skills and how to help dads whose child is doing very little ie dads need more individual attention than can be given in group; Can be confronting for dads as may be first time they have chance to "compare" their child with other children with disabilities.

Even knowing the families that were coming, we had to adapt what we had planned at the time. It was quickly clear that one child would not have been able to do any of the activities we had set out – that they would need something even more basic. Because we were operating in our playgroup venue we had resources on hand and were able to get something that to enable the Dad to play with his child... Even so, the comparisons probably were quite difficult for him.

*Using a developmental approach will help those dads whose children can do the activities see the tangibility of what they are doing. It may have a negative effect on those dad's whose children can't adequately participate, as it may reinforce feelings in these dads that once again their child does not "fit in" and won't benefit from "the program".
... if children have autism, ADHD, ADD, etc it may be extremely difficult in some cases to run an organised program. In these situations, it may require multiple activity or toys etc available where some kids and dads "may do their own thing". It may be helpful to ask dads in these situations to also bring a child's favourite toy/activity along to the group. So the flavour in this example may be minimally developmental and maximally ... fun and an opportunity for the kids to interact at whatever level socially (so the benefit may simply be social and fun).*

The interviews with fathers did confirm that comparisons were being made between children and situations. However the sample interviewed suggested that the comparisons being made were favourable and hopeful: that they realised that their child was doing well and their situation seemed to be “better” than that of other fathers or that there was more hope for their child in the future than professionals sometimes voiced.

My wife and I are very positive about our daughter's condition. The more we see how much she has developed, it has made us more and more positive. And that may not be the future that had been presented to some fathers. So I think the session may have been motivating for other dads.

There are always other people worse off than yourself. And it is good to know that there are people who want to help.

It was good to have a chat. I feel a lot luckier than many fathers. And there are good things about having children with a disability. (A lone father with three children with a disability)

It should be said that the fathers interviewed were sampled randomly, apart from one father who was deliberately not sampled, as his facilitator held concerns that the session had indeed raised negative comparisons in relation to his child's development and situation.

However, one facilitator reinforced that group results can be unpredictable and still positive:

Sessions can be unpredictable and outcomes more difficult to ascertain. Sometimes as a facilitator you may feel that the session was a bit "messy".... But then on reflection and with feedback you find that it was useful to the dads.

Range of activities

Some suggested that the range of activities in the draft manual and in sessions needed enhancement as they insufficiently considered the range of ages and abilities of the children likely to be present. Age ranges in sessions from 18 months to young teenagers were reported.

So it also means facilitators preferably should be checking out with dads before the group the level and type of the child's disability, age, what they can and can't do. It means letting the dads know that if there will be a range of children with varied disabilities, ages and abilities, that it will nevertheless offer social interaction for the kids as well as fun as well as the opportunity for the dads to meet other dads (which ultimately I think is the main aim of the program).

Activities to enhance social interaction between the fathers and relationships between the children and their fathers were also suggested.

Some suggested that, to reduce the difficulties with negative comparisons and a mismatch between activities and the ages and abilities of the children, the sessions should be restricted to fathers with children with similar ages, abilities and disabilities. However, most thought that such an expectation was not realistic.

Content and structure explanation

Some fathers and facilitators suggested that fathers needed a clearer explanation before and at the beginning of each session of what the session was likely to involve, who would be likely to attend, and the purpose and use of some of the activities to be included.

In support of this suggestion, it was certainly clear from the comments of some of the fathers that they had expectations of the sessions which were never going to be realized - for example, learning signing or more about autism or meeting children of the same age with the same abilities and disabilities.

Enhanced structure

The structure of the session was said to need an introduction time or activity, a break preferably with food, and some activities to build relationships between the fathers.

Opportunities for Dads to connect / introduce themselves/ discuss with other Dads in the kids/ playgroup context.

One facilitator reported that he had included an introduction section based on asking the fathers to name themselves and their child, to name one thing they found most challenging about being the father of a child with a disability and something they loved about their child. He also reported using the fathers' strength cards for dads to discuss as another relationship building / get to know each other activity.

Tone and style

Of the fathers who commented on the tone and style of the sessions, all were positive noting that the sessions were comfortable, friendly and welcoming. Some added that the food was good offering an easy and informal way of getting to know each other better.

Facilitation team and resources

It was quite clear from facilitators' comments that the conduct of these and the workshop sessions required a considerable worker and organisational investment.

Facilitators thought that it was useful to have a team of at least three for the sessions, preferably including someone with early childhood or special education experience.

Another commented:

Was very good - just hard to do all the time outside core business hours as it eats into staff free time.

Not only did the sessions involve workers working outside their normal working hours, but also investment by their organisations of this worker time, access to suitable venues and play and other equipment, and out-of-pocket expenses for other consumable supplies such as play dough and food. Certainly food was seen by the fathers and the facilitators as helping activities, offering a friendly and unstructured time to help the fathers get to know each other. The preparation of food was also built into the activities of some groups (eg make smoothies for everyone to then consume).

Timing

Timing changes were suggested though responses conflicted – some thought a longer time was necessary, while others thought the time allocated was sufficient.

3.8 Engaging dads in workshops

The workshops

Five workshops were conducted (see Table 2.2) at Maroubra, Rosehill, Croudace Bay, Ryde and Casino.

All of the workshops commenced with the first topic *Making connections*. Then each discussed one of the other 11 topics. The five additional topics covered were:

- *Maintaining positive adult relationships*
- *Juggling your family, work and own needs*
- *My Child and Me*
- *Encouraging your child's emotional growth*
- *Balancing the needs of other family members*

A total of 44 fathers attended workshops: 29 fathers attended workshops only and a further 15 attended a workshop as well as a playgroup (Table 2.3).

Ranking of workshops

29 fathers provided a ranking of what was talked about at their workshop, with all of them ranking the workshop as very good, 76%, or good, 24% (Table 3.3). They also all ranked the conduct of the workshop as very good, 72%, or good, 28% (Table 3.4).

Fathers' qualitative comments

Table 3.5 shows that, similar to the playgroups, one of the things they liked most in the workshops was meeting other dads.

I found the session today very rewarding. It has been the first time that I have been able to interact with other Dads in similar circumstances.

Opportunity to discuss issues as fathers, with fathers only. Having done "care for caring parents" I felt that this environment was more useful and I was more open and honest than an environment in which my wife and other women were present.

They also liked the opportunity, provided by the workshops, to talk about needs, feeling and experiences.

I felt this is a very useful way to understand and realise I'm not alone in what I'm going through and it's a great way to get things off my chest.

Talking about individual situations / experiences; getting an idea of what other fathers are going through.

Their other comments were generally positive about the day. They frequently noted that they liked finding out that other fathers had similar experiences and feelings.

The session was well organised and planned. It was a comfortable environment which encouraged me to share some ideas and listen to different perspectives.

Just the openness of being truthful with each other and knowing how similar our lives have become even though we all come from different lifestyles.

Sharing ideas; Learning what works for us in common; Being around other guys with the same frustrations but good sense of humour.

Finding you are not alone.

Meeting other Dads and discussing/ acknowledging relationship pressures; Hearing others' coping strategies /ways to leverage husband-wife relationship time; generally hearing similar feelings /uncertainties more similar to my own.

One father, however, commented that he found the workshop:

Unexpectedly emotionally draining.

Facilitators' feedback and rankings of workshops

Six facilitators ranked their workshop sessions with all ranking their workshop as going very well to well (Table 3.6).

The participants bonded well early, were open, shared honestly and picked good ideas and strategies from each other. They raised of their own volition grief issues which were shared openly.

The dads shared experiences, expressed emotion, gave each other support and ideas, used humour and reflectively listed all be themselves - so it was fantastic to be a part of it.

The group was run by two experienced facilitators and the participants already had a good relationship with the other facilitator - so they were the very ingredients to its success.

Overall though- almost every topic that was listed in the handbook got a mention throughout the dad's conversations and they seem particularly excited about the opportunity to meet again and cover these. Mainly it was the opportunity to meet other dads and share that seemed to be the most important- I think we could have been talking about the weather and it still would have worked out as they seemed to be set on chatting and unloading...it was great.

Arrangements for day were good. We had tea/coffee on arrival, a quick break after 1.5 hours then BBQ for lunch. We would have liked lower chairs and coffee tables for all participants. The men liked tables in front of their chairs to write on and place cups.

Did I say that the Hey, Dad! sessions were the best thing I have done for a very long time. Professionally they offer something really worthwhile. Dads connected so well... At times it got quite emotional. As a group of Dads, they came, ready to talk and they did so with such openness, it could perhaps be said they got ahead of the facilitators.... It was a very intense experience.

Issues and suggestions to improve the workshops

Sex of the facilitators

Most of the facilitators of the workshops were female.

They seemed to have no problems whatsoever that Sheila and I were females.

When the fathers were asked, admittedly by a female evaluator, whether this mattered, they did not think it was a concern, with comments that female facilitators were perhaps more nurturing and that their role anyway was to facilitate rather than to judge or evaluate the fathers' discussions.

You get more of a motherly feeling....

The female presenters softened it... and they were able to give a female perspective.

However, at least one facilitator thought that a male facilitator for at least the first session would be beneficial:

Having a male facilitator for the first session of a new group is highly recommended as it increases credibility and comfort and helps establish sense of group rapport.

Other facilitators did not necessarily support this view.

Timing and organisation

Facilitators from three of the five workshop groups commented that the timing of the program plans was inadequate and that possibly two topics in a day was too much:

The agenda / program plan was too optimistic on how much could be achieved.

We felt rushed for time and so it would have been nice to have had more time for the talking and sharing stuff. The dads really wanted to talk about themselves, not so much about their child. But I think that is also important to them.

One father suggested that the timing should be restricted to 3 to 4 hours, with another commenting:

Saturday was OK for me as that is the only time I could be available. And I think about six monthly would be good... It wears you out a lot, although the time did go quickly.

A number wanted more fathers to attend, including fathers with particular characteristics:

To have more dads with adult disabled kids to learn of their experiences.

Structure and content of the workshops

An informal or semi-formal tone and structure was supported by fathers.

It was good and casual and having a lunch time break was good.

It was also thought by some fathers and facilitators that clearer information to fathers both before and at the beginning of workshops about what they should expect was required.

Perhaps articulate clearer roadmap for the day so we can see where we're going.

A number of the facilitators mentioned the need for the rhythm of the session to be appropriate – that while the session should include discussion of problems and challenges, each session needed to end with positive and action oriented discussion. This reinforced the strengths-based philosophy of *Hey, Dad!*

Another facilitator recommended a more diverse use of activities and media within the workshops, rather than relying so heavily on facilitated discussions. And complementing the manual suggestions with exercises and activities which the facilitators have found useful in other groups.

Resources

As was the case with playgroups, significant organisational resources and planning to support the workshops were considered necessary:

A lot of preparation needed to be done before the workshop. I don't believe the workbook offers enough for people to be able to just pick it up and run with it.

Facilitators need time and planning to be familiar with the material before the workshop. Needs people experienced in group work generally.

It was fine - perhaps for future sessions we should have more resources at hand e.g. on finances; trusts

Food was again considered important. One sole parent noted that without respite he would have been unable to attend.

Two fathers suggested better seating. Another two suggested write-ups from sessions and/or improved handouts, including about family relationships, and publications, agencies and other resources that fathers could consult.

The thing I raised was that the information you get about services is really difficult. You get really confused, particularly about funding of services and school funding and the help you can get. And just when you think you have it sorted, it all changes, depending on politics.

Another thought fewer notes:

I wouldn't worry about worksheets..... I'd just have more talking rather than all that butchers' paper.

Comments particular to workshop topics

Stakeholders made suggestions about amending content of the draft manual in relation to particular topics. These suggestions have already been provided to Burnside for consideration in the development of the final manual.

Making connections

It was suggested that the first workshop session should only include this topic to allow the fathers sufficient time to get to know each other and to discuss their situations and to give time for the facilitator to canvass with them the topics for and planning of future sessions.

