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ACU Institute of Child Protection Studies 2019

Doing *good* business

A resource for researchers about conducting research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children about family violence.

This resource was prepared by staff at the ACU Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) based on research conducted by Dr Debbie Noble-Carr and Professor Morag McArthur. The following ICPS staff contributed to the research and resource development: Dr Debbie Noble-Carr, Professor Morag McArthur, Professor Daryl Higgins, Sam Morley, Steve Roche, Sebastian Trew and Alex Cahill.

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Contents

The aim of this resource 5

Understanding family violence for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children 7

- Why some Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children may experience violence 7
- The effects of family violence on children 9
- Why should researchers talk to children about family violence? 9
- The benefits of researchers talking with children 11
- Children's rights provide a foundation for good research 11
- Conducting research that is safe and culturally sound for children 13
- Values and principles for ethical conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research 14
- Ensuring researchers gain consent from children, their families and communities 17
- Including families and communities in research with children 18

A research approach best suited to children 19

- Participatory action research 19
- Evaluations 19
- How can research with individuals, families and communities be designed and implemented to ensure participants benefit from participation rather than harmed? 21

Reflection questions and resources 25

- Who? – The right people to conduct the research 25
  - What we know and what we learnt 25
  - Critical questions for researchers to consider 27
  - Engaging family and community 28
  - Resources 29
- Who am I working with and for? – Working in partnership 29
  - What we know and what we learnt 29
  - Getting others involved during the study 31
  - Critical questions for researchers to consider 32

Engaging family and community 34
Resources 36
When? – The right time to conduct research 37
What we know and what we learnt 37
Critical questions for researchers to consider 39
Engaging family and community 39
Resources 41
Where? – Appropriate spaces and places for research 42
What we know and what we learnt 42
Critical questions for researchers to consider 44
Engaging family and community 45
Resources 46
How? – Appropriate research methodologies and methods 46
What we know and what we learnt 46
Critical questions for researchers to consider 49
Engaging family and community 50
Resources 52

Appendix – About the scoping study 55
Table 1: Participants in the scoping study (number and profile) 56

References 58

The aim of this resource

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the First Peoples of Australia, representing the oldest continuous cultures in the world with diverse languages, kinship structures and ways of life.

This resource is designed for people who may be interested in funding or conducting research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on the topic of family violence. It is informed by the views of Indigenous researchers, research ethics committee members, Elders and senior community members, service providers, parents and young people from remote, rural, regional and urban Australia who participated in a scoping study. For information on the study see the Appendix.

This resource has a specific focus on conducting research with children on the topic of family violence. It is designed to complement, rather than replace, existing resources that provide guidance on ethical research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

This resource is also designed to inform community and/or family members who may be asked to support and/or provide consent for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children to participate in research on family violence. It explains that children (their families and communities) have a right to make decisions about their participation in research. This resource informs individuals, family and community members about the responsibilities researchers have, to ensure that children (their families and communities) are enabled to provide prior, informed and free consent to participate in, and to be protected from harm during any type of research.

It aims to assist family or community members to understand:

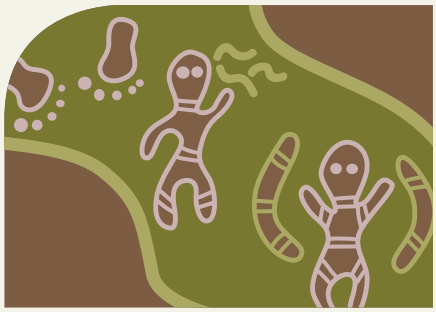
- why research with children on family violence may be of benefit
- the best-practice principles that should be followed by researchers
- which questions community and family members can ask researchers to help them feel confident in supporting the process of seeking consent from children to participate in research.

The research team acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities cannot and should not be treated as a single entity: “Before British colonisation of the Australian continent there were at least 260 distinct language groups, each with their own distinct history, culture, and social, religious and spiritual activities” (Salmon et al., 2018, p. 1). For a visual representation of this diversity, see: https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/aiatsis-map-indigenous-australia

Despite the past and continuing adversity faced by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, children and families, not all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, families and communities experience or perpetrate violence.

This resource aims to provide general information and guidance that should be considered and adapted by researchers to meet the needs of each distinct individual, family and community with whom they hope to engage. It also provides suggestions for researchers about how to provide information for families and communities whose children may be asked to participate in research.

The use of the word ‘children’ throughout the document refers to both children and young people.



Understanding
family violence for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children

Family violence has been acknowledged as an issue of national importance for the whole population, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. In Indigenous families or communities, family violence is understood as:

> "A wide range of physical, emotional, sexual, social, spiritual, cultural, psychological and economic abuses that may occur within families, intimate relationships, extended families, kinship networks and communities" (Aboriginal Affairs Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force, 2003, p. 123).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who participated in a scoping study to create this resource emphasised the importance of researchers considering how other violence within and across communities also impacts on children and families.

Lateral violence was especially noted by participants in the study as being a significant issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Study participants explained that lateral violence occurs within and across families and communities and is created by experiences of powerlessness. They stated that it includes the following behaviours: gossiping, threats, payback, bullying, feuding, quarrelling, lashing out at people, shaming and physical violence.

Why some Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children may experience violence

There are many helpful publications that assist researchers to understand the unique vulnerability that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children have to experiences of violence – from within or outside of their family unit (see Atkinson 2002; McGlade 2013; Milroy 2014, Telethon Institute, 2017).

Children's vulnerability is not due to their Aboriginality but is best understood within the historical context of racist social attitudes and discriminatory legislation and policies and practices against Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The following factors must be recognised in any policy and practice response:

- the continued impacts of colonisation and social policies that resulted in dispossession of lands
- the destruction of culture and disruption of family and community life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- the continuing experience of racism

- the lack of cultural safety (especially when trying to access supports)
- intergenerational trauma.

The participants in the scoping study confirmed that individual and communal grief, loss, disempowerment and trauma lie at the heart of family and community violence for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. They explained that due to this, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people who use violence are likely to have been the victims of violence themselves and may also live within violent communities. As such, some of the participants suggested that terms such as 'victim' and 'perpetrator' are best avoided and could be replaced with 'people who use violence' or 'people who have had violence used against them'.

The study participants reported concerns that violence has become "normalised" in some families and/or communities, to the extent that some Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children may consider it to be an expected and accepted part of current or future relationships.

When violence becomes normalised in this way, violent behaviours and their impacts can be minimised, dismissed or overlooked. Many participants in our study stressed the need to acknowledge and confront the level of violence that exists in some families and communities and the need to talk openly about finding ways to prevent and respond to violence.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities often require targeted strategies and supports, designed to meet their unique needs. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people should be given the chance to help inform and develop the strategies and supports that are designed to meet their needs. Colonisation and social policies that resulted in dispossession of lands, destruction of culture and disruption of family and community life for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and the continuing experience of racism, lack of cultural safety (especially when trying to access supports) and intergenerational trauma continue to affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This must also be recognised in any response.

Participants in our study noted that a recognition of past policies and intergenerational trauma is vital so that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children can grow up safe and strong.

The effects of family violence on children

The effects of family or community violence on children can be significant. Participants in this study indicated that experiencing violence as a child can lead to:

- the early adoption of caring and protective roles for family members
- feelings of shame and poor levels of self-worth and self-esteem
- hypervigilance and a general lack of trust in others
- reduced school attendance and early school leaving
- challenging behaviours and the use of violence
- homelessness or removal from family by child protection authorities
- mental health problems
- harmful behaviours such as drug abuse, self-harm or suicide.

The study participants stated that *"courageous conversations"* are required to discuss violence and remain optimistic about the capacity of families and communities to keep children safe. It is important that the best interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remain central in these conversations and that children are also given an opportunity to participate.

Why should researchers talk to children about family violence?

When violence becomes normalised, violent behaviours and their effects are minimised, dismissed or overlooked. No child, regardless of cultural background, should have to live with violence. It is important to acknowledge and confront the level of violence that exists in some families and communities and to talk openly about ways to prevent and better respond to it. This is vital to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children growing up safe and strong. As one participant said:

> *"Traditionally as a society, our children were gifts from the spirit world…they are everyone's responsibility…and we are compelled by our ancestors to always put our children first."* (Study participant)

Children have unique and important perspectives on issues that affect them, their families and communities. Participants in this scoping study confirmed that children are currently given few opportunities to be included in broader conversations about important family issues. As a result, we know little about how children understand or experience family violence, or what children want and need in response to this issue.

"[Things will not work] unless you get Aboriginal people to say, 'Look this is what we need'. Not 'this is what you're going to have'." (Study participant).

Children's perspectives are an important piece of the puzzle in informing good policy and programs that can help prevent or respond to the violence that may impact on their lives.

There is currently very little information available about 'what works' in preventing and responding to violence for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, their families and communities. Research can be a helpful way to capture, build and share Aboriginal knowledge and community expertise. It is currently one of the best ways we can inform and improve policy and practice to ensure positive outcomes and safety for children and families. As scoping participants stated:

"Let my children know that it's okay to stand up and speak your piece."

"Let's break that cycle, let's find out what they want, see if we can help them."

"Well, we're developing young leaders, really, by allowing them to talk about it... So, it's making our kids strong for their future relationships and what they come to accept in relationships and what they will stand for."

Previous research found that, when asked, children often want to be involved in talking about important issues like violence and they feel they have unique and important perspectives on issues that matter to them and their families and communities (Noble-Carr, McArthur, & Moore, 2017).

The benefits of researchers talking with children

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people we spoke with emphasised the importance of including children in research. They said this is vital in order to find out what makes our children, families and communities strong.

