

Standing on strong foundations



Professor Pat Dudgeon AM and Professor Helen Milroy AM

Last month, the Transforming Indigenous Mental Health and Wellbeing (TIMHWB) project and the Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention (CBPATSISP) hosted a research forum at the University of Western Australia. At this event we took the opportunity to reflect back on our work over the past seven years, to celebrate our achievements with colleagues and allies, old and new, and to look forward to the future with clarity and focus.

The TIMHWB project began in 2019, with Indigenous leadership from Professors Pat Dudgeon AM, Helen Milroy AM, and Jill Milroy. Through the project, we aimed to bring cultural ways and healing into mental-health and wellbeing systems to better serve the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. Our project partners represented a collaboration of Aboriginal leaders and organisations, dedicated to creating long-term impact by bringing together skills across community, academia, professional services, and national policy. Our research was designed, implemented, and translated with cultural values and integrity, prioritising the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It has been a long journey with many learnings along the way.

While the TIMHWB project, in its current iteration, is drawing to a close, it is by no means the end for our transformative work in Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB), suicide prevention, and cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. At the research forum we were excited to announce the name and cultural narrative for our new identity, the *Kwop Boorn Djenara* Centre – a place of good tree roots. The Boorn Centre will be home to our team and our research and will continue the good works of the TIMHWB project and the CBPATSISP.

We were honoured that Dr Richard Walley OAM, respected Noongar-Yamatji man and cultural advisor at the University of Western Australia, not only guided in the naming and narrative process but also delivered the Welcome to Country at the event. Dr Walley

created the beautiful *Kwop Boorn Djenara* painting to tell the story of the new centre and his daughter, Rickeeta Walley, wrote our cultural narrative.

At the forum event many wonderful team members shared their research, including Belle Selkirk, Jody Kamminga, Dr Rama Agung-Igusti, Dr Shraddha Kashyap, Dr Blerida Banushi, Dr Joan Chan and Julie Robotham. They presented on the transformative research that we have completed as a collective over the years, in both the TIMHWB project and the CBPATSISP. The MC for the day was the inimitable Michael Mitchell, community cultural expert, wellbeing advocate, and valued team member.

The Boorn Centre will enable us to continue and expand our work, providing the strong roots needed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention, cultural safety, mental health, and SEWB. It will strengthen the foundations already built with community collaborators, including the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia (consortium members in the new Boorn Centre). Importantly, it will also allow us to foster the next generation of emerging community, research, and clinical leaders, ensuring continuity and strong Aboriginal leadership in our sector.

During the forum, acknowledgment and recognition was given to everyone, individuals and organisations, who have contributed, and continue to contribute, to this community-driven research journey.

Recognition was particularly made to those who shared their knowledge, experiences, and expertise within research projects; the communities who partnered with UWA; and all who helped bring the concepts, stories, and deep wisdom of our people to life in our publications and reports. Our ways of knowing, being, and doing have been at the heart of our work, guiding and strengthening us throughout.

We are excited to continue this vital work together, grounded in trust, cultural strength and partnership, and to keep improving the wellbeing of our communities into the future.



Kwop Boorn Djenara by Dr Richard Walley OAM.



Michael Mitchell at the TIMHWB Research Forum.



Dr Richard Walley OAM delivering the Welcome to Country at the TIMHWB Research Forum. Pictures supplied.

Professor Pat Dudgeon AM is a Bardi woman from the Kimberley region of Western Australia. She is Australia's first Indigenous doctor and child psychiatrist, the Stan Perron Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the Perth Children's Hospital and University of Western Australia, and Honorary Research Fellow at the Kid's Research Institute. She is an artist and published author and illustrator of children's books and has been shortlisted for several children's literature awards.

Professor Helen Milroy AM is a Palyku woman whose

homelands are in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. She is Australia's first Indigenous doctor and child psychiatrist, the Stan Perron Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the Perth Children's Hospital and University of Western Australia, and Honorary Research Fellow at the Kid's Research Institute. She is an artist and published author and illustrator of children's books and has been shortlisted for several children's literature awards.