Alternative activities to assist fathers to get to know each other were tried:

... the men felt most at ease with getting to know each other. We didn't utilise the "name call" activity or the "getting to know each other activity" - instead we asked what the dads wanted to do to get to know one another and they asked to be able to go around one by one and talk as long as they needed to about they situation past and present and talk about whatever they wanted. It was a great process and although went for a long time- was very important and seemed to dovetail into the changing roles of fathers session and the kids need dads (which we changed the order of these two as it seemed to flow better on the day).

Also:

The presentation on the role of fathers needs to consider fathers from different cultural backgrounds. May be valuable to check if this is an issue in any other sessions.

Juggling your family, work and own needs

Maybe talk a bit more about siblings.

My Child and Me

One father suggested more on positive thinking and adjustment within this topic, with the facilitator of his group noting that:

The "Welcome to Amsterdam" exercise was not well received by the group. Some had done it before and also all of the dads present felt it was not representative of a male perspective on the situation.

The other facilitator of this group suggested that the Welcome to Amsterdam story should be used as a prompt for discussion, with less emphasis on set outcomes:

I think it is helpful to emphasise the unique nature of each person's grieving process, rather than stages.

One father in this group described his experience as more like mourning the child not getting to Italy. Another said he saw it more like embarking on a mystery flight.

I have lived before. I want him to have the life I have had. We're here to help. I don't need to do anything else.

This group rejected any notion that they held grief for themselves and their vision of the future, only acknowledging grief for their child's loss. This view was not necessarily shared by another of the interviewed fathers from a different group:

All the Dads were great, and I remember talking the way they talked when my son was younger.... It is a matter of coming to grips with it and you constantly are coming to grips with it... Every time you are grappling with your child's schooling. Every time something happens to you child or he has some setback.... You never cease coming to grips with the consequences and the reality... The father in the family has to be the strong one. Some men are in denial.... I grieve for my son every day.

Although these parts of the topic were not covered in the trial, it was also noted that men with children with severe disabilities or with no verbal communication would have had difficulties discussing the sections on helping your child to talk about their disability and talking with your child.

Balancing the needs of other family members

As mentioned earlier, the facilitator from this session described the topic as inappropriate to a number of her fathers as they were single parents or only had one child – the child with a disability.

Encouraging your child's emotional growth

Facilitators commented that making choices and decisions was not an appropriate topic for dads with young children and it would have been equally difficult for fathers of children with severe disabilities.

Activity three "Opportunities for choices and decisions" fell a bit flat so we didn't focus on this for too long. But the part the fathers got the most out of seemed to be the strategies for managing strong emotions.

They also reported that they used the strengths cards to get the fathers to describe the strengths that they bring to the support of their child and that this strategy worked well.

Maintaining positive adult relationships

One facilitator suggested that it would be:

Good to have knowledge of impacts of disability on marriages

One of the fathers who attended the adult relationships session commented:

Initiative very well worthwhile; strongly encourage persistence with program and explore evening options / alternative venues to increase attendance; Have you considered some interventions around emotional. Relationship demands for the Mums (they seem to be more therapeutically focussed at Building Blocks). Also may be valuable at some point to explore mechanisms of uniting the husband/wife units in an intervention (I know the logistics of coordinator care would be immense but the rewards may outweigh the obstacle. Purpose to facilitate dialogue and develop shared perspective on current challenges, coping strategies as well as division of labour around life and care.

This suggestion was rejected by the Steering Group, based on their experiences and particularly on the evidence that fathers have difficulties sharing their thoughts and concerns in front of wives and hold anxieties when first attending a support group. The Group did feel that having special family events would be useful once these initial fathers' anxieties had been overcome and the group had formed and developed trust and strength.

3.9 Getting dads to use the skills learnt

Each section of the manual includes fathers reviewing what they have discussed and learnt in each session and what they want to try or discuss with their partner when they leave.

Session 11 discusses with participants how they or their behaviour have changed since the sessions began and how changes may make a difference in the future. The session also discusses how men intend to maintain the momentum of positive change.

Session 12 looks at fathers planning for their future and the future of their family.

Evaluation feedback suggests that even with only one session, some fathers had changed or were trying to use new skills. These were being applied in relation to their children, their partners and to their own self care.

3.10 Getting dads to attend again

Focus group discussions held to inform the preparation of the manual had suggested that fathers' attendance at workshops was likely to be intermittent because of their work and time commitments. This meant that, it could not

be presumed that men would work in an orderly fashion through the topics over time.

Evaluation feedback reinforced this pattern of attendance, although with only 5 organisations holding both a playgroup and workshop session, this evaluation's capacity to assess repeat attendance is limited. Table 2.3 shows that 42 men attended sessions conducted by organisations who held both playgroup and workshop sessions. Of these, just over one-third attended both.

Looking at the rate of participation within these organisations, the two organisations with longer standing relationships with their fathers were Maroubra and Casino. Two-thirds and a half of their men, respectively, attended both sessions, with the other organisations having a quarter or under attending both. This clearly suggests that repeat attendance is more likely where trust and relationships have been forged.

Interest in repeat attendance was gauged in a number of ways. All men who were asked about their interest in attending further sessions said they would be interested in attending or hearing about further sessions. In addition, the Ryde organisers asked fathers about interest in other topics with all topics receiving positive responses from some men, and all of the men indicating interest in the following:

- *Juggling your family, work and other needs*
- *Balancing the needs of other family members*
- *Maintaining positive adult relationships*
- *Managing behaviour*
- *Encouraging your child's emotional growth*
- *Focussing on the future.*

After their workshop, Ryde also emailed fathers about interest in further workshops. Three men responded positively with two commenting:

Another group, depending on sleep and other factors at that time, I might come along.

Definitely interested in further contact and would appreciate some insight on the other 10 modules that have been proposed.

Two facilitators commented:

The other topic headings resonated strongly with the dads....

Our group of dads seemed desperate just to connect with other dads in similar circumstances. And some travelled for over an hour each way to attend. The topic didn't seem important to them but they were all willing to participate. Ideally if we didn't have the limitations of the evaluation process, the first session would have been an ideal chance to get together with other dads and choose topics for other workshops at a later date.

4 Program outcomes

4.1 Coverage of program outcomes

Appendix B explains that some of the FRSP and *Hey, Dad!* desired outcomes were not tested in the trial because of the cancellation or postponement of some workshops covering content related to these outcomes.

This chapter provides the evidence available about results against the tested outcomes.

4.2 Communication

FRSP Outcome: <i>Increased communication skills (in the context of family relationships)</i>
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Only one group, the Casino group, formally covered topics related to communication. Of the six men who attended, three ranked the session as giving them “lots” of ideas to help them to communicate more effectively with their family, one scored “a bit” and two scored “not sure”. This session would have been particularly challenging to facilitate as two of the men had an intellectual disability themselves, a situation for which the manual had not necessarily been designed.

4.3 Parenting skills

FRSP Outcome: <i>Increased parenting skills (both parents have parenting skills and are involved in their children's upbringing)</i>
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Questions about how well sessions assisted parenting skills and the support of children were included as core questions in all feedback forms. It was not possible to assess any impact on mothers' skills and involvement.

Table 4.1 shows the results about improvement of parenting skills by topic, with 76% responding positively: 32% of the respondents thought that their session had helped them with their parenting in quite a few ways and another 44% thought the session had helped at least “a bit”.

Workshops generally were more highly scored than playgroups. The workshop topic “*Encouraging your child’s emotional growth*” was most highly scored of the topics.

Table 4.1 Fathers’ ranking of whether the session had helped them improve their parenting skills by session topic

	Dads and Kids Playgroup	My Child and Me	Juggling your family, work and other needs	Balancing the needs of other family members	Encouraging your child’s emotional growth	Total	%
Yes, in quite a few ways	8	2	3	1	5	19	32%
A bit to quite a few ways	1					1	2%
Yes, a bit	19	2	1	3		25	42%
Not sure	5	3		2	1	11	19%
No	3					3	5%
Total	36	7	4	6	6	59	100%

79% of fathers scored their session positively in relation to whether it helped them to better support their child (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Fathers’ ranking of whether the session had helped them to better support their child by session topic

	Dads and Kids Playgroup	My Child and Me	Juggling your family, work and other needs	Balancing the needs of other family members	Encouraging your child’s emotional growth	Total	%
Yes, in quite a few ways	10	1	2	2	4	19	32%
Yes, a bit	17	5	2	3	1	28	47%
Not sure to a bit	1					1	2%
Not sure	3	1		1	1	6	10%
No	3					3	5%
No response	2					2	3%
Total	36	7	4	6	6	59	100%

In interviews, one mother commented that she thought the sessions had made her partner have more fun with their daughter. Her partner said:

I am pursuing being more relaxed. I don’t know that I have got to where I want to be yet, but I am still working towards it.... I found it was a common

thing for all of us to want times for ourselves. So now I don't feel as guilty about it... And I am trying different things with my daughter. I think I don't get as frustrated as often as I did before... But I do have to concentrate to put what I learnt into practice.

Another father said:

Perhaps I feel more relaxed and more relieved.... That there are other people going through the same thing.

And another:

It more reinforced things for me. I think we do pretty well..... But it was good to have reinforcement. And it was good that the ideas were slightly different.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, some fathers would have preferred groups with similarly aged children. However others found the diversity of age and experience useful:

I found it very helpful to hear the experiences of fathers with older kids..... It gives me a better understanding of what could happen in our future..... It was a lot to take on and a lot of areas were covered.... But I learnt a lot by being there.

The father who would have preferred to attend a session with similarly aged children reflected on the mix:

I remember talking like those Dads when (my son) was one. I hope my well is still full but you go through stages. It is like everything in life, experience gives different perspectives.

4.4 Conflict resolution

FRSP Outcome: <i>Improved conflict resolution skills</i>
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This topic was only formally covered by one workshop group of six men, two of whom answered that the session had made them feel “lots” more confident about positively resolving conflict, three said it had made them a bit more confident and one scored not sure.

4.5 Relationships

FRSP Outcome: <i>Increased communication skills (in the context of family relationships)</i>
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69% of participants scored their session(s) positively in terms of offering them something new to try to help their relationship with their children (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Fathers' ranking of whether the session had given them something new to try to help their relationship with their children, by session topic

	Dads and Kids Playgroup	My Child and Me	Juggling your family, work and other needs	Balancing the needs of other family members	Encouraging your child's emotional growth	Total	%
Yes, more than one strategy	8	1	2	1	4	16	27%
Yes, one strategy	19	2	2	1	1	25	42%
Not sure	7	2		3	1	13	22%
No	2	2		1		5	8%
Total	36	7	4	6	6	59	100%

Some fathers in interviews reinforced this:

I have tried a few different things since the session. And I think I do feel a bit more at ease with my child, more comfortable....

Another added a comment to his feedback sheet about his relationship with his partner:

Identified thing to try with partner; Very good should be more.

A number of facilitators as well as fathers described the different reactions of mothers and fathers to the realisation that their child had a disability and to their attitude afterwards. As already discussed one group rejected any notion that they held grief for themselves, only acknowledging grief for their child's loss. This group of men did however think that their wives felt grief about the potential loss of the future they had envisaged for themselves, their child and their family. One father said that until he realised that his wife and he had different reactions to the disability of their child, it had negatively affected their relationship.

I had a different way of thinking to my wife. I realised that some of the difficulties we went through, resulted from me not being prepared for my wife's reaction.

Perhaps the most significant relationship effect of the sessions was the impact on the men of having the opportunity to discuss their experiences, issues and concerns with other men. This is discussed in the next section.

4.6 Connections

FRSP Outcomes:	<i>Increased family and social connections (improved help-seeking behaviour/able to identify support people and services)</i>
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Increased community participation, within the community of interest to best support and address the needs of families.

Increased knowledge in the community in maintaining strong and resilient relationships.

The opportunity to form connections with other fathers was the most important impact of the sessions for most men. It would be reasonable to presume that the impact of these connections and the associated discussion of concerns and issues would help fathers in their everyday life, including in their relationships with their children, partners and the wider community. To underscore the potentially unique or rare opportunity offered, men described how seldom, if ever, they have the opportunity to speak openly and freely, without judgement, about their concerns and reactions.

