

Pioneering culturally-safe parenting programs



BEK MORRISON

We have launched a research project at The Kids Research Institute Australia to address the lack of culturally safe and trauma-informed parenting programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Between 1910 and 1970, it is estimated that 1 in 3 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children were forcibly removed from their families, and this resulted in generations of intergenerational trauma.

Currently, there are no parenting programs that deliver culturally derived and trauma-informed support to Indigenous parents and children in Australia. Instead, there are programs that are built from traditional Western practices that do not include the knowledge of intergenerational trauma or its impacts on our Mob.

"We have always had great parenting practices in our families, but there has been a lot of disruption through the forced removal of children and the fragmentation of our families. So, we want to put culture first and ensure that our kids grow up with the right stories about themselves and their Mob. They are our future," says Professor Helen Milroy, one of the investigators on the grant and Co-Director of Embrace at The Kids.

Indigenous families also have unique family structures and dynamics which a Western program may not have capacity to cater for.

Through engagement with community so far, the feedback has been supportive of our project and has shown a great need for a program such as this, which is created in collaboration with community members and families.

With this Australian Research Centre-funded project, we plan to develop and implement a culturally safe, responsive and trauma-informed parenting program designed with and for the community. This will be achieved using traditional storytelling with strength-based

narratives aiming to address difficulties and interrupt the transmission of intergenerational trauma.

A key to our program is it will be co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and will focus on what support they need, while including and prioritising family connections, kinship, connection to Country, and culture. Led by Professor Helen Milroy AM and Professor Jeneva Ohan, the project team is made up of Senior Research Officer Dr Nita Alexander as the project lead, myself (Aboriginal Project Officer Rebeka Morrison), and Research Assistant Aysa Bahar Arjmand.

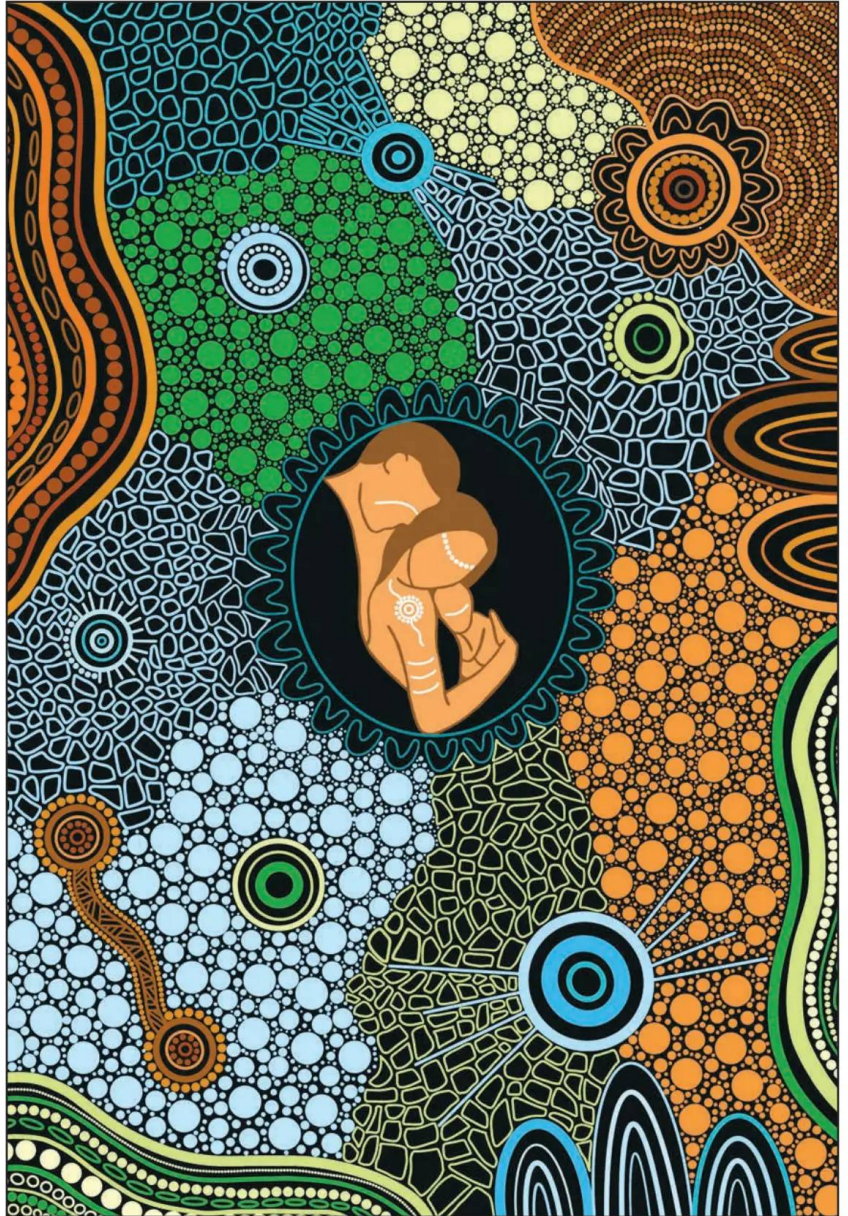
"The parenting program will be co-designed with advisory groups comprising of Elders, professionals and service providers, as well as Indigenous parents and carers. A pilot of the program will then be implemented with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families of young children between the ages of 2-6 years. This will then be evaluated as to the impact, cultural safety and potential for roll-out to other communities beyond Boorloo (Perth)," Dr Nita Alexander said.

We officially unveiled the program at an event on Wednesday 26 March, which featured yarning circles hearing from community members and professionals on what is needed in the community. These yarning circles were recorded by Noongar artist Ronda Clarke in a cultural visual map.

Looking ahead, we are busy setting up advisory groups to provide expertise in co-designing the parenting program which assists parents and caregivers of young children to enhance their wellbeing and relationships. We expect this project to be completed by mid-2027.

Bek is a proud Bibbulman and Yued Nyoongar woman, working with The Kids as an Aboriginal Project Officer. She has a range of experience working in research, community engagement, and data management. She is currently studying a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Anthropology and Sociology and Indigenous Knowledges at the University of Western Australia. Bek is passionate about preserving and incorporating global Indigenous cultures in to mainstream society as well as contributing to an equitable and sustainable future for all people and cultures.

● This article is part of a series by authors from the Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention at the University of Western Australia.



The Kids' Parenting Program project artwork, *Building Stronger Foundations*, by Jacinta Anderson.



Bek Morrison presenting at the project launch event.



A water ceremony to commence the proceedings at the project launch event.