

NATIONAL ALLERGY STRATEGY 250K YOUTH CAMP – A FIRST FOR AUSTRALIA

ABSTRACT

Background: A national Australian online survey conducted by the National Allergy Strategy (NAS) in 2016 identified camps as an activity young teens with severe allergy wanted to participate in. The NAS 250K Youth Camp aimed to provide an opportunity for participants to learn about managing their food allergy (FA) in a fun, safe environment. Specific objectives were: to foster new friendships between teens with FA, to build a sense of community, to share information about FA, and to inform adult volunteers how they can better support campers with FA.

Method: 7 members of the NAS 250K Youth Advisory Team (aged 16-25) and 15 teenagers with FA (aged 11-15) were invited directly or approached through social media to participate in a Sydney-based held in January 2019. Campers could bring a friend to the camp. Education sessions were provided by NAS staff, volunteers from Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia and ASCIA (nurses, dietitians, allergist, psychologist, Australian Camps Association representative). Camp food service staff received FA training by the NAS prior to the camp.

Findings: 30 participants, 22 with severe FA and 8 friends without FA attended (aged 11-23 years). Over the 4-day camp, 21 different food allergies were managed without incident during 17 meals and snacks. Of the campers with FA completing the camp survey (n=21), 85.7% reported they greatly enjoyed the camp; 52.4% enjoyed meeting others with FA; 76.2% would attend other camps; 66.7% were more confident to tell adults about their FA; 61.9% had increased confidence in food selection; 76.2% would recommend the camp to others.

Conclusion: The camp successfully met its aims of fostering relationships between young people with food allergy, which for many have continued beyond the camp. Camp participants learned a lot from the health professionals and each other and the health professionals learned from the participants.

Preparing for the camp

Extensive preparation and planning was required to ensure that the camp would run smoothly, that all special dietary needs would be accommodated, and that the campers had fun.

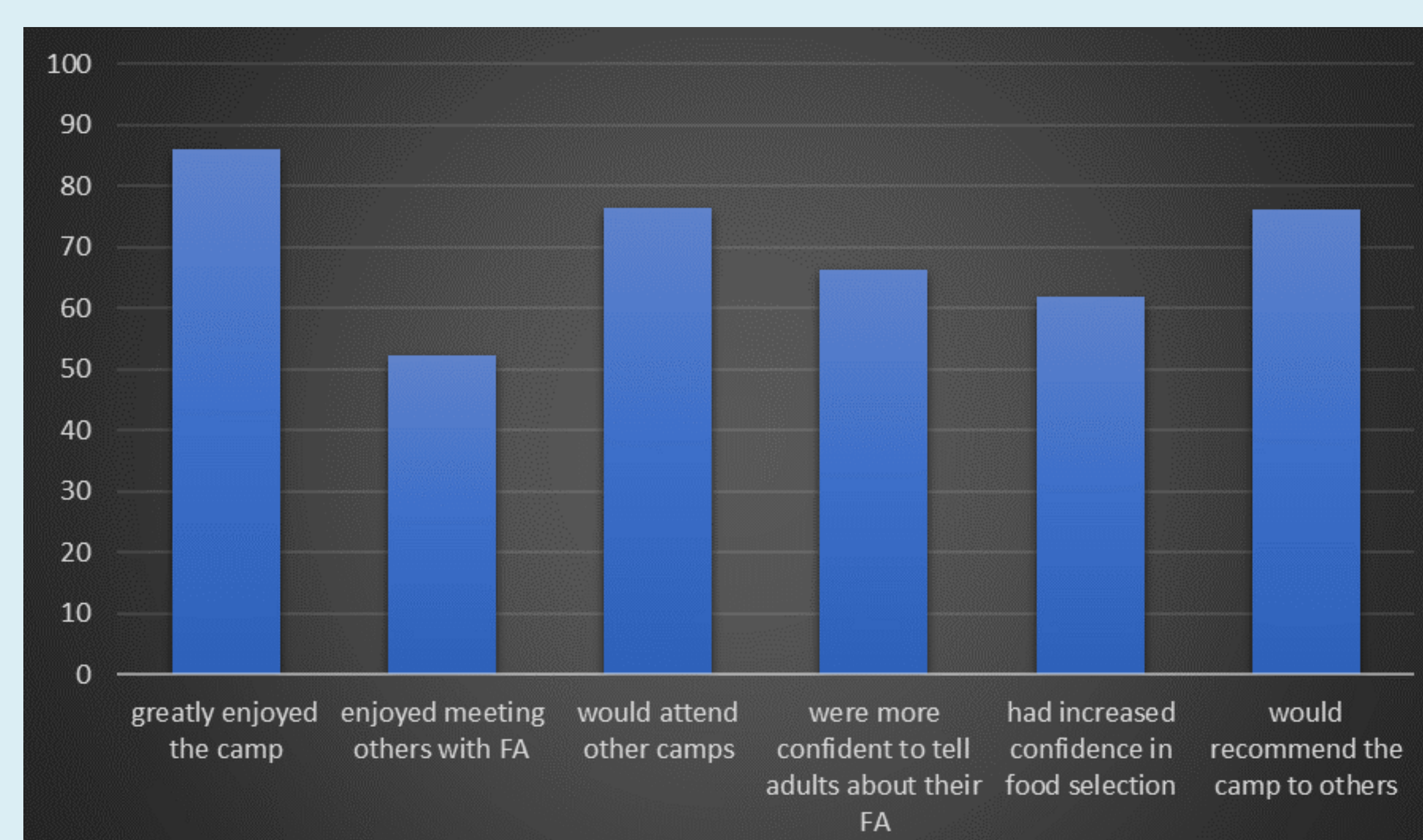
This included:

- Engagement with Australian Camps Association (ACA).
- Identifying a suitable camp site.
- Engagement with camp site staff and a site visit.
- Onsite food service staff training.
- Preparing camp manual, documentation, procedures and review of camp menu.
- Approaching volunteers.
- Staff undertaking First Aid training and Working With Children Check.
- Development of an educational and fun program.
- 250K Youth Advisory Team (YAT) members were fully funded to attend the camp. Under supervision, 4 participants travelled from Perth and 2 participants travelled from Melbourne.
- Coordination of transport from Sydney airport to Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia and then to the camp site and transport after the camp.

Camp outcomes

- 30 campers (7 members of the 250K YAT; 15 (aged 11-15 yrs) with food allergy and 8 friends (aged 11-15 yrs)).
- Education sessions were run with a dietitian, allergist, psychologist, A&AA representative and nurse.
- Team building sessions coordinated by the ACA representative.
- 5 sport activities (canoeing, high ropes, flying fox, climbing wall, swimming) were undertaken
- The camp concluded with a visit to Sydney Trapeze where participants were able to trapeze and learn other skills.
- 21 different food allergies were managed over 17 different meal times with no reactions.
- Building independence of camp participants.

End of camp survey results



250K - an allergy awareness project supported by



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www.250k.org.au

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The team of staff and volunteers (from left) – Pete Griffiths, Maria Said, Merryn Netting, Sally Voukelatos, Sandra Vale, Nyssa Booth, Briony Tyquin, Melanie Wong and Tristan Schwartzkopff.