



YOUTH ISSUE – BRIEFING

TO: CHIEF MINISTER

DATE: 20 NOVEMBER 2014

FROM: LILY REID

TOPIC: ADOLESCENT WARD AT ROYAL DARWIN HOSPITAL

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Northern Territory (NT) Government:

1. Establish an adolescent ward at the Royal Darwin Hospital (RDH); and
2. Establish a recreational area for adolescent patients at the RDH.

BACKGROUND

Adolescent wards are a safe and secure space where young people between the ages of 13 and 18 years of age can recuperate whilst in hospital. In a statement released to the media on the 7th of May 2014, the Minister for Health the Hon. Robyn Lambley stated that *“an upgrade [to the RDH] has been long called for”* then going on to say that *“for teenage patients there will also be a purpose-built 4-bed adolescent area”*¹. This indicates that the NT Government has acknowledged the need for adolescent appropriate care in the NT.

This topic briefing is focused on the establishment of a safe and secure adolescent environment at the RDH. This area would be for young people between the ages of 13 and 18 years, to ensure they receive care catered to their specific needs and health requirements.

Young people have differing health care requirements and social needs to adults that should be recognised in the context of hospitalisation². Factors including; the provision of facilities for parents or careers, staffing levels and skills, as well as recognition of the adolescent’s developmental stage and ability and child protection and education requirements should all be considerations in the context of care provision and aiding recovery. Appropriate decorations, furniture and access to communications, including phones and the internet are additional concepts that can significantly contribute to a young person’s wellbeing and recovery. Having access to internet as well as computers is important for the wellbeing of an adolescent as they may be attending school and most schools are now using internet forums and websites for teachers and students to communicate. By a young person having access to technology they are able to continue with their schooling. This is especially good for those who are constantly in and out of hospital for long periods of time during

¹ Northern Territory Government, 2014

² Sturrock, T., Masterson, L., Steinbeck, K., 2006



the school year. Having technology on the ward can also help the young person's wellbeing, as communication can be a large part of a young person's life with most outlets for entertainment being either online through social media, or through telecommunications. Through social media patients are able to keep in contact with friends and family who may not be able to visit them as they live out of Darwin in remote areas or they cannot make it to the hospital within the standard visiting hours.

This topic was chosen because, from personal experience, hospitals can be an intimidating place. The aim of this project was not just to benefit young people with chronic illnesses or disabilities but to benefit any young person that is admitted into hospital in the NT. Hospitals can be frightening and overwhelming to anyone, especially for young people who have not experienced such environments before and who are already in state of compromised health.

DISCUSSION

Interviews and surveys were undertaken as part of this project and identified that medical jargon, sterile and strange environments can cause a patient to feel isolated (refer to Attachment A). It was also identified that these pressures can cause young people in hospital to become stressed, which can worsen the condition that they are already in and make it harder for medical staff to help. Across the country there are many different models of adolescent care. Many of the major hospitals have separate wards for adolescents where young people are treated in age appropriate environments, surrounded by medical staff that specialises in youth care.

This project initially sought to determine whether there is a current need for an adolescent ward in the RDH. A survey targeted at adolescents was developed and subsequently shared on social media and in hard copy format through health care services such as headspace (a non-for-profit youth mental health organisation). Targeted interviews were also conducted with identified stakeholders. A total of 73 surveys were completed with the overall response indicating that young people feel an adolescent ward should be established at the RDH. The findings of the survey will be discussed further in this briefing and all results can be found at Attachment A.

With the need for a customised approach to age-specific health care to be established, this project's focus shifted to determining what resources were required and establishing a process for their implementation. Within this year's budget, \$11.9 million was designated by the Commonwealth to move and refurbish the wards within the hospital so that they are all on the same level. The refurbishment was to include a culturally appropriate facility with shower and toilet amenities, a lounge as well as a respite room that will all hope to improve experiences for parents³.

The short term goal hoped to be achieved by this project is to create an area within the hospital dedicated to adolescents, a common room of sorts. The idea is to create a space where young people from across the wards are able to come away from the machines and sterile rooms to relax and interact with other people the same age. The long term goal of this project is to develop an

³ Northern Territory Government, 2014



entire ward dedicated to the treatment and recovery of 13 to 18 year olds. The next step in this project was to conduct research to find samples of other wards within hospitals across Australia and the rest of the world.

Through interviews and surveys with employees who work at the RDH and young patients and their families at the hospital, information has been gathered with a strong indication that there needs to be a better suited and age appropriate environment at the RDH for young people.