Participants in the scoping study thought that nurturing and encouraging children to talk about important issues like violence could have the following benefits for them, their families and communities. These included:

- acknowledging lived experience
- helping children to (re)claim culture as a strength
- giving children a safe place to have a say about the issues that impact on them
- reducing the normalisation of violence
- promoting help-seeking and access to appropriate supports for them and their families
- strengthening connections to culture and country
- building the capacity and confidence of children and young people to become the next generation of leaders and change makers in their communities.

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states: Children have the right to give their opinion and adults must listen and take these views seriously

Children's rights provide a foundation for good research

If children, families and communities decide to participate in research it is imperative that they be provided with further choices, and as much control as possible, to decide how they will participate and to help inform decisions about how their information will be used.

It is vital that researchers understand **children's rights** before they seek to include them, their family and/or community in research activities. Children's rights need to be explained in a clear and concise way to all research participants and stakeholders.

Ensuring there is broad understanding of children's rights to participation (as well as protection) is important. Some of the participants in the scoping study pointed out that if adults exclude children from the opportunity to participate in research it can result in children's voices and experiences not being heard.

For Family and Community

Children have rights when participating in research

Children have the following rights when participating in research, these rights must be shared with the child so that they can make an informed decision to participate or not:

- you have the right to be informed about the research
- you have the right to provide free and informed consent to your involvement in the research
- you have the right to choose whether you get involved, how you get involved and whether you want to continue your involvement
- you have the right to change your mind about your involvement at any time and to **STOP** at any time
- you have the right for you and your culture to be treated with respect
- you have the right not to be harmed because of your involvement
- you have the right not to be discriminated against because of your background or preferences
- you have the right to benefit from your involvement in the research
- you have the right to complain if you are not happy about the way you, your family or community is being treated

Ask researchers whether they are aware of their duties and obligations under the:

- **The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007 (the Declaration)** *and the*
- **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989**

Conducting research that is safe and culturally sound for children

"In our community…our kids are very important… the overall care of kids is very important within the Aboriginal community, it's very, very big"

"Reclaim culture as a strength and protective factor for kids"

(Quotes from study participants)

Until recently, most research to understand issues relevant to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people had been conducted on them, rather than *with* them and often resulted in little or no benefit to them and their communities. To rectify this, important ethical principles, and guidelines, have been established to ensure that research protocols and practices meet the agenda and interests of the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants.

Reflecting on this experience of research, the participants in the scoping study felt that many people would have concerns or worries about children being involved in research. They were concerned that research may not lead to change for them or their communities and were particularly worried about the potential for:

- retriggering trauma and causing further distress or further harm to children, their families and communities
- increasing risks to children's safety by allowing them to talk openly about violence that may exist in their families or communities
- social isolation and shame people after they disclose violence and abuse
- lack of support during and after the process (especially for children that may experience distress by being involved)
- fear of child removal.

We all have a shared responsibility to ensure children are safe and treated with dignity and respect. It is important for family and community members to know that the researchers have listened to the worries and concerns of the children, family and community and have thought about all the potential risks to children. It is also important for family and community members to know that researchers have processes in place to ensure children, their families and communities will be safe when participating in research.

Children and young people we spoke to as part of the scoping study said that being involved in research, when done carefully and safely, is a positive experience for them. The lessons learned from previous research with children have helped to inform this resource. There are now many experienced Indigenous and children's researchers who have developed research approaches that facilitate positive outcomes from research – for children, their families and communities. We know that when research is done well the likelihood of any harm to participants is low.

Values and principles for ethical conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research

Researchers are bound by some important ethical principles, and guidelines, to ensure that research reflects the interests of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and their communities. These principles include: that it is safe for, and of benefit to, the people who may be involved.

A number of references and links to publications that discuss research ethics and principles can be found throughout this resource. These documents outline the minimum requirements of researchers and provide important guidance to ensure that research is ethically and methodologically sound.

All research conducted with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people should be subject to ethics approval, not only from Human Research Ethics Committees but also from an Aboriginal Human Research Ethics Committee or subcommittee. These committees can help assess whether the research include steps and measures to ensure that Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people own the outcomes of research and benefit from being involved.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (2003) summarise the six core values and principles for ethical conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research generally but are relevant to research with children as well. They include:

- ✔ **Spirit and integrity:** a connection between the past, present and future, and the respectful and honorable behaviour that holds Aboriginal values together
- ✔ **Reciprocity:** shared responsibilities and obligations to family and the land based on kinship networks, also includes sharing of benefits
- ✔ **Respect:** for each other's dignity and individual ways of living – this is the basis of how Aboriginal peoples live

- ✔ **Equality:** recognising the equal value of all individuals – fairness and justice, the right to be different
- ✔ **Survival and protection:** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, languages and identity – acknowledging shared values is a significant strength.
- ✔ **Responsibility:** the recognition of important responsibilities, which involve country, kinship, caring for others and maintenance of cultural and spiritual awareness. The main responsibility is to do no harm to any person or any place. Responsibilities can be shared so others can be held accountable.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and the Lowitja Institute have also published resources specifically for individuals or organisations that researchers may be asking to support or participate in research. Researchers should ensure that participants and partners know about, and have access to, these resources

Ensuring an ethical approach to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander research

Publications and resources that outline important ethical principles and guidelines for conducting research with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people or communities are available from:

- The National Health and Medical Research Council: www.nhmrc.gov.au
- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies: www.aiatsis.gov.au
- Lowitja Institute: www.lowitja.org.au

A very helpful resource is available from www.aiatsis.gov.au : ***Keeping Research on Track: A Guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples about Health Research Ethics*** (NHMRC, 2006 – Updated May 2015).

This resource is designed for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities to use when they are considering conducting or being involved with health research. It assists people to become familiar with the stages of research – setting out eight key steps of the research process. It can help individuals or community groups to make decisions that ensure the research journey respects shared values as well as diversity, priorities, needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities.

Key resources for ethical principles and guidelines for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander research

Key ethical guidelines and resources available from: www.nhmrc.gov.au, www.aiatsis.gov.au, www.lowitja.org.au include:

- National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC, 2007) - Updated July 2018
- Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research (NHMRC, 2003)
- Keeping Research on Track: A Guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples about Health Research Ethics (NHMRC, 2006) – Updated May 2015
- Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (AIATSIS, 2012)
- Supporting Indigenous Researchers: A practical guide for supervisors (Laycock, Walker, Harrison and Brands, 2009)
- Researching Indigenous Health: A Practical Guide for Researchers (Laycock, Walker, Harrison, & Brands, 2011)
- The ethics hub for researchers, ethics committees, research participants, community organisations, students and supervisors at www.lowitja.org.au

Other helpful publications and practical resources:

Jamieson, L. M., Paradies, Y. C., Eades, S., Chong, A., Maple-Brown, L., & Morris, P. (2012). Ten principles relevant to health research among Indigenous Australian populations. Retrieved from https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2012/197/1/ten-principles-relevant-health-research-among-indigenous-australian-populations

Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit. (2008). We Can Like Research… in Koori Hands: *A Community Report on Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit's Research Workshops in 2007.* Retrieved from http://onemda.unimelb.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/In%20Koori%20Hands_FINAL.pdf

South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute. (2014). *Wardliparingga: Aboriginal research in Aboriginal hands* – South Australian Aboriginal Health Research Accord: Companion Document. Retrieved from https://www.sahmriresearch.org/user_assets/2fb92e8c37ba5c16321e0f44ac799ed581adfa43/companion_document_accordfinal.pdf

Ensuring researchers gain consent from children, their families and communities

When researchers undertake studies with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities they should always include children as well as their family. Researchers may need children and community members help to understand who **'family'** and **'community'** is for each child participating in a study.

Seeking partnerships with, and consent from, community: Researchers should seek consent from Elders to enter communities where they want to conduct research. Researchers also need to develop partnerships with other members of the community who are known to be looking after and speaking out for children – adults who are taking up the challenge to confront and talk about violence in their communities. A granny's group, a school, or a local community-controlled health or welfare organisation are all examples of the types of community members that researchers may seek to partner with.

Seeking partnerships with, and consent from, family: At least one parent/carer will need to be included and give their agreement and consent for a child to be involved in research. To give consent, parents and other important family members need to have clear information about the study. Researchers should tell parents and their children:

- why they are conducting the research
- who will be involved, what they intend to do (and ask) of your children (including where, when, the time commitment involved and how)
- the potential risks and intended benefits for all participants
- what will happen with the information they collect
- who you can complain to if you are not happy.

If you are not provided with the above information you have a right to ask for it.

Seeking partnerships with, and consent from, children: All children should receive age appropriate information about the study so they are able to make their own free and informed choice about their participation. Information should be presented clearly, in a variety of formats (written, pictorial and verbal) and there should be plenty of opportunities for children to ask questions.

Researchers need to be confident that children have understood all aspects of the research, including their rights when participating in the research, before accepting that children have provided consent. Where children are vulnerable through immaturity, consent can be provided by parents/guardians only when it is deemed that the research is in the child's best interest. Every effort should be made by researchers to always seek and confirm (and consistently check) that children have provided their own free and informed consent to be involved in research.

No child, their family or community is obliged to participate in research. Everyone has a right to give FREE and INFORMED CONSENT and is allowed to change their mind and STOP participating in the research at any stage

Including families and communities in research with children

This resource stresses that when considering, consulting or collaborating with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, including their family and community in meaningful partnerships is essential.

Is it important to understand who **'family'** and **'community'** is for each individual child or young person It is likely that who we mean by 'family' or who we mean by 'community' will be different for each individual child and across different research studies.

Family *may be extended and complex in structure and may include:* informal or formal foster or kinship carers, biological or non-biological family, aunties, uncles, grandparents, cousins, siblings or other extended family.

Community *may be defined as, or include:* a geographic location, traditional lands, school, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations (including health & welfare services & lands councils), Elders, significant women or others who care for children, or elected members of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander governance body.

When considering who to approach and include in research, you should also take the time to find out which individuals or organisations in this community have children's best interests as a leading principle and who is currently taking up the challenge to confront and talk about violence.

