



Ngulluk Koolunga Ngulluk Koort (Our Children, Our Heart) Project



2020/21 Community Update



Telethon Kids Institute Honorary Research Associate presentation

Honorary Research Appointments:

As part of NAIDOC week in 2019 the Telethon Kids Institute acknowledged the work of the Elder Co-Researchers by appointing them to the role of Honorary Research Associates. This is the first time the Institute has appointed Elders to this role. A ceremony was held at the Institute with Director, Jonathan Carapetis and Deputy Director Glenn Pearson presenting the Elder Co-Researchers with their certificates. Aunty Charmaine Pell, Aunty Muriel Bowie, Aunty Doris Hill, Uncle Allan Kickett Snr., Aunty Oriel Green, Uncle Albert McNamara, Aunty Millie Penny, Kerry Hunt, and the late Rev. Sealin Garlett have provided ongoing cultural advice and direction to the project team in all aspects of the research.

Rev. Sealin Garlett:

It is with great sadness that the Telethon Kids Institute marked the passing of Reverend Sealin Garlett AM. Rev Garlett was an extraordinary man, and we were privileged to have Rev. Garlett as one of the Birdiyas (bosses) on the Ngulluk Koolunga Ngulluk Koort (Our Children Our Heart) Project.

As an Elder Co-Researcher, Rev. Garlett made an invaluable contribution to Telethon Kids Institute, not only to our research but also to our community. His wisdom, guidance, compassion, and leadership have shaped our community-led research and made a lasting difference to our work in Aboriginal Health. Rev. Garlett was much loved and respected throughout the community and worked tirelessly to build bridges between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. His passing is a huge loss and we will miss him dearly.

Our thoughts continue to be with his family and loved ones.



Ngulluk Koolunga Ngulluk Koort (Our Children, Our Heart) Project



Ngulluk Koolunga Ngulluk Koort began in 2016 as a five-year research project working together with the Aboriginal community(s) of Perth to improve outcomes for young Aboriginal children and their families. Local Aboriginal Elders and other community members are actively involved in all stages of the project and direct the focus of the research. There have been a number of discussions with the community(s) to talk about the important things that make Aboriginal children strong, protect young Aboriginal children, what is needed to support Aboriginal children, and what gets in the way of raising strong, solid koolunga. These diagrams present the information the community told us.

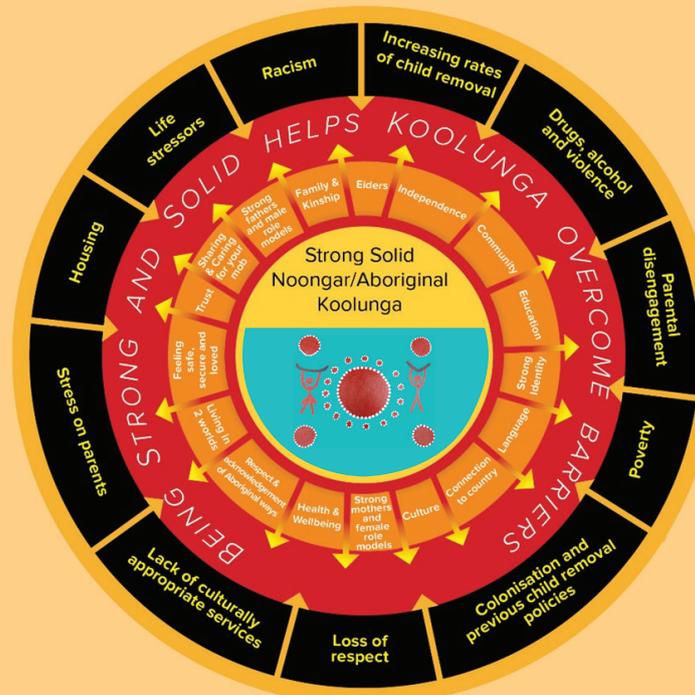
Since 2016 the Ngulluk Koolunga Ngulluk Koort project has worked across three priority areas identified by the community

- 1 Housing and homelessness
- 2 Child protection and removal
- 3 Early childhood education and care

Throughout 2019 and into 2020 the Ngulluk Koolunga Ngulluk Koort project, under the direction of the Elder Co-Researchers, has continued to bridge the gaps between the Aboriginal community(s) of Perth, researchers, policymakers, and service providers.

