

Perinatal support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents who have experienced complex childhood trauma.

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## Investigators' report and project update

We are pleased to share the sixth *Healing the Past by Nurturing the Future* (HPNF) project newsletter which we circulate three times a year.

What a start to 2020, with bushfires and then a global pandemic. Our thoughts are with all people affected and hope you are managing to stay safe and well.

We have been preparing for 'phase 3', which will involve asking parents to help evaluate questions to include in an Aboriginal Complex Trauma Questionnaire and a final round of discussion groups with parents and service providers. Preparation has included; recruiting interviewers in all three jurisdictions, preparing online and face-to-face interviewer training, and preparing ethics submissions in all three jurisdictions (Victoria, South Australia and Northern Territory). Thank you to Shannon Bennetts, Graham Gee and Cindy Woods for all the hard work going into this. We were hoping to start parent recruitment in May 2020, but this has been suspended with COVID-19 and we will reassess this later in the year.

We have also started to develop plans and funding submissions to implement recommendations from Workshop 3. We'd love to hear any suggestions, particularly in light of challenges with COVID-19. Please contact us or visit our [website](#) for further information.

## Welcome Cindy

We are delighted to welcome [Dr. Cindy Woods](#) who has joined the HPNF team as Senior Research Fellow (full time) and is based in Melbourne. Cindy is a mid-career researcher and her research focuses on Indigenous health and wellbeing, substance abuse, patient safety, rural and remote health and pregnancy/birth. Cindy brings a wealth of research expertise to the team, including in statistics and systematic reviews across a broad range of topics.



Dr. Cindy Woods

## Welcome Hannah

We are also delighted to welcome Hannah Whetham, who has joined the HPNF team as a Research Officer based in Adelaide (part time). Hannah has a background in developmental psychology and public health. She has research interests in Indigenous health and wellbeing; social, emotional and cognitive development; supporting mothers and families to improve child outcomes; and improving chronic condition prevention and management. She has worked to empower First Nations' children and families in research, project and service delivery roles, and has worked in education, health, and community development. She recently worked in partnership with communities and RFDS across rural and remote SA to roll out a pilot 'flying headspace' program.



Hannah Whetham



Associate Professor Cath Chamberlain and Dr. Graham Gee at Workshop 3

## Third key stakeholder workshop

Thank you everyone who participated in the third key stakeholder workshop, and for sharing their wisdom and expertise that made the two-day workshop very successful. The purpose of this workshop was to reflect on evidence and learnings from this community-based participatory action research project and co-design practical strategies to improve perinatal awareness, recognition, assessment and support for Aboriginal parents experiencing complex trauma.

The workshop was held at the historical Aborigines Advancement League which provided a sense of deep connection and safety for us all participating. Our safe space was supported with excellent facilitation by Wurundjeri leader Sue-Anne Hunter, and we thank Aunty Irene Morris for providing a Welcome to Country. We all enjoyed a range of activities to make the day fun as well as productive, including basket weaving with Aunty Dot Lovett, performances by the Djirri Djirri Dancers and Damien Nicholson who played the didgeridoo. The incredible singing by Kartanya Maynard and the Deadly Nannas was a special experience for us all.



Damien Nicholson playing the didgeridoo at Workshop 3





Djirri Djirri Dancers performing at Workshop 3

Also, our sincere thanks to Lee Couch who provided a calming Wayapa session to relax and wind down after the first day of the workshop, and to Dr. Rachel Reilly for offering counselling support if needed.

Led by Aboriginal facilitators, there were lots of group discussions which have generated invaluable information to inform future plans and these are available in the Workshop 3 Report [view by clicking on [link](#)].



Aborigines Advancement League, Thornbury



The Baggarook project team were awarded the 2019 Victorian Government's Public Healthcare Award for Improving Aboriginal Health

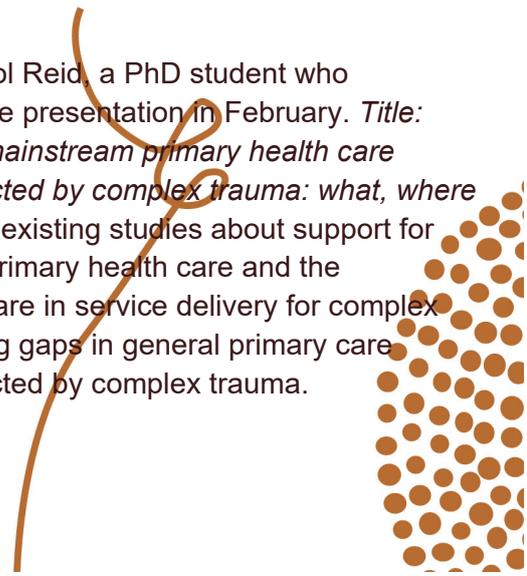
## Congratulations!