Key stakeholders in this investigation included the RDH, including staff, patients and families and headspace. The families and caregivers of the patients are the most important stakeholders within this investigation as without the support network of family and friends young people start to feel isolated and signs of mental health issues could arise. The NSW *'Guidelines for the Care of Children and Adolescents in Acute Care Settings'* indicates that an aim of any hospital administering support to adolescents should be to recognise the special psychological needs of adolescents in hospital and encourage and enable carers to provide necessary emotional support during times of high stress. An example given is to develop facilities which enable carers to stay by the bedside of a sick child or adolescent. This would have significant benefits for the stressed parents as well⁴.

Overview of Survey

The survey (Attachment A) was conducted with 73 participants ranging between 14 and 18 years old. The survey questions aimed to identify emotions and personal experiences that young people have had while in hospital in the NT.

The survey was distributed through social media and by hand, with 73 responses. From the respondents there was a fairly even number of female and male participants, with 56.2% being female. A total of 26.4% of the respondents were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. When asked, 78.1% of participants stated that they would prefer staying in an area with other patients around the same age. At least 78.8% of young people surveyed indicated that they believed it was important that an adolescent ward be established at the RDH, stating that it would make the experience more tolerable as they would be able to converse and interact with other people going through the same social phases and developmental stages.

Interview with the Adolescent Health Nurse, RDH

Ms Erin Evans, the Adolescent Clinical Nurse Coordinator (CNC) at the RDH, was interviewed as part of this project. It was established that between 8 and 12 young people present to RDH each day with the figures excluding those in the Outpatients Department. Ms Evans also stated that at the moment there is no physically designated area for adolescents within the hospital but they do try to accommodate the young patients within the Paediatric Unit, however the patients who are at the

⁴ NSW Kids and Families, 2010



edge of the Paediatric age limit (15 years and above) are generally moved into their appropriate specialty unit i.e. orthopedics, surgery or medicine etc. Then Ms Evans went on to state that through the redevelopment of the Paediatric Ward, specific beds for adolescent patients will be provided. *“All adolescents at RDH have access to support from the Adolescent CNC. Young people did have some input into a space on the Cancer Ward. This space is well set up; however, the numbers of young patients in this specialty area is small.”* The space that is to be developed should incorporate best practice models from other hospitals both nationally and internationally to form a safe and secure environment for young Territorians.

Ms Evans also outlined that while there is a well-established model of adolescent care at the RDH which is managed by herself, there is not a physical space that is integral to a holistic care environment for young people. *‘Creating Adolescent Peer Support (CAPS)’* is a new initiative for young people between the ages of 12-24 with a primary diagnosis of a chronic illness / health issue who would like to participate in a group program. The CAPS program is implemented by Ms Evans and is currently supported by the NT Government, headspace and the Top End Association for Mental Health Inc. (refer to attachment C). Currently there are approximately eight young people who attend the program with others who come when they are able to.

Adolescent care models and Clinical Practice Guidelines

Around Australia and the rest of the world there are many different variations of adolescent wards all with a common goal to provide age appropriate care for persons between 13 and 18 years old.

Dr Kate Senior et al. of Menzies Health led an investigation the aimed *‘to determine an appropriate model for adolescent friendly hospital.’* Collaborators of the project Ms Evans and Dr Louise Woodward both from RDH and Dr Janet Helmer of Charles Darwin University summarised the project saying that *‘adolescents who are hospitalised require accommodation and services which are specific to their life stage. Currently there is no adolescent ward in Darwin’⁵.*

The Royal Children’s Hospital (RCH), Melbourne, in 2011 released a report on the Adolescent Care Model used within the hospital system⁶. The report identifies common goals to those held by staff at RDH; *‘to create a set of principles for treatment of all adolescents in hospital (...) Within the context of a holistic model of care, both structural (youth friendly spaces), and programmic (life-long, peer support, creative expression) issues need to be addressed’⁷.* Currently the RCH has a program similar to the CAPS program run by Ms Evans. The Chronic Illness Peer Support program (ChIPS) is a group that helps to empower young people with chronic illnesses from rural and metropolitan Victoria. To

⁵ Senior, K., et al. of Menzies Health, 2014

⁶ Clinical Professor David Bennett, March- July 2009

⁷ Lam, Fitzgerald, & Sawyer, August 2005



join the program patients fill in forms which will then need to be endorsed by healthcare professionals⁸.

Within the last four years the Queensland Government has opened two adolescent mental health wards, both have eight bed inpatient accommodations. The Josephine Sailor Adolescent Inpatient Unit and Day Service in Townsville was officially opened on September 5 2013⁹ and on the 18 October 2010 the Adolescent Mental Health Unit (AMHU) began construction at the Toowoomba Hospital. AMHU facility is a \$10.6 million eight bed ward for young people with mental health issues¹⁰. The first patient admitted to the ward was in August 2012 and between its opening and June 30 2013 the ward took in 222 admissions¹¹.

NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Framing the Future:

This project briefing addresses one of the four goals under *Framing the Future*, a 'Strong Society' that has a strong health system.

