

Let me start with **RESPECT**



SAHMRI
South Australian Health &
Medical Research Institute



I am going to Acknowledge that the land we meet on today is the traditional lands for the Kaurna people and that I respect their spiritual relationship with their Country. I also acknowledge the Kaurna people as the traditional custodians of the Adelaide region and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to the living Kaurna people today.



Strong Dads Strong Futures



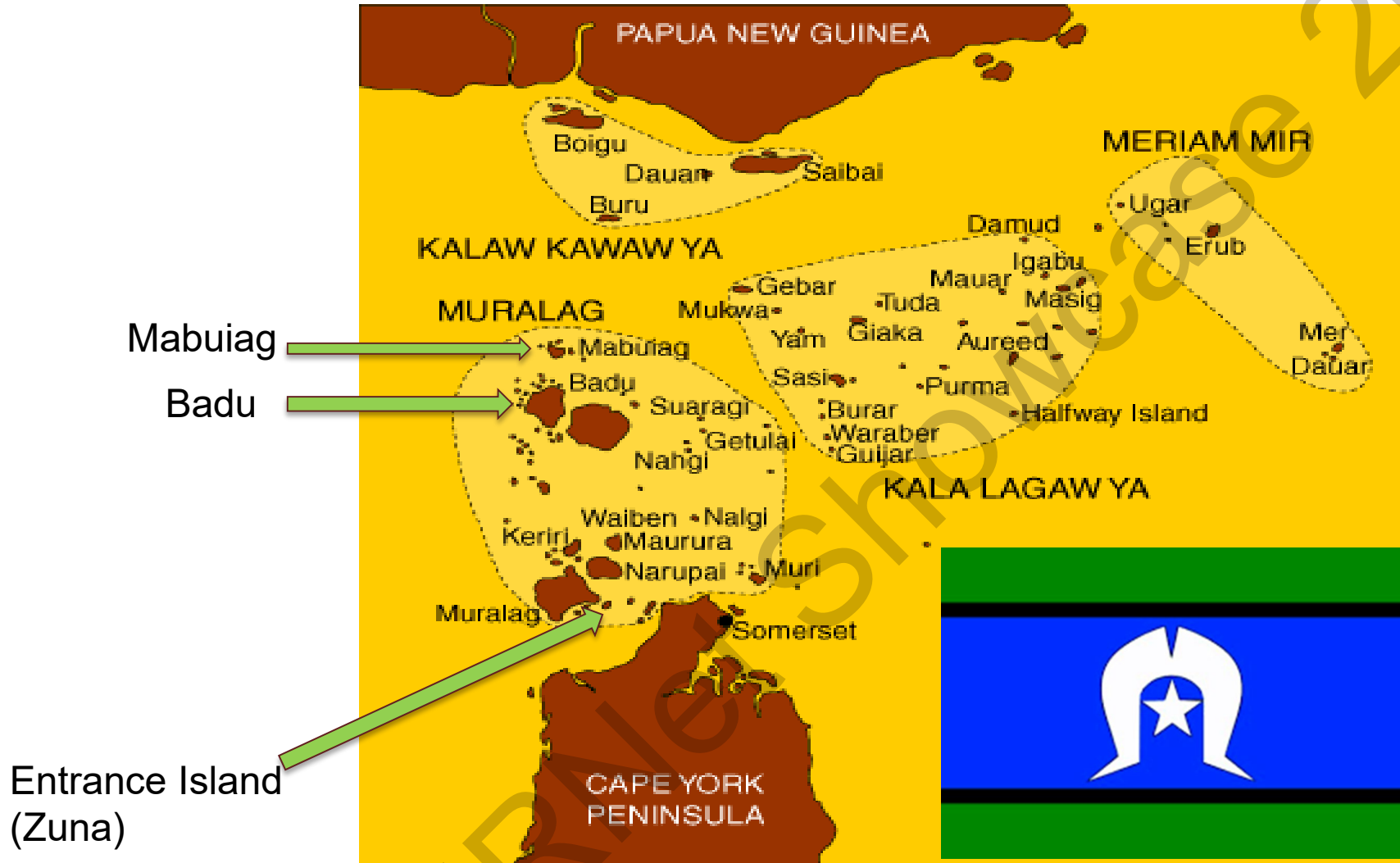
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South Australian Health & Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI).

