

The National Indigenous Research(er) Capacity Building Network Newsletter

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Edition 4



Welcome to the new look IRNet Quarterly Newsletter, just in time for the fourth edition. This quarter, we share some news about a National Network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Researchers, as well as an update on the NHMRC-funded Women's Health Translation Network, in case you missed it. We also feature projects from Murdoch University's Ngangk Yira Research Centre for

Aboriginal Health & Social Equity, and a piece about the South Australian Aboriginal Health Landscape Project, a project by the Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity theme of the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) that aims to put Aboriginal data into Aboriginal hands.



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National Network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Researchers

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) have committed funding to support a National Network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers. The Network will create an inclusive system that brings together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research groups and support networks to form a structure that builds the capacity and capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers.

Following an initial expression of interest (EOI) in December 2019, 5 teams, led by CIAs Professor Gail Garvey; Professor Sandra Eades; Professor Alex Brown; Ms Pat Anderson; and Associate Professor Luke Burchill, were successful in receiving seed funding for their proposals. The 5 teams are now working together on a joint application to be submitted to NHMRC by the 30th October.

The application will be reviewed by a panel, and an announcement is expected by the end of 2020, with up to \$10 million available over 5 years.

Click here for more information on the initiative, or email IRNet@sahmri.com



Women's Health Research, Translation and Impact Network

In the lead up to Women's Health Week in September, the Australian Government announced \$5 million of funding for the National Women's Health Research, Translation and Impact Network (WHRTN), formed by the 10 Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA) Collaboration Centres through the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF).

The WHRTN is a collaboration between communities; health

services; and academic institutions, and aims to build health workforce capacity; develop leaders in women's health; and advance research translation to deliver impact and better health for Australian women.

In line with the Government's health strategy, the priority health areas include a focus on reproductive and sexual health; preconception and perinatal health; nutrition; healthy

lifestyle; healthy ageing; chronic disease prevention; mental health; and Indigenous health.

Amongst other commitments, the Network will specifically aim to build the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women researchers.



Ngangk Yira Research Centre for Aboriginal Health & Social Equity



NGANGK YIRA

The Ngangk Yira Research Centre for Aboriginal Health & Social Equity supports Murdoch University's "commitment to improving Aboriginal health, wellbeing and social equity" through innovative and translational research. Under the leadership of Professor Rhonda Marriott, the Centre brings together a "wealth of knowledge and experience to help grow strong Aboriginal communities".

Recognising that a strong start in life is fundamental to health and wellbeing, Ngangk Yira's research takes a connected

approach from pregnancy, young adulthood, through to parenthood and the transition to older adulthood.

Its projects aim to change the life course of the next generation of Aboriginal people and inform translatable outcomes at the state and national levels, including the 3 projects featured below: Baby Coming- You Ready? (BCYR); Birthing on Noongar Boodjar (BONB); and the Youth Indigenous People Resilience and Wellbeing (YIPRaW) Project.

Baby Coming- You Ready?



Baby Coming You Ready (BCYR) is an innovative mental-health and social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) program being piloted for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers and fathers, by a majority Aboriginal research team.

BCYR centres around an app that uses touchscreen technology and voiceovers to engage in a person/family-centred exploration of SEWB and help parents-to-be externalise their emotions that can be hard to express. Importantly, it is designed to create relevance and give control back to the mother during perinatal care, including the setting of SMART* goals to address pressing stressors.

Aboriginal people from 14 Clans or Nations across Australia contributed

to developing this ground-breaking solution, intended to replace current mental health and SEWB screening and assessments in antenatal and postnatal care.

A pilot of BCYR in selected metropolitan and regional settings in WA will investigate acceptability and feasibility of the process from community and health service perspectives; progressing to a future multi-state trial.

The research is supported by philanthropic, Australian government and WA government funding.

By Jayne Kotz and Valerie Ah Chee, Ngangk Yira Research Centre for Aboriginal Health and Social Equity, Murdoch University.



*SMART goals: Specific, Measurable/Motivational, Achievable/Agreed upon, Realistic, Time-framed.

Birthing on Noongar Boodjar – promoting Aboriginal cultural birthing practices in urban environments



Birthing on Noongar Boodjar (BONB) set out to address a knowledge gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal concepts of maternity care, focussed on Aboriginal women's experiences and cultural requirements and midwives' knowledge to understand what makes culturally safe health. The research took place on Noongar Boodjar (Country) in the Perth metropolitan area.