This briefing also aligns to the wellbeing goal under the NT Youth Participation Framework 2014-17, that young Territorians lead safe, healthy and happy lives by making positive lifestyle choices.

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

From undertaking this project it has become apparent that in the views and opinions of young Territorians, an adolescent ward and space is needed within the RDH. Many of the participants were on the edge of the scale where their age is a contributing factor on where they would stay while in hospital. By having an adolescent ward, young Territorians will have a place they can recover, where staff will be suited for their specific needs as well as a safe and secure place around people their own age. This will make it easier for them to socialise and connect with each person going through the same developmental phases and or social experiences. For a faster recovery, a sense of normality is key, meaning that the patient is surrounded by a day to day routine including education whether that be while in bed if they are not able to attend the hospital school, socialising with people their own age and being able to communicate with family members. An adolescent ward would help to shorten the recuperation period and lower the risk for young people developing mental health issues which will later impact their lives in turn leading them back into the hospital system.

LILY REID
20 NOVEMBER 2014

⁸ The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne

⁹ Queensland Government, 2014

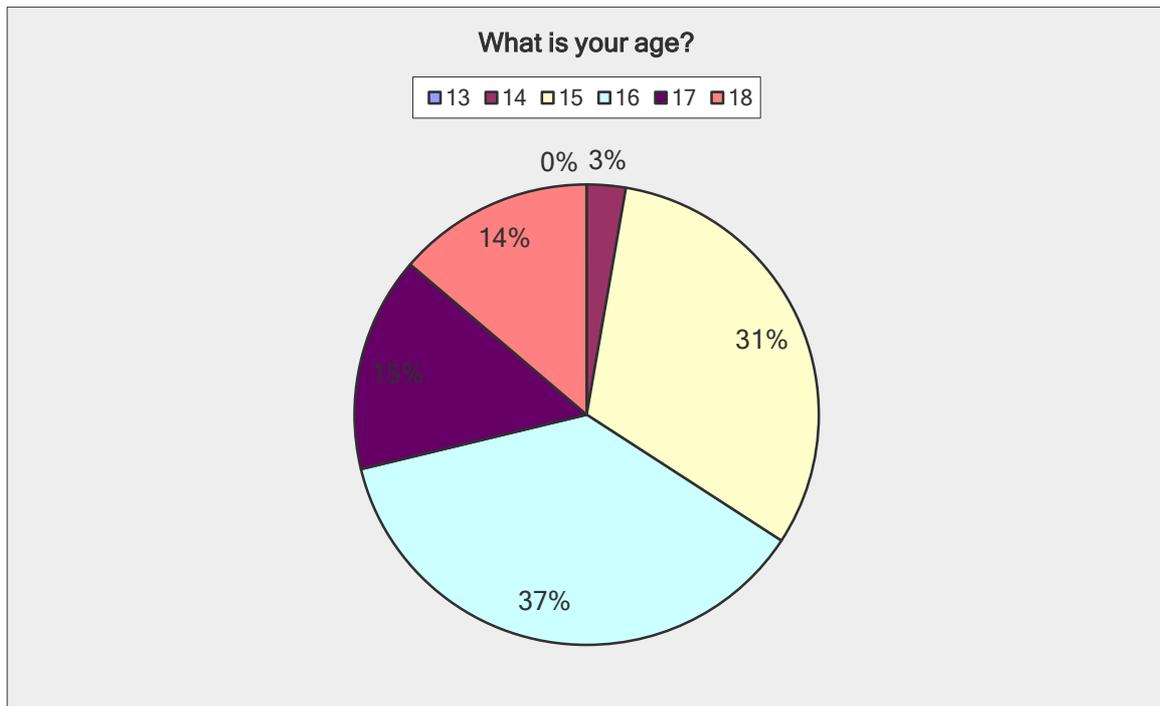
¹⁰ Lucas, 2010

¹¹ Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service, September 2013

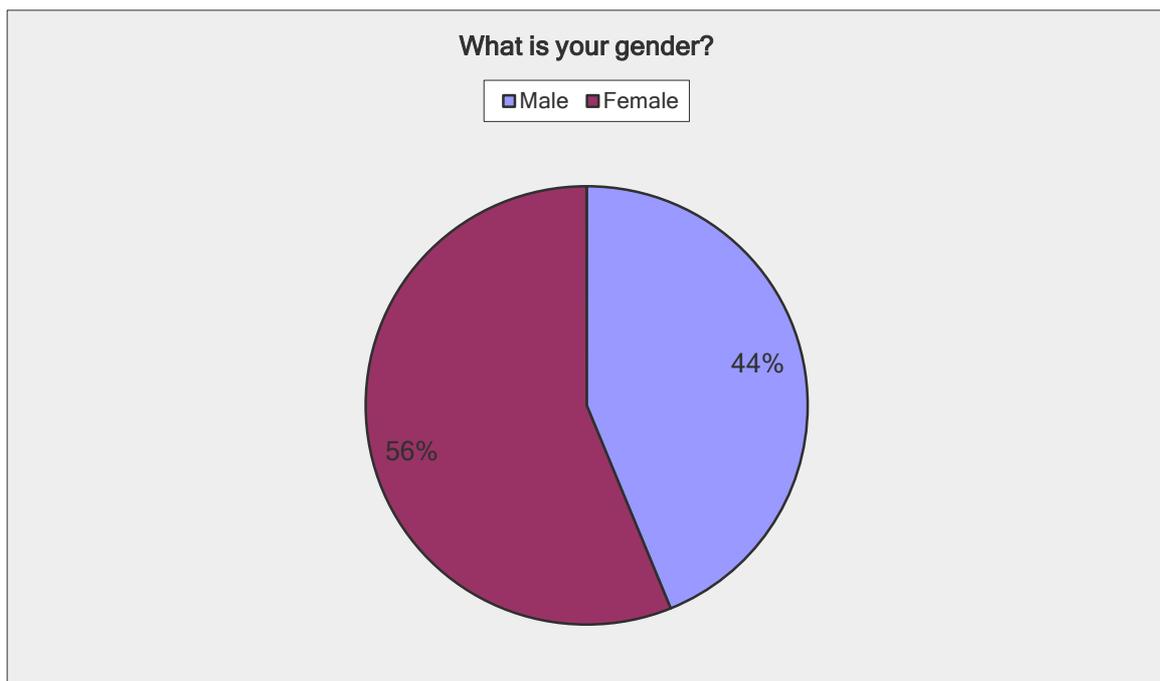


Attachment A: Survey Results

Q1.

