

Perinatal support for
Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander parents experiencing
complex trauma

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The Emu Who Ran Through the Sky is a picture book by Helen Milroy and is offered to parents for their participation in interviews

HPNF is funded by the Lowitja Institute
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Research Council (NHMRC) (1141593).



Investigators' update

We are pleased to share the eleventh *Healing the Past by Nurturing the Future* (HPNF) project newsletter which we circulate three times a year. It has been four years since we started on this journey together and we have all learnt so much.

We are currently transitioning from the Lowitja Institute and National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funded co-design phase, to the Ian Potter Foundation and Medical Research Future Fund [ed] development, implementation and evaluation phase.

We sincerely thank all investigators, team members and allies who have been on the journey so far. There are a few changes, including moving the administrative base from La Trobe University to The University of Melbourne, with subsequent changes to email and website addresses. Please see the new ones on this newsletter and disregard any old ones. We are also excited to introduce several new team members inside this newsletter.

Recruitment for the Aboriginal Complex Trauma and Strengths Assessment Tool (ACTSAT) continues, and an update is provided next page. If you can, please feel free to share the information below.

Please help us with this research

Do you live in Northern Territory, South Australia or Victoria?

Are you Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?

Are you or your partner pregnant or have a child of any age?

We need your help to develop a questionnaire to improve support for parents who have experienced bad or hurtful things in their own childhood.

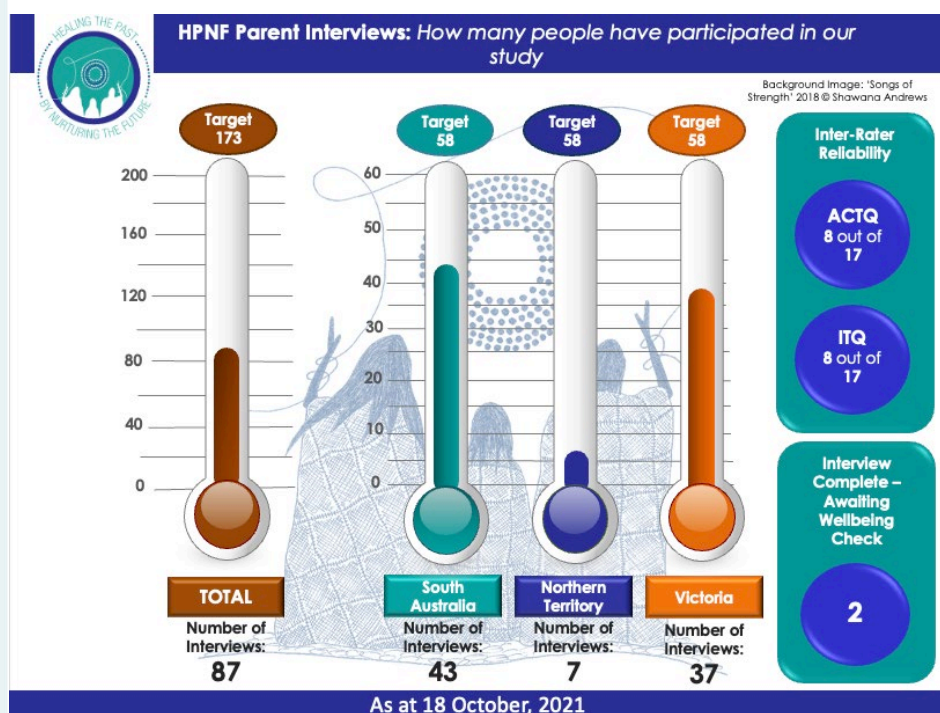
What's involved? Two separate interviews (30 mins to 1 hour each). You will not be asked to provide your personal stories and any information you provide will be strictly private and confidential.

We will provide *supermarket vouchers*, a *thank you gift* and a *book* for your child for your time. If you would like to know more please click [here](#).



Image by Shane Rouch Unsplash

How many people have participated?



ACTSAT Parent Interviews: How many have participated – graphic developed by Dr Shannon Bennetts

Huge thank you to all the parents, partners who have been recruiting, and the interviewers – Cindy Woods, Anni Hine Moana, Cath Chamberlain, Hannah Whetham, Ngaree Blow, Pam McCalman, Karen Glover, Madelyne Hudson, Jill Faulkner, Graham Gee, Alison Elliott, Yvonne Clark, Tanja Hirvonen, Carlie Atkinson, Rachel Reilly, Antonia Burke and Tahnee McBean.

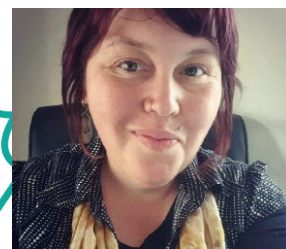
We are also delighted Ms Skye Stewart, from the VACCHO Koori Maternity Service, has joined the interviewer team.