The Elder Co-Researchers gave presentations about the Ngulluk Koolunga Ngulluk Koort project at three prominent conferences in 2019

- ▶ The Lowitja Institute's International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference in Darwin
- ▶ The SNAICC Conference in Adelaide
- ▶ The Danjoo Koorliny Walking Together Social Impact Festival at the University of Western Australia





Meeting with Minister Howarth

Housing and Homelessness

Our work in the housing and homelessness space has been focused on aligning the project with relevant Aboriginal Community Controlled housing organisations and advocacy groups, participating in consultation processes and forums, contributing to the development and implementation of strategies, and progressing action items from the 2018 Metropolitan Aboriginal Housing Forum that we co-hosted with Shelter WA and Noongar Mia Mia and the 2019 Ngulluk Koolunga Ngulluk Koort Elders Meeting.

In 2019, following directions from the community at the large Elder's meeting, the Elder Co-Researchers worked with Noongar Mia Mia to develop a Housing Standards Code of Conduct that outlines expectations of tenants living in a Noongar Mia Mia property. These standards have been included in the Residential Tenancy Agreement that all tenants sign when moving into a Noongar Mia Mia property. These standards have been very useful in supporting tenants living in Noongar Mia Mia properties.

The Elder Co-Researchers and staff from Shelter WA, Noongar Mia Mia, Murchison Regional Aboriginal

Corporation, Goldfields Indigenous Housing Organisation, and Southern Aboriginal Corporation met with Minister Ken Wyatt (Minister for Indigenous Australians) and then with Minister Howarth (Assistant Federal Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services) to discuss the housing needs of Aboriginal people, the challenges facing Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in the housing sector, and the barriers Aboriginal people experience in accessing appropriate housing.

The Elder Co-Researchers have continued to consult on the development of several housing strategies within the Department of Communities. These include the WA Housing Strategy 2020-2030 and the WA 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness.

The Elder Co-Researchers have also continued their work with Shelter WA as directed at the 2019 Ngulluk Koolunga Ngulluk Koort Elders Meeting. The Elder Co-Researchers have met with Shelter WA's board for Birdiya to Birdiya conversations and have supported Gordon Cole in his new role on the Shelter WA board.

Child Protection and Removal

The Elder Co-Researchers have continued to engage in conversations in the child protection sector, advocating for greater Elder and community input into child protection policy and practice. The Elder Co-Researchers responded to a call for submissions on the establishment of a therapeutic court for child protection matters. In this submission the Elder Co-Researchers offered their support for the therapeutic court model and further advocated for the role of Elders and families in child protection matters. Recommendations from the Elder Co-Researchers in the submission are:

- 1** Harm which has been incurred through historic child removal policies must be acknowledged and mechanisms to restore culture, identity, and place in Aboriginal society for children must be sought
- 2** Establish Elder-led processes in the governance structure of the therapeutic pilot court initiative for child protection matters
- 3** Establish Elder-facilitated Family Group Conferencing to be used as a decision-making forum for the therapeutic pilot court initiative for child protection matters
- 4** Commitment to the employment of Aboriginal staff and senior decision makers

Next steps:

The team are currently awaiting the outcome of several competitive grant applications to continue working in the child protection and removal sector. These include grants submitted to the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) and a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Ideas grant aimed at increasing cultural connection for Aboriginal children in the care of Key Assets. Sharynne has also submitted an Australian Research Council (ARC) DAATSIA grant application. Further grant applications will be developed in 2020 and 2021 to continue our work in the child protection and removal sector.



We are very excited to announce that **Sharynne Hamilton** joined the team in late 2019. Sharynne is a proud Ngunnawal woman with family links to Canberra and Yass who has lived in Perth for 35 years. Sharynne brings extensive expertise in child protection and justice research and advocacy and will be exploring opportunities to advance the Elder and community-identified child protection research priorities.