Research Team

Kurt Towers
Jimmy Perry
Joshua Riessen
Dudley Ah Chee
Shane Bond
Dr Kootsy Canuto

Where MY MOB are from...



**I am a Wagadagam man and
my totem is the Keodal.**



Strong Dads Strong Futures Project Team



Shane Mohor

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Special Mention

**Amanda
Mitchell**



**Karen
Glover**

Thank you to both of you for all the work you did behind the scenes, including the effort you both put into getting the Strong Dads Strong Futures project off the ground.

Supporters



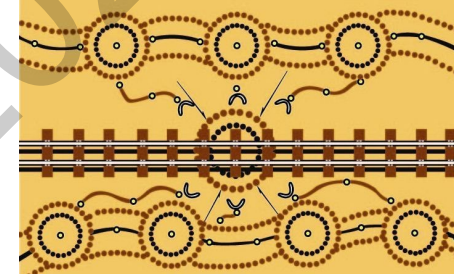
the
Lowitja
Institute

Australia's National Institute for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Health Research



Aboriginal Health Council
of South Australia Ltd.

our health, our choice, our way



watto purrunna



Government of South Australia
SA Health



SAHMRI
South Australian Health &
Medical Research Institute



Healthy Mothers,
Babies and Children



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE



murdoch
children's
research
institute



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WHY?

The realms of parenting have long belonged to females and for good reason. In most cultures it has been a female who has tended to the sick within families and who have predominantly cared for and raised the children.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male parents this has resulted in them being largely overlooked from contributing to the parenting conversation.

Predictably, such a dominant discourse has led to an inadequate distribution of opportunities available and a societal perception that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male parents are disinterested in and or disengaged from their parental roles and responsibilities, however, this is far from the truth.

Strong Dads Strong Futures Peer Reviewed Publications

CSIRO PUBLISHING

Australian Journal of Primary Health
<https://doi.org/10.1071/PY19106>

AUTHOR'S PAGE PROOFS: NOT FOR CIRCULATION

Review

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and parenting: a scoping review

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Abstract. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men rarely rate a mention within discussions of parenting unless framed in the negative, or as the cause of dysfunctional family life. Consequently, the roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men within parenting have largely been neglected or ignored. This scoping review aimed to identify and describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parenting programs that focused on male parents. A comprehensive search was conducted of databases, PubMed and Informit ATSIhealth, to identify peer-review publications, while relevant websites were also searched for grey literature. The review identified eight programs that met the inclusion criteria. The review highlights the lack of rigorously researched and published literature on parenting programs that focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male parents. The programs all reported positive outcomes and demonstrate that given the opportunity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male parents are ready and determined to fulfil their roles and responsibilities as parents to the best of their ability for their families and communities. The provision of inclusive parenting programs and services will equip Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male parents to better support their families during these important times.

Received 15 May 2019, accepted 20 September 2019, published online xx xxxx xxxx

Introduction

Inevitably, the continuing processes of colonisation in Australia is contributing to the poor health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As Walker and Shepherd (2008) argue, 'historical legacies of forced separation from family and removal from traditional country continues to affect the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous people' (Walker and Shepherd 2008, p. 6). This trauma continues to affect the lives of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as distress 'can have a significant impact on carer-child relationships, parenting styles and how well families function' (Walker and Shepherd 2008, p. 6). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male parents, colonisation restricts them from performing traditional roles as 'landowner, educators, father figures, providers and decision makers' (Reilly and Rees 2018, p. 422), which negatively affects their ability to parent.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men rarely rate a mention within discussions of parenting (Reilly and Rees 2018), unless framed in the negative (Stuart *et al.* 2015) or as the cause of dysfunctional family life (Stoneham *et al.* 2014). Contributing to this exclusion is a parenting domain, which is

dominated by a narrative that tends to exclusively focus and privilege the roles and responsibilities of females (Astone and Peters 2014). As a consequence, the roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men within parenting have largely been neglected and/or ignored. It is feared that 'Aboriginal children of both sexes may no longer be receiving adequate fathering' (Adams 2006, p. 70) due to the breakdown of kinship systems (Adams 2006).

