

WORDS FOR WELLBEING: A REGIONAL PROGRAM FOR CONSUMER HEALTH LITERACY

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Kim has been a Health Sciences Librarian since 2006. She had a previous career as a Primary School Teacher and teacher-librarian for 15 years. She is based at Redland Hospital, Cleveland, Queensland and supplies library services to the Bayside Health Service. Kim has a passion for education and health literacy. As well as providing library services to the Bayside Health Service staff, she is a member of several clinical education, research and health literacy committees. She initiated the Words for Wellbeing program into Redland Hospital.

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What is 'Words for Wellbeing'

'Words for Wellbeing' is a self-help mental health and physical health literacy project, that is run as a collaboration between health professionals and the local public libraries. The program provides people in the Redland City Council (RCC) area with useful, evidence-based library resources that have been recommended by health professionals to improve their mental and physical health and wellbeing rather than just relying on Google's search results.

There is good evidence from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) www.nice.org.uk that self-help books can help people understand and manage common conditions, including depression and anxiety. This is sometimes referred to a 'bibliotherapy', "*Bibliotherapy commonly refers to the use of literature to help people deal with psychological, social and emotional problems*".^[1] There is a wealth of evidence to show that prescribing such books does work, with research published in *Plos One* in 2013 showing that people who used them over a year had measurably lower levels of depression.^[2] Although books can sometimes work on their own, research has shown that self-help approaches work best when there is support from a health professional.

History of Words for Wellbeing



Professor Neil Frude who first developed 'Books on Prescription'

In 2003 a program called *Books on Prescription* was first developed in Cardiff, Wales by Professor Neil Frude, a clinical psychologist. He developed a recommended reading list of mental health books and piloted a partnership with Cardiff Libraries. Neil Frude said "The doctors are already there; the books are already there and so are the libraries. It just needed joining them up" ^[3]. Variations of the program have spread across the world. In 2011 the 'Books on Prescription' program was implemented in New Zealand by WellSouth. This program focused on mental health. A national scheme for England, 'Reading Well', based on Dr Frude's program, was launched in England in 2013 and is delivered by the Reading Agency. It only focuses on mental health and

dementia.

History within Australia

In 2011 *Books on Prescription* was launched in Western Australia (Broome, Derby, Kununurra), a collaboration between Boab Health Services and the Kimberly Public Libraries.

In May 2016, the *Books on Prescription* initiative was launched at several public libraries across Central and Far Western NSW in collaboration with the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health.

History within Queensland Health

In mid-2016, the hospital librarian and the Consumer Engagement Officer at Ipswich Hospital heard about the *Books on Prescription* program and decided to adapt and implement it across West Moreton Hospital and Health Service. They partnered with the 4 regional councils to implement the program (Ipswich, Lockyer Valley, Somerset, and Scenic Rim). They called the model, '*Words for Wellbeing*' which is based on the same principle and experience of the *Books on Prescription* initiative and modified for the Australian environment.

Where the *Books on Prescription* model has been focused on mental health, *Words for Wellbeing* caters to both mental and physical health. The [Ipswich collaborative developed two lists](#); one regarding mental health and one for physical health conditions. They had health professionals at Ipswich Hospital evaluate the books.

How did Redland Hospital get involved?

In November 2016 the Ipswich Hospital Library Manager presented the program at the QLD Health Librarians annual conference. As the Redland Hospital Medical Librarian, I was looking for a consumer health literacy strategy that we could implement through the Redland City Council. Metro South Hospital and Health Service (HHS) had just embarked upon Planetree accreditation and all departments/areas were being asked about their service and how it related to person-centred care.

In March 2017 I contacted the Redland City Council (RCC) Public Library. They had already heard about the program and were immediately on board. They had been looking for a health agency to partner with. Over 6 months, we met on several occasions and organised the implementation of the program. The organising group involved the RCC Acquisitions librarian, the RCC Library Web Developer, the RCC Community Programs Project Officer, the Redland/Logan Hospitals Consumer Liaison Officer and the Redland Hospital Librarian. Ipswich City Council Public Library was happy to share the Words for Wellbeing templates that they had already created. The RCC Public Library bought all the books, placed Words for Wellbeing stickers on them, created and printed the marketing materials and designed the Words for Wellbeing web pages on the [public library website](#).