A huge congratulations to Helen McLachlan and the Baggarook project team who were awarded the [2019 Victorian Government's Public Healthcare Award for Improving Aboriginal Health](#). "Woman's Journey: Baggarook Yurrongi, Nurragh Manma Buliana" is a 5-year NHMRC funded Partnership Project with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), the Royal Women's Hospital, the Mercy Hospital for Women, Sunshine Hospital (Western Health) and Goulburn Valley Health. The team are pleased that of the 55 finalists the Department of Health & Human Services chose to feature their project in a [short video](#).

We are pleased to congratulate Carol Reid, a PhD student who completed her confirmation milestone presentation in February. *Title: Trauma-informed care in Victorian mainstream primary health care settings for Aboriginal parents impacted by complex trauma: what, where and how?* Carol's work will focus on existing studies about support for parents and will examine Victorian primary health care and the understanding of trauma-informed care in service delivery for complex trauma. It will contribute to identifying gaps in general primary care settings for Aboriginal parents impacted by complex trauma.



Image credit: Birthing tree, ink on paper, 2018 Shawana Andrews





## New Project Partner

We are delighted to announce that we will be working in partnership with the Deadly Nanna's [Moorundi Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service Inc. \(ACCHS\)](#). Moorundi's mission is to holistically improve the health of their community from a cultural perspective. In Ngarrindjeri, the word 'Moorundi' means river and refers directly to the Murray River. For the people of the Ngarrindjeri nation, the river is where all life begins and the connection between health and water is intricately linked to the culture of the Ngarrindjeri community.

## Publications

Two articles have been recently published for the *Healing the Past by Nurturing the Future* project:



Image of shared weaving created by participants at workshop 3 and guided by Aunty Dot Lovett

1. "Pregnancy, birth and early postpartum experiences and views of parents with a history of childhood maltreatment" published in *PLOS ONE*. Link to [full article](#). A plain language research summary of this article has been prepared by [Dr. Shannon Bennetts](#) and is [now available](#).
2. "Framework and protocol for a community-based participatory action research study", accepted for publication in *BMJ Open*. This paper describes the overarching protocol and conceptual framework used to guide the *Healing the Past by Nurturing the Future* project. Link to [full article](#).

A paper describing Aboriginal perspectives about complex trauma and engaging with parents (from Workshop 2 discussions) has been submitted for review.

## Upcoming Conference Presentations

[Associate Professor Catherine Chamberlain](#) recently participated in a Healing Foundation Knowledge Circle workshop to develop resources to support Aboriginal families healing from complex trauma.

Associate Professor Catherine Chamberlain will present at the [WHA Perinatal Mental Health Special Interest Group Web Conference](#) on 28th July, 2020. In this presentation Cath will discuss:

- Risks and opportunities for supporting parents who are experiencing complex childhood trauma during the perinatal period
- The views and experiences of parents who have experienced trauma in their own childhood
- Suggestions of ways to support Aboriginal parents experiencing complex trauma from a community co-design process.



Healing Foundation Knowledge Circle Workshop participants

Emeritus Professor Judy Atkinson, Dr. Caroline Atkinson and Associate Professor Catherine Chamberlain have been invited to take part in an Emerging Minds/MHPN Webinar on the **4<sup>th</sup> May, 2020 7.15 pm (AEST)** where they will outline **practical strategies for identifying and understanding the effects of intergenerational trauma and providing accessible support for children**. To register [click here](#).

The following week an interdisciplinary panel of experts will **explore and identify challenges and treatment opportunities for children and families during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak**. [MHPN](#) Webinar 'Working with children and families during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak' **Thursday 30th April, 2020 7.15 pm (AEST)** Click [here](#) for webinar details and registration.

The National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioural Medicine (NICABM) present this short [discussion with mental health experts](#) on how to **help providers who are feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, or afraid during COVID-19?**

Centre for Paediatric Stress present '[Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Toolkit for Emotional Coping for Healthcare Staff \(TECHS\)](#)'

## Lowitja Institute Scholarships for 2020

The Lowitja Institute has just released [Scholarship opportunities for 2020](#). In 2020, the Lowitja Institute is offering three types of scholarships:

- [Postgraduate top-up Scholarship](#)
- [Graduate Certificate](#), and
- [Certificate IV](#).

For further details on each of the available scholarships, including eligibility criteria and application form, please go to the Lowitja Institute [website](#).

### Self-care during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak



#### Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Social and Emotional Wellbeing, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

The recently established [Gayaa Dhuwi \(Proud Spirit\) Australia](#) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention national leadership body is now live. Click [here](#) for tips for staying healthy and strong during the coronavirus outbreak. For further resources and reliable information, including how to get mental health support, see the longer version of this tip sheet by clicking [here](#). © **Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia Ltd.** Artwork © Roma Winmar

#### Self-care tip 😊 Walking: 'A Superpower'

Walking unlocks the cognitive powers of the brain like nothing else, making us happier, healthier and brainier\* so put on some comfy shoes and get strolling.

\*<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/jul/28/its-a-superpower-how-walking-makes-us-healthier-happier-and-brainier>