Our 18 member Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal investigator team, led by Professor Rhonda Marriott AM, worked closely with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partners from community-based, health and higher education sectors in the collection and interpretation of the evidence.

Adhering to principles of sustained and high-level engagement with Aboriginal people; the Aboriginal community were our most significant BONB partner; joining governance and advisory committees, attending events, and actively contributing ideas.

The BONB Project evidence demonstrated a deep insight into the multiple factors contributing to problems associated with providing culturally secure maternity care for Aboriginal women in urban environments. The Project identified service gaps, issues and barriers within the WA maternity care system; requiring efforts to address racism in health settings,

strengthen the Aboriginal workforce and improve the capability of the whole health system to provide care which supports Aboriginal cultural practices. From this, the BONB Project has made 3 recommendations to be translated into concrete health system responses—see <https://goto.murdoch.edu.au/ngangkyira>.

By Professor Rhonda Marriott and Associate Professor Tracy Reibel, Ngangk Yira Research Centre for Aboriginal Health and Social Equity, Murdoch University- contact Ngangk Yira – either R.Marriott@murdoch.edu.au or Tracy.Reibel@murdoch.edu.au

Youth Indigenous People Resilience and Wellbeing (YIPRaW) Project



The YIPRaW project commenced in July 2017 and is a cross-sectional study of Aboriginal youth in two sites; Noongar Country (WA), and Gamilaroi Country (NSW). This joint research project is being led by Professor Rhonda Marriott, Director, Ngangk Yira, Murdoch University; and Professor Kim Usher, Professor of Nursing at the University of New England. It includes researchers from University of Technology, Sydney; Victoria University; University of Western Australia; Telethon Kids Institute; and Murdoch University, and two PhD students.

The three overarching study aims are:

- 1) Explain manifestations and dimensions of resilience and wellbeing in groups of Aboriginal youth;
- 2) Validate resilience and wellbeing measures in two different geographic cohorts of Aboriginal youth; and
- 3) Inform service and program development to build resilience and wellbeing for Aboriginal youth and recommend best practice frameworks to funders and decision makers.

Despite delays due to COVID-19, over 200 Aboriginal youth aged 15-25 years have been recruited to participate in the survey and face-to-face interviews, and it is anticipated that another 100 youth will be recruited by the end of 2020. This will include interviews with youth service providers and

Aboriginal community members and/or Elders. Importantly, initial results suggest that several widely used quantitative instruments for measuring wellbeing and resilience require amendments before being used with confidence with young Aboriginal people.

This translational research project will improve our understanding of Aboriginal youth and their self-assessment and understanding of resilience and wellbeing and improve Aboriginal youth services and community programs to meet the expressed needs for their welfare.

By Professor Rhonda Marriott and Melanie Robinson, Ngangk Yira Research Centre for Aboriginal Health & Social Equity, Murdoch University.

The South Australian Aboriginal Health Landscape Project

At a seminal workshop in 2013, the Aboriginal community in South Australia spoke for the need to access their health and social data to inform and monitor changes required to advance health equity. The priorities identified at this workshop informed the program of research that is being delivered by the Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity theme of the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute.

This includes the Landscape project that aims to put Aboriginal data into Aboriginal hands as a means of achieving a more equal platform for informed decision making and transparent monitoring.

"[It] aims to put Aboriginal data into Aboriginal hands as a means of achieving a more equal platform for informed decision making and transparent monitoring"

An Aboriginal Advisory Group governed the establishment of the project and the first Objective which was to provide communities with their own health and social data. This included the process for defining 18 Landscape areas, contiguous across the state and the development of a contextual reporting framework.

The research team obtained secondary datasets within the scope of the framework, analysed and reported the findings for each of the 18 Landscapes.

This was completed in November 2019 and the health and social information is currently being returned to community groups, native title organisations, and Aboriginal health organisations, in the form of reports, excel tables of the analysed data and an App. The next step is to ensure the information is provided in a way that maximises its meaningfulness to and usefulness for the Aboriginal community.

By Dr Odette Pearson and Dr Owen Churches, the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute



Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Research Theme, SAHMRI



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