The Elder Co-Researchers have worked with staff at Key Assets, a non-government organisation who provide out of home care, to work towards improving the cultural connections and wellbeing of Aboriginal children in their care. To support this, the Elder Co-Researchers have met with foster carers and the Aboriginal children in their care to yarn. Elder Co-Researchers have also participated in Birdiya to Birdiya conversations with Key Assets management and staff to share community concerns regarding child protection policy and practice.

During Homelessness Week 2020 the Ngulluk Koolunga Ngulluk Koort Elder Co-Researchers and Gordon Cole (Chair of Noongar Mia Mia and Shelter WA Board member) met with the Hon. Simone McGurk (WA Minister for Child Protection; Women's Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services) to have a yarn about housing and homelessness issues. The Minister gave a commitment to continue to meet with the Elders in partnership with the Hon Peter Tinley AM (WA Minister for Housing).





Meeting with Gordon Cole, John Berger, Lisa Kazalac, Kathleen Gregory and the Hon. Simone McGurk

Early Childhood Education and Care

Based on community consultation with Perth parents and carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in early education settings, a resource was co-designed to help parents and carers to support their child’s cultural needs, and to improve early educators and schools’ knowledge and understanding of some specific, but not limited to, cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children within early education settings in order to strengthen their connection to culture for good mental health and wellbeing. Larissa Perry worked closely with the Early Childhood Education and Care Elder Co-Researcher subgroup to develop the resource in response to community priorities.

Feedback from the community has been positive *“Being able to say this is where we are from, this is who we are and just sort of say this is what we want to change. It’s just showing that again, its conversation with, not to or about, it is looking at this is what Indigenous people would like to see. Yeah, it’s definitely more an inclusive discussion if you do share these resources and if they [early educators] take them on board as well.” [Interview Participant, Beeliar].* The resource has also attracted interest from the Edith Cowan University Faculty of Education and Little Green Steps WA.

The development of this resource was supported by the Australian Health Promotion Association (WA Branch) Health Promotion Scholarship Program, funded by Healthway.



Lowitja Institute’s International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference in Darwin

Next steps:

The resource is available for free on the Ngulluk Koolunga Ngulluk Koort project webpage in both printable and online formats. The Elder Co-Researchers will continue their work in the early childhood education and care sector including through the Lotterywest funded Ngulluk Koolunga Ngulluk Koort Early Years Education and Support program.

Ngulluk Koolunga Ngulluk Koort Early Years Education and Support program

Supported by Lotterywest



In December 2019, the project team was awarded funding from Lotterywest to establish a co-designed Ngulluk Koolunga Ngulluk Koort Early Years Education

and Support program in the Willagee area. This program is intended for Aboriginal children entering pre-kindly (three-year-olds) and their families. The project will run for three years (2021-2023) and will provide a co-designed, culturally safe early education and support program to Aboriginal children and their families as well as a supported pathway into school. The Elder Co-Researchers are providing cultural governance and oversight of the project.

The Ngulluk Koolunga Ngulluk Koort Early Years Education and Support program will begin engaging directly with families in late 2020, with the program fully commencing in term one 2021.



With the Hon. Ken Wyatt AM (Minister for Indigenous Australians) at the Lowitja Institute's International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference in Darwin

Project Team

The Project Team is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the project and consists of:

- ▶ Dr Brad Farrant (Researcher),
- ▶ Carol Michie (Project Officer),
- ▶ Sharynne Hamilton (Researcher),
- ▶ Nicole Ilich (Researcher) and
- ▶ Larissa Perry (Researcher).

The project is also supported by

- ▶ Mr Glenn Pearson,
- ▶ Associate Professor Michael Wright,
- ▶ Professor Cheryl Kickett-Tucker,
- ▶ Dr Carrington Shepherd and
- ▶ Professor Stephen Zubrick.

This group has overall responsibility for driving the vision of the project and the delivery of the project outcomes.



If you would like more information or to become involved in the project please get in touch with:

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