A research approach
best suited to children

Participants in this study had firm ideas on what types of research would be most helpful to understand children's views and experiences of family violence. Relying only on statistics without adding the voices of those affected risks problematising Aboriginal families and communities. Most participants stressed how important it is to take a strengths-based approach (i.e., to also find out what children think makes them, their families and communities strong rather than focusing on what is going wrong).

It is possible to conduct culturally safe and appropriate quantitative research, as well as qualitative research. Maggie Walter and Chris Anderson have explained how quantitative knowledge can reflect Indigenous standpoints in their 2013 book: *Indigenous statistics: a quantitative research methodology.* This book is essential reading for those engaging with quantitative research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and outlines the need for new approaches to producing statistical data by and for diverse Indigenous peoples.

There are many types of research that can help design better services to help prevent or respond to family violence. Two examples of research approaches focused on making positive change for children, families and communities these include:

Participatory action research: is an inclusive approach which aims to involve communities to identify issues that are important to them and then implement 'the next steps' required to work towards solutions to practical problems. Participatory approaches are commonly used in research with children and have been found to be very effective for understanding children's views and experiences.

Evaluations of existing or new programs that aim to prevent or respond to family violence for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, families or communities to assist in building a better understanding about what works to address complex problems like violence. Once researchers know what works and for who, programs are then refined or redeveloped to better meet the needs of participants. Allowing children to provide their views and experiences of the services designed to meet their needs is vital.

Most participants in this scoping study thought that **participatory action research** is the most appropriate approach for conducting research about violence. It is a culturally inclusive approach that aims to involve communities to identify issues that are important to them and implement 'the next steps' required to work towards solutions to practical problems. Researchers commonly use participatory approaches like this with children and have found them to be very effective.

There was also a strong view that adequate funding for evaluation should be built in to existing or new programs that aim to prevent or respond to family violence for Aboriginal children, families or communities. Researchers need to better understand what works to address complex problems like violence. Including children's views and experiences of programs, services or supports is also vital.

Helpful resources for 'good practice principles' when delivering programs with children and families . . .

If your research is going to involve co-design of services or programs that aim to be culturally safe and appropriate for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, we suggest you consult the literature to find what we already know about the common elements of good practice. For example:

For family violence programs for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families:

Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care. (2014). *Safe for our Kids: A guide to family violence response and prevention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.* Retrieved from https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/03319.pdf

For good practice principles for healing programs with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people:

Healing Foundation. (2012) *National Gathering of Healing Centres Final Report.* Canberra, Healing Foundation. Retrieved from https://healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/resources/34202_34202.pdf

For best-practice principles for child-centred practice:

Moore, T., & Layton, M. (2009). *Kids 'R' Central.* Canberra: Australian Catholic University and ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services. Retrieved from http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/faculties,_institutes_and_centres/centres/institute_of_child_protection_studies/kids_central_toolkit

There must be tangible benefits to the children, families and communities who support or participate in research. Our participants told us that research about family violence is unlikely to be supported by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people or communities unless it is accompanied by the provision of support or educational programs for children and families.

The greatest worry that participants in this scoping study had about researchers in their community was that the researchers would not have the appropriate skills or approach required to understand the multitude of issues present within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.

Many people spoke about a fear of researchers misinterpreting the level of risk a child is facing and the subsequent negative consequences that could result for children, their families and communities. This concern is due to past and current government policies that have resulted in many Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children being removed from their family and community.

Researchers need to design and implement studies that can respond to these concerns and ensure that their research does no harm, but can benefit children, families and their communities.

How can research with individuals, families and communities be designed and implemented to ensure participants benefit from participation rather than harmed?

The study participants provided useful advice to assist researchers to design appropriate and effective studies with and for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children. They also offered guidance on how researchers can best engage with children to understand their views and experiences. The broader *Childhood Studies* literature which has developed over the last few decades with the increasing number of studies being conducted with children on sensitive issues is also a good source of information (Powell, McArthur, Chalmers, Graham, Moore, Spriggs, & Taplin, 2018; Woodhead, 2004).

The remainder of this resource provides some key principles and processes that, if followed, will allow researchers to discuss and address any concerns that children, their families or communities may have in getting involved in research.

Researchers must provide children, families and communities with **free and informed choice** as to whether they participate in research. Researchers should expect that some children, families and communities will not want to be involved in research – this is their choice and this choice must be respected. It is up to researchers to present as much information about the study as they can, in a culturally appropriate and accessible manner.

This may entail having to develop separate child-friendly versions of information that is suitable to different ages and capacities of the children involved. Children, families and community members should be encouraged to ask questions, discuss their concerns and appropriate changes to the study should be negotiated to meet the needs of children, their families and communities. It is vital that these considerations and conversations happen as early as possible and as often as possible throughout the research.

In addition to the minimum ethical requirements, funders and researchers need to think carefully about how they can promote the participation of, and benefits for, children and their families and communities ***before, during*** and ***after*** their study. They will also need to make good decisions about ***who*** should conduct this sort of research, who it should be conducted ***with*** and ***for*** and ***when, where*** and ***how*** it is best done.

The remainder of this resource provides information on what researchers, individuals, families and communities should expect during the different stages and aspects of research. It offers some questions which researchers, individuals, families and community members can ask of each other which might help participants to decide whether they or their children would like to participate in the research or not.

Helpful resources about 'evaluation' and how to conduct culturally safe and appropriate evaluations with and for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and communities. . .

Muir, S & Dead, A. (2017). *Evaluating the outcomes of programs for Indigenous families and communities.* Child Family Community Australia, Australian Institute of Family Studies. Retrieved from https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/evaluating-outcomes-programs-indigenous-families-and-communities

Kelaher, M., Luke, J., Ferdinand, A., Chamravi, D., Ewen, S., & Paradies, Y. (2018) *An Evaluation Framework to Improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.* The Lowitja Institute, Melbourne. Retrieved from https://www.lowitja.org.au/sites/default/files/docs/evaluation-report_0.pdf

The remainder of this resource looks at the key learnings from the scoping study, the exiting literature and is accompanied by reflective questions to help researchers, families and communities to consider:

- who should conduct this sort of research
- who it should be conducted with and for who
- when the research should be conducted
- where it should be done
- how it is best done.

Links to extension reading or other helpful resources are also provided in each section.

If researchers incorporate the following suggestions into their research processes, research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, discussing issues such as violence and safety, can be a positive and collaborative activity that is culturally bound, sound and safe for children, their families and communities.

The scoping study demonstrated that further research is critically required which can support the co-design of these initiatives, programs or services and then systematically monitor them to inform changes or improvements over time so to ensure they are meeting needs of children, family and community. For example, see the analysis by Smith, O'Grady, Curnow, and Pearce (2018) of the co-design approach taken with Aboriginal workers, communities, and services to the development of KidsMatter resources to support the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal children.

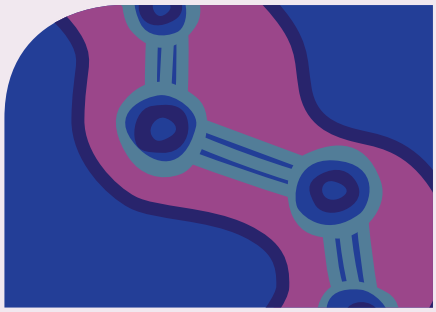
Looking for further information. . .

For a list of helpful publications on the topic of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples and family violence see:

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. (2017). *ANROWS Special Collection: Violence against Women in Aboriginal, & Torres Strait Islander communities.* Retrieved from https://d2c0ikyv46o3b1.cloudfront.net/anrows.org.au/A&TSI_SpecCollection_Nov_2017.pdf

For a useful summary paper on Australian children and family violence see:

Campo, M. (2015). *Children's exposure to domestic and family violence: Key issues and responses.* CFCA Paper No. 36 – December 2015. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies. Retrieved from https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/childrens-exposure-domestic-and-family-violence



Reflection questions and resources

Participants in this study had firm ideas on what types of research would be most helpful to understand children's views and experiences of family violence. Relying only on statistics without adding the voices of those affected risks problematising Aboriginal families and communities. Most participants stressed how important it is to take a strengths-based approach (i.e., to also find out what children thin In this section we propose reflection questions for researchers to think about, and to help them support Elders, families and communities reflect on why they might want to be involved, and what information they need to support that decision. We focus our questions and resources on who, when, where, and how research can be conducted with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children about family violence.

Who? – The right people to conduct the research

What we know and what we learnt

Before families and communities make decisions about who should be involved in the research, it is important that researchers hoping to conduct research with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children about family violence help them understand that researchers draw on participants who bring specific perspectives, knowledge, skills and experiences.

In some cases, it may be important that the researcher is female or male. This is best confirmed during the study with each participant. Most researchers, Elders and community members that we spoke to in the scoping study stressed that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researchers (who may be either from within or outside of the community being researched) are best placed to conduct research with Aboriginal people and communities.

This is due to the unique perspectives these researchers bring, and often the in-depth knowledge and relationships they have (or can more easily develop) with members of the community where the study may be taking place. Many people stressed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers are more likely to be accepted and trusted by children, families and communities and would be better placed to ease concerns and worries that participants may have in becoming involved in research.

"You've got to trust the person that you're telling… This is a safe space for it"
(Study participant).

Although they often bring untold benefits to a study, it is important to consider the safety and wellbeing of researchers that have pre-existing relationships with the community participating in the research.

Participants in our study reminded us *"being part of research makes you a prime target for lateral violence".* Researchers will need to consider researcher and participant safety before, during and after the research is conducted.