'Words for Wellbeing' was officially launched in the Redland Hospital main foyer on 30th November 2017.



Launch day for 'Words for Wellbeing'



What did I need from Redland Hospital staff?

- **Awareness.** I needed the department teams to know about the program. To achieve this I attended meetings with clinicians and education sessions to talk about Words for Wellbeing.
- **Recommend the program.** Hospital teams are time poor and often don't have time to 'tick and flick' a paper-based 'book prescription' so we asked clinicians to verbally tell patients about the program.
- **To be proactive.** The Public Library needs the recommendations from health professionals at the hospital for Words for Wellbeing. I asked staff to send through their suggestions for consumer health books that they would like on the list.
- **Evaluation help.** I asked the Clinical Directors for a couple of motivated health professionals from mental health and other departments to volunteer to evaluate books as needed.

Staff also made suggestions to improve the program. For example the Mental Health team asked if there were any Words for Wellbeing books available as eBooks as some mental health patients might not be able to get there or some would be incapable of returning a book. Another Director wanted to know if any were available as audio books for indigenous patients and patients with low literacy. I fed these suggestions back to RCC libraries and now they also look to see if the recommended titles are available as eBooks and audio.

Promoting the Program - Public Library Initiatives

An important step in the program was to take awareness of the program out to the local community. An article on Words for Wellbeing was placed in the Council's '[Our Redlands](#)' magazine that was letterbox dropped to each house in Redland City at the end of February 2018.



Promoting the Program – Redland Hospital Initiatives

The Hospital Librarian became a proactive member of other health consumer networks to expand and gather ideas for the program such as the Redland Hospital Consumer Partnership Committee, and the local community Redland Dementia Alliance (RDA). The program was presented to multiple departments, especially in Allied Health. There were many recommendations for books received from Dietetics, Occupational Therapy, and Social Work. The program was also promoted in the hospital newsletter.

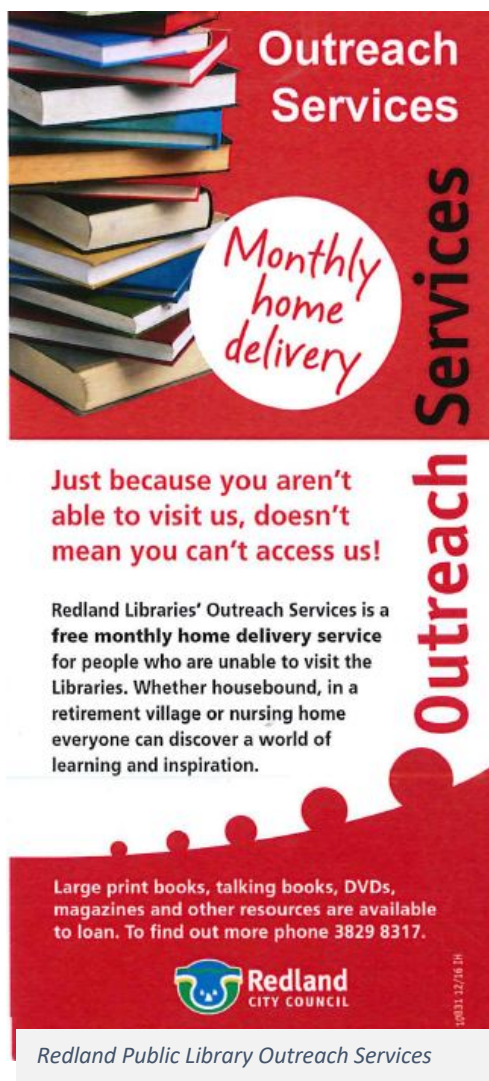
How does it work for the hospital and public libraries?