New project staff

We are delighted to welcome new team members to the *Healing the Past by Nurturing the Future* project.

Skye Stewart

My name is Skye Stewart and I am a Registered Midwife. First and foremost, I am a proud Wergaia and Wemba Wemba Custodian and Caretaker. My cultural role and responsibility is to do what I can to ensure that Aboriginal parents and their babies stay safe, well, alive and together.



Skye Stewart



Image by Jeremy Bishop Unsplash

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Self Esteem Flower

Written by Diana Murphy
Illustrations by Roslyn Richards, Georgie Trevorrow & Natasha Sumner
May 2021

The soil was rich with all the most important ingredients like:

- Culture
- Wisdom
- Ancestral Knowledge
- Universal Respect

that are needed for growing the strongest most beautiful flowers.



Self Esteem Flower written by Diana Murphy
Illustrations by Roslyn Richards, Georgie Trevorrow & Natasha Sumner May 2021

This book was created for young people aged between 7-10 years as a promotion, prevention and early intervention resource. The story aims to introduce the concepts of resilience through adversity and reward for effort in simple terminology with a connection to the land.

I have worked with Aboriginal communities around Victoria since I was little, following my Mum around when she was a health worker at a local Aboriginal Co-op. Over the years I have supported many Aboriginal families accessing and navigating the maternity care system. Many of these families experienced vulnerability with complex trauma backgrounds however have shown incredible resilience and courage. The capacity as humans to 'come home to oneself' and begin to heal is a driving force of the work I do.

Deb Bowman

Yaama, my name is Debra Bowman. I am a proud Ngemba woman from Brewarrina, NSW currently living and working on the south coast of NSW in Nowra with my husband Lee. What is important to me and what I value the most is love and connection to my family, country and culture. I'm currently studying a Masters degree with the University of Melbourne & The Dulwich Centre in Adelaide in Narrative Therapy & Community Work, which I am very passionate about as storytelling and yarning comes natural to my cultural ways of being and keeps me grounded and connected to my cultural heritage.



Deb Bowman

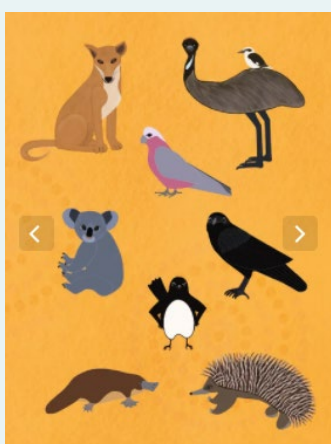
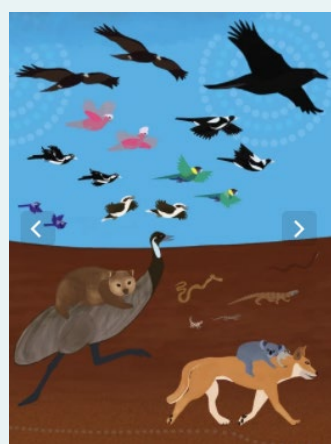
Renee Fiolet

I am a non-Indigenous woman born and raised on Wadawurrung Country (of the Kulin Nation) where I still live today. I feel terribly lucky to be a visitor on these beautiful lands that include the beaches along the Surf Coast of South Victoria.

I have a background in nursing which is primary health care focused and have been in academia for a long time but mostly in teaching roles. My research priorities include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, health equity and addressing the barriers marginalised people experience when accessing health care. My thesis reported on the community-based participatory methods used to a co-designed family violence resource developed with the Wadawurrung community for their community members.



Renee Fiolet



Willy-willy Wagtail by Helen Milroy is from the Tales of the Bush Mob series about a group of animals that works together to solve problems. The book is offered to parents and children as a special gift for participating in interviews.

Kim Jones

I am a non-indigenous researcher born on Awabakal Country, now living on Wurundjeri Country in the Kulin Nation. I am a Research Fellow with expertise in evidence synthesis and trauma research. My research interests are focused on health equity in marginalised populations. I am passionate about improving health and wellbeing outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations.



Kim Jones

I completed undergraduate studies in biomedical science, a PhD in Neuroscience studying the effect of stress-related immune responses in the brain, and a Master of International Public Health at UNSW. My background includes work in health behaviour research, knowledge translation, clinical trials, chronic illness translational research, and trauma-related mental health research. I have extensive experience in guideline development, evidence synthesis, and research project design and implementation.

Elise Davis

I am a non-Indigenous woman, living on Wurundjeri country. I am a public health researcher with a background in psychology. I have led research projects in child and adult mental health and wellbeing for 20 years. I have worked in academic settings and in non-government organisations. I have expertise in the following areas: mental health, disability, evaluation, outcome measurement, co-design, qualitative and quantitative research, and knowledge translation.