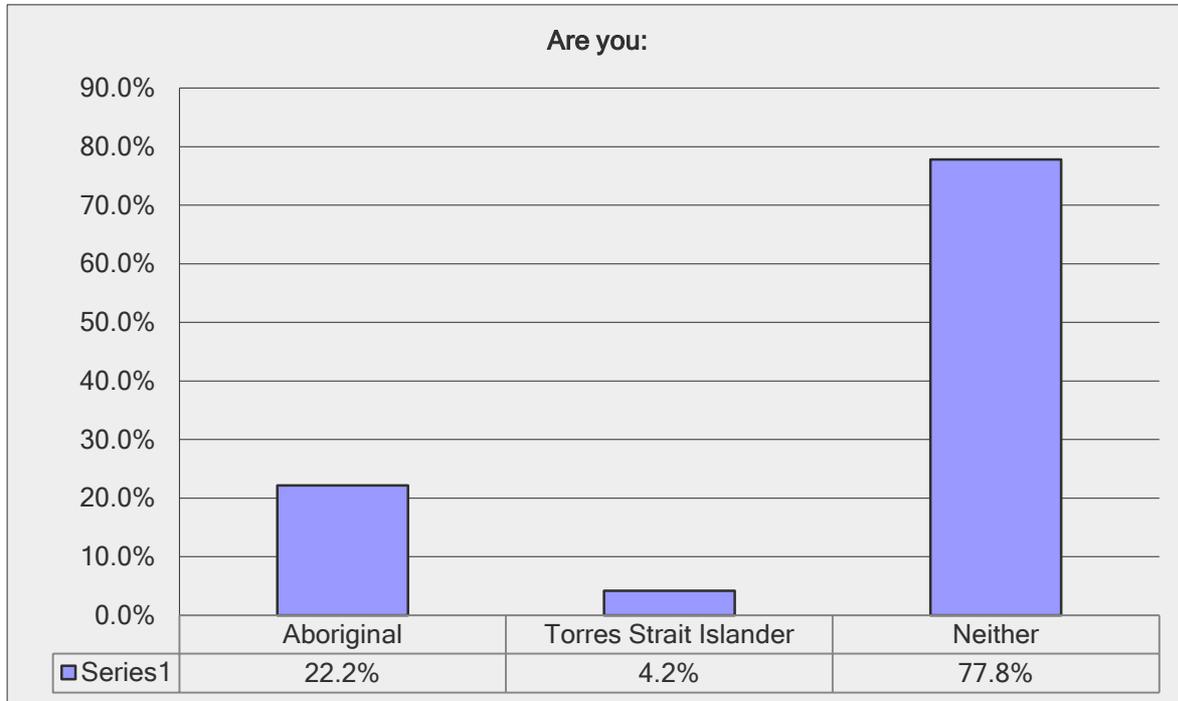


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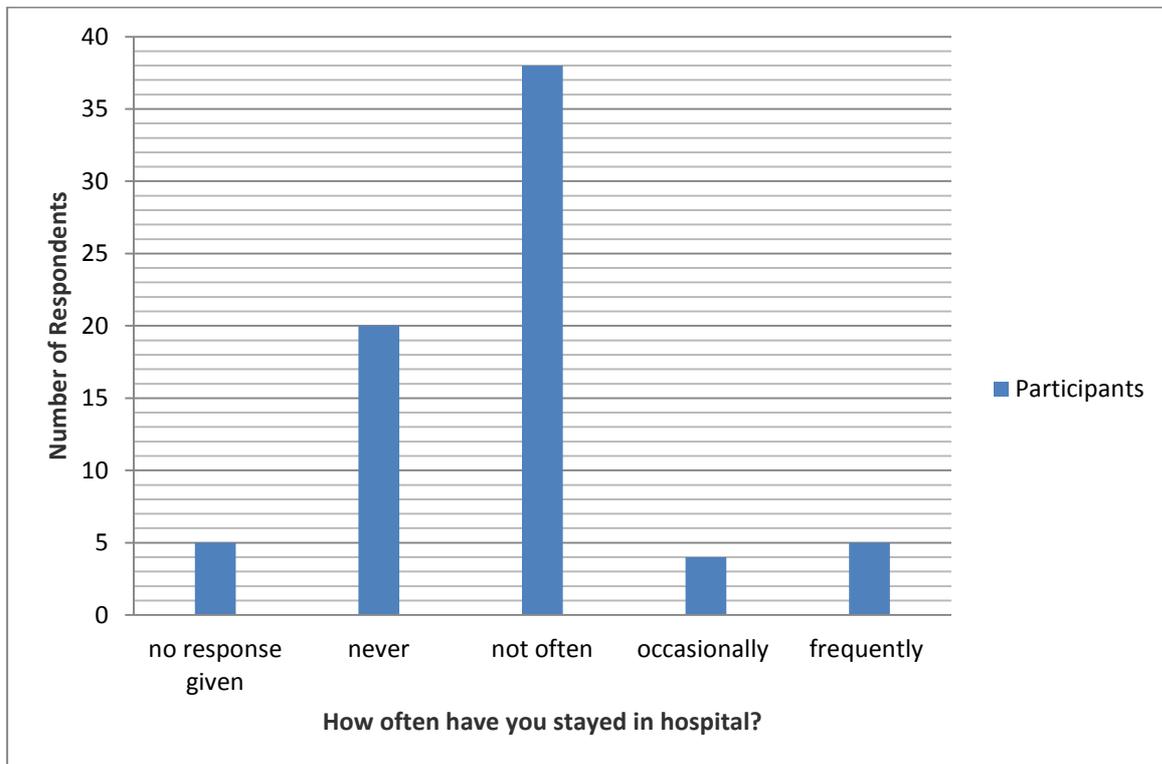




