

Karitane program for new mums wins national award

By helping first-time mothers get off to a good start, the Karitane Family Care Centre in Liverpool, has won the *Consumer Involvement* category of the 2005 AHA Baxter Healthcare National Innovation Awards.

The award was presented today in Adelaide at the *3rd Australasian Conference on Safety and Quality in Health Care*, hosted by the Australian Healthcare Association (AHA) and The Australasian Association for Quality in Health Care (AAQHC). The AHA is the peak national body for public hospitals and other not-for-profit health and aged care services.

“Many first-time mothers experience a high degree of anxiety and stress associated with their new roles as mothers. For many women who lack family and social support, becoming a mother can be a very socially isolating and difficult experience,” Ms Prue Power, Executive Director of the AHA said today.

“The *Women as Mothers (WAM)* program, based at Karitane’s Liverpool Family Care Centre, has successfully helped new mothers support each other to increase their confidence as mothers and reduce their isolation and stress.

“WAM aims to assist women in making a positive transition to motherhood by providing practical parenting information, self-care skills and the opportunity to discuss issues relevant to becoming a mother in a supportive group environment.

“The WAM program was developed in direct response to identified consumer needs in the Liverpool area and comprises a five week program for first time mothers experiencing difficulties after the birth of their baby.

“Since it was developed in 1996, the WAM group has been run between five and eight times a year, with about 10-12 participants in each group. The groups are facilitated by a social worker or registered nurse, and child minding is provided.

“Evaluations of the program have found that it has been very successful in meeting participants’ goals. In particular, women’s confidence in themselves as mothers increased during the time they attended the WAM group and their feelings of isolation decreased.

“Four years after attending the initial five week course, most WAM groups still meet regularly, according to a four year follow-up survey of participants. This indicates the ongoing value of the social support and assistance provided by the WAM program. Since its inception, the program has since been adapted for use with Vietnamese mothers in the Liverpool community.

“On behalf of the AHA I would like to congratulate Karitane for their well-deserved success in winning this prestigious award,” Ms Power said.

Contact:

Ms Prue Power, Executive Director AHA, 0417 419 857 or (02) 6295-6995

Ms Kate Mejaha, Nurse Unit Manager, Karitane Family Care Centre Liverpool, (02) 9821 4555

Ms Vicki Samson, Manager Marketing/Promotions, (02) 97941873