

Aboriginal families STUDY

Community Newsletter

OCTOBER 2010

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Katrina Williams (artist, left) and Karen Glover (Chair, Aboriginal Advisory Group, right) holding 'Women and children gathering bush tucker'. Katrina's painting was awarded first prize in the Aboriginal Families Study Artwork Competition.



"The painting shows how a pregnant woman is looked after by her grandmother and mother, and they encourage her to eat healthy food and to go to the health service or the doctor regularly until she has her baby".

Women and children gathering bush tucker, KATRINA WILLIAMS 2009

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Acknowledgements

Murdoch Childrens Research Institute (MCRI), University of South Australia (UniSA), Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (AHCSA) and SA Health respectfully acknowledge the Aboriginal Custodians of the Land and Waters of Australia. We recognise the diversity of Aboriginal language groups, cultures, customs and child rearing practices.

We acknowledge and thank the many Aboriginal families who have already played an important role in the development of the Aboriginal Families Study through the community consultation and the development of the questionnaire. Many more families will take part in the study through interviews, providing comments and giving of their time. Their stories will help build stronger, culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal families.

The Aboriginal Families Study is a research project which will invite women to talk about pregnancy and birthing care, and the support they had from services before and after their baby was born. The research findings will be used to strengthen services so they can provide better care and support for Aboriginal families.

The beginning of the Aboriginal Families Study

In 2007 researchers at MCRI and UniSA talked to AHCSA about running a research project to ask Aboriginal women across South Australia what they thought about the care they received when they were pregnant, in hospital and when they went home after the birth of their baby.

Community consultations were held across South Australia in 2007-2008 to ask Aboriginal communities if they thought this project should go ahead and also how it should be run.

An Aboriginal Advisory Group was set up to guide the researchers in conducting the consultation and in really understanding what communities were saying.

The consultation was conducted by two Aboriginal research officers Roxanne Miller and Hayley Wilson, who are still working on the project.

AHCSA then decided to form a partnership with the researchers and conduct the research with them. AHCSA thought it would be an important project to do and that the researchers would conduct it well.

Roxanne Miller (left) and Hayley Wilson (right) during a recent visit to Port Lincoln.



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"The Aboriginal Families Study understands that communities can bring forward their issues and that they know the answers to their problems"

Aunty May Turner
ABORIGINAL ADVISORY
GROUP

What came out of the community consultations?

Some clear messages came out of the consultations. Communities said:

- > they wanted to make sure Aboriginal women and families receive the support they need when having a baby
- > families, including dads, need information about pregnancy and what happens at the birth and afterwards. They sometimes need support with transport and accommodation and with issues like mental health, drugs and alcohol or feeling safe at home
- > they wanted services to respect Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal ways of doing things, including Aboriginal birthing ways and ceremonies.

We were told that confidential interviews were the best way to hear women's views about the care and support they receive during pregnancy and afterwards.



"The community consultations showed the importance of family and family issues in pregnancy. In 2010, Aboriginal families having a baby face many important issues such as the role of Aboriginal traditional birthing practices in today's world and the role of men in pregnancy and birth."

Karen Glover
CHAIR ABORIGINAL ADVISORY GROUP

Getting ready to start the research in 2011

The research project will start in early 2011. Aboriginal women across South Australia will be invited to participate as well as non Aboriginal women with an Aboriginal partner. Women who decide to take part will have a confidential interview using a questionnaire booklet.

In 2010 Roxanne, Hayley and the research co-ordinator, Rosie King, have been asking women to check the questionnaire booklet to make sure that all the important issues are covered and to get the women's feedback on the interview questions.

Roxanne, Hayley and Rosie would like to offer their special thanks to the network of service providers for asking women to take part, for providing transport and for accommodating them. They are grateful for the generosity shown to them by:

- > Pika Wiya and the Early Years Parenting Centre (Port Augusta)
- > Adelaide Central Community Health Service for allowing us to visit the 'Alberton Playgroup' and the 'Korka Babies Group'
- > the midwives at Northern Women's Community Health Service
- > Hackham West Community Centre 'Nunga Mum's and Bub's Group'
- > Nunkuwarrin Yunti 'Brady Street Clinic', and
- > Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service.

REFLECTIONS FROM ROXANNE AND HAYLEY ON CHECKING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

It was good for Rosie and Hayley to come over to Port Lincoln and do some of the piloting, as we had about 12 babies born in the December and January months, so we needed to get some of the piloting done here.

The Aboriginal Football and Netball Carnival that was held in Port Augusta in October 2009, I gave out booklets on the Aboriginal Family Study, so if every Aboriginal women read this booklet, are able to understand what work myself and the team are doing and with your input, it will be better for our women in the future when they have their babies.

Roxanne Miller ABORIGINAL RESEARCH OFFICER

It has been a privilege to hear women's pregnancy stories. I am grateful for the openness that the women showed us and willingness to take us in and share their pregnancy journey with us.

Sometimes these personal stories are not easy to tell a stranger. The women's support and participation has been really important to us in helping to develop the questionnaire to make it as good as it can be. It has helped me appreciate that every women's story is unique and powerful and when we put them all together we hope that they will present a strong case to help improve services for Aboriginal women and families.

Hayley Wilson ABORIGINAL RESEARCH OFFICER

Aboriginal Families Study Artwork



Raymond Bendessi (left) also won a prize in the Aboriginal Families Study Artwork Competition. He is seen here holding his painting, *Empowerment through knowledge* (2009) with Karen Glover (Aboriginal Advisory Group, right).

“The painting represents the main role that groups which provide free help to those in need play in our community. The crossing over lines in the painting represent the need for all races and people from all classes of society to work together in researching ways to improve services to the community. The smallest space on the canvass is representative of the services available to help men cope with misfortune”.

Empowerment through knowledge, RAYMOND BENDESSI, 2009

How will communities be involved in the Aboriginal Families Study?

Aboriginal communities have been advising the Aboriginal Families Study since it began. Over the next 3 years, there will be more consultation with communities and the Aboriginal Advisory Group will continue to guide the researchers.

Community organisations will be involved in a range of ways, including having pamphlets about the study for women to read and take home. Newsletters will be sent out until the research project is finished.

What will happen to the research results?

The information that women provide in the interviews will be confidential so it won't be possible to know what any one particular woman has said.

Over the 18 month period in which interviews will be conducted, some of the results will be analysed so service providers and policy makers can start making changes to services where necessary.

When all the interviews are completed, all the information will be collected, analysed and taken back to communities for community workshops, to get feedback and to make sure we have completely understood what women have said.

After we know that communities are happy with the results we will give them to service organisations and government who will use the results to make improvements to services.

Children, Youth and Women's Health Service, Country Health SA and the Department of Health are already involved in the project. They are part of the Aboriginal Families Study Partnership, a group of organisations who are committed to making sure that the research results are translated into action and lead to improved services for Aboriginal women and families.

“At the end of the project communities must feel that their efforts in supporting the project have been worthwhile”.

Glenise Coulthard
ABORIGINAL ADVISORY GROUP

“The research will be sound, the results will be important and it must lead to improved services for Aboriginal families”.

Alwin Chong
ABORIGINAL HEALTH COUNCIL OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND ABORIGINAL FAMILIES STUDY PARTNERSHIP MEMBER