A systematic review by Baldwin and Bick (2018) on the mental health of first-time fathers in high-income countries found that there were 'wide gaps in the provision of services; many fathers did not have access to tailored information resources nor were their needs generally acknowledged by health professionals' (Baldwin and Bick 2018, p. 2064). In Australia, the lack of options for male parents to engage with appropriate support services and programs is cause for concern and as Baldwin and Bick (2018) noted: 'despite increasing evidence of perinatal consequences for men's mental health, fathers continue to report being marginalized by the maternity and early years' services' (Baldwin and Bick 2018, p. 2064).

PLOS ONE

RESEARCH ARTICLE

"Anybody can make kids; it takes a real man to look after your kids": Aboriginal men's discourse on parenting

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Abstract

Background

The realms of parenting have long belonged to females. In many cultures it has been a female who has predominantly cared for and raised children. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male parents this has resulted in them being largely overlooked from contributing to the parenting conversation. Predictably, such a dominant discourse has led to an inadequate distribution of opportunities available and a societal perception that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male parents are disinterested in and/or disengaged from their parental roles and responsibilities, however, this is far from the truth.

Methods

This study is entrenched in an Indigenist research approach which privileges Indigenous lives, Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous voices, and utilised the Research Topic Yarning method to capture participants stories.

Results

Four yarning groups were conducted across South Australia in Coober Pedy, Yalata, Port Lincoln and metropolitan Adelaide. In total, 46 Aboriginal men contributed their experiences and stories of their roles and responsibilities as parents to this study.

Men described being a dad as a privilege, emotionally fulfilling and rewarding and although at times it can be challenging, neglecting their roles and responsibilities are not considered options. Lack of employment and therefore financial security were described as a challenge to fatherhood especially for fathers who live in remote communities. Aboriginal culture, connection to country and family were identified as critical elements and strengths for Aboriginal male parents. Furthermore, Aboriginal male parents are yearning for opportunities to participate in parenting programs including men's parenting groups.

OPEN ACCESS

Citation: Canuto K, Towers K, Riessen J, Perry J, Bond S, Ah Chee D, *et al.* (2019) "Anybody can make kids; it takes a real man to look after your kids": Aboriginal men's discourse on parenting. PLOS ONE 14(11): e0225395. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0225395>

Editor: Aisha K. Youssaf, Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, UNITED STATES

Received: August 1, 2019

Accepted: November 2, 2019

Published: November 22, 2019

Peer Review History: PLOS recognizes the benefits of transparency in the peer review process; therefore, we enable the publication of all of the content of peer review and author responses alongside final, published articles. The editorial history of this article is available here: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0225395>

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Data Availability Statement: The data that support the findings of this study are available for researchers who meet the criteria for access to confidential data upon request from the Aboriginal

Barriers and challenges to parenting for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men



We are constantly dealing with the lies, blame and misconceptions

We BEAT our
women

We're ALL lazy

We're DISINTERESTED in
our health

We're
IGNORANT

We DON'T want
help

We're child
MOLESTERS

We're full of
EXCUSES

We're
HOPELESS

It's our OWN
fault

We're all
ALCOHOLICS

What the men are saying about their parenting roles and responsibilities

- “Put food on the table and pay the bills”.
- “Increased responsibilities when you have a child”.
- “Become a role model to your child”.
- “Stepping up to the plate”.
- “Set good examples”.
- “It’s quite easy to be a father, but you’ve got to be a dad as well”.
- “Give them what you never had – a better life”.
- “Put oneself into a position of financial security”.
- “Being present and involved”.
- “Give your child direction”.
- “Support your children”.
- “Being there under any and all circumstances”.
- “Being a guide, a teacher and a friend for your children”.
- “Parents always worry for kids regardless of child’s age”.
- “Give them a good chance in life”.

Family is important

“How my father treated me (and uncles) moulded myself into the person I have become”.

“Depending on the child’s age depends on the kind of relationship you have with your children”.

“Don’t have to have kids to be a father or parent, you still have a fatherly role”.

“If you treat your child good your child treats theirs equally good”.

“Family helped me become a role model. I looked up to my family and now others look up to me”.