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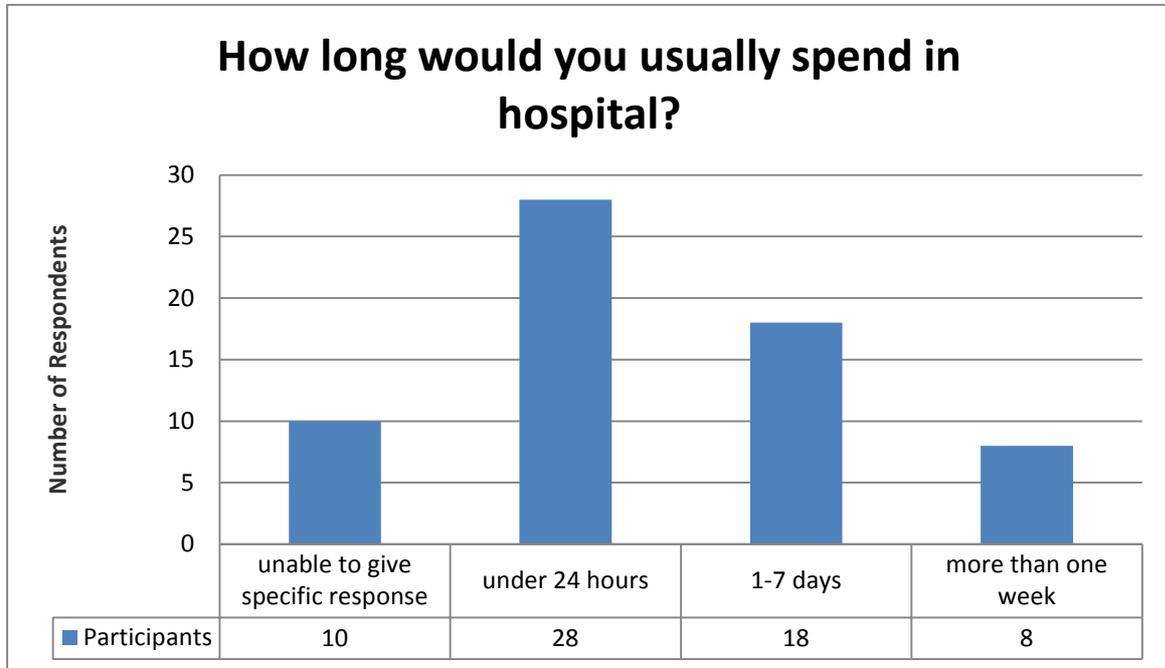