Elise Davis

Ilias (Leo) Kamitsis

I am a psychologist and have worked extensively with Aboriginal men who have experienced an addiction to alcohol and/or other drugs, complex trauma and other mental health issues. I have listened to stories of many Aboriginal men who have experienced severe trauma, but who have also shown incredible courage to overcome their difficulties and embark on a journey of healing.



Leo Kamitsis

I completed my PhD in October of 2020 at Orygen and the University of Melbourne's Centre for Youth Mental Health. I did a qualitative study exploring how people with a history of childhood trauma and psychosis

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experience the effects of antipsychotic medications on trauma-related thoughts, emotions, physical responses, and dissociative symptoms.

Project update

Huge thankyou to Dr Cindy Woods for preparing this summary of some of our achievements so far:



Image by Deniz Altindas Unsplash

Healing the Past by Nurturing the Future:
Aboriginal parents' views of what helps support
recovery from complex trauma
Indigenous health and well-being: targeted primary
health care across the life course

Catherine Chamberlain^{1,2}, Yvonne Clark^{3,4}, Stacey Hokke⁵, Angela Hampton⁶,
Caroline Atkinson⁶ and Shawana Andrews⁷ for the HPNF investigator group¹

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University, Perth, Western Australia; ³SAHMRI Women and Kids Theme, South Australian Health and Medical
Research Institute, Adelaide, South Australia; ⁴School of Psychology, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, South
Australia; ⁵Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia; ⁶We Al-li Pty Ltd,
Goolimang, New South Wales, Australia and ⁷School of Health Sciences, University of Melbourne, Melbourne,
Victoria, Australia

HPNF latest publication – please see next page



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New publications

We are proud to share our latest publications:

1. Healing the Past by Nurturing the Future: Aboriginal parents' views of what helps support recovery from complex trauma. See full article [link](#).
2. https://www.cochrane.org/CD014874/BEHAV_interventions-during-pregnancy-or-two-years-after-birth-parents-who-are-experiencing-complex-trauma
3. 10 Ways we can better respond to the pandemic in a trauma-informed way. See the full article [here](#)!

Please see our [website](#) for previous publications and several other articles are in different stages of preparation for submission and review.

Conference presentations

Cath Chamberlain delivered two presentations at the World Association for Infant Mental Health Congress. 19-21 June 2021- Please get in touch if you would like copies of these.

- Supporting Aboriginal Families to Stay Together from the Start (SAFeST Start): Key learnings from the Healing the Past by Nurturing the Future project.
- Healing the Past by Nurturing the Future: co-designing perinatal awareness, recognition, assessment and support for Aboriginal parents experiencing complex childhood trauma.

APPRISE workshop

Thank you to everyone who participated in the workshop on the 14th and 15th October to develop a culturally-responsive trauma-informed public health emergency framework for First Nations communities during COVID-19.



This is very timely as we are seeing the stress of the pandemic taking its toll, and trauma may be impacting on community members' confidence in taking up important life-saving prevention measures – such as vaccination. Christina Heris and team drafted a very comprehensive literature review to inform the discussions, and a brief Conversation article [here](#). De-identified data collected about COVID-19 from parent interviews was also shared to inform discussions, and we thank the experts who joined to present and participate.

Emerging Minds online resources

We are very grateful to [Emerging Minds](#) for supporting development of some practical resources about 'what would be helpful for non-Indigenous practitioners to know when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents experiencing complex trauma?' The team have been working to develop a set of freely available online interactive modules which we hope will be available in 2022.



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MRFF project community meetings

We have enjoyed having our first meetings with key MRFF project partners – the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) and La Trobe Regional Hospital. It's early days of just getting to know each other and getting administrative things sorted – but we hope to be starting this important work early 2022 and will keep you posted.

The First 1000 Days online course is CPD accredited

The First 1000 Days online course has received CPD accreditation from the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. GPs can now acquire 40 accreditation points on course completion. The course provides health care practitioners with the information they need to do their best work with families during the first 1000 days, from pre-conception to the end of a child's second year. It explores how to implement the cultural determinants of health to provide strong foundations for lifelong wellbeing, as well as how the First 1000 Days Australia model can be established and implemented across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities Australia-wide.

[Click here to find out more.](#)



Karabena Coaching Self-Care Course

To stand in solidarity with health care workers and the communities they serve, and recognising the impact of COVID in our communities, Karabena Coaching has developed a self-care course which is available NOW. It is a self-paced course containing 11 lessons outlining key health and wellbeing messages across physical, mental, social and emotional health and wellbeing.

We have developed a workbook to support people develop a self-care plan, and an emergency self-care plan during these uncertain times. This is a course based on evidence of 'what works'. Individuals, families and workers can use these lessons to reflect on what is important for them in promoting their own self-care, and the self-care of others. Please enjoy - feedback is welcome! Free of charge to all. [Click here](#) for more information.