They also spoke about how significant the absence of confidantes was to them particularly soon after the diagnosis was known, and about how alone they felt at that time and at some other times since. They believed that this situation would be common to all new fathers of a child with a disability.

New dads have to realise they are not on our own. We have gone through it already... They will find that some people will shut doors to them and maybe some of their friends won't understand. But other people will understand.

They also spoke about the importance of good relationships with services and access to good information and resources.

I have realised we have to take care of ourselves. If we can't look after ourself, we can't look after our child, our partner or our family. And I have found we can't do it without external help. That is why it is good to have a place like this to talk, without fear of retribution.... The first time I started to feel better was when I started to ask for help.

When you first find out you are cast into some bureaucratic process – you go on a waiting list and then you go onto another waiting list. The best thing for new dads to have would be to meet other dads.

They particularly felt that *Hey, Dad!* groups and other ways of making contact would significantly help new dads:

I wouldn't say to new dads "Don't worry"... That can't help. Probably the message would be more "Be alert and not alarmed!"

The best thing would be to get people experiencing disability for the first time.... There is a silver lining and although it is hard, it can get better.

5 Partnerships

5.1 *The partners*

The evaluation brief requires an assessment of the partnership between UnitingCare Burnside and Centacare. However, the development of *Hey, Dad!* for Fathers who have a Child with a Disability also involved partnership arrangements with the Spastic Centre and with Lifestart. Each of these agencies was represented on the Steering Group for the project and for this evaluation.

Burnside and Centacare have collaborated in the past on the *Hey, Dad!* for Separated Fathers. The Spastic Centre and Lifestart were introduced as members of the Steering Group and development team for this disability initiative.

Lifestart, as a community based disability organisation, organised a focus group with their clients about the use of the manual and advised on appropriate implementation and timing strategies. The comments of this focus group are reflected in the final manual. Lifestart's workers were also used as a sounding board in the preparation of the material and to trial the material with their fathers.

The Spastic Centre was responsible for the scoping study and was extensively involved in the drafting and refining of the manual, in the training of program facilitators, in the conduct of sessions for the trial and in the analysis of evaluation material to assist the refinement of the final document. Four of the sixteen services signed up to conduct sessions during the trial were Spastic Centre services.

5.2 *Positive relationships*

All of the program partners interviewed reported satisfaction with the benefits that the partnership brought and with the day to day relationships and collaboration between program partners.

The partnership has operated so smoothly and wonderfully. I have been pleased and impressed by how well it has run... It has offered a seamless way of working. I think the keys to its success have been having a high level of support, long relationships and previous connections, and I think the program and trial came at the right time for the agencies.... Program partners have done a lot of proactive work. They have done a lot of preparation, kept times for meetings clear and distributed and provided comments on material swiftly.... It has been a pleasure to be part of... Everyone contributes so much it makes it easy to resolve issues.

Agency representatives had reasonably regular, informal contact throughout the development of the program and formal contact via Steering Group meetings. The steering group structure was seen as having worked well, providing a range of expertise and bringing positive suggestions into the planning and development of the program. While at times styles and preferences may have differed, any differences seem to have been amicably resolved:

Sometimes organisations working together may strike political differences from within their organisations or personality differences within referencing group members that can have a negative effect. I feel that we have managed to avoid these differences and have worked well together.... So all in all I'd have to say a pretty positive experience. I generally enjoy partnership between organisations as the experience introduces new knowledge and cultural norms, allows the sharing of expertise and enables projects to happen which may not otherwise happen or at least be as effective. This partnership has certainly been a positive experience.

6 Strategies to enhance success

The following suggestions for improvement emerged from the evaluation. Those which have been incorporated into the re-drafted text of the final manual are ticked.

Planning accessible sessions

- ✓ Recruit a **facilitation team** containing members with experience in group work, the support of families with a child with a disability and, if you are conducting playgroups, in special education. Consider having a male facilitator for at least the first session.
- ✓ Allow **adequate time** for the development of relationships with, and possibly between, fathers, prior to *Hey, Dad!* sessions and for planning and promotion of sessions. Social activities with fathers may be a good precursor to *Hey, Dad!*
- ✓ Plan well including **engaging service partners** to assist planning, promotion, recruitment and conduct of sessions.
- ✓ Try to **engage fathers** in your planning wherever possible.
- ✓ **Research** the characteristics of the men and children likely to attend each session and plan your sessions to suit their abilities, ages, experiences, interests and needs. Recognise the special needs of some children, for example the reactions of some autistic children to noise. A format for planning appropriate activities and an example playgroup plan from the trial have now been included in the manual.
- ✓ Ensure you have the **resources** to support good sessions (including adequate worker time, accessible and comfortable venues and seating, appropriate equipment and other facilitation resources, adequate resources and strategies for promotion, money for food and other consumables, availability of respite and transport if needed etc).

- ✓ Prepare for the session, including by researching topics of particular interest to your fathers and by adding the details of **services and other support available locally** to the resources handout.
- **Consider information and suggestions from other facilitators** available via any *Hey, Dad!* website or other networking / communication process (a recommendation of this evaluation).
- **Use any *Hey, Dad!* development and promotion support** (a recommendation of this evaluation).
- ✓ For playgroups, try to include fathers with children of **similar ages and abilities**. If this is not possible, describe the likely diversity in the children likely to be attending when explaining the session to interested fathers.
- ✓ Recognise that you will need to be **flexible**:
 - in your delivery, matching content to the participants' interests and needs on the day and matching the skills and strengths of your facilitators; and
 - in your timing. You may need to re-schedule planned sessions as fathers unexpectedly become not available.

Getting fathers to enrol

- ✓ Utilise and build on any **relationships** you already have with fathers and engage these men to assist in the session planning, recruitment and promotion process.
- ✓ Recruit others to assist with promotion including your **service partners and wives**.
- ✓ Consider whether you understand your fathers and their children well enough to start with a playgroup and whether you have the skills on the team to plan and run it effectively. Or whether you want to delay it till later in the *Hey, Dad!* program. Remember it could be that Australian born fathers are more likely to attend a workshop if they have already attended a playgroup.
- ✓ Work with fathers on **timing**: when, how long and with what frequency. They know their likely commitments and availability.
- ✓ Include **quotes from fathers** who have been through the program in your promotional material, including quotes which recognise that other men were initially nervous, but overcame this anxiety and found the sessions useful.

- ✓ **Be clear in your promotional material** and in your communications with fathers about the structure of each session, who will be involved, what are likely to be the outcomes and what assistance, including respite and transport, will be available.
- ✓ For playgroups, wherever possible, explain to fathers that you will be showing them the types of **activities that the children do during weekdays**.
- ✓ Include **food**, requesting fathers to bring food for their children if they have special dietary needs.
- ✓ **Speak with fathers individually** to encourage their attendance and to check that your planning still suits them.
- ✓ Promote the **advantages to others** of fathers attending: such as for playgroups, giving wives a break; and for all sessions, getting tips from other fathers about how to better support children and providing an opportunity for fathers to support each other.
- Explain that discussions are **confidential**.

Getting fathers to attend

- ✓ **Check and re-check** availability.
- ✓ **Reinforce** the benefits of attendance, particularly the benefits reported by other dads. Remind them of the likely session content and structure and explain available support to attend.
- ✓ See if you can get **other fathers to encourage them to attend** – word of mouth from another father is likely to be a strong motivator.
- ✓ **Postpone** sessions if necessary.

Getting a representative group of fathers to attend

- Engage as **partners**, services supporting fathers which your group wishes to attract.
- Seek help with promotion and recruitment from **fathers or community leaders from the groups** you wish to attract.
- Include in your facilitation team, facilitators from the groups you are trying to attract or ensure your facilitation team has **experience working with fathers from different backgrounds**.

- Ensure days and venues you pick are suitable and **appropriate** for the men you are seeking to attract. Particularly avoid significant religious dates, unless these days have been suggested by the Dads themselves.
- Include in your promotional material **references to men you are trying to attract**.
- Use the **language** of the groups you are trying to attract in promotional material.
- Get a copy of the general *Hey, Dad!* manual in the language of the men you are trying to attract, if available.

Engaging fathers in playgroups

- ✓ Depending upon the wishes of the fathers, restrict the session to **2-3 hours**.
- ✓ **At the beginning of the session**, spend time on activities which help the fathers and their children to get acquainted.
- ✓ Ensure that all of the children and fathers attending can **participate**, and indeed are participating and achieving, in your activities.
- ✓ Include activities to build relationships between fathers as well as between fathers and their children.
- ✓ Include a **food** break with lots of food – men eat a lot!
- ✓ Explain the **benefits of the activities** to each child if his/her dad wants this. An example handout explaining some of the benefits of activities used by one group in the trial is now in the manual.
- ✓ Keep the sessions **positive** and **action oriented**.
- ✓ Request and use **feedback** from dads to improve and plan future sessions.

Engaging fathers in workshops

- ✓ Consider devoting the **first workshop** session solely to “*Making connections*” to allow the fathers to get to know each other and their situations well and to help plan your next workshop.
- ✓ **Re-check** with fathers the most suitable times and frequencies to meet and their preferred length of session. This may mean only covering one topic per workshop.

- ✓ **Be flexible.** Respond to the interests and flow of the group. This may involve moving beyond the planned session topic so prepare for this. Or if you feel that the discussion is well beyond what you have prepared, suggest to the fathers that you hold another session in the future on this issue if they are interested.
- ✓ Make sure that the bulk of the session time, and particularly the latter half, focusses on **positives, actions and strategies**.
- ✓ **Trust** the fathers to come up with suggestions and to care for, and be sensitive to, each other.
- ✓ **Recognise that the manual is an aid to, rather than a script for, your facilitation.** Use the manual as a prompt to your facilitation. Capitalise on your facilitation team's strengths, complementing the suggestions in the manual with activities and content that you have found works well.
- ✓ Again, lots of **food!**
- ✓ Request and use **feedback** from dads to improve and plan future sessions.
- **Share** your successes and suggestions for improvement. The development of a website or other practice-sharing forum is a recommendation of this evaluation.

Getting fathers to use learnt skills.

- ✓ Use the strategies in the manual to **review** learnt skills at the end of each session.
- Discuss with fathers at the end of each session **what they think they may try with their family** or elsewhere.
- Ask fathers at the beginning of subsequent sessions to tell the group **how they went trying** to use things they learnt at the previous session. And ask them to reflect on what they have now learnt and how they think they could do even better.

Get Getting repeat attendance.

- Get dads who have found the sessions worthwhile, to promote repeat attendance and **spread the word** about the benefits they have experienced.
- **Follow up** any commitments you made to fathers including sending any promised write-ups from the session and/or references.

- Offer fathers the **opportunity to discuss** with you any concerns or issues which arose for them either during or following the session.
- ✓ **Refer** fathers to other resources or agencies if you feel they need different or additional help, but in doing so **remind** them of what the group can offer them.
- **Provide fathers with feedback** after the event, about how their comments have helped you plan or refine future sessions.
- Provide **feedback to partner agencies** so they can assess the benefits of *Hey, Dad!* and spread the word further.
- **Start the process of planning all over again**, maintaining the momentum and goodwill accumulated at each stage.
- Consider holding a **family session** to complement your men's meetings.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Steering Group

Andrew King	Burnside
Annette Coleman	Burnside
Lyn Slocombe	Centacare Broken Bay
Paul Mavromatis	The Spastic Centre
Allison Watson	Lifestart
Samantha Livingston	Centacare Broken Bay

In addition, the following people were part of the development team for the new module:

Patricia Kiely	Burnside
Matthew Chrczonowicz	Father representative from the Spastic Centre

Appendix B: Evaluation approach, activities and issues

Evaluation approach and activities

The evaluation was to be based on an action research strategy, with progressive feedback being fed back to the program developers and trial facilitators in order to enhance the package and its delivery's success and refinement. Further, as the evaluation was being conducted concurrently with the design of the manuals and the re-ordering and re-scheduling of their content, so the evaluation design and strategy was also consistently refined to reflect changing needs.

