

January 2007

## KULUNGA'S VISION

"A society where there is sustained **improvement** in the **health** and wellbeing of **Aboriginal children** and families through implementation of the findings of **high quality** child and maternal health **research** initiated, controlled and conducted by Aboriginal people"

WAACHS Volume 4 Launch  
Page 3

Wheatbelt consultations  
Page 5

New member at TAFE WA  
Page 8

## About Kulunga

The Kulunga Research Network is the Institute's Indigenous research arm.

It was established in 1999 as a joint initiative between the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research and the WA Aboriginal community (through WA Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, now known as the Aboriginal Health Council of WA).

The aim of Kulunga is to build capacity in Aboriginal research. A team of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers and staff oversee the Aboriginal child and maternal health research programs of the Institute.

Kulunga aspires to a model of research and practice that is of the highest value in bringing the ideas and experiences of Aboriginal communities and the research expertise of Aboriginal people together in a world class, multi-disciplinary research setting. Our firm belief is that improvements to the lives of Aboriginal children through sustainable, community owned research effort will have far-reaching impacts on the lives of our families and future generations.

## Kulunga Logo

Kulunga is a Noongar word for "child".

'The design represents a joyful child, nurtured by the land and the family. The heart shape represents the love surrounding the child and the nurturing, the child emerging as if a beautiful flower. The wavy line could be thought of as the life course of the child, as she/he moves to adulthood, the open petals symbolising the flexibility of the young child's personality.' The design is by artist Peter Cameron.

## Kulunga Patron

The Kulunga Research Network Patron is Troy Cook from the Fremantle Football Club.

### FRONT COVER

Photo taken at the launch of Volume 4 - WA Aboriginal Child Health Survey.  
Left to right - Isaiha Morrison, Kulunga Patron Troy Cook and Sheliah Radovanovic

Story on page 3

## Message from the Manager



Welcome to the first edition of 'community' for 2007. This year is shaping up to be a busy, but very exciting year for the Kulunga Research Network.

This is a particularly exciting and challenging time for Kulunga, with a number of key projects emerging. Several of our projects have a focus in the Pilbara so it is pleasing to welcome Stephanie Hall to our team, who has strong family ties in the Pilbara. We also welcome Carrington Shepherd who is taking some time away from exclusive WAACHS work to assist us in a range of areas related to overcoming Indigenous disadvantage.

Colleen W.

We are looking forward to an eventful year that will build on the achievements of the last few years and enable it to continue to have a significant impact on improving the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

This newsletter is produced by the Kulunga Research Network of the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research

# Strengthening the Capacity of Aboriginal Children, Families and Communities

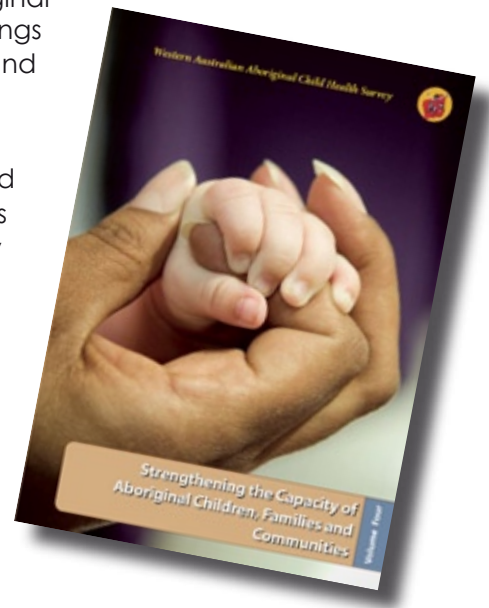
On Wednesday 22 November 2006, the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (WAACHS) launched its fourth volume of findings titled 'Strengthening the Capacity of Aboriginal Children, Families and Communities'.

This volume builds on the findings from the previous three volumes and focuses on how key health and wellbeing outcomes of Aboriginal families are associated with different aspects of the communities in which they live.

Channel Ten Journalist Narelda Jacobs was the MC for the event, with Kulunga's Patron Troy Cook also in attendance, while special guests Isaiha Morrison (10) and Sheliah Radovanovic (12) shared their personal experiences on what family and community means to them.