The young people and parents we spoke to were less concerned with the cultural background of the researchers, but agreed with others, and stated the following characteristics, knowledge and skills were critical when conducting research with children, their families and communities:

- humble, genuine, caring, resilient, passionate, good humored and good hearted
- prepared to connect with community, informal and relaxed, non-judgmental
- being a good listener, respectful and respected, open, honest and frank
- having a clear purpose and intent and commitment to children, families and the community.
- a capacity for reflective practice, sensitivity, leadership and self-care
- pre-existing connection to, or relationships with, the community where the research is being conducted
- experience and skills in engaging with Aboriginal people and children around trauma.

It is unlikely that one researcher would possess these preferred set of characteristics, knowledge, skills and experience. In most cases it will be best if a team of people with complementary characteristics, knowledge and skills can work together with children, families and the community to conduct research in a collaborative way.

Where possible, all research teams should include an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, and where this isn't possible, at the very least engage a cultural advisor.

It is vital that all members of the research team have high levels of cultural competency: "which is demonstrated through synthesis and application of [cultural] awareness, knowledge, and sensitivity, and involves a commitment to engaging participants, organisations, and communities in all stages of the research" (Ferguson, Baker, & Proctor, 2017, p. 2).

Critical questions for researchers to consider

Before -

- *Am I best placed to conduct this research? Why?*
- *What pre-existing values, qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience do I bring into the research and how will this affect the research process or outcome?*
- *Do I know and understand the basic protocols required in this community?*
- *Am I able to listen and be flexible and responsive to the needs of research partners or participants?*
- *Do others agree that I should be doing this research?*
- *Am I prepared and resourced to provide adequate support for all research participants (children and their families)?*
- *Do I understand (and how will I negotiate) what my professional and relational boundaries are in the community in which I am conducting the research?*

During and after the research -

- *Are there appropriate supports, supervision and safety protocols and processes in place for all researchers throughout all stages of the research and after it is completed?*
- *What is my role in supporting children, families and communities?*
- *How do I ensure that children are safe before, during and after the research?*
- *Do I understand what these Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children want from a researcher and from research?*
- *Have I developed methods to find this out in the community in which I am doing the research?*
- *Have I ensured there will be support in place to assist children, their families and communities throughout the research process and are these roles and responsibilities clearly outlined, agreed to and understood by all partners and participants?*
- *Do I understand the requirements needed to be reflexive? Am I prepared to engage in these activities and personal reflections?*
- *Do I have experience with engaging with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people about sensitive issues?*
- *How can I locate others who can complement (and, when necessary, challenge) my own perspectives, knowledge, skills and experience?*
- *Do I have someone who is prepared to vouch for me who already has a relationship with or connection to this community?*
- *Have I recently completed cultural awareness training?*

Engaging family and community

Before agreeing to be involved, children, their families, and other adults in their community will need to feel confident that the researchers have the specific knowledge, skills and experience required to conduct research with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children on family violence.

Some key points which participants in the study thought were critically important included:

- having good relationships with the community where the research is being conducted prior experience and skills in engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and children around trauma.

Questions researchers might want to use in consultations with Elders, community members and families

- ✔ *Are the researchers being open about telling us who they are, where they are from, and what skills and experience they have?*
- ✔ *How much experience do the researchers have in talking to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children about sensitive issues like violence and family safety?*
- ✔ *Is this someone that I feel like I can trust to talk to my child about violence? What else do I need from them to be able to trust them?*
- ✔ *Who else will the researchers be working with, or getting advice from, throughout the research?*
- ✔ *Are the researchers getting advice and support from local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people?*
- ✔ *Do the researchers have ethics approval from a Human Research Ethics Committee and an Aboriginal Human Research Ethics Committee?*
- ✔ *Who can I talk to if I have any questions or complaints about the research?*

Resources

- Secretariat National Aboriginal Islander Child Care. (2016). *Stronger safer together: A reflective practice resource and toolkit for services providing intensive and targeted support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.* Retrieved from https://www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children/publications-articles/stronger-safer-together-practice-resource-report
- Laycock, A., Walker, D., Harrison, N., Brands, J. (2009). *Supporting Indigenous Researchers: A Practical Guide for Supervisors.* Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health, Darwin. Retrieved from https://www.lowitja.org.au/sites/default/files/docs/supervisors_guide1_0.pdf
- Phelan, S.K., & Kinsella, E. A. (2013). Picture this…safety, dignity and voice – ethical research with children: practical considerations for the reflexive researcher. *Qualitative Inquiry, 19(2),* 81–90. doi:10.1177/1077800412462987
- Mundine-Russell, G. (2012). Reflexivity in Indigenous Research: *Reframing and Decolonising Research? Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 19(1),* 85–90. doi:10.1017/jht.2012.8

Who am I working with and for? – Working in partnership

What we know and what we learnt

Research about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children needs to be done in partnership with, and for, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, parents and their communities. Positive partnerships need to be formed before the beginning stages of the research – ideally this includes formulating research topics and questions to ensure research is of benefit to all participants and partners.

Effective collaboration is based on trust and genuine partnership and must respect community governance. Developing memoranda of understanding or partnership agreements is one way that researchers and collaborators can hold themselves - and each other - accountable for mutually agreed upon roles and responsibilities.

Ensuring people have accurate and good information about what they should expect of researchers, and modelling this, is helpful. There are many resources available to help organisations and participants make their own informed decisions based on their rights and important ethical research principles and guidelines. However, there are not many resources that are written in child

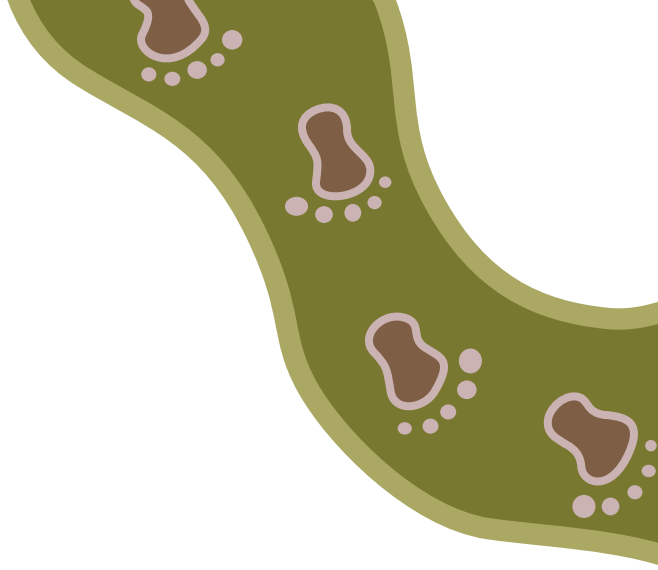
friendly formats – researchers will have to ensure that they produce these if conducting research with children.

Participants in this study expressed the strong view that any research with children about family violence should seek to include and benefit children, their families and their community. Who constitutes family and community for the children participating in the study may be different in different locations, or circumstances (see page 18). Researchers must commit to finding out who are the appropriate participants and partners for their study and then engage meaningfully with them in all stages of the research.

One of the first things researchers need to understand is which members of the wider community need to be invited and consulted in the research. It is important to always ascertain the cultural protocols in the community and to follow these: “There may be very clear protocols relating to who can speak and on what topic people may speak” (Muller, 2014, p. 111).

Researchers must keep in mind that the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture of a particular area or community is not always going to be homogenous. Most often the first contact in community will be Elders Councils or Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). Participants in our study explained that Elders are the holders of wisdom and knowledge – and should be the first contact points before seeking permission to enter communities to conduct research. It is essential that researchers seek to respect, recognise and collaborate with key knowledge holders in communities who can inform them of cultural protocols and traditional lore.

Participants in the scoping study explained that it is Elders and grandparents who are often the ones providing places of safety for children within communities and that it would be important to locate the other champions of children’s safety within communities. Most suggested this would be strong women who often are: ‘our backbone, our strength in our community, in our cultures’. Participants suggested that locating these key people can take time and often involves ‘trial and error’. Participants reinforced that researchers will need to be prepared to be present and available within communities, to observe and talk with people who are willing to be the conduit to start ‘courageous conversations’.



Getting others involved *during* the study

At least one parent/carer should be consulted, included and asked to provide consent for their child to participate in research. Participants in this study identified that there may be additional, and in some cases alternate family or community members that should be included – this may have to be carefully assessed in consideration to the safety of the child and family. An inclusive model that encourages and enables these people to participate is ideal, but careful consideration should be given to the unique circumstances of each child.

For example, in some cases, consent from parents will not be required (i.e., where the child is mature enough and/or living independently from parents/carers and the research is assessed to be in the child's best interests). The safety, security and wellbeing of the child is the primary guiding factor in making assessments of who should be involved in consent processes.

Recruitment material developed by the researcher should highlight the partnerships and processes that have been developed and undertaken – this may give children more confidence to be involved in the study.

When conducting research with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people or communities, capacity building should also be a key focus of the research partnership. Participants in this study expressed that young people may need to be carefully supported (and possibly trained) to provide them with skills and confidence needed to engage with the research and take a leadership role in the research. Two methods for providing children with leadership roles during the study include the recruitment and training of peer researchers or the formation of a children's reference group.

Peer researchers are sometimes used in research with children and young people due to the rapport and trust they can develop quickly with child participants. Adequate time needs to be incorporated into the study to train and support these researchers to engage with children. The safety of peer researchers is as vital as the safety of child participants.

Establishing a Children's Reference Group to sit alongside other governance bodies to guide and inform the research is one way to ensure children's perspectives are well represented throughout the study.

The involvement of children, families and community before and during the research helps you to understand and seek guidance about what questions or topics are off-limits and if there are any particular cultural protocols that need to be followed when devising questions or asking them.

Researchers must be ready to participate fully in reciprocal relationships for the duration of the study. Reciprocity is required as a core value when undertaking research with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is explained as being a: "two-way process. The sharing of skills, knowledge, goods and services that creates responsibility within a relationship where the sharing becomes a mutual obligation. For example, I openly share with you and that's what I expect back" (NHMRC, 2015, p. 39).