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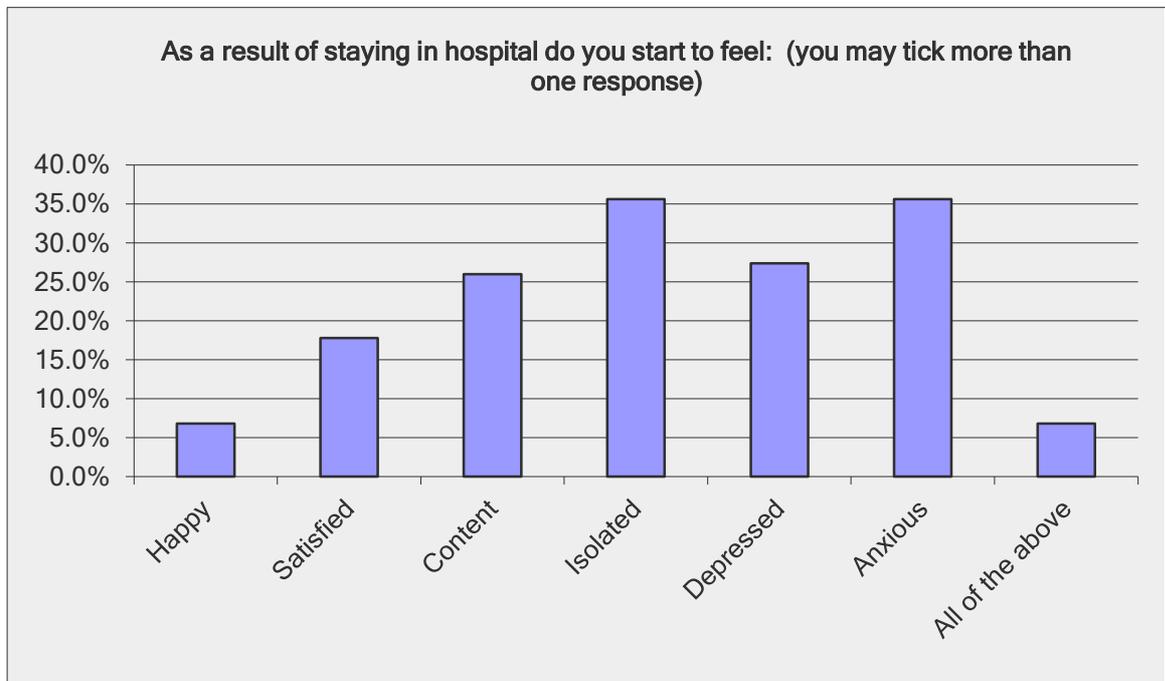




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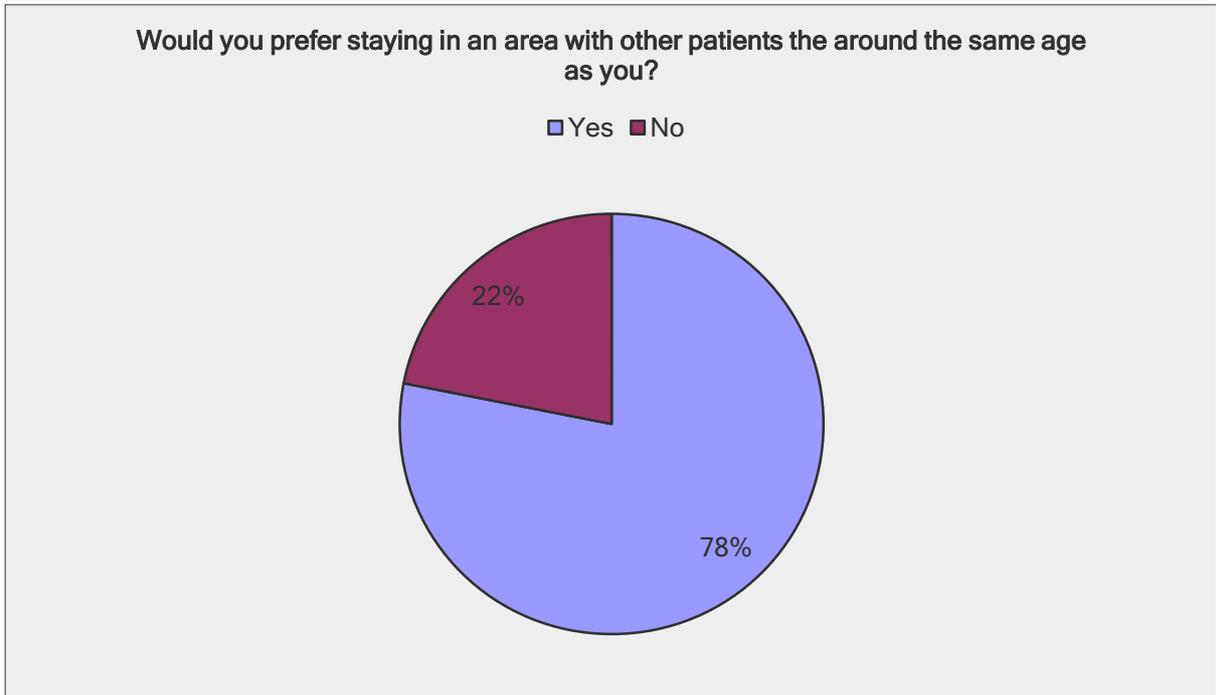