1. The hospital library promotes the program to departments and gathers recommendations. Each department/team allocates a Words for Wellbeing person to liaise with the librarian.
2. The hospital librarian reviews the recommendations (e.g. checks for new editions or a title change). The hospital librarian sends the recommendations to the liaison at the local public library such as the acquisitions librarian or the adult program librarian.

3. The public librarians also do a quick evaluation. They check their catalogue, if they already have the book, they add it to the Words for Wellbeing website and put a Words for Wellbeing sticker physically on the book. If they don't have the book, they order it.
4. Regular meetings are scheduled between both libraries. As the program starts to run on 'auto', meetings may only need to be held twice a year.

How does it work for the consumer?

In a busy hospital environment, it is easier for staff to just provide a verbal recommendation. A health service centre or a GP clinic is probably in a better situation

A red and white poster for Redland Public Library Outreach Services. The top left features a stack of books. The text 'Outreach Services' is in large white letters on a red background. A circular graphic with a red border contains the text 'Monthly home delivery' in a handwritten style. Below this, the text 'Just because you aren't able to visit us, doesn't mean you can't access us!' is written in red. Further down, a paragraph describes the service: 'Redland Libraries' Outreach Services is a free monthly home delivery service for people who are unable to visit the Libraries. Whether housebound, in a retirement village or nursing home everyone can discover a world of learning and inspiration.' At the bottom, it says 'Large print books, talking books, DVDs, magazines and other resources are available to loan. To find out more phone 3829 8317.' The Redland City Council logo is at the bottom left, and the text 'Redland Public Library Outreach Services' is at the bottom. A vertical date stamp '15/03/12/14 JH' is on the right side.

Outreach Services

Monthly home delivery

Outreach Services

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Redland
CITY COUNCIL

Redland Public Library Outreach Services

15/03/12/14 JH

to provide a brochure of the program.

The patient goes to their local public library (in Redland City Council there are 3 mainland branches; Cleveland, Capalaba and Victoria Point and 4 remote libraries located on nearby islands) and borrows the books for free. If they are not available, the librarians can reserve the items for the person. Free reservations are available in most libraries.

The books in the library can be easily identified on the shelf with a *Words for Wellbeing* sticker. The public librarians know about the program and can help consumers find the Words for Wellbeing books on the shelves.

They can also search for the program and the books online on the Redland Public Library website through the Words for Wellbeing catalogue. If a consumer is too sick or frail or unable to leave their house the Redland City Council Library has a Mobile library service (van) that can come to their house and deliver books. This is also a nice social aspect for those who live alone (it is a literary meal on wheels!)

Desired outcome – improved health literacy!

In a perfect world, the patient reads the book, thinks about what they could do to improve their health based on health professional advice and further information gained via reading the book. The patient is then empowered to make changes with the support of their health professional. The patient also has a better understanding of their relevant condition and improved health literacy. It may also enable them to have a better conversation with their health

professionals about their condition and ask important questions about their health and management.

Benefits to the Consumer

- **Joining a local public library:** It's quick and easy for consumers to join their local library.
- **Privacy and Confidentiality:** Library book loans and borrower details are treated as strictly confidential.
- **There is no cost!** It's free, and the library is air-conditioned and has a café!
- **Links to other support programs:** Home visits, senior groups, language literacy support (migrants), companion programs in community groups, book clubs, First Five (young and/or new mums), introduction to computers, and so much more! Hopefully these groups also help them on their own 'wellness plan'.

Benefits of the program for the Hospital

- The council buys the books on our recommendations. So, there is no cost to the hospital.
- The council manages and updates the website.
- It helps the hospital with accreditation, Standard 2: Partnering with Consumers (every department/team/individual that participates can put it in their accreditation activities/outcomes) ^[4]
- Improves the value and visibility of the hospital library. Especially regarding accreditation and standard 2 ^[4]
- It meets and aligns with the Metro South HHS Planetree program objectives (person centred care), especially component 3 ^[5]
- It is a health promotion strategy
- It is a health literacy initiative
- Some patients will increase their health literacy and make changes, thus fewer visits to hospital.

