

Meet Jessica: A road trip around NSW

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Meet Jessica Report

The School-Link team at the Children's Hospital at Westmead travelled across NSW to engage a discussion about the mental health of children and adolescents with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) in mainstream settings.

In 2014, there were 8000 students in the public school system in NSW with a confirmed diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and approximately 15,000 students with an intellectual disability (DEC, 2014). Previous research has suggested that up to 40.7% of these children and young people experience mental health problems or disorders (Einfeld and Tonge, 2006).

An increasing number of students with a disability are attending regular classes in mainstream school settings. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) report that 65.9% of children with a disability attended regular classes in mainstream schools, compared to 24.3% who attend special classes within mainstream schools and 9.9% who attend special schools. These figures are consistent for students with mild intellectual disability and/or ASD.

This has seen a growing need to modify existing programs and environments to include all students from a variety of disabilities and mental health capacities. The School-Link team from the Children's Hospital at

Westmead presented a two hour workshop in every Local Health District (LHD) across NSW in term 3 & 4 of 2015. This included a short animation written in collaboration with the Department of Education, NSW Public Schools and the Statewide Behaviour Intervention Service, Clinical Innovation and Governance, Ageing Disability and Home Care, Department of Family and Community Services, about a student in a school setting. The animation titled meet Jessica was then used to initiate further discussion, reflection and learning amongst participants. The animation was supported by a PowerPoint presentation and activities.

The CHW animation workshop aimed to further assist primary and secondary school staff:

- to understand that students with an intellectual or developmental disability (IDD) are more likely have additional mental health problems and challenging behaviours.
- to identify students within their classroom who may need help (what to notice).
- to build on existing strategies for supporting students in the classroom.
- to know where to direct students who need additional assistance.



Bandaged Bear on the road in Broken Hill, NSW



The Three Sisters, Blue Mountains, NSW

“Amazing collaboration and shared learning processes with participants”

The workshop and resources were presented as a train the trainer session to enable participants to replicate the session back in their schools and workplace settings to share the awareness of mental health and IDD for children and adolescents. The resource pack is now available on the School-Link website www.schoolink.chw.edu.au.

Key Outcomes

Key outcomes of the animation road show included 1200 registrations from participants across NSW comprising of:

- 28 workshops across all NSW Local Health Districts
- 380 schools
- 50 NGOs
- Several ADHC and CAMHS staff
- A participant informed package that discusses mental health and intellectual and developmental disability of children and young people
- 2016 cross sector collaboration mental health matters award recipient

ent as awarded by the Mental Health Association of NSW

There were some tremendous lessons learnt from organising and implementing such a detailed road show. There was amazing collaboration and shared learning processes both logistically and with participants.

- Various levels of knowledge amongst participants
- Scarcity of services in regional and remote areas
- NSW is a beautiful and diverse state

Future Directions

Now that the presentation and script and implementation resources are available, we hope that there will be an exponential impact in the number of people who will see the Meet Jessica animation and use the pack-



Street Art in Lismore, NSW

age for useful discussion with colleagues.

The animation presentation and accompanying resources are now available at www.schoolink.chw.edu.au/workshop-resources/

Acknowledgements:

The animation and road show was a collaborative process that took much effort from many agencies and colleagues, the Children's Hospital at Westmead School-Link team would like to thank:

- Statewide Behaviour Intervention Service, Clinical Innovation and Governance, Ageing Disability and Home Care, Department of Family and Communities
- NSW Department of Education
- NSW School-Link Coordinators
- Workshop Venues
- MHCYP



Bandaged Bear on the road to Gundagai, canola fields, NSW



Bandaged Bear with Jodie Caruana, School-Link Coordinator, Blast Furnace Park, Lithgow NSW



Bandaged Bear at the Big Golden Guitar in Tamworth NSW

The beautiful artworks in this journal are taken from the participants of the **Operation Art project** at the Children's Hospital at Westmead. You can find out more at <https://www.artsunit.nsw.edu.au/visual-arts/operation-art-2014>

contact us...

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