The evaluation consisted of the following broad steps:

1. Development of an evaluation plan in consultation with the evaluation Steering Group.
2. Design of evaluation tools based on this plan and on the draft program materials.
3. Attendance at the facilitators' training in order to explain the evaluation and its requirements, to speak with facilitators about their prior experience and their reactions to the training, and to seek any suggestions for improvement of the evaluation plan and guide. This occurred on Wednesday 7 February 2007.
4. Revision of the evaluation guide based on facilitators' suggestions. *Appendix C* provides the final version of the evaluation guide. It contains evaluation tools including evaluation information and consent forms.
5. Staying in touch with key Steering Group representatives and with facilitators throughout the trial of the program in order to obtain qualitative information about issues and results and in order to assist where possible with implementation and enhancements.
6. Preparation of progress reports to inform the development of the package and to assist facilitators with the conduct of sessions. Four types of progress reports were prepared:
 - a report on facilitators' feedback on their training, circulated in mid February;
 - a progress report on session feedback received by 23 March 2007;
 - a compilation of qualitative feedback received by 26 April 2007; and
 - a report outlining the sessions either conducted or planned, updated throughout the trial as developments occurred.

In addition, drafting suggestions for modification of the *Hey, Dad!* manual were provided on two occasions, based on evaluation feedback, to help prepare the manual for publication.

7. Interviewing of a sample of facilitators and participants, either face to face or by phone and, if possible, observation of the conduct of some sessions, subject to the agreement of both participants and facilitators.
8. Receipt of all participant and feedback forms by 31 April and analysis of these.
9. Presentation of the key issues and trends from the data analysis and interviews for discussion in early May with the Steering Group and other invited facilitators. This discussion was held on 7 May.
10. Preparation of a draft report for consideration of the Steering Group.
11. Receipt of Steering Group amendments to the draft report, refinement of the report and submission of the final by the end of May 2007.

The design of the evaluation was based on an outcomes hierarchy (see Attachment A of *Appendix C*). It was also based on the assumption that all of the manual topics would be trialled with feedback on the achievement of FRSP outcomes captured within relevant topics. Table B.1 shows the link between evaluation questions and FRSP outcomes.

Table B.1 FRSP outcomes by evaluation question and Hey, Dad! topic

Outcome	Question	Hey, Dad! Topic
FRSP: Communication	Do you think that this session will help you to communicate more effectively with your family?	<i>Balancing the needs of other family members</i>
FRSP: Parenting skills	Do you think what was discussed* to-day increased your parenting skills?	Initially <i>Managing Behaviour</i> ; then used as a CORE question for all sessions
FRSP: Connections	Do you know more ways of getting support from others should you need it?	<i>Working in partnership with service providers</i>
FRSP: Conflict resolution	Do you feel more confident about positively resolving conflict?	<i>Balancing needs of other family members</i>
FRSP: Participation	Have you thought of other ways of helping your child outside your home, for example at school or in the community?	<i>Working in partnership with service providers</i>
FRSP: Relationships	Can you identify anything you have learnt to-day you want to try this week to help your relationship with your child/children?	Initially <i>Building relationships through play and friendships</i> ; then used as a CORE question for all sessions
OTHER: Child development	Do you think you understand your child's development and needs better now?	<i>Focussing on the future</i>
OTHER: Partner	Do you think this session will help you better support your partner?	<i>Adult relationships</i>
OTHER: Child's special needs	Do you think what was discussed* to-day will help you to better support child?	<i>Encouraging your child's emotional growth</i> ; then used as a CORE question for all sessions.
OTHER: Stress	Can you identify anything you heard to-day which you want to use to reduce the stress in your life?	<i>Stress Management</i>

* For playgroups "tried" was substituted for "discussed".

Evaluation constraints, challenges and issues

The evaluation faced significant design, implementation and timing challenges, as did the trial of the program, because of the time available, the divergent locations, and the differing experiences of the organisations involved in the trial, and because of the manual's concurrent development and evaluation.

This section outlines some of these challenges to explain evaluation decisions and limitations in evaluation data.

Decentralised evaluation design

Firstly, it was clearly impossible, both logistically and within the very limited funds available for the evaluation of both programs, for the consultant to be responsible for directly collecting feedback from all sessions. Therefore, the evaluation design had to rely on the co-operation

and assistance of facilitators. As a result, more explanatory material had to be prepared than would normally be the case in an evaluation conducted directly by a consultant. Revised versions were prepared and circulated as important improvements were identified. While all facilitators were very committed to assisting the evaluation (and indeed this was a condition for them to be trained for free as part of the trial), this decentralised evaluation system did add extra stress, workload and sometimes confusion to the evaluation and trial. It was also difficult to assess the amount of information reasonably required by the facilitators without overburdening them. As a result, cut-down versions of the evaluation guide were provided to facilitators.

Evaluator observation and direct contact

The initial evaluation plan involved more direct observation of *Hey, Dad!* sessions and face to face interviews than actually occurred. This was because facilitators were concerned about the impact of an observer on their sessions, on their own facilitation and on Dads, and because the dispersed locations of the sessions would mean that a heavy time and financial cost would be required. It was agreed therefore that the balance of evaluation time would be shifted to phone contact and other strategies for obtaining feedback. As a result only part of one session conducted at Maroubra on Saturday 28 April was observed.

Timing

Although facilitators were trying very hard to conduct their trials and provide feedback prior to the evaluation deadline of 31 May, the final forms were not received till 11 May, meaning that not all information was available for the final 7 May discussions and that repeat processing was required.

Timelines and evaluation tools

The evaluation tools needed to incorporate elements of the existing *Hey, Dad!* enrolment form and to build in evaluation information and consent mechanisms as well as providing session feedback forms. These forms would have not been too burdensome if the fathers were enrolling for a 12 topic series (as was originally envisaged and which occurs in other *Hey, Dad!* formats).

However, the focus group discussions conducted to prepare this *Hey, Dad!* manual suggested that fathers of children with a disability would be unlikely to be able to commit to more than one or two sessions every six months and only three months were available for the trial. Organisations were required as a condition of their training to conduct preferably a minimum of one playgroup and one workshop session, of a designated topic in order to ensure all topics were trialled, before 31 April.

Further, as it was expected that not all fathers would attend both sessions, it was decided that feedback needed to be requested at all sessions.

Not only did this timeline cause difficulties for the organisations in planning, recruiting and holding sessions, the result was the evaluation forms seemed a bit overblown for the time available and for the sometimes very limited involvement by individual fathers:

Too much paperwork - overwhelming leading to reduced spontaneity.

Flexible form design

Because organisations were conducting different session topics and because the measurement of outcomes was linked to particular topics, the forms needed to be modified by the facilitators prior to their use. This design feature added to the explanation burden but seemed to cause less trouble than might have been the case.

Literacy

Because the literacy levels of the men were expected to vary, three alternative options were offered to facilitators to obtain feedback:

1. A fairly standard word based feedback sheet;
2. A “happy face” feedback sheet to be complemented by discussion around qualitative questions for groups likely to include men with literacy issues; and
3. A feedback option totally discussion-based.

Facilitators largely chose the first two options. But paperwork remained an issue.

Do any paperwork prior to event if possible. My group tended to have several fathers with literacy issues.

One-off attendance

Because it seemed likely that many fathers would attend only one session, it was not feasible for the evaluation to try and capture change over time. The best which could be achieved was change over the course of the session, and, for the sample of fathers interviewed, change or lessons implemented between the session and the time of the father’s interview.

Planned versus held sessions

A number of planned sessions did not proceed. This therefore affected the collection of trial feedback on the achievement of FRSP and other outcomes for the topics not covered. In addition, one group was not asked the

designated outcome related question. Table 1.2 shows the impact on the evaluation strategy of topics not trialled.

*Table B.2 FRSP/other outcomes for which feedback was **not** collated or trialled*

Outcome	Question	Hey, Dad! Topic
FRSP: Connections	Do you know more ways of getting support from others should you need it?	<i>Working in partnership with service providers</i>
FRSP: Participation	Have you thought of other ways of helping your child outside your home, for example at school or in the community?	<i>Working in partnership with service providers</i>
OTHER: Child development	Do you think you understand your child's development and needs better now?	<i>Focussing on the future</i>
OTHER: Partner	Do you think this session will help you better support your partner?	<i>Adult relationships</i>
OTHER: Stress	Can you identify anything you heard today which you want to use to reduce the stress in your life?	<i>Stress Management</i>

Appendix C: Facilitators' evaluation guide



EVALUATION OF
HEY, DAD! for Fathers with
Children with a Disability

EVALUATION IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE
for PROGRAM ORGANISERS
and SESSION FACILITATORS

FEBRUARY 2007

Contents

1. THIS GUIDE
2. EVALUATION COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTIONS
3. ABOUT THE EVALUATION
 - Evaluation principles
 - Evaluation components and responsibilities

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A: Evaluation outcomes hierarchy
- Attachment B: Feedback following training of facilitators
- Attachment C: Enrolment Form
- Attachment D: Participant evaluation information & consent form
- Attachment E: Feedback and Code Sheet formats
- Attachment F: Facilitator feedback following sessions with Dads

1. This guide

The *Hey, Dad!* program for Fathers with Children with a Disability is to be evaluated for the funding body, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA)³.

I, Dianne Beatty, have been contracted to carry out this evaluation.

The evaluation is to be completed by May 2007. So given this time, it will only be possible to assess initial results and reactions to the program.

Your assistance with the conduct of the evaluation is therefore sought.

This guide outlines:

- the evaluation plan;
- what is expected of program organisers and of session facilitators;
- what feedback is required from participants and facilitators; and
- the options and tools available to facilitators to collect and collate feedback material.

³The *Hey, Dad!* program for Aboriginal fathers is also being evaluated over the same period of time.

2. Evaluation comments, questions or suggestions

Should you have any questions or comments, and for the return of feedback material to me, my contact details are:

Dianne Beatty
Alt Beatty Consulting
PO Box 962
Armidale NSW 2350

Phone: 02 6775 2257
Fax: 02 6775 2344
Email: diannebt@ozemail.com.au

Please do not hesitate to call me should you have any questions, comments or suggestions about the evaluation, its strategies tools and feedback options, and/or your responsibilities.

Thank you, in anticipation of your assistance.

3. About the evaluation

Evaluation principles

In line with the philosophies underpinning the *Hey, Dad!* programs, this evaluation needs to be:

- **flexible** and able to respond appropriately to participants' and other stakeholders' needs, skills and characteristics, as well as to different modes and timing of program delivery;
- **ethical**, respecting participants' confidentiality, rights, culture and other interests;
- **open to change and to improvement**, as new issues or implementation issues emerge or as stakeholders identify unanticipated concerns;
- **as rigorous as possible** in the time available and within a guiding rule that the evaluation should positively complement, rather than impede, program delivery.

To these ends, flexibility has been designed into evaluation strategies and tools, with tools kept as simple as possible.

However, this therefore means that there is no single route to follow to implement the evaluation. Program managers and session facilitators therefore need to consider how best, and when, to involve me as the evaluator and how they will collate required feedback material considering the options offered within this guide. This guide aims to explain each evaluation step and the options available for their implementation.

Evaluation components and responsibilities

The outcomes hierarchy at *Attachment A* shows the key questions which will be considered in this evaluation, with the questions a mix of those required by FaCSIA or by the evaluation brief.

The diagram on the next page summarises the major points in the implementation of the *Hey, Dad!* program up to May 2007 when evaluation information will be collected.

- The first item shown in black is my responsibility if I am present at the training of facilitators OR otherwise the responsibility of the trainers of the facilitators.
- The red items are the responsibility of facilitators of *Hey, Dad!* sessions (or sometimes, me if I am present at sessions or for post-session discussions).
- The grey italicised items are my responsibility.