“Set an example. Move away from the stereotypical negative Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander male narrative”.

Culture Matters

“Knowing who you are and where you are connected is very important”.

“We need to teach the children respect and we need to teach our children about culture”.

“What made you be a better person/dad? Being back on country”.

“Does not matter what tribe you are from; we are all one”.

“Parenting is not an ‘individuals’ job – a whole community is required”.

“Strong supportive family network and links to culture”.

“One of the elder men has feelings of loneliness and isolation because he has no other older men to learn from or listen too”.

What the men are asking for....

“There’s a lot of programs for mums and bubs and families...and they’re good things, I’m not dragging them down but where’s the dads voice in there?”

“Providing a space like this [men’s parent group] to be able to communicate...it’s so refreshing, and it helps you to understand what you are going through is shared with many others and yeah it takes a bit of weight of your shoulders”.

Three Main Findings

(Resulting from the scoping review and focus groups)

1. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male parents are lacking the necessary resources and support to navigate the realms of parenting in a beneficial way for their children and families.
2. Changes in political will and societal perceptions will go a long way towards increasing and improving the number of appropriate parenting and early years services available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male parents.
3. Given the opportunity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male parents are ready and determined to fulfil their roles and responsibilities as parents to the best of their ability for the benefit of their whole family.

Next Steps

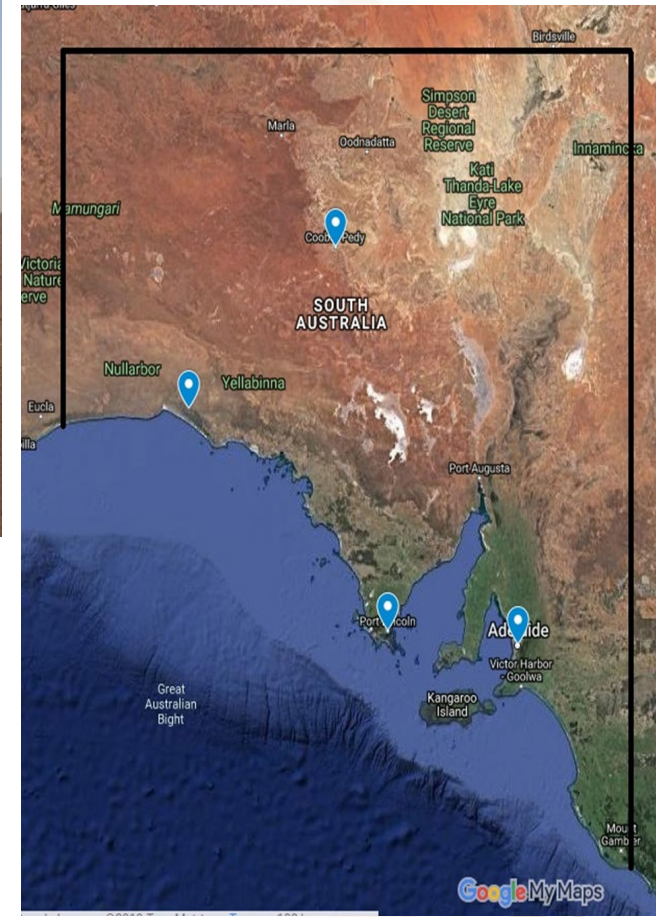
We need to radically rethink and reorient the way maternal and early years services and organisations value and involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male parents into the realms of parenting.

Despite the lack of funding opportunities available **we cannot stop!**

Photo Time



Locations



Acknowledgements



First and foremost – thank you to the men and health services involved in the Strong Dads Strong Futures pilot project. You made us all understand how vitally important this research is.

I would like to acknowledge the significant administrative support provided from the Lowitja Institute, the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (AHCSA) and the Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity Theme and the SAHMRI Women and Kids Theme within the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI).

I would also like to acknowledge all those who provided encouragement and support throughout the Strong Dads Strong Futures pilot project.

Food for Thought

It doesn't matter where we've come from – what does matter is where we're going and hopefully that's towards a maternal and early years space that is;

The end – thank you!

1. Culturally appropriate
2. Culturally supportive
3. Gender inclusive
4. Family oriented