Benefits of the program for the council public libraries

- It meets their community literacy objectives
- It encourages more people to join and use their local public library.

- Staff and patients at the hospital become more aware of the public library as a useful service and resource. For example, the public library program, [First Five](#), brochures are now in the Women & Birthing packs and are available in the antenatal waiting room. And a slide about the program has been added to the Women & Birthing slideshow that plays on the TV in the antenatal waiting room.
- Visiting the public library might encourage people to use the other reading options to help them feel better: novels, magazines, poetry and book club groups.

Evaluation of the program

The Redland Hospital Library and Redland City Council Public Libraries have not formally evaluated the program yet, but statistics on the book usage are available on request from the council libraries. Ipswich and Townsville Hospital Libraries have also not formally evaluated the program.

So, while we can't be formally sure the books are making a difference, I refer people to the Reading Well Books on Prescription evaluations that are done every year.

Other evaluations on the program

- In NSW, Central West Libraries are working with the University of Newcastle's Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health in researching the effectiveness of their [Books on Prescription program](#).
- In 2014 WellSouth in New Zealand conducted its own research to evaluate various aspects of their [local scheme](#).
- The [Reading Well](#) Books on Prescription program has undergone and released an independent evaluation each year since its launch in 2013.

Spreading the word and expanding the program within QLD

On the 15th June 2018 Redland City Council librarian Monique Whitewood and I were invited to talk about the program to the 2018 Health Consumers QLD Forum in

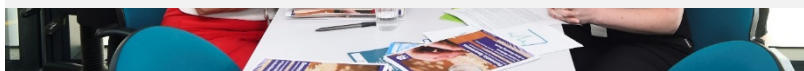


RCC Public librarian Monique Whitewood and Kim Meers at the Health Consumers Queensland Forum

Brisbane. This generated interest from staff attending from Townsville HHS, who later approached us for more information. On the 15th February 2019 I was invited to Townsville to present the program to staff from Townsville Hospital and Townsville City Council. They decided to go ahead with the program. They launched the program in July 2019



Townsville 'Words for Wellbeing' team with Kim Meers, Redland Hospital Librarian





Townsville Hospital and Health Board Chair Tony Mooney and Mayor of Townsville Cr Jenny Hill with books from the collection

Issues

- Despite my efforts I did not receive enough recommendations from the doctors and nurses in the hospital. Mainly due to them being so busy with their clinical work. We are hoping we can get some more doctors and nurses from the community involved such as GP's and community and child health nurses.
- I found the Mental Health and Allied Health departments (social work, speech therapists, dietitians, physiotherapists, psychologists and occupational therapists, etc.) were interested in helping with the program since a lot of them work in rehabilitation and counselling roles and already use books with patients. I have therefore been liaising with them in a larger capacity. One thing I have found useful is to ask each department to appoint a member of staff to be their Words for Wellbeing liaison. That person oversees gathering the recommendations from their team into one list and sending it to the library.
- I found the staff and my liaisons at the public library changed a few times within the two years, which involves scheduling a meeting either in person or by phone to get the new staff member up to speed on how the program operates and their role in the program. This is also the case with the hospital departments' Words for Wellbeing liaison.

Collaboration

We now have 3 Queensland public hospital libraries partaking in the program, Redlands, Ipswich and Townsville. We have found it helpful to create a shared folder that we can each put our recommendations into. As receiving regular

recommendations from busy health professionals can be an issue, by sharing the recommendations with each other, it triples the recommendations that we can send on to our respective public libraries.

Last Word

For any health librarian thinking about implementing the project it has proven so far to work well with small to medium hospitals and city councils as you can build a relationship and rapport between two library services. It has not been attempted in QLD with a large hospital and city council such as Brisbane City Council. Once the program is up and running it is not too difficult or time consuming to manage. The most difficult part is the setting up and promotion. I would allow at least a 6-month time frame.

Where to next?

We aim to spread information about the program to local GP's, medical centres and community health agencies. Also, as expected regularly reviewing the titles for new editions and/or sourcing possible replacements and checking the apps and websites to see if any have altered over time.

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