Diagram 1: Outline of key points when evaluation information will be collected

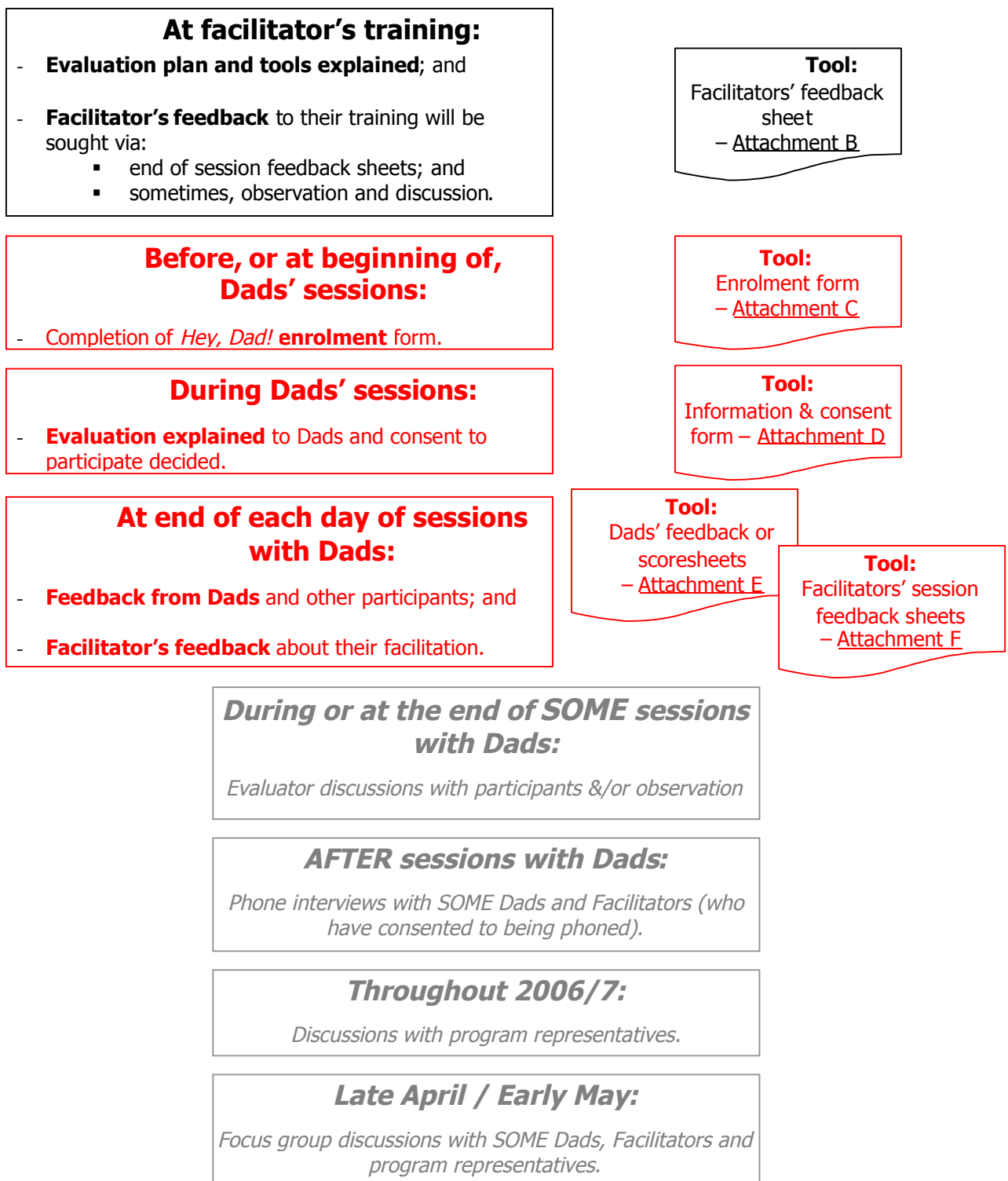


Table 1 provides more detail about the data to be collected, and about from whom, by whom and how it will be collected.

Table 1: Overview of each evaluation strategy and program organisers' and facilitators' roles and responsibilities.

When:	Strategy	Sample size	Comments about the strategy	Contributions requested from:	
				Program organisers	Session facilitators
At Facilitators' training	A session on the evaluation to be incorporated into facilitator training .	To be included in all facilitator training conducted in 2006-7.	If I am present, I would be happy to facilitate this training session. However, if I am not in attendance, then this guide should be used to inform facilitators of the evaluation, of their expected roles and of the tools and options available to them.	Discuss with me which facilitator training I can attend. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If I am not able to attend, then program organisers will need to: incorporate a session on the evaluation into their training; provide facilitators with this guide; and discuss its content and expectations. 	Use this guide and the training to get an understanding of facilitators' evaluation roles, responsibilities and options.
	Observation of some facilitator training sessions, and discussion with facilitators about their views; OR if I cannot attend, collation of facilitator feedback .	To be included in all facilitator training conducted in 2006-7.	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include time at the end of the facilitators' training for me to discuss with them their reactions and expectations re <i>Hey, Dad!</i>; OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using the form at <i>Attachment B</i>, obtain facilitator feedback and send me completed forms. 	At the end of the training, provide feedback about your reactions and expectations.
Before or at the beginning of program delivery	Completion of <i>Hey, Dad!</i> enrolment form – <i>Attachment C</i>	All participants involved in <i>Hey, Dad!</i> program during 2006-7.	Alternative options for obtaining the enrolment information are suggested in Table 2.	<p>Incorporate this implementation guide into facilitators' training and notes.</p> <p>If enrolment forms are completed prior to program sessions, please send a copy of these forms (with participant addresses blacked out) to me for those participants who give their consent to this (see next row).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find out whether enrolment information has already been completed before the session. If not, choose the collection option, from Table 2, considered most suitable for your style of delivery and the group. Schedule time to collect this information. Collate material and send to relevant Centacare representatives for their records. Please also send a copy (with participant addresses blacked out) to me for those participants who give their consent to this (see next row).
During <i>Hey, Dad!</i> program delivery	Explanation of the evaluation and of the support requested of Dads.	All participants involved in <i>Hey, Dad!</i> program during 2006-7.	An evaluation information and consent form is provided at <i>Attachment D</i> . It is necessarily reasonably detailed, to meet ethical requirements.	Incorporate this implementation guide into facilitators' training and notes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate time in your session to explain the evaluation and get relevant consents. During this time, read the information aloud and discuss the concepts with the participants to assist them to decide about evaluation participation and to complete the form. Collate responses and send to me.

When:	Strategy	Sample size	Comments about the strategy	Contributions requested from:	
				Program organisers	Session facilitators
At end of each <i>Hey, Dad!</i> session day	Feedback from participating Dads at the end of session days.	All participants at the end of each session day during 2006-7.	Options for how this feedback will be collected are offered: If I am present, then with the agreement of facilitators, I can collect Dads' feedback. If I am not present, then facilitators will be responsible for collecting feedback and sending it to me.	Incorporate this implementation guide into facilitators' training and notes.	If I am not collecting feedback, then you will need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide which of the feedback collection options outlined in Table 2 you wish to use. Prepare your feedback or code sheets for each day – the basic formats are at Attachment E. Leave time at the end of each session day to collect the feedback. Collate the material and send it to me as soon as you can after each session day.
	Feedback from facilitators at the end of session days.	Facilitator feedback questions are provided at Attachment F .	-	Incorporate this implementation guide into facilitators' training and notes.	Complete facilitators' feedback sheet at end of each session day and send it to me, along with participants' feedback, as soon as you can after each session day.
During or at the end of SOME <i>Hey, Dad!</i> sessions	Evaluator observation of some program sessions; discussions with program participants at the end of program days.	It is not expected that all program sessions will involve the evaluator. As a guide, it would be good to perhaps have this involvement in one or two sessions for each program.	It would be great if these involvements could be over consecutive days due to the travel time and cost involved. It has been agreed that observation of sessions by a white, female evaluator may not be appropriate, especially for Aboriginal Dads sessions. Therefore:	Program organisers in consultation with session facilitators will need to decide whether opportunities exist for either observation or end of day discussions with participants. If opportunities exist, it would be appreciated if I could be informed as soon as possible to discuss whether my involvement is logistically possible or required.	If it is agreed that I will be present at either some sessions, or an end of day discussion, facilitators are requested to positively support my involvement.
After <i>Hey, Dad!</i> participation	Phone interviews with a sample of participants and facilitators	To be determined, depending upon number of people who consent to being phoned and on number involved in post-session discussions.	Interviews will be based on feedback questions plus deleted questions from normal <i>Hey, Dad!</i> feedback forms, trying to penetrate more deeply than feedback sheets allow.	Incorporate this implementation guide into facilitators' training and notes.	Participants will have indicated their willingness (or not) to take a phone call from me on their evaluation consent form. It would be great if you would give your consent, on your training feedback form, for me to ring you if necessary.
2006-7	Phone interviews and other discussions with key Centacare and Uniting Care Burnside representatives.	Discussions with Lyn, Andrew and others as necessary.	Discussions will canvass progress and implementation issues as well as progressive evaluation results and suggestions – see evaluation plan.	Participate in discussions as necessary.	-
Late April / 1st week May 2007	Focus group discussions with <i>Hey, Dad!</i> stakeholders.	To be decided later in the implementation of the programs.	One focus group for each <i>Hey, Dad!</i> program.	Assistance with organisation of, and participation in, relevant focus group.	Participation by some of you in relevant focus group.

Table 2 lists each participant feedback question (in a more conversational form than the outcomes hierarchy). It then offers a number of ways via which facilitators may collect the evaluation information.

Note to facilitators:

These different strategies are provided so that you can select the option(s) which best suit your own style of delivery and the likely skills and preferences of each group of participants.

Because you may deliver different program sections on different days and because you can choose different ways to collect evaluation information, some preparation work is required of you prior to each session day:

- to decide which sections of the *Hey, Dad!* program you are going to deliver on each session day;
- to familiarise yourself with the content and prepare how you are going to deliver it;
- to decide how you are going to collect the required evaluation feedback from Dads and other participants – see Attachment E, and
- to amend the selected feedback tool so that it reflects what you are going to cover during the session day and so that only the appropriate questions remain on the form. More information about this is provided at the start of Attachment E.

To help you prepare for each day, the *Hey, Dad!* program includes a format to prepare your day's outline as well as a checklist to ensure you have all required hand-outs and evaluation forms for each day.

Table 2: FATHERS OF CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY - Draft of evaluation questions to be asked of participants by section and by possible strategies

