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## WAM! When the reality of a newborn baby hits home

By **Kylie Stevens**

A LIVERPOOL program designed to assist first-time mothers adjust and get their babies off to a good start has won a national health award.

The Karitane Family-Care Centre won the consumer involvement category at the Baxter Healthcare National Innovation Awards, run by the Australian Healthcare Association, in Adelaide this month.

It was one of three award-winners and it was the only NSW entrant and the only one related to mothers and babies.

The centre won for its Women As Mothers program, which helps new mothers in Liverpool with babies under six months or who use the Karitane Fairfield services because they have difficulties adjusting to their new lives.

Since 1996, the five-week WAM program has run up to eight times each year with 10 to 12 participants in each group to provide practical parenting information, self-care, baby massage techniques, play development and a discussion group.

According to a follow-up survey of participants, many WAM groups still meet regularly up to five years after attending the initial five-week course.

"It's exciting to be recognised for a program which has been so successful," said Karitane's nurse unit manager, Kate Mejaha.

"For the staff who do the hard work on a daily basis, it's rewarding for them to see the success.

"The judges said they were impressed with the fact that it's become a long-term support network."

She said any first-time mother from the Liverpool area keen to do the WAM course can be put on a waiting list.

The group meets for two hours once a week for the duration of the course.

"They get a lot out of it educationally and socially," Ms Mejaha said.

"The course is one of its kind in this area where we focus on the mums."

Along with the award, the centre received \$1000, which will go towards buying resources for the centre and the group.

It also hopes to run a second WAM program targeting the Vietnamese community.

"We hope to keep WAM running for another 10 years," Ms Mejaha said.

**Details: 9821 4555.**



**Winners are grimmers:** The mums of Ethan Batbham (left) and Luke Brennan are benefiting from the national award-winning WAM program at Karitane Family-Care Centre. **Picture:** Jonathan Ng