The responsibility researchers have to those they are partnering with in the research remains throughout the research project, and is especially important in data analysis, reporting and dissemination stages (**during** and **after** the research study). As Muller explains in her book:

"Knowledge and responsibility are inseparable" (Rist, 2005-09 cited in Muller 2014, p. 108)

Researchers need to think carefully about how they use the knowledge they gather from people. Many participants in the scoping study told us of times when their information had been misused or words and actions misinterpreted. This is especially important when making assumptions or assessments related to the safety of children.

Critical questions for researchers to consider

Before -

- *Have I asked the community if they want the research to take place?*
- *How am I going to understand who the key people and supporters of children are in the community?*
- *Have I asked the community that I am researching what they think is important for their community – how will I check if they feel like they co-design and co-own the research?*
- *Have I developed a process where ongoing dialogue about intentions, values and assumptions and the research tasks can take place with participants and partners?*
- *Have I developed appropriate protocols, processes and permissions for accessing, understanding, incorporating and honoring indigenous Elders' expertise and knowledge?*

- *How am I going to balance community values, needs and perspectives with those of children participating in the research for each stage of the research process? Do we need binding agreements?*

Before and during -

- *Who are the 'family' and 'community' for the children we are conducting research with?*
- *How are participants and our partners going to be supported to remain involved throughout all stages of the research?*
- *Who am I going to approach to seek guidance about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander kinship relationships that I need to be aware of?*
- *Do I understand, and have I considered the relatedness and connectedness of those involved and how this may impact how I gather information?*
- *How am I going to protect restricted Indigenous knowledge that may have been shared as part of the research process?*
- *How am I supporting those who I am partnering with, and who are participating in the research (including prior to, during and after the research has been conducted)?*
- *How am I going to protect restricted Indigenous knowledge that may have been shared as part of the research process?*
- *Have I consulted or partnered with expert clinicians in this area to understand how best to have conversations about family violence?*
- *How can I be sure that children understand and are providing free, informed and ongoing consent – do I have ways of checking this?*
- *Have I designed child friendly information letters, consent forms and complaint forms and processes and made these readily available to children?*
- *How am I going to assess and obtain any additional investment that may be required for building the capacity of research participants or partners?*

After -

- *Is the information I am presenting about the research study - and the consent procedures, protocols and processes - in line with community expectations, child friendly and appropriate?*
- *How am I ensuring that data will be interpreted with a cultural lens and within the specific cultural context?*
- *Are participants going to be included in checking analysis and reporting?*

Engaging family and community

Families, Elders and other community members will want to know what they can expect from researchers. Below, we have included the types of information you might want to convey.

Before agreeing to be involved -

- Research about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children needs to be done in partnership with, and for, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities. Researchers should seek to develop these partnerships before they commence collecting information.
- Researchers must respect community governance and kinship structures. They should have approached Elders first, before asking family members about children's involvement in a study. They should also ask you and/or your child about important people in your child's life and who else should be consulted about children's participation.
- Ideally you and your children should be able to contribute to what research questions are being asked. This helps to ensure the aims of the research align with children's needs and the needs of families and community.
- The research must be of benefit to your children, families and/or community. The researchers must be able to explain what these benefits will be and how they will ensure they are achieved over the life of the research. This should happen before your child, or you, give consent to be involved the study.
- The researchers should be prepared to work in partnership with children, family and community throughout all stages of the research. They should ask you how much involvement you and your child expect or want to have in the research process and keep you informed along the way. At all times researchers must protect you and your child's right to safety, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality.

Things to check out, reflect on and questions to ask

- ✔ *Which Elders in my community are supporting the research?*
- ✔ *How much say do we – our children, family members, community members – have about the research aims and questions? What is going to happen with the information collected?*
- ✔ *Will my (or my children's) relationships with people within the community be affected by our participation in the project?*
- ✔ *How are children and young people going to be supported to ensure they can fully participate in the study?*
- ✔ *What is the age-range of child participants in the study? Have the researchers developed age appropriate information letters, consent forms, data collection methods and tools?*
- ✔ *Why do the researchers think this research is needed?*
- ✔ *Do the researchers want to find out what we do well, and what makes us proud? Or do they seem to just be focusing on problems and what is going wrong?*
- ✔ *What are the potential risks and benefits of the research? How are these being managed during and after the research?*
- ✔ *How will our information be used? Do we have a say on what is used and how?*
- ✔ *How will I find out about the results of the research?*
- ✔ *How will my child's safety be ensured? How will our confidentiality, anonymity and privacy be protected?*

Resources

Useful resources about ethical conduct of research with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities: www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research

For information on the national peak body representing 143 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHSs) across the country on Aboriginal health and wellbeing issues. See: www.naccho.org.au

You may like to partner with one of the Family Violence Prevention Legal Services that work with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander victim/survivors of family violence. These can be found at: www.nationalfvpls.org

Child friendly consent and sharing of information - processes and forms that include child-friendly examples of tick box consent & sharing of information forms:

- ✔ Moore, T., McArthur, M., Noble-Carr, D. (2018) More a marathon than a hurdle: towards children's informed consent in a study on safety. *Qualitative Research, 18(1),* 88–107. Retrieved from https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1468794117700708

How can I involve children in meaningfully in all stages of the research?

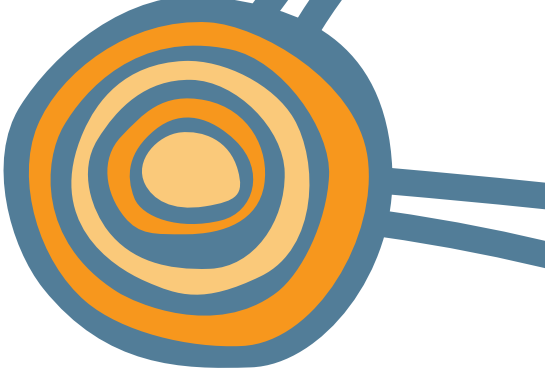
- ✔ Commissioner for Children and Young People WA. (2018). *Engaging with Aboriginal Children and Young People Toolkit.* Perth, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA. Retrieved from https://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/media/2919/engaging-with-aboriginal-children-and-young-people-toolkit-complete.pdf
- ✔ Links to resources (including toolkits) and information on children's participation: https://www.unicef.org/adolescence/cypguide/index_capacity.html

Resources and Publications (including on children as peer researchers) can be found at:

- ✔ https://childethics.com/

Children's Reference Groups:

- ✔ Moore, T., Noble-Carr, D., & McArthur, M. (2016). Changing things for the better: The use of children and young people's reference groups in social research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 19(2),* 241–256. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13645579.2014.989640#.VLxb3tKUfg0
- ✔ Examples of how research findings can highlight the voices



of children and be communicated effectively to a wide audience:

- ✔ The 'Voices" series from the Royal Commission into the Protection & Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. Available at: https://childdetentionnt.royalcommission.gov.au/community-engagement/Pages/Voices-of-the-Commission.aspx
- ✔ Higgins, J. R., Higgins, D. J., Bromfield, L. M., & Richardson, N. (2007). *Voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care.* Promising practice in out-of-home care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Carers, Children and Young People: Strengths and Barriers (Paper 7).
- ✔ http://www.snaicc.org.au/promising-practices-out-of-home-care-booklet-1/
- ✔ Higgins, D. J., Bromfield, L. M., Higgins, J. R., & Richardson, N. (2006). Protecting Indigenous children: Views of carers and young people on 'out-of-home care'. *Family Matters, 75,* 42–49. Available at: Retrieved from https://aifs.gov.au/publications/family-matters/issue-75/protecting-indigenous-children

When? – The right time to conduct research

What we know and what we learnt

Before -

Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children needs to be well planned and well-resourced with suitable time allocated for each stage of the research. A 'time rich approach' (Muller, 2014, p. 6) that allows researchers time to **stop and listen** and have flexibility in their research design and processes is most often required. As such, it may be essential to ensure that extended research timeframes and timelines have been incorporated in funding proposals and agreements. One of the participants in the scoping study explained:

> *'Allow as a researcher much more time in whatever you're doing and whatever conversation you're having, not just allow more time at the front end for the protocols, but to actually allow time all up because it takes longer for important conversations to happen.'* (Study participant)

During the study -

Taking the time and making the effort to build relationships that are safe, authentic and positive is an essential component of trauma-informed practice and particularly important when conducting research with children about violence and safety. All the participants in this study talked about the importance of time in allowing trust and rapport to build between researchers and children and their families and communities.

Extra time may also be needed to allow for times when children or their family members have to attend to important cultural obligations or commitments that will take precedence over your research activities. This can include caring obligations, sorry business or activities governed by traditional Aboriginal lore.

Additional time may also be required because research with children is often best done through a series of interactions, rather than in one-off consultations or interviews. This may be particularly important when conducting research on violence, to ensure that safety protocols and supports are well-established and can naturally sit alongside the research process.

When children are engaged in research through a series of interactions, the research tasks that children are asked to undertake can be carefully scaffolded – ensuring that researchers can build up to sensitive topics and gather meaning and depth about children's experiences and views over time.

"[The kids come because] they know it's safe, and that they will get a voice, and we will do things that will build up the kids and over time" (Study participant)

As well as allowing children to be engaged in research over time and throughout each stage of the research, researchers need to carefully consider if and when each child is best able to participate safely in research.

Participants in the scoping study told us that children should not participate in research about violence unless they are currently in a safe environment with safe people around them who are available to provide them with support. It is vital to assess that children's safety (and the safety of their family members) will not be put at increased risk due to their participation in a study. A safety plan may have to be developed in consultation with parents and research partners prior to children's involvement.

We know from previous research, that children live with the impacts of violence, and often remain feeling unsafe, long after they are removed from unsafe situations. Engaging with children to ascertain their feelings of safety is just as important as relying on adult-led safety assessments.