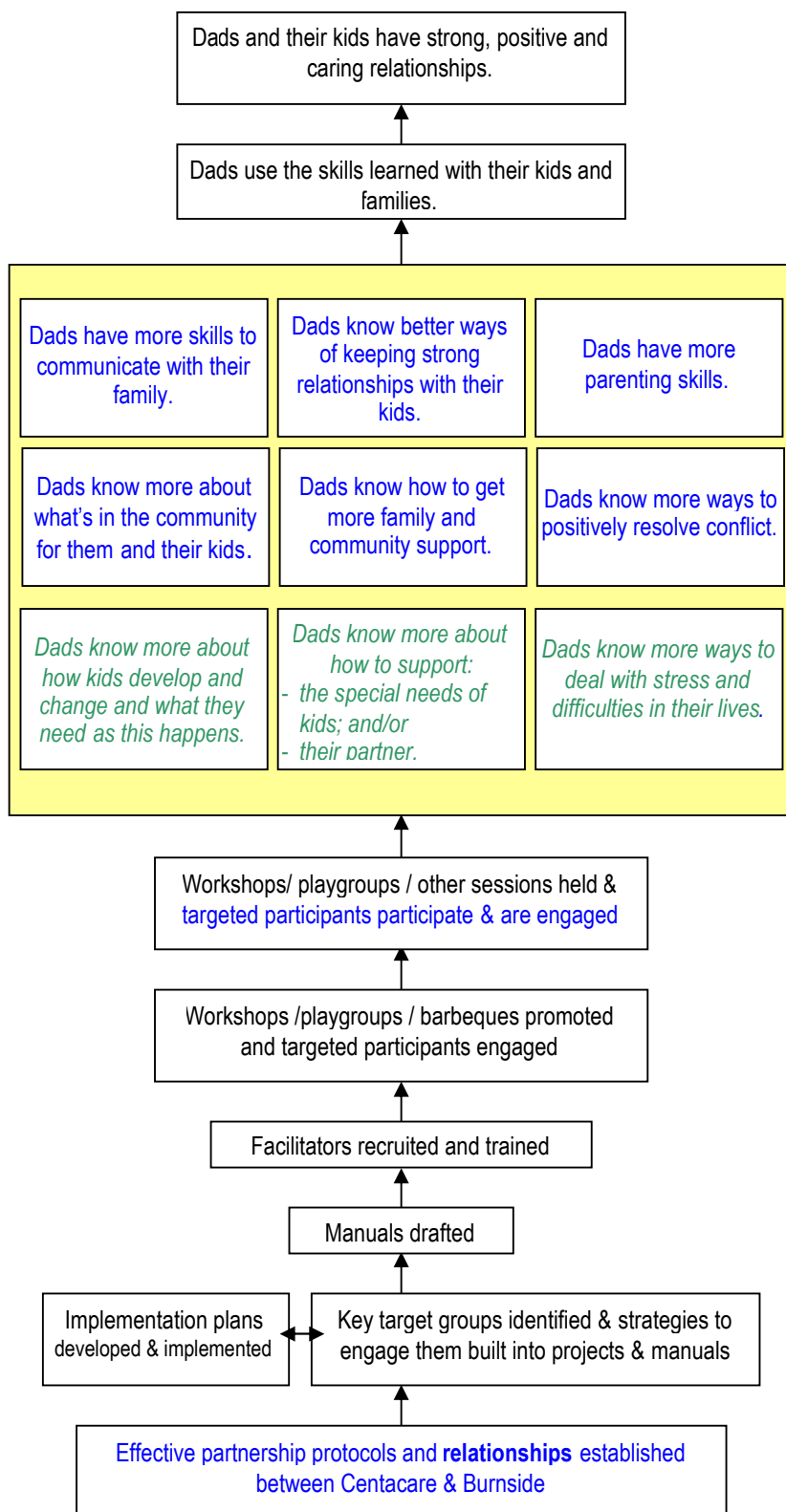
Draft session and titles	Evaluation questions	Possible strategies for facilitators to collect information		
		Main strategy if no literacy issues	Alternative strategies if participants not likely to complete written forms:	
<p>Core questions for all sessions with Dads and kids and/or with Dads only</p>	<p>Do you think this session has increased your parenting skills?</p>	<p>Include the question in the feedback form for the session, with scoring categories to be: No Not sure Yes, a bit Yes, in quite a few ways</p>	<p>At the end of the session, facilitator to distribute a coloured score sheet to each Dad and ask participants to score their reaction to each question in turn, as they are read aloud by the facilitator.</p> <p>Following this, the facilitator will discuss with the group their responses to the other feedback questions, recording group responses in the code sheet supplementary response sheet.</p>	
	<p>Do you think this session will help you to better support your child?</p>	<p>Include the question in the feedback form for the session, with scoring categories to be: No Not sure Yes, a bit Yes, in quite a few ways</p>		
	<p>Can you identify anything you have learnt to-day you want to try this week to help your relationship with your child/children?</p>	<p>Include the question in the feedback form for the session, with scoring categories to be: No Not sure Yes, one strategy Yes, more than one strategy</p>		
<p>Session 1 MAKING CONNECTIONS Introductory session for fathers to connect with each other and explore relevant themes for future workshops</p>	<p>Questions about Dads on enrolment form</p>	<p>All participants complete the enrolment form</p>		
<p>Session 2 MY CHILD AND ME Allows the men to discuss their experiences of hearing about their child's diagnosis and their responses. Stages of grief will be explored. The aim of this session is to allow fathers of express their anxieties and support their families who live with uncertainty.</p>				
<p>Session 3 WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS Focuses on discussing other people who are involved with managing their child's disability. Sharing information about local resources. Communication styles for effective partnerships to be maintained.</p>	<p>Do you now know more ways of getting support from others should you need it?</p> <p>Have you thought of other ways of helping your child outside your home e.g. at school or in the community?</p>	<p>Include the question in the feedback form for the session, with scoring categories to be: No Yes, one Yes, some Yes, lots</p>	<p>At the end of the session, facilitator to distribute a coloured score sheet to each Dad and ask participants to score their reaction to each question in turn, as they are read aloud by the facilitator.</p> <p>Following this, the facilitator will discuss with the group their responses to the other feedback questions, recording group responses in the code sheet supplementary response sheet.</p>	

Draft session and titles	Evaluation questions	Possible strategies for facilitators to collect information		
		Main strategy if no literacy issues	Alternative strategies if participants not likely to complete written forms:	
<p>Table 2 continued..... Session 4 JUGGLING THE NEEDS OF YOUR FAMILY, WORK AND YOUR OWN NEEDS Highlights the range of needs that a father has to manage and ensuring that there is a balance of all of these commitments.</p>				
<p>Session 5 BALANCING THE NEEDS OF OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS Acknowledges the impact of a child’s disability on siblings and other family members. Exploring the ways that fathers can support and talk to these important people. In order to build and maintain strong family relationships, it is important that fathers have the opportunity to reflect on how their child’s disability impacts on brothers and sisters and also other significant family members.</p>	<p>Do you think that this session will help you to communicate more effectively with your family?</p> <p>Do you feel more confident about positively resolving conflict?</p>	<p>Include the question in the feedback form for the session, with scoring categories to be:</p> <p>Not at all • Not sure Yes, a bit Yes, lots</p>	<p>At the end of the session, facilitator to distribute a coloured score sheet to each Dad and ask participants to score their reaction to each question in turn, as they are read aloud by the facilitator.</p>	<p>At the end of the session, ask each participant privately.</p>
<p>Session 6 ADULT RELATIONSHIPS Research tells us that many adult relationships suffer from the stress related to having a child with a disability. This work shop deals with the relationships that fathers are managing and provide strategies to keep them strong and healthy.</p>	<p>Do you think this session will help you better support your partner?</p>	<p>Include the question in the feedback form for the session, with scoring categories to be:</p> <p>No • Not sure Yes, a bit Yes, in quite a few ways</p>	<p>Following this, the facilitator will discuss with the group their responses to the other feedback questions, recording group responses in the code sheet supplementary response sheet.</p>	
<p>Session 7 MANAGING BEHAVIOUR A practical session for fathers to consider the needs of the child and the strategies to deal with their child’s behaviour, which is age appropriate and considerate of their disability.</p>	<p><i>Question moved to be a core question (see above)</i></p>			
<p>Session 8 ENCOURAGING YOUR CHILD’S EMOTIONAL GROWTH In this session fathers are given the opportunity to look at the challenges and limitations that their child may be experiencing in making choices, as well as identifying opportunities to encourage the child’s involvement in the decision making. The session also provides scope for encouraging parents to voice their concerns about the emotional and behavioural reactions of their child with the day-to-day situations they encounter.</p>	<p><i>Question moved to be a core question (see above)</i></p>			

Draft session and titles	Evaluation questions	Possible strategies for facilitators to collect information		
		Main strategy if no literacy issues	Alternative strategies if participants not likely to complete written forms:	
<p>Table 2 continued.....</p> <p>Session 9 BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH PLAY AND FRIENDSHIPS An opportunity for fathers to share ideas about ways that they can encourage their child in their time together through play and the forming of friendships with others. Fathers will have the opportunity to explore the range of emotions that impact on them about their child’s disability. They can find appropriate ways to offer social interaction with other children.</p>	<p><i>Question moved to be a core question (see above)</i></p>			
<p>Session 10 STRESS MANAGEMENT Identifies the impact of stress on daily life and offering practical strategies for fathers to manage their stress. This work shop explores the impact of stress on our body, thought, feelings and actions.</p>	<p>Can you identify anything you have heard to-day which you want to use to reduce the stress in your life?</p>	<p>Include the question in the feedback form for the session, with scoring categories to be: No • Not sure Yes, one strategy Yes, more than one strategy</p>	<p>At the end of the session, facilitator to distribute a coloured score sheet to each Dad and ask participants to score their reaction to each question in turn, as they are read aloud by the facilitator.</p> <p>Following this, the facilitator will discuss with the group their responses to the other feedback questions, recording group responses in the code sheet supplementary response sheet.</p>	<p>At the end of the session, ask each participant privately.</p>
<p>Session 11 FINDING YOUR OWN STRENGTHS AND SOLUTIONS This workshop acknowledges the strengths already shown by fathers in dealing with issues relating to their child. We highlight these strengths and encourage fathers to continue to draw on their strengths to find solutions to new challenges that face them, their child and their family.</p>				
<p>Session 12 FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE This workshop acknowledges the concerns faced by fathers as their child moves towards adolescence. Some young people will be moving towards greater independence whereas others will need more specialised care that might be located outside the home.</p>	<p>Do you think you understand your child’s development and needs better now?</p>	<p>Include the question in the feedback form for the session, with scoring categories to be: Not at all • Not sure Yes, a bit Yes, lots</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>At the end of the session, ask each participant privately.</p>

Facilitators' Evaluation Guide:
ATTACHMENTS

***Attachment A - Facilitators' Evaluation Guide:
Evaluation outcomes hierarchy***



How will each of these items be measured during the course of the evaluation?

- Unlikely to be able to be measured during evaluation.
- Unlikely to be able to be measured during evaluation.
- **Participant feedback** e.g. Participants report increased family communication skills;
- **Participant interviews** e.g. Participants report use of newly acquired family community skills.
- **Facilitator feedback and interview comments** on the content and design of the manuals and on the training's anticipated and observed impact on participants. E.g. Facilitators report they expect the training will result in participants knowing more family communication skills.
- **Focus group discussions** about the achievements of the programs and ideas for improvement.
- **Organisational representative's feedback and interview comments** on the programs, their observed impact and suggestions for improvement.
- **Qualitative comments** from participants, facilitators and other stakeholders re process, manual, sessions, strengths, weaknesses, anticipated outcomes and effectiveness of engagement strategies.
- **Numbers of sessions and participants, by distribution, characteristics, level/frequency of participation** compared to reasonable capacity of programs offered.
- **Numbers of facilitators trained and their characteristics** compared with targeted participants.
- **Qualitative comments from project and organisational representatives about goals** re targeted participants, number of sessions, participation rate etc
- **Qualitative comments from project and organisational representatives** about effectiveness of partnership.

Blue text shows outcomes required for evaluation in evaluation brief;
 Green additional outcomes relevant to both groups; &
 Orange for special need groups only.

***Attachment B - Facilitators' Evaluation Guide:
Feedback following training of facilitators***

Hey, Dad! for fathers with a child with a disability

Feedback on Facilitators' Training.

Your feedback about your training would help us to improve our future training of facilitators as well as the design and content of our *Hey, Dad!* Packages. It would therefore be appreciated if you would answer the following questions and add any other comments you have. If you require more space, use the back of this page.

1. In which **town or suburb** was your training? Date:

2. Overall how would you rate this *Hey, Dad!* facilitator training?
 Very poor Poor OK Good Very Good

3. What parts were most useful for you?
 Working with men
 Engaging men into service delivery.
 Overview of the manual.
 Facilitators delivering a section of the manual.
 Participants trialling delivering sections of the manual.
 Reflection sessions.

4. Overall, what aspects have you found most useful?
 Presentations about the *Hey, Dad!* content.
 Group discussions with other facilitators.
 Trialling facilitation of the material.
 Other

5. What parts of the *Hey, Dad!* package do you think will be of MOST value to the Dads?
 Making connections
 My child and me
 Working in partnership with service providers
 Juggling the needs of your family, work and your own needs
 Balancing the needs of other family members
 Adult relationships
 Managing behaviour
 Encouraging your child's emotional growth
 Building relationships through play and friendships
 Stress management
 Finding your own strengths and solutions
 Focusing on the future

6. What parts of the *Hey, Dad!* package do you think will be of LEAST value to the Dads?
 Making connections
 My child and me
 Working in partnership with service providers
 Juggling the needs of your family, work and your own needs
 Balancing the needs of other family members
 Adult relationships
 Managing behaviour
 Encouraging your child's emotional growth
 Building relationships through play and friendships
 Stress management
 Finding your own strengths and solutions
 Focusing on the future

7. How do you think the *Hey, Dad!* package could be improved?

8. How could we have improved the training for you?

9. Other comments:

PTO.....