Q6.

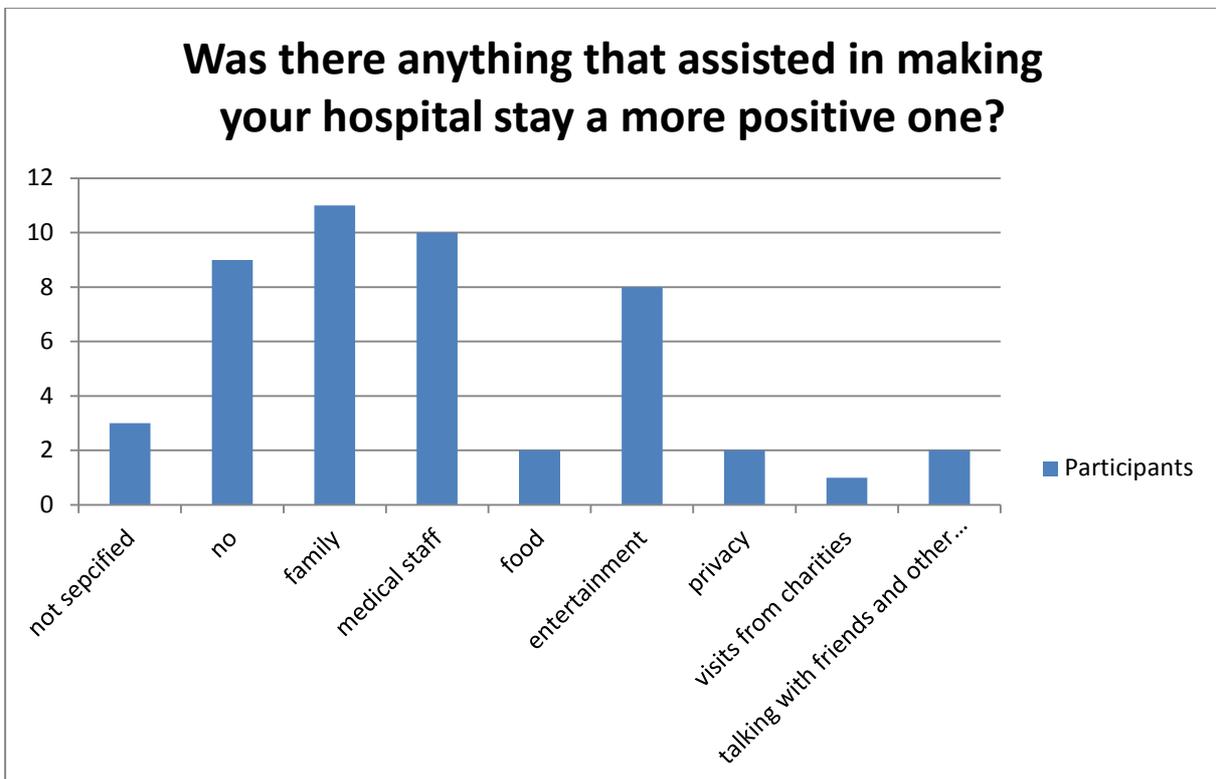




Q7.