Due to the impacts of violence and trauma on children's development, a considered and careful assessment of children's capacity to be involved in research should be undertaken. Never rely on assumptions about age-appropriateness and capacity based on developmental milestones.

Assumptions around age, maturity and provision of consent may also have to be (re)considered when dealing with children and young people (especially in remote communities) where the concept of childhood and adulthood is traditionally understood and aligns with important cultural lore and initiation practices.

Critical questions for researchers to consider

Before -

- *How will I negotiate timeframes with partners and participants and ensure there is flexibility in the research design?*
- *How can I ensure the research funding is appropriate to support flexible and sustainable processes and outcomes?*

During -

- *Do I have the time and tools required to build rapport and trust with children?*
- *How am I going to ensure my research methods and materials are age and developmentally appropriate for all children in the study?*
- *How am I going to make assessments that it is safe for children (and their families) to participate in research? Are there other trusted community members who can help me make this decision?*
- *What special considerations may I have to give to ensure that the research is trauma-informed*

Engaging family and community

Families, Elders and other community members will want to know what they can expect from researchers. Below, we have included the types of information you might want to convey.

Before and during the research -

- Research with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities needs to be well resourced. The researchers should have allowed enough time for meaningful engagement with you and your community.
- You should not feel rushed or pressured to provide information in an unrealistic timeframe.
- Researchers should take the time to get to know your child, and to understand the interests, skills and capacities of each child they are asking to participate in the research. You should always feel like the researchers have enough time to stop and listen to what you and your child have to say.
- Researchers must be respectful of the time you and your child are also contributing to the research. They must respect that cultural commitments, obligations and caring responsibilities may mean you or your children cannot participate in research activities at certain times.
- Researchers should only talk to children if children are living in safe environments and have support readily available to them. Children should not be asked to participate in research when they and their families are in crisis situations.
- No-one's safety should be put at risk because of their involvement in research. Children should be able to have a say on whether they feel safe participating in the research and how their safety can be enhanced during research processes.
- You need to be aware that researchers may have mandatory reporting requirements (in relation to children's safety). They should explain this to you and explain how you and your child if they need to make a report.

Things to check out, reflect on and questions to ask

- ✔ *Do the researchers have enough funding to be in the community for the length of time required to conduct the study appropriately? What is the timeframe of the research? How much time will the researchers spend in the community?*
- ✔ *Are researchers prepared to take the time for us to get to know and trust them?*
- ✔ *How much time will I be asked to contribute to the research?*
- ✔ *How are we going to be compensated for the time we are giving to the study?*
- ✔ *How are researchers going to decide if children's current environments will enable them to participate in research safely?*
- ✔ *Have the researchers checked that children have people to support them whilst they are participating in the research and afterwards?*
- ✔ *Do the researchers have ways to assess whether children are feeling safe? What are they going to do if children indicate they are not feeling safe (with researchers, their family or in the wider community)?*
- ✔ *Are researchers prepared to work with local professionals if they worried about a child's safety?*

Resources

Engagement tools with children (including how to talk about safety and tough issues like violence):

- ✔ Kids Central Toolkit from Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University www.acu.edu.au/icps
- ✔ VACCA: 'Child's Voice' Toolkit www.vacca.org
- ✔ St. Luke's innovative resources: www.innovativeresources.org

Some tools for discussing safety with children who have experienced family violence can be found at:

- ✔ www.deadlystory.com

Lessons from (including tools for) conducting a study on safety with children:

- ✔ Moore, T., McArthur, M., Noble-Carr, D., & Harcourt, D. (2015). *Taking us seriously: children and young people talk about safety and institutional responses to their safety concerns.* Melbourne: Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University.

Child development and trauma guide:

- ✔ https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/ChildProtection ChildAbuseAndNeglect/Documents/ ChildDevelopmentAndTraumaGuide.pdf
- ✔ Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2016). *The effect of trauma on the brain and development of children.* CFCA Practitioner Resource. Retrieved from https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/effect
- ✔ Atkinson, J. (2013). Trauma-informed services and trauma-specific care for indigenous Australian children. Resource Sheet no.21 for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse. Canberra: AIHW & Melbourne: AIFS. Retrieved from https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/e322914f-ac63-44f1-8c2f-4d84938fcd41/ctg-rs21.pdf.aspx?inline=true

Where? – Appropriate spaces and places for research

What we know and what we learnt

The literature on violence and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and communities stresses the need for place-based issues and solutions. This is important to remember when conducting research. Cultural knowledge, systems and practices will vary across Australia. Local strengths, knowledge and protocols need to be considered. Research methods and methodologies need to be responsive to context and environment.

Before commencing -

The place where research is being conducted should inform what is studied and how it is studied. Protocols and processes that may be unique to the place (or country) where the research is being conducted will need to be understood. For example, research being conducted in remote locations will have to be respectful of, and adapted and responsive to customary lore/law practices and protocols. Some locations will require researchers use a translator with specific language skills.

Despite the need to tailor research to specific places where it is being conducted, participants in this study reminded us that *'even in one*

place you may have a diversity of circumstances and complexity of needs.' Researchers will also need to consider that individuals within one given community may have varying levels of connection to culture and involvement in, or continuation of, cultural practices.

Researchers will need to seek advice about local sacred places (who can and cannot access them) and the spaces that are culturally safe (especially to children).

Participants in the scoping study told us that there are currently few opportunities for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children to participate in talking about violence or safety concerns for themselves, their families and communities. Therefore, there may not be any existing places or spaces where children feel comfortable and safe to speak up and researchers may have to co-create these in consultation with children and the community. As one participant stated, researchers may have to *'be willing to stand-up and create that space for that young person.'*

During -

Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children may be enhanced by ensuring research is conducted in places:

- that are conductive to children having fun
- that are familiar to children and where you would naturally find them enjoying themselves – homes, parks, schools
- where there are other Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people that are well known and trustworthy to provide

'a safe haven for people around and during the process.'
(Study participant)

- where there are toys, games and play equipment and other things for children and young people to do
- that have a focus on helping children, young people and their families (like children's or youth centres or family support services)
- where children's rights and participation are promoted
- where there are safe and trusted adults
- where children have a sense of control and are able to exert choice easily
- where child-friendly messages are displayed
- that are inclusive of all children
- easily accessible and user friendly for children with disabilities
- where expectations, rights, roles and responsibilities are clear
- where children feel good about themselves and their abilities
- where's children's best interests always come first.

It may be important to ask children what places are safe for them and which places or spaces best facilitate research processes. For example, schools may be assumed to be child-friendly safe places that would be ideal for conducting research with children. However, school environments may not be culturally safe and may already have ingrained power dynamics that may be unhelpful to the sharing of power and control required in child-friendly participatory research. Participants in this study also told us that if research is confined to schools it may exclude some of the most vulnerable children in the community who do not regularly attend school.

Spaces that can provide a sense of cultural safety

Places and spaces where cultural knowledge and practices are prioritised will likely be the most conducive to positive outcomes for children and their families. These places are important in ensuring cultural safety of participants. Research with children on violence and safety should help facilitate a positive connection to culture and country and where necessary, promote healing.

The Healing Foundation has found that "healing is underpinned by a process which reconnects Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people back to their land, language, people, culture, ceremony and environment" (Healing Foundation, 2012).

Critical questions for researchers to consider

Before -

- *How will I identify and understand important local knowledge and protocols – especially in regard to what practices can take place with who and where?*
- *Do I have sufficient knowledge of the local context for where I am conducting the research?*
- *How can I adapt my research methodologies and methods to better suit the context and environment in which it is taking place?*

During -

- *Who do I need to consult with to decide where the research should be carried out safely?*
- *How can children and young people be provided with choice about where they might participate?*
- *How will I identify safe places for the research to be carried out?*
- *Do I know what the culturally safe places for children and families are in this community or how will I go about creating a safe place?*

Engaging family and community

Families, Elders and other community members will want to know what they can expect from researchers. Below, we have included the types of information you might want to convey.

Before agreeing to be involved -

You and your child should be confident that the research team understands the diversity that exists within and across Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia.

Researchers should seek to understand the cultural knowledge, systems and practices of the area where they hope to conduct research and develop appropriate protocols and processes that reflect these.

Children should be able to provide advice to researchers about what 'safe places' exist in their community and where the research is best conducted.

Researchers should understand that children require spaces that:

- provide cultural safety (where cultural knowledge and practices are respected)
- are flexible to their unique needs (including those children who have disabilities)
- are fun and familiar to them
- feel safe
- have trusted people available
- help children to feel like they have choices and control over the process
- always put children's interests and safety first.

When participating in research activities, the researcher should always ensure there is a safe place for children to go if they no longer want to participate.

Things to check out, reflect on and questions to ask

- ✔ *What knowledge do the researchers have about the local area and culture? How are they trying to find out more?*
- ✔ *Have researchers asked children which places and spaces should be used for research activities with them?*
- ✔ *Is the research space catering to the unique needs of my child?*
- ✔ *Do I need to check-in with my child to ask about the places where they feel safe to participate in research?*
- ✔ *Is there going to be somewhere safe for my child to go if they decide they want to stop participating in the research activity?*

Resources

For further information on the need for place-based responses to meet the needs of local communities please see:

- ✔ Healing foundation reports and resources: http://healingfoundation.org.au

Information on how children perceive safe places:

- ✔ Moore, T., McArthur, M, Noble-Carr, D., & Harcourt, D. (2015). *Taking us seriously: children and young people talk about safety and institutional responses to their safety concerns.* Melbourne: Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University. Retrieved from https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/file-list/research_report_-_taking_us_seriously_children_and_young_people_talk_about_safety_and_institutional_responses_to_their_safety_concerns_-_causes.pdf

How? – Appropriate research methodologies and methods

What we know and what we learnt

Planning for, and conducting data collection

Once appropriate protocols and processes have been developed with research partners and participants, researchers can begin to engage with children to collect data. As stated above, the methodologies and methods that are most useful for research with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children about violence and

safety are likely to be participatory approaches that allow for shared ownership and are oriented towards action.