10. About you:
- What motivated you to enrol in this facilitation training?

.....

.....

.....

- What facilitation experience and/or training did you have prior to this training?

.....

.....

.....

11. Are you OK for Dianne to ring you to discuss your training and, later, your facilitation of sessions with Dads? No Yes - if yes, please complete the following:

Name: Phone number:

Best time to call? Daytime Evenings Other:

(If you provide your name, your feedback comments will remain confidential. No written or verbal report will be given which would allow others to identify you with your comments. To assist this confidentiality, please put your response in the attached envelope addressed to Dianne.)

Thank you for your comments. They are greatly appreciated!

***Attachment C - Facilitators' Evaluation Guide:
Enrolment Form***

Please note:

- This form has been modified from that in the normal *Hey, Dad!* manual.
- Later in the evaluation information and consent form, it is explained that I would like to receive a copy of this enrolment form.
- But I do not need surname and address details for participants. Therefore, surnames and addresses should be blacked out before I am sent copies of the forms. However, it would be preferred that the postcode is **not** blacked out as this will allow me to analyse the number of participants by area.

Hey, Dad! for fathers with a child with a disability

Enrolment Form

Name Your age

Address

..... Postcode

Phone (day)..... (evening)

How many children do you have? boys girls

What age is the youngest? What age is the eldest?

What is your current relationship status?

- Never married Widowed Divorced
 Separated Married (registered) Living together

My children live with me Full time Part time No contact

Other children live with me Full time Part time No contact

No other children
(eg. step children, foster children)

Who else lives with you?

- Spouse / partner Parents Other relatives Other people

What country were you born in?

Do you identify as: Aboriginal? Torres Strait islander? South Sea islander?

What is the first language you speak?

What is the highest level of education you have obtained?

Are you: Employed? If employed, what is your job?
 Unemployed? Not in the labour force?

What skills and information would you like to gain from this program?

.....

How did you find out about this program?

.....

***Attachment D - Facilitators' Evaluation Guide:
Participant evaluation information & consent form***

Hey, Dad! for fathers with a child with a disability

Evaluation Information.

Hey, Dad! has been going for some time. But this year, we are offering for the first time, this specially developed program for **fathers with children with a disability**. Because it is new, we want to learn from what you think about it. This is so that we can make it as good as we can. Also, the Australian Government department, the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs wants to know what you think about *Hey, Dad!* This Department gave us the money to design and run this program. So they want to know what you think to help them decide whether they will give us any money to deliver the program to more Dads.

Evaluation

We have contracted an independent evaluator, Dianne Beatty, to help us to improve the program. To do this Dianne will be working with us till about May 2007 and she will need information. So:

- you will be asked to complete forms or to answer questions about what you have learnt and what you thought of our program. We will, if you agree, give Dianne either copies of the forms or your answers to our questions.
- Dianne may want to talk to you in more detail about what you thought of the program and how you have used what you learnt. She may do this by meeting with people after program sessions or by ringing people.

We will also, if you agree, give Dianne the information you gave us, when you enrolled for this program **except for** your surname and address, which will be blacked out. Dianne will be given this information, if you agree, so that she can ring you if she needs to. And so that she can work out the general characteristics of those who have been trained. For example, she may write in her final report: "On average, fathers who attended the program had 2 children. Their average age was 3." She will not use your name in the report.

We will **not** give Dianne any other personal information which identifies what you tell us about yourself, your children or your family during program sessions.

By May 2007, Dianne is required to write her report which will incorporate your, and others', suggestions on how we could improve our program. This report will also tell us what you and others think has been achieved through the program. We will provide a summary of what Dianne recommends to all those who have assisted with the evaluation.

Your responses are **CONFIDENTIAL**. Dianne will not identify which people make which comments in her report - unless you want her to do so or you have given her specific permission to do so. Therefore Burnside UnitingCare, Centacare and the Spastic Centre will not be able to identify your responses from those of others. So what you will say will not affect your future support from us.

We would like you to agree to assist Dianne with her evaluation, so that we can improve what we do. If you are happy to help Dianne with the evaluation, please complete the relevant boxes below.

Any questions? If you have any questions about the evaluation or any comments, please ring Dianne on 02 6775 2257 or email her at diannebt@ozemail.com.au. Alternatively, you may want to speak directly to your facilitator about the evaluation. We want to hear any suggestions you may have, or if you have any worries about the program or evaluation.



Willingness to participate in the evaluation

- I would like to participate in the evaluation of this *Hey, Dad!* program.
- I would be happy to get a **phone call** from Dianne to talk about the program- Phone no.
- Best time to call? Daytime Evenings Other:
- I do **not** want to participate in the evaluation. But I will continue to participate in the program.

Permission for us to give your sign on information to Dianne (apart from your address)

- I **give permission** for Dianne to be given my enrolment form, apart from my surname and address.
- I **give permission** for Dianne to be given my enrolment form, apart from my surname, address and:
- I do **not** give permission for Dianne to be given any of my enrolment information.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

**Attachment E - Facilitators' Evaluation Guide:
Feedback and Code Sheet formats**

Note to Facilitators:

It would be greatly appreciated if you could get feedback from participants at the end of each *Hey, Dad!* day – whether this be a Dads and children session, or a Dads only session. (This is because some participants may not attend all session days. And also to give you some feedback on how things are going at the end of each day.)

Three alternative feedback collection options are suggested:

1. A **standard feedback sheet** follows. This can be used when you feel confident that there are no literacy issues for any participants in your group.
2. Alternatively there is a **code sheet format (plus supplementary form** for facilitated group discussions) which you may want to use if you think that some participants may have literacy issues. The idea with this option is that:
 - Each participant will be given the score sheet.
 - The facilitator will then read out each question in turn on the score sheet, indicating which face represents each rating.
 - The participants then tick the box associated with the rating they believe best represents their response.
 - Once the code sheets are completed, the facilitator discusses with the group the questions on the supplementary sheet, using this sheet to record their responses.
3. If neither of the preceding options seems suitable, then it would be good if you could **discuss the questions with the participants** either as a group (or individually if you have a small group and the time and opportunity). Summarise their responses on butcher's paper or via some other suitable method, and send your summary to me.

Preparation for a program day:

Decide which option you will use for your group.

For options 1 and 2, prepare your forms by deleting any sections and related questions which you are not intending to cover as well as the instructions in red. If possible try to get all of the feedback or score sheet onto one page. Then you will need to print / photocopy the required number of feedback or score sheets for the day.

For option 3, decide which questions need not be asked in your discussion (as you are not intending to cover the sections to which they relate).

Hey, Dad! for fathers with a child with a disability

Participant's Feedback.

Your feedback about to-day would help us to improve future sessions. It would therefore be appreciated if you would tick the boxes which seem to answer the following questions best for you and add any other comments you have. If you need more space, please write on the back of this page.

1. Overall how would you rate what we **talked** about to-day?

Very poor Poor OK Good Very Good Don't know

2. How would you rate how to-day was **run**?

Very poor Poor OK Good Very Good Don't know

3. Do you think what was discussed to-day will improve your **parenting skills**?

No Not sure Yes, a bit Yes, in quite a few ways

4. Do you think what was discussed to-day will help you to **better support your child**?

No Not sure Yes, a bit Yes, in quite a few ways

5. Can you identify anything you have learnt to-day you want to try this week **to help your relationship with your child/children**?

No Not sure Yes, one strategy Yes, more than one

Strategy

6. What parts of to-day were **most useful** for you? (*FACILITATORS: Delete any sessions not covered to-day*)

- Making connections
- My child and me
- Working in partnership with service providers
- Juggling the needs of your family, work and your own needs
- Balancing the needs of other family members
- Adult relationships
- Managing behaviour
- Encouraging your child's emotional growth
- Building relationships through play and friendships
- Stress management
- Finding your own strengths and solutions
- Focusing on the future

(*FACILITATORS: Delete session specific evaluation questions NOT relevant to the sessions covered to-day*)

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS:

7. Do you know more ways of getting support from others should you need it?

No Yes, one Yes, some Yes, lots

8. Have you thought of other ways of helping your child outside your home e.g. at school or in the community?

No Yes, one Yes, some Yes, lots

BALANCING THE NEEDS OF OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS:

9. *Do you think that this session will help you to communicate more effectively with your family?*

- No, not at all Not sure Yes, a bit Yes, lots

10. *Do you think you might feel more confident about positively resolving conflict?*

- No, not at all Not sure Yes, a bit Yes, lots

ADULT RELATIONSHIPS:

11. *Do you think this session will help you better support your partner?*

- No Not sure Yes, a bit Yes, in quite a few ways

STRESS MANAGEMENT:

12. *Can you identify anything you have heard to-day which you want to use to reduce the stress in your life?*

- No Not sure Yes, one strategy Yes, more than one strategy

FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE:

13. *Do you think you understand your child's development and needs better now?*

- Not at all Not sure Yes, a bit Yes, lots

14. *How could we have improved to-day for you?*

.....

.....

.....

15. *Other comments:*

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for your comments. They are greatly appreciated!

Hey, Dad! for fathers with a child with a disability

Participant's Scoresheet.

1. Overall how would you rate what we *talked* about to-day?

 Very poor
  Poor
  OK
  Good
  Very Good
  Don't know





2. How would you rate how to-day was *run*?

 Very poor
  Poor
  OK
  Good
  Very Good
  Don't know

3. Do you think what was discussed to-day will improve your parenting skills?

 No
  Not sure
  Yes, a bit
  Yes, in quite a few ways

4. Do you think what was discussed to-day will help you to *better support* your child?

 No
  Not sure
  Yes, a bit
  Yes, in quite a few ways




5. Can you identify anything you have learnt to-day you want to try this week to help your relationship with your child/children?

 No
  Not sure
  Yes, one strategy
  Yes, more than one strategy


(FACILITATORS: Delete the evaluation questions below NOT relevant to the sessions covered to-day - see Table 2).

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS:

6. Do you know more ways of getting support from others should you need it?


 No
  Yes, one
  Yes, some
  Yes, lots


7. Have you thought of other ways of helping your child outside your home *e.g. at school or in the community?*


 No
  Yes, one
  Yes, some
  Yes, lots

BALANCING THE NEEDS OF OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS:

8. *Do you think that this session will help you to communicate more effectively with your family?*


 No, not at all


 Not sure


 Yes, a bit

 Yes, lots

9. *Do you think that you might feel more confident about positively resolving conflict?*

 No, not at all

 Not sure


 Yes, a bit

 Yes, lots

ADULT RELATIONSHIPS:

10. *Do you think this session will help you better support your partner?*

 No

 Not sure


 Yes, a bit

 Yes, in quite a few ways

STRESS MANAGEMENT:

11. *Can you identify anything you have heard to-day which you want to use to reduce the stress in your life?*

 No

 Not sure


 Yes, one strategy


 Yes, more than one strategy

FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE:

12. *Do you think you understand your child's development and needs better now?*

 Not at all

 Not sure

 Yes, a bit

 Yes, lots

Thank you for your comments. They are greatly appreciated!

Hey, Dad! for fathers with a child with a disability

SUPPLEMENTARY RESPONSE SHEET TO SCORESHEET:

TO BE COMPLETED BY FACILITATOR, IF YOU USED THE SCORESHEET OPTION, TO RECORD GROUP DISCUSSION OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- What parts of to-day were most useful for each of the group members?

	Number of participants identifying this section as most useful to them.
<i>FACILITATORS: Delete/ cross out sections not covered to-day....</i>	
Making connections	
My child and me	
Working in partnership with service providers	
Juggling the needs of your family, work and your own needs	
Balancing the needs of other family members	
Adult relationships	
Managing behaviour	
Encouraging your child's emotional growth	
Building relationships through play and friendships	
Stress management	
Finding your own strengths and solutions	
Focusing on the future	
Total number of participants:	

- How could we have improved to-day for you?