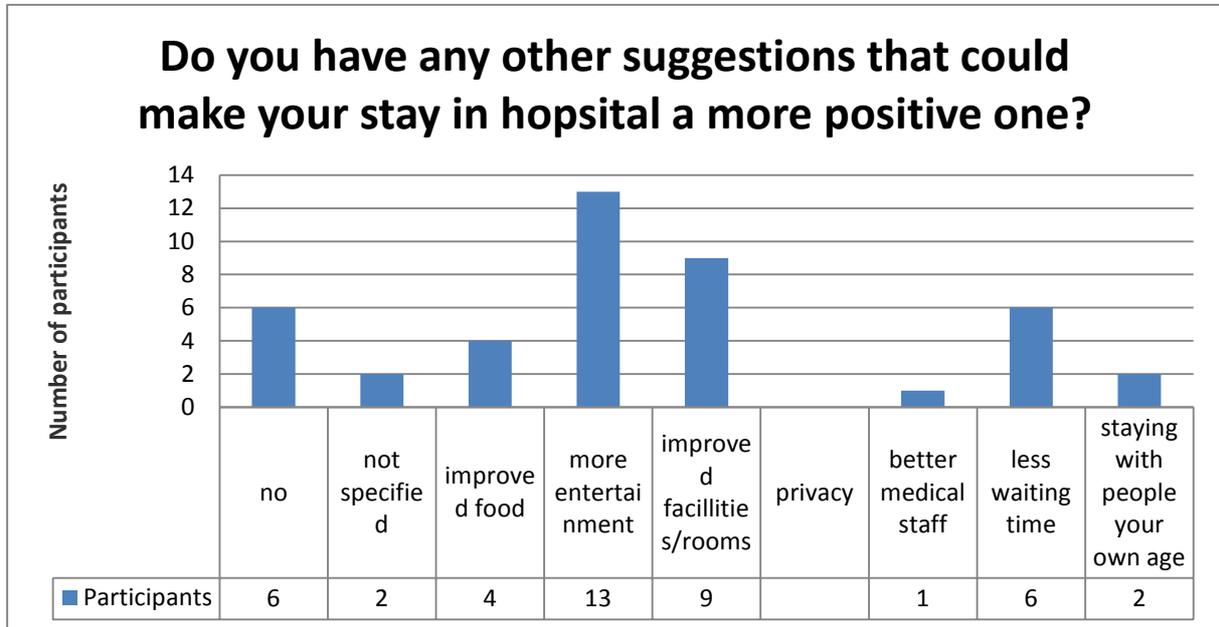


Q8.





Q9.





Attachment B: Survey Template

2014 Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians

ADOLESCENT WARD AT ROYAL DARWIN HOSPITAL SURVEY

Lily Reid is a member of the 2014 Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians (Round Table) and is investigating the viability of an adolescent ward at the Royal Darwin Hospital for young people aged 13 – 18 years. Your comments will remain anonymous and will be used for the purpose of data collection. Lily would really appreciate your help with her project by completing and submitting this survey by 15/05/2014.

1. What is your age?

13 14 15 16 17 18

2. What is your gender?

MALE FEMALE OTHER

3. ARE YOU:

ABORIGINAL TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER NEITHER

4. How often have you stayed in hospital?

5. How long would you usually spend in hospital?

6. As a result of staying in hospital do you start to feel:
(you may circle more than one response)

- a. Happy
- b. Satisfied
- c. Content
- d. Isolated
- e. Depressed
- f. Anxious
- g. All of the above



h. Other _____

7. Would you prefer staying in an area with other patients the around the same age as you?

- a. Yes
- b. No

8. Was there anything that assisted in making your hospital stay more a positive one?

9. Do you have any other suggestions that could make your stay in hospital a more positive experience?

All queries should be directed to the Office of Youth Affairs on 8999 3890.

Please send completed surveys to:

Office of Youth Affairs OR Fax: (08) 8941 5291
GPO Box 4396 Email: oya@nt.gov.au
DARWIN NT 0801



Attachment C: Creating AdolesceNT Peer Support (CAPS) Poster

CAPS

(Creating AdolesceNT Peer Support)

WHAT IS CAPS???

CAPS is a vibrant new initiative for young people aged 12-24 years with a primary diagnosis of a chronic illness/ health issue who would like to participate in a group program.

The focus of the initiative is to foster connections between young people who get what it is like to live with a chronic illness. Opportunities will be created to connect and have fun through peer support and youth participation.



What does CAPS Offer?

- Fortnightly 2 hour workshops;
- An opportunity to share experiences and challenges of living with a chronic illness using discussion, art, music and other group activities;
- An opportunity to meet people who may have had similar experiences
- Time to have fun!!

When: Monday (fortnightly next meeting 28th July 14)

Time: 3:30 – 5:30pm

Where: Day to Day Living Facility
Rapid Creek Shopping Village
(Rear of the Centre, left side)
Trower Road Rapid Creek

Cost: FREE

Snacks provided



To confirm your attendance, please contact Erin Evans Adolescent CNC

8944 1394 or erin.evans@nt.gov.au

Places are limited. Assistance with transport if required





References:

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