Participatory approaches align with de-colonising methodologies that honor and reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander world views and Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, and start with the acknowledgement that the researcher may not be 'expert'. When conducting research with children, it is important to acknowledge that children are also often the best experts on their experiences and perspectives. It can be informative to ask what would work to promote their participation and help keep them safe.

Along with a strong participatory approach, research with children should be trauma-informed, rights and relationship based, child friendly and culturally safe. Children's safety is paramount, and the safety of other family members and community is also important.

Research with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children should aim to incorporate these important principles of practice that can better enable children's participation and maintain their safety during the research process:

Trauma informed: Trauma-informed research understands trauma and its impact on individuals, families and communal groups and creates environments in which children feel physically and emotionally safe (see Atkinson, 2013; Wall, Higgins, & Hunter, 2016). In particular, researchers must understand the intergenerational trauma that exists for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples that has been caused by colonisation and subsequent social policies. An understanding of, and sensitivity to, widespread child removal policies are particularly relevant when research is taking place on family violence.

Researchers will also need to be skilled in identifying, acknowledging and helping children to manage strong emotions and in supporting their connections to safe family and community members, culture and country. This means building in approaches that support and scaffold research tasks for children and do not have unrealistic expectations of them. Researchers may also need to collaborate with professionals who are experienced in providing therapeutic support for children and their families and who can help you support children, families and communities during and after the research.

Rights based: The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007 (the Declaration) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (that outlines children's right to provision, protection and participation) must be upheld in all research process and interactions.

Child-friendly: Being child-friendly means acknowledging and addressing the normative power dynamic and relationship between adults and children to ensure a more equitable sharing of power during the research process. This is best done by providing appropriate choice and control to children throughout all stages of the research. This will include finding or developing innovative and creative methods that can recognise children's ages and developmental stage, individual capacities, interests and strengths and build capacity to enable their full and meaningful participation in research.

Relationships based: A relationship of trust sits at the heart of effective communication and research with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children. Researchers must invest time to establish trusting, empathic, respectful, genuine and optimistic relationships with children, their families and communities. Children should always be offered support – before, during and after – their involvement in research.

Culturally safe: Researchers should have an approach that values Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander history, culture, traditional lore, beliefs, values, custom, while recognising the cultural and individual diversity that exists within and across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Culture is a central and key protective factor for children that also support families to be free from violence. Researchers should adopt processes, resources and tools that respect cultural identity and assist children to (re)discover and recover cultural knowledge and (re)claim culture as a strength.

Methods and techniques that align with these key principles may include: yarning, story-telling, drawing, mapping techniques, story boards, video clips, DVDs, photography, activity sheets, vignettes (that allow you to ask questions in the third person), open-ended questions, groups conducted with peer or Elders as co-facilitators, learning circles (which can bring together cross generations together and take turns to hear each other), play-based activities, animal-assisted therapies, and the use of drama, dance, arts or crafts, sport or music.

Many of these research methods involve engaging concrete tasks or activities that allow children to express their feelings and thoughts. This is often the best way to open up conversations on sensitive issues.

These methods (that can often be applied with individuals or in groups) will promote children's voice and the opportunity for them to have a say. However, this needs to be partnered with 'respectful

adult listening' that extends beyond empathy and includes an intention to empower and support action in response to their views.

Professor Judy Atkinson talks about the concept of Dadirri in research with Aboriginal peoples. The principles and functions of Dadirri, as used by Atkinson (2002), are:

- a knowledge and consideration of community, and the diversity and unique nature that each individual brings to community
- ways of relating and acting within community
- non-intrusive observation, or quietly aware watching
- a deep listening and hearing with more than the ears
- a reflective non-judgmental consideration of what is being seen and heard; and, having learnt from the listening, a purposeful plan to act, with actions informed by learning, wisdom and the informed responsibility that comes with knowledge (Atkinson 2002, p. 16).

When engaging with children, researchers should ensure there is plenty of time for fun, play and laughter, eating and drinking. Friendly opt out/safe spaces should be available for children who need a break from data collection activities or who choose to stop participating in the research.

A support person should also always be immediately available if the children wants and needs support. The provision of a 24-hour telephone support service (like Kids Helpline or Lifeline) also offers another alternative for support if children want to access support anonymously.

Critical questions for researchers to consider

Before and during -

- *How can I establish, work from and build in Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing into the research methodology and methods?*
- *Are strengths-based processes and questions incorporated into the study methods?*
- *Do I have appropriate resources and supports to engage in research on sensitive issues?*
- *Am I prepared to listen to children's pain and respond appropriately?*
- *Do I understand my obligations in supporting children and families who may disclose that they are unsafe? And do I have support processes set up to help facilitate ensuring adequate and appropriate support to children (and their families and community).*

- *Have I developed transparent protocols and processes to communicate these with participants and partners?*
- *Have I ensured that there are appropriate processes in place to check my decision-making around notifications of concerns to authorities?*
- *Do I understand my duties and obligations as outlined in UN Conventions?*
- *Are the rights of participants and partners being clearly communicated to them?*
- *Have I developed a process to trial some of my proposed methods and data collection tools and adapt them in line with feedback from children, families and community members?*
- *Is appropriate support in place for children before, during and after their participation in the research*
- *Am I confident that my research processes and tools are engaging and appropriate for the children in the study? Am I using a strengths-based approach?*
- *Am I familiar with and well-practiced in respectful adult listening?*
- *Do I have all of the resources that will help me to provide a comfortable environment to children*?

Engaging family and community

Families, Elders and other community members will want to know what they can expect from researchers. Below, we have included the types of information you might want to convey.

Things to check out, reflect on and questions to ask

Before agreeing to be involved, researchers have different methods available to them for collecting the information they require to answer their research questions. The methods they choose should align with the children's needs, interests, skills and capacities and be culturally appropriate. Choosing to collect information in ways that build on people's current strengths and resources is ideal.

When conducting research with children it is best if children (and their family and community) are consulted about the best ways of collecting information. Children should be given as much control and choice over this as possible. The researcher should provide lots of options for them to choose from. These options might include an interview or focus group with questions for children to answer or topics for them to discuss. More creative methods may include:

- yarning
- learning circles
- use of activity sheets
- drawing or mapping
- story-telling
- video clips or using play
- arts and crafts
- music, drama, sports or dance.

You may need to help the researcher understand which activities are most appropriate to building positive connections to family, community, culture and country – and which ones need to be supported by Elders or senior community members. Whatever approach is used, it should always be trauma informed.

It is important that researchers understand trauma and its impact on children (and adults). In particular, researchers must understand intergenerational trauma caused by colonisation and subsequent social policies. An understanding of, and sensitivity to, widespread child removal policies are particularly relevant when research is taking place on family violence.

Researchers must ensure that they create safe and secure spaces for children to talk about tough issues like violence. Researchers should have the skills to help children to regulate their behaviours when dealing with strong emotions. There must be trusted adults available to children to help support them during and after their research interactions. All research practices should help children feel good about themselves, and support positive connections with their families, their communities, culture and country.

Things to check out, reflect on and questions to ask

- ✔ *Is the researcher working in ways that are consistent with, and respectful of, Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing?*
- ✔ *What will children (and other participants) be asked about or asked to do in the research?*
- ✔ *How will our children being given choice and control over their involvement in the study and how they provide information?*
- ✔ *Does the researcher need help in assisting children to (re)connect with culture and to understand how culture can be claimed and used as a strength?*
- ✔ *How will researchers deal with disclosures or concerns about the safety of children (or others)? Do the researchers have mandatory reporting requirements?*
- ✔ *Will I be consulted about the best ways to ensure my child feels safe and supported whilst participating in the research?*
- ✔ *Has my child been given information about their rights whilst participating in research in a way that they can understand?*
- ✔ *Have the researchers developed ways for my child to identify who the safe people are in their lives?*
- ✔ *Do I think the researchers understand what cultural safety is?*
- ✔ *Are they working in ways that provide cultural safety to my child?*
- ✔ *How will my child (and their families and other participants from the community) be provided with support – during and after their involvement in the study?*

Resources

There are many Indigenous researchers who are now writing about decolonising methodologies and methods. Some you may like to access include:

- ✔ Bessarab & Ng'andu (2010), Henry (2002), Martin & Mirraboopa (2003), Tuhiwai Smith (2012).

St. Luke's innovative resources helps you to understand strengths-based practice and provides tools for engaging in strengths-based work with vulnerable people: www.innovativeresources.org

- ✔ *Atkinson, J. (July 2013) Trauma-informed services and trauma-specific care for indigenous Australian children. Resource Sheet no.21 for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse. Canberra: AIHW & Melbourne: AIFS.* https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/e322914f-ac63-44f1-8c2f-4d84938fcd41/ctg-rs21.pdf.aspx?inline=true

Lessons from conducting a study on safety with children:

- ✔ Moore, T., McArthur, M., Noble-Carr, D., & Harcourt, D. (2015). *Taking us seriously: children and young people talk about safety and institutional responses to their safety concerns.* Melbourne: Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University.
- ✔ Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2017). *Mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect.* CFCA Resource Sheet. Retrieved from https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect
- ✔ Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2017). *State and territory departments responsible for protecting children.* CFCA resource sheet. Retrieved from https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/reporting-abuse-and-neglect
- ✔ Australian Institute of Family Studies (2015) *Responding to children and young people's disclosures of abuse*. CFCA Practitioner Resource. Retrieved from https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/responding-children-and-young-people-s-disclosures-abu

Kids Central tools include a poster which outlines children's rights.