Comments:	Number of participants agreeing

- Other comments:

Please use the back of this page if you need more space....

Thanks for your help... Dianne

***Attachment F - Facilitators' Evaluation Guide:
Facilitator feedback following sessions with Dads***

Hey, Dad! for fathers with a child with a disability
Facilitators Feedback on Sessions with Dads.

Your feedback about to-day's session with Dads would help us to improve our Hey, Dad! packages. Your answers to the following questions would therefore be appreciated. If you need more space, please attach an extra page.

1. In which **town or suburb** was the program? **Date** of program:
2. How many Dads (Uncles or Pops) participated?
3. What parts of the *Hey, Dad!* package did you **include** to-day?
 - An activities / playgroup session with Dads and their children
 - Making connections
 - My child and me
 - Working in partnership with service providers
 - Juggling the needs of your family, work and your own needs
 - Balancing the needs of other family members
 - Adult relationships
 - Managing behaviour
 - Encouraging your child's emotional growth
 - Building relationships through play and friendships
 - Stress management
 - Finding your own strengths and solutions
 - Focusing on the future
4. **Overall** how do you think the day's sessions went?
 - Very poorly Poorly OK Well Very Well
5. What parts of the *Hey, Dad!* package do you think were of **MOST value** to the Dads?
 - Activities / playgroup session with Dads and their children
 - Making connections
 - My child and me
 - Working in partnership with service providers
 - Juggling the needs of your family, work and your own needs
 - Balancing the needs of other family members
 - Adult relationships
 - Managing behaviour
 - Encouraging your child's emotional growth
 - Building relationships through play and friendships
 - Stress management
 - Finding your own strengths and solutions
 - Focusing on the future
6. What parts of the *Hey, Dad!* package do you think were of **LEAST value** to the Dads?
 - Activities / playgroup session with Dads and their children
 - Making connections
 - My child and me
 - Working in partnership with service providers
 - Juggling the needs of your family, work and your own needs
 - Balancing the needs of other family members
 - Adult relationships
 - Managing behaviour
 - Encouraging your child's emotional growth
 - Building relationships through play and friendships
 - Stress management
 - Finding your own strengths and solutions
 - Focusing on the future

Appendix D: Facilitator Training Flyer



Burnside TRAINING PROGRAM

Hey, Dad! for fathers who have child with a disability Facilitator Training Workshop

New pilot program!!!!

To be launched in June 2007

EARLY INTERVENTION SPECIALISTS

Hey, Dad for fathers who have a child with a disability program is a new addition to the *Hey Dad* series of programs and is being developed in partnership between Burnside, Centacare Broken Bay and The Spastic Centre and Lifestart with funding from FaCSIA.

This training supports facilitators to target dads who have a child with a disability, and provide Dads and Kids Playgroups and a Dads' Workshops in either a three or five hour format. The training provides a suggested program and resources for workers to facilitate both types of groups. Themes explored in the Dads' Workshops include:

- working in partnership with service providers
- juggling the needs of your family, work and your own needs
- balancing the needs of other family members
- encouraging your child's emotional growth
- focusing on the future

FREE TRAINING!

The program will help organisations that support families who have children with disabilities, to involve fathers more easily into their service. When both workshops are provided once per school term, the manual provides enough resources to deliver an 18-month program.

Who can attend this training?

- Professionals who have group work experience and are currently employed to work with families where there are children with disabilities
- Their organisation needs to support the facilitator's attendance at the two day's free training in Sydney and to facilitate a pilot *Hey Dad* Program in their own area (which involves providing a two hour Dads and Kids Playgroup and a five hour Dads' Workshop). It is anticipated that these events will occur on weekends
- The facilitator needs to have an interest in supporting dads who have children with disabilities

For more information, ring Andrew King on 0412 404 577

Dates	Location
Tuesday and Wednesday 6, 7 February 2007 from 9am to 5.00pm (lunch provided)	Cumbræ, 7 Blackwood Place, Oatlands/North Parramatta, Sydney

Trainers: Andrew King and Paul Mavromatis

Andrew is the UnitingCare Burnside Training Manager based in NSW. He is a specialist trainer in group work and trains professionals throughout Australia in 'working with men'. Paul is employed by The Spastic Centre and provides group work, mentoring and support to programs who work with families that have a child with a disability.

Cost: This course would normally cost \$400 but is free of charge (See the conditions on the following page)
Free accommodation is provided for regional workers

To register: To register your interest and be part of this pilot program, complete the application form on the following page and fax to Maureen Micallef on 02 0630 0664 or phone Burnside on 02 9766 6811 or email mmicallef@burnside.org.au
Closing date for applications is 1 December 2006





HEY DAD! FOR FATHERS WHO HAVE A CHILD WITH A DISABILITY FACILITATOR TRAINING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST APPLICATION

*Fax this expression of interest application to:
Burnside Training Program Fax: 02 9630 0664*

Date of Course: Tuesday and Wednesday 6, 7 February 2007
Course Location: Cumbrae, 7 Blackwood Place, North Parramatta, Sydney

Name 1: Male Female

Name 2: Male Female

Organisation:

Postal Address:

Suburb/Town:

Post Code

Daytime Phone Number:

E-mail

(necessary for workshop/course confirmations)

What the training and pilot program provides:

- 2 days FREE training for group workers to facilitate the Hey, Dad for fathers who have a child with a disability program
- two nights FREE accommodation for regional workers (UTC Campus)
- Opportunity to be part of this exciting pilot and evaluation of a leading edge program for families who have children with disabilities
- Ongoing phone or email support for facilitators as they deliver the program in 2007
- Training for female and male workers to work effectively with dads
- The trainers are happy to discuss this project and what is required with any potential facilitator or organisation – Ring Andrew King on 0412 404 577
- Facilitators will receive a draft version of the program in February and will receive a final version of the program in June 2007 at the completion of the project

Please tick if you can achieve the following requirements to attend this training?

- The facilitators have group work experience and are currently employed to work with families where there are children with disabilities
- The organisation where the facilitators are employed supports their attendance at the training and for piloting and the external evaluation of the program in their program
- The facilitators have an interest in supporting dads who have children with disabilities
- Two facilitators from each organisation are encouraged to attend this free training. A co-facilitator for sole workers can be arranged if this is not possible
- Within six weeks of the completion of the training, the facilitators are required to facilitate the Hey Dad Program (which involves providing a two hour Dads and Kids Playgroup and a five hour Dads' Workshop) in their own organisation. It is anticipated that these events will occur on weekends
- The facilitator will distribute an evaluation forms and provide feedback to an independent evaluator of the program
- A promotional package will be provided to facilitators to allow them to start promoting the Hey Dad program that will occur in February/ March 2007

Closing date for expression of interest applications is 1 December 2006

The facilitators agree that the above requirements are met.

Signature:

Appendix E: Facilitator Training Outline

Day 1

9.00am BOTH ANDREW ANDREW	Housekeeping & introduction of participants Trainer introductions Overview of 2-days Breaks/toilets etc Emphasise – no such thing as a stupid question Importance of relationship in engaging men
9.20am PAUL	Continuums: Work with a lot of men/ not many men Name – types of programs represented in room Working with men is easy/working with men is difficult (Talk in pairs – challenges for men in accessing programs) Feedback Working with men is different to working with women? Talk in pairs to feedback back to whole group Before people return to their seats, ask “What is the most important thing you to gain from these two days?”
9.45am PAUL	Feedback from last question and record on butcher’s paper - what people would like to gain from the day
10.00am ANDREW	Overview of pre-reading reading material OH’s (2-5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assumptions ▪ Principles ▪ Emphasise that working with men is all about relationships
10.30am	Morning tea break
10.50am PAUL	Small group discussions: Challenges in working with men in a variety of settings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Group 1 - What makes programs effective in working with men? ● Group 2 - Challenges men experience when they have a child with a disability ● Group 3 – Important issues to remember when working with families who have a child with a disability ● Group 4 - Skills used to work effectively with men

11.30am	<p>Engaging men into service delivery Feedback from Group 1 What makes programs effective in working with men?</p> <p>Emphasise the key issue is the point of engagement: Discuss - What does engagement mean in working with men? Discuss strengths based approaches in working with men OH. How does this position help you to engage men in a group. Choose a strength card that represents how you see men view themselves and their family relationships. People share in pairs and some feedback to whole group. Closing question: Ask the participants – imagine that they working with men is all about relationships – what would they be doing more of? OH8</p>
12.15pm ANDREW	<p>Typical family system around men Discussion: Factors influencing father's lives How to target programs to men (overcoming barriers) Brainstorm list of best barriers in working with men</p>
1.00pm	Lunch
1.45pm PAUL	<p>Feedback from Group 2 & 3 Discuss challenges men and families experience when they have a child with a disability. Connect the feedback with issues seen in the sculpture.</p>
2.30pm ANDREW	<p>Feedback from Group 4 - Skills used to work effectively with men OH10 Overview of engagement triangle – Discuss skills used when working with men</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Honesty ▪ Relevance ▪ Faith Building
3.15pm PAUL PAUL ANDREW PAUL	<p>Overview of Hey, Dad for fathers who have a child with a disability Manual OH11-12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Kids and Dads Activity Workshop Sessions • Overview of Dads' Workshop Sessions • Overview of evaluation process <p>Divide into nine groups to look at nine specific sessions of the Dads Workshop manual – include with quick break</p>
4.15pm ANDREW	<p>Ask for 4 pairs of co facilitators to facilitate a section of the manual on day 2 Discuss in pairs – what has been important out of today Stand in large circle and share some of these reflections</p>
4.30pm	Close and brief co facilitators

Day 2

9.00am	Welcome, review of day 1 and reflections Introduction of Di Beatty Continuum – How is your goal being achieved? (Ask people to talk in pairs regarding on how goal is being achieved and what we need to do more of or change)
9.30am	Session facilitated by Andrew and Paul – section of Session 1 (TBD)
10.40am	Morning tea break
11.00am	Session 1 (30 minutes) facilitated by leaders 1&2 – section of manual to be determined with half the group as observers in a fish bowl and reflective discussion facilitated by Andrew and Paul
Noon	Session 2 (30 minutes) facilitated by leaders 3&4 – section of manual to be determined with half the group as observers in a fish bowl and reflective discussion facilitated by Andrew and Paul
1.00pm	Lunch
1.45pm	Session 3 (30 minutes) facilitated by leaders 5&6 – section of manual to be determined with half the group as observers in a fish bowl and reflective discussion facilitated by Andrew and Paul
2.45pm	Session 4 (30 minutes) facilitated by leaders 7&8 – section of manual to be determined with half the group as observers in a fish bowl and reflective discussion facilitated by Andrew and Paul
3.30pm	Closure for two days – Reflect on learning goals, ongoing support
3.45pm	Focus group discussion – Di Beatty
4.30pm	Close

Group 1 - What makes programs effective in working with men?

Group 2 - Challenges men experience when they have a child with a disability

Group 3 – Important issues to remember when working with families who have a child with a disability

Group 4 - Skills used to work effectively with men

Appendix F: References

Harrison J, Henderson M & Leonard R 2007. *Different Dads – Fathers' Stories of Parenting Disabled Children*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London and Philadelphia

Johnson J & Kerr P 2002. *Hey, Dad! A parenting education program for men*. Updated 4th edition. Centacare Catholic Family Services, Diocese of Broken Bay (Centacare Broken Bay), Sydney

King A & Coleman A 2007. *Hey, Dad! for Fathers who have a Child with a Disability. A parenting program for men*. Final draft. UnitingCare Burnside, Centacare Broken Bay, The Spastic Centre & Lifestart, Sydney

King A, Slocombe L, Fletcher R, Clugston H, McKenzie P, Chudleigh A & Kerr P 2002. *Hey, Dad! for Separated Fathers. A parenting education program for men*. Centacare Broken Bay & UnitingCare Burnside, Sydney

Sharp N, Hooke K, Coles D and Mavromatis P 2006. *Hey Dad! For Fathers of Children with Special Needs – The scope of existing research and programs*. The Cerebral Palsy Institute, Sydney.