



Social and Emotional Wellbeing Program

Program Goal:

To build and strengthen the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal families and communities through appropriate interventions, including a better understanding of the role of social and cultural relationships as determinants of health.

Program Overview

In the past decade social and emotional wellbeing has emerged as a priority for the Aboriginal community for government sectors, for policy makers, service providers and researchers. It is recognised as an integral component of the Aboriginal health reform agenda, particularly in relation to national, state and territory policy frameworks and community-based interventions.

The term 'social and emotional wellbeing' is a recent construct, but its origins and meaning are embodied in Aboriginal social, cultural and historical understandings. Aboriginal belief systems are based on complex social relationships in which individuals and groups are intimately bound to each other and their environment. These beliefs continue to inform all aspects of Aboriginal people's lives, including health and wellbeing.

Research Priorities

An industry roundtable in September 2006 contributed to the development of the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Program. The priorities and areas for further activity identified are:

- Families
- Resourcing and service provision
- Activism/advocacy
- Workforce
- Research transfer and capacity development within SEWB
- What's working and why?
- Spirituality.

For More Information

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Parenting Support Interventions for Indigenous Families: Let's Start

Let's Start developed from an earlier project, the Tiwi Life Promotion Evaluation Project, partly funded by the CRC for Aboriginal and Tropical Health.

This was the first attempt to adapt and implement a resilience-promoting intervention for Indigenous families living in the Tiwi Islands, based on the successful Exploring Together Program (Littlefield, Story *et al.* 2005). The pre-school version of Exploring Together has now been redeveloped for Indigenous pre-school and early primary school-aged children and their parents.

The program helps parents to respond positively to children's behavioural difficulties and promotes positive parent-child interaction. It also promotes children's social and emotional competencies and assists them in building capacity to negotiate the transition to school. The program is based on a manual that sets out structured activities for children and parents over 8-10 weeks of a school term. Substantial work has been done on redeveloping elements of the approach for work with Indigenous families. Trained group leaders, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, deliver the program and results so far have been extremely promising. The program is producing good outcomes for many children, including those who have been subject to care orders.



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Research Projects Relevant to Area of Priority / Research Focus

Research focus areas	Project number	Title	Project Leader	Potential outcomes/lessons
Families and children	213	Parenting support interventions for Indigenous families: Let's Start extension	Gary Robinson, Charles Darwin University	This project aims to assist children and parents: it reduces problematic parenting, helps parents to respond positively to children's behavioural difficulties and promotes positive parent-child interaction. It promotes children's social and emotional competencies and helps build children's capacity to negotiate the transition to school.
	114 & 185	<i>Kanyirripak</i> : Health, masculinity and wellbeing of desert Aboriginal men	Brian McCoy, La Trobe University	This project seeks to understand what a group of desert men understood by the English word 'health'. <i>Holding Men: Kanyirripak and the Health of Aboriginal Men</i> is to be published by Aboriginal Studies Press (AIATSIS) in May 2008.
	275	Balunu Foundation	David Cole, Balunu Foundation Kare Senior, Menzies School of Health Research	The Balunu Foundation aims to break self-destructive behaviours learned by young Aboriginal people in distress, through a structured personal development program. The program includes Cultural Healing Camps as an essential component within a broader guided process of self-help. The CRCAH is facilitating an evaluation of the Balunu program with support from the NT Department of Health and Community Services and Menzies School of Health Research.
Resourcing, service provision and workforce	63	Australian Integrated Mental Health Initiative (AIMHI)	Trish Nagel, Menzies School of Health Research	This project has explored strategies to facilitate the journey of Aboriginal clients and their carers from community to primary care to specialist mental health services and home again. The NT project has developed a range of multimedia resources, in collaboration with Aboriginal Mental Health Workers, which have supported the following key activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-wide mental health promotion • Service provider training in cross-cultural care planning • Mental health literacy surveys of service providers • Hospital admission data analysis • Development of screening, assessment and outcome measurement tools • Trial of a care brief intervention for clients with mental illness that showed improved outcomes compared with 'treatment as usual' • Development of evaluation tools for community-based gambling intervention • Research transfer through website, newsletters, DVDs, seminars, workshops, conference papers, journal articles.
	61	Coordinated Aboriginal mental health care—A model for best practice for rural and metropolitan service delivery	Inge Kowanko, Flinders University	This project aims to develop, implement and evaluate agreed pathways and protocols of care for Aboriginal people with mental health (including drug and alcohol) problems, in particular to address the problems of coordination between agencies and locations (country to city).
Activism/Advocacy	97 & 103	Empowerment research program	Komila Tsey, James Cook University Melissa Haswell, University of Queensland	These projects are part of a 10-year program of work developing a greater understanding of how empowerment can occur, and its impact and importance for Australian Indigenous communities. The projects range from how to measure outcomes in empowerment, to very localised partnerships with specific communities achieving outcomes like reduced violence, and development of regional health services.
Spirituality	265	Discussion paper series on spirituality and Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing		The discussion paper series will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of literature on spirituality and Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing. • Spirituality and Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing through a practice-focused lens, from within a social and emotional wellbeing centre in south-eastern Australia. • 'The Role of Spirituality in Health Interventions: The Family Wellbeing Program at Yarrabah', an in-kind contribution from Alexandra McEwan, Komila Tsey and the Empowerment team from University of Queensland.