- ✔ Child friendly versions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child available from: https://www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrcchilldfriendlylanguage.pdf
- ✔ The Kids Central Toolkit from the Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/faculties,_institutes_and_centres/centres/institute_of_child_protection_studies/kids_central_toolkit . Contains 60 tools to help you to talk to children to assess their needs, concerns, strengths etc.)

Tools that may help you to engage with children and have tough conversations with them: From www.winangay.com

- ✔ Aboriginal Young people's rights cards; and
- ✔ Kids say and carers' say cards – triggers for ongoing participation and conversations

From www.vacca.org

- ✔ Child's Voice Toolkit

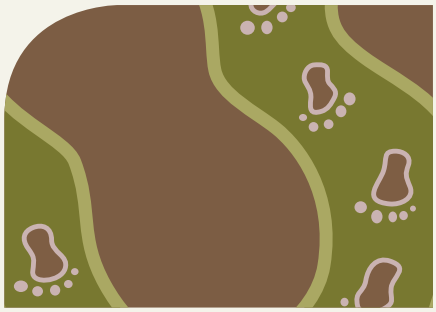
From www.deadlystory.com:

- ✔ Includes resources developed from a partnership between VACCA, SNAICC, The Koorie Heritage Trust, the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owners Corporation and Brightlabs, in conjunction with the Department of Health & Human Services. Some very good tools for talking with children about family and their worries and safety.

- ✔ From www.innovativeresources.org "Talking Up Our Strengths Cards' and many other tools designed for engaging with children and families using a strengths-based approach.

Examples of research that has been with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

- ✔ Dawes, G. D. (2011). *The challenges of reintegrating Indigenous youth after their release from detention. Journal of Youth Studies, 14(6),* 693-707. doi:10.1080/13676261.2011.580338
- ✔ Parkes, A., McRae-Williams, E., & Tedmanson, D. (2014). *Dreams and aspirations of mobile young Aboriginal people. Journal of Youth Studies, 18(6)*, 763-776. doi: 10.1080/1376261.2014.992314
- ✔ Dawes, G. (2010). *Figure lights, spin outs and power slides: Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander youth and the culture of joyriding. Journal of Youth Studies, 5(2),* 195-208. doi: 10.1080/1376260220134449
- ✔ Senir, K.A. & Chenhall, R.D. (2008) *'Walkin' about at night': the background to teenage pregnancy in a remote Aboriginal community, Journal of Youth Studies, 11:3,* 269-281, DOI: 10.1080/13676260801946449
- ✔ Moore, T., Bennett, B., & McArthur, M. (2007). *They've gotta' listen: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Young People in Out of Home Care.* Dickson ACT: Institute of Child Protection Studies. https://staff.acu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/467725/Theyve_Gotta_Listen.pdf
- ✔ Senior, K. A & Chenhall, R. D. (2012) *Boyfriends, babies and basketball: present lives and future aspirations of young women in a remote Australian Aboriginal community, Journal of Youth Studies, 15:3,* 369-388, doi: 10.1080/13676261.2012.663890
- ✔ Booth-Bell, R, Staton, S & Thrope, K. (2012). *Getting There, Being There, Staying and Belonging: A Case Study of Two Indigenous Australian Children's Transition to School. Children and Society 28(1),* 15-29. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259550591_Getting_There_Being_There_Staying_and_Belonging_A_Case_Study_of_Two_Indigenous_Australian_Children's_Transition_to_School



Appendix

About the scoping study

The Department of Social Services (DSS) commissioned the ACU Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) to conduct a scoping study to:

- identify the barriers and enablers to directly engaging with Indigenous children to determine their experiences of family and domestic violence
- draw out young people's voices to identify what is needed for Indigenous children to feel safe and supported in relation to researchers exploring their experiences of family and domestic violence
- identify specific guidance for researchers, service providers and parents that would increase their confidence to consent for researchers or those working with children to speak to children about their experiences of violence.

A Critical Friends and Consultant Group was established to provide specific expertise and knowledge to the project. The members of this group included: key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, representatives from the Healing Foundation, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Victorian Commission for Children and Young People and the Department of Social Services. The primary role of the Critical Friends and Consultant Group was to:

- provide advice and feedback to the researchers on each phase of the research including on a plan for youth participation
- provide cultural guidance to the project
- advise on implementation issues and engagement of research participants
- review and discuss the types of questions to ask key stakeholders (Elders, community members, service providers parents and young adults)
- provide feedback on the findings from the project
- advise about dissemination and advocacy.

The study aimed to conduct focus groups or interviews with Elders/senior community members, service providers/peak bodies, researchers/ethics committee members, parents and young people. The study aimed to talk to participants from remote, rural, regional and urban areas of Australia to ask them about:

- understanding of family violence within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- why we would talk to children about family violence
- benefits and risks for talking to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children about family violence
- best-practice approaches to talking with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children about family violence.

A total of 31 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (21 women and 10 men) participated in this scoping study. Table 1 provides a summary of where these people were located.

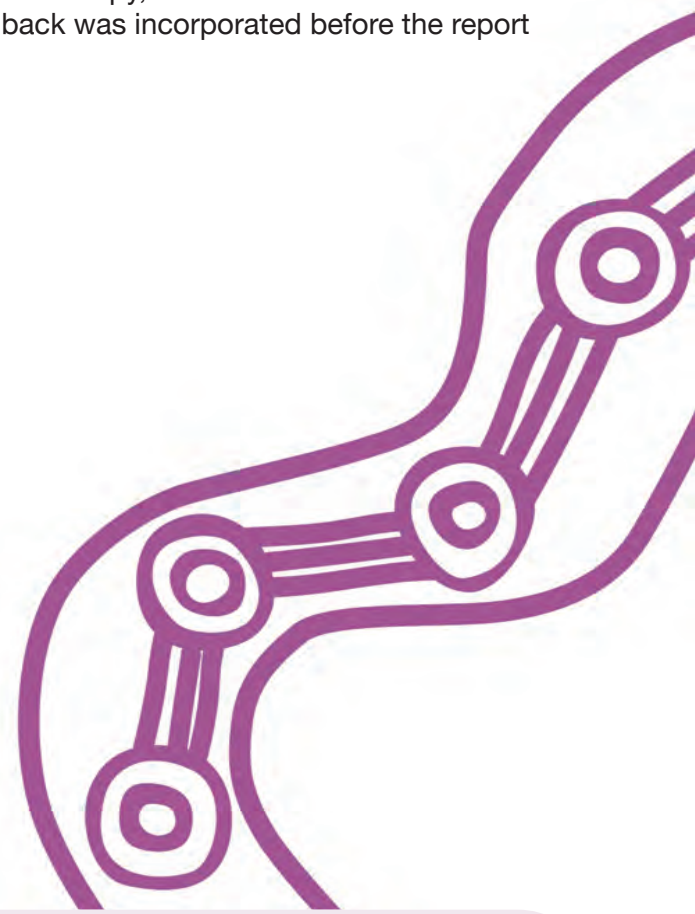
Table 1: Participants in the scoping study (number and profile)

	Elders / Senior community members	Service providers / peak bodies	Researchers / Ethics Committee members	Parents	Young people	Total
NSW						**6**
- urban		1	2			
- regional / rural	1	1			1	
WA						**5**
- urban			1			
- regional / rural			1			
- rural / remote	1	1		1		
ACT						**10**
- urban	1	2		1	6	
QLD						**4**
- urban		3				
- remote (TSI)	1					
NT						**2**
- urban		2				
VIC						**3**
- urban				2	1	
not disclosed		1				**1**
TOTAL	**4**	**11**	**4**	**4**	**8**	**31**

This profile does not necessarily reflect the participant's lived experiences that informed their responses. For example:

- the people we interviewed often identified that they were not living on the lands of their traditional country
- at least six of the service providers from urban areas had experience working across a range of urban, regional, rural and remote communities across Australia
- participants in the study often had multiple roles and perspectives – at least three Elders/service providers also spoke from the perspective of a parent who had experienced violence and a further two participants also spoke from their experience of being a child victim of violence, and one also spoke from the perspective of being a past perpetrator of violence.

Interviews and focus groups were transcribed and key themes and issues were derived from a thematic analysis of the data. The Critical Friend's and Consultant Group discussed the findings from the study and asked researchers to develop practical resources, rather than a formal report. Draft reports were sent out to participants who requested a copy, and to the Critical Friends and Consultant Group. Feedback was incorporated before the report was finalised.



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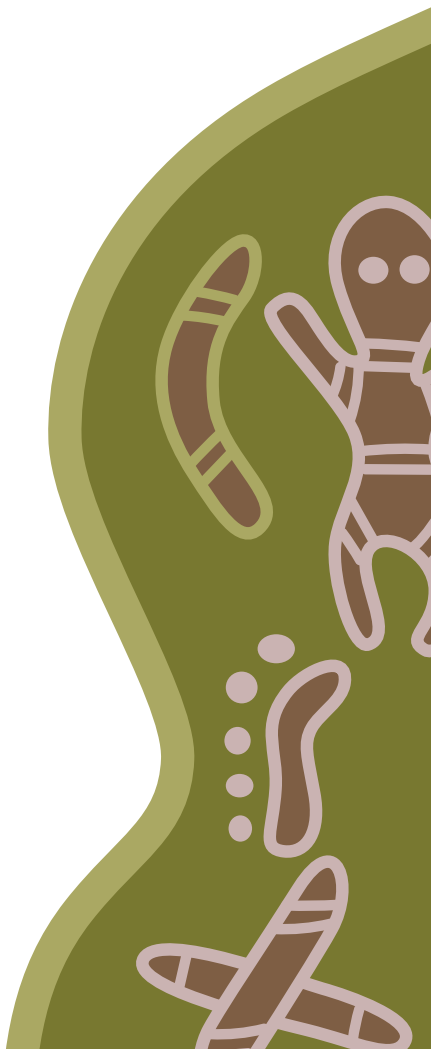
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