



Centre for Research Excellence in Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing

From Marginalised to Empowered: Transformative Methods for Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing

In 2010, National Health and Medical Research Council awarded the \$2.5 million Centre for Research Excellence in Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing grant to a group of 10 Chief Investigators headed by Professor Fiona Stanley AC (Director, Telethon Institute for Child Health Research). The CRE partners include the University of Western Australia (UWA), Murdoch University, Curtin University of Technology, the Baker IDI, Pindi Pindi, The National Research Centre for Aboriginal Children, Families and Community and the Combined Universities Centre for Rural Health (CUCRH).

The Centre for Research Excellence in Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing (CREAHW) is a strategic program of intervention research that is focussed on achieving radical and sustainable change for the Aboriginal community and improving the lives of Aboriginal people. The program is a unique validation of Aboriginal knowledge and demonstration of Aboriginal methodology involving a multi-disciplinary team of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers, who will contribute to the body of knowledge, work transparently with the Aboriginal community and embrace Aboriginal culture and ways of thinking.

The CRE brings the research strengths of each of the Chief Investigators together in a cohesive program of community-based intervention research, well known both nationally and internationally, but with local relevance to Western Australia. It will be supported by the outstanding track record of the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research in working with government and informing policy and practice and build on past achievements by developing the next generation of Aboriginal health researchers and leadership among the Chief Investigator team.

The CRE team program of research will build capacity in the community and bridge the disconnect between researchers, service providers and the community in a practical and empowering way. History has seen significant issues, such as racism, perpetuated and become embedded in the Aboriginal community with a significant negative impact on health and wellbeing. The CRE investigators are seeking to change this cycle by listening and working in partnership with the community and investing energy and attention to get the best result for the community. This will require system change and involve investing time with decision makers in order to inform policy and practice.

Advancing the training of researchers

One of the aims of the CRE is to build the capacity of Aboriginal researchers alongside a group of outstanding, independent Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal research leaders. Projects are available through the CRE for advanced or higher degree studies (Masters or PhD).

For further information:

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“We aim to facilitate the empowerment of Indigenous communities so that self determination can take place.”

Funded by



Chief Investigators

Professor Fiona Stanley (TICHR) will provide leadership and mentoring for the CRE. She supervises the quantitative analyses involving the linked data bases with Sandra Eades and others. She will help with advocacy, translation of research and communication of the outputs of the CRE to all major stakeholders and the general public.

Associate Professor Dawn Bessarab (Curtin University) brings experience in Community Participatory Action Research (CPAR) and Indigenous research methodologies to the CRE. Her research program within the CRE will entail partnering with a grass roots Aboriginal drug and alcohol organisation in the development of an assessment tool to assist families of clients addressing their substance abuse programs and applying a gendered analysis to exploring Aboriginal concepts of parenting, the connection of cultural justifications to excuse family violence against women and children and understanding the context to preventable deaths of Aboriginal children from such things as infection and or traffic accidents.

Associate Professor Juli Coffin (CUCRH, UWA) brings research expertise in cultural security, education and research in a diverse range of topics such as sexual health, nutrition, contextualising bullying, health promotion and stroke services. Her specific research interest is to test the effectiveness of her already developed cultural security model (Coffin, 2007) across different health sectors i.e.; State, Aboriginal medical and private health services.

Professor Pat Dudgeon (School of Indigenous Studies, UWA) brings a range of skills and psychological expertise to the CRE. Her project seeks to develop and sustain culturally appropriate Indigenous women leadership skills, working with Aboriginal women leaders to investigate their roles in contemporary society and to look at ways to develop leadership in a transformative process. A psychological empowerment model to sustain Aboriginal women in leadership positions will be developed. How Indigenous men support Indigenous women's leadership will be an outcome.

Professor Sandra Eades (Baker IDI, Melbourne) major roles in the CRE will be to co-supervise with Fiona Stanley several analyses of the linked data particularly in relation to pathways from pregnancy to adult disease. She will also mentor PhD and post-doctoral scientists in grant writing and in designing the most appropriate interventions in Aboriginal communities ie action research methods.

Associate Professor Cheryl Kickett-Tucker (Pindi Pindi, The National Research Centre for Aboriginal Children, Families and Community) aims to extend her research on the development of racial identity and related self-esteem of Aboriginal children, youth and adults (using her IRISE measures across the life span). This research will describe the mediating factors of racial identity and related self-esteem in relation to Aboriginal people's mental wellbeing and identify effective ways to strengthen the social, cultural and emotional wellbeing and identity of Aboriginal children, youth and young adults onwards. This research will encompass development of new instrumentation, complemented by in depth personal interviews using CPAR methods.

Professor Rhonda Marriott (Murdoch University) will conduct a 4 year study to explore the meaning of connection and belonging and health outcomes for Aboriginal people living in two locations in Western Australia (the City of Swan and the Pilbara) and one location in New South Wales (the Hunter New England area around Newcastle). Recommendations will inform non-Aboriginal health care professionals' understanding and better position their provision of culturally appropriate and supportive health care services. This is important and original work and will add to the paucity of knowledge in this area.

Mr Glenn Pearson (TICHR) has 15 years of working within senior levels of the State and Australian Government in the areas of health, education and welfare will bring the experience of policy development into the CRE. His doctoral research explores, from an Aboriginal knowledge perspective, the delivery of education, child health and child protection services to Aboriginal families by the WA State Government.

Associate Professor Roz Walker (TICHR) brings qualitative research expertise particularly in CPAR methods, research into policy, action research and over 25 years of working with Aboriginal communities, building local capacity within both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations. She has taught extensively at under-graduate and graduate level in Aboriginal studies and will be a main mentor for PhD and post-doctoral staff associated with the CRE. Her research involves working with the Martu communities to improve maternal and child health outcomes in the Western Desert and further developing and implementing cultural competence assessment across the health sector to support culturally responsive services.

Dr Michael Wright's (TICHR) project aims to increase the effectiveness of the public mental health service system responsiveness to Indigenous families living in an urban setting whose lives are affected by serious mental illness. He is keen to adapt the methodologies of critical ethnography and CPAR to increase the flexibility of research and service provision in Indigenous settings. He will share this expertise with the CRE, particularly as it relates to the delivery of other services for Aboriginal people, as he works through his post-doctoral studies.