As part of the Communication and Dissemination Strategy for the WAACHS, a specific Communication and Dissemination Plan for Volume 4 will be developed, with the team preparing for regional visits and dissemination early in the year.

Copies of the WAACHS Volumes can be purchased from the Institute or downloaded from the website at [www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/waachs](http://www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/waachs).



## New Kulunga Team Members Profiles



**Carrington Shepherd**  
Senior Research Officer

Carrington has extensive experience in statistical analysis and producing quality statistical outcomes.

Prior to joining Kulunga, he was head of the National Children and Youth Statistics Unit at the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), where he maintained key responsibilities for directions in children and youth statistics in the ABS and assisted developments in other federal agencies.

Carrington is an integral member of Kulunga's project team for the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (WAACHS). His role includes the data analysis, dissemination and communication of results for this large, population-based survey aimed at identifying the developmental and environmental factors that enable resiliency and competency in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Western Australia.



**Stephanie Hall**  
Research Assistant

Stephanie Hall is currently undertaking her second year of study for a Bachelor of Biomedical Science at the University of Notre Dame in Fremantle

and hopes to further her studies for a degree in Physiotherapy.

She is particularly interested in doing Aboriginal research in the areas of mental health and youth suicide and will be working with Kulunga on a part-time basis throughout the duration of her studies.

Stephanie's Indigenous heritage is through her mother's different language groups. She belongs to the Banjyma, (Wittenoom) Ngarluma (Roebourne) and Nyul Nyul (Broome). She also has other family ties to the metropolitan region of Western Australia.

# National Symposium on workforce development

The Rio Tinto Child Health Partnership is pleased to be hosting a second two-day national symposium, **ENHANCING INDIGENOUS CAPACITY: Building a Sustainable Future**, which will focus on workforce development in Indigenous maternal and child health.

This symposium provides an opportunity to bring together the views and experiences of people in health, research, education, training, government sectors, Aboriginal communities and organisations.

Participants will share their success stories, workshop new strategies for enhancing and retaining a representative and culturally secure workforce in Indigenous maternal and child health, learn about ways of addressing particular maternal and child health issues including maternal alcohol and tobacco use.

Through workshops, presentations and key note forums the aim of the national symposium is to showcase, inform, instruct and inspire.

The symposium will be held in Perth, Western Australia on the 8 - 9 May 2007. It follows on from the highly successful **START OUT STRONG: A healthy beginning in life**, national symposium in May 2006, which had a focus on healthy pregnancy and highlighted the successful approaches in Indigenous maternal and child health promotion programs.

Registration and program information will be available shortly. Keep checking the Kulunga website for this information at [www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/kulunga](http://www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/kulunga).

## More than 50% of women drink alcohol while pregnant

A new study by researchers at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research has found that more than half of West Australian women surveyed drank alcohol during pregnancy.

The report, published in the February issue of the international journal *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research*, also found that nearly half had not planned their pregnancy, and 80% consumed alcohol in the three months before conception.

Report author Lyn Colvin said the findings have important implications for health promotion.

"Binge drinking among women of child bearing age is of particular concern. The findings that 14.2 percent of women surveyed consumed five or more standard drinks per occasion during the three months prior to pregnancy, and that almost half of the pregnancies were unplanned pregnancies, indicate that many women may have exposed their babies to high levels of alcohol before they were aware of their pregnancy," she said

"It's important that women understand that there is no known safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy. We recommend not drinking as the safest option because the impact of alcohol on the fetus depends on so many factors including the

stage of pregnancy, the frequency of consumption and the type of beverage consumed."

Ms Colvin said that complications due to drinking during pregnancy can range from the very serious Fetal Alcohol Syndrome to the often less severe but more common Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders which include behavioural and developmental difficulties.

She said it was encouraging that many women who drank alcohol reduced their consumption in the first trimester of pregnancy.

"It suggests to us that with appropriate education, more women will reduce or abstain from consuming alcohol when they are pregnant or might soon become pregnant," she said

"It's also important that while we raise awareness that we don't generate undue fear or guilt. Most pregnancies are healthy, but women also have a right to know about the risks to a baby from alcohol and, if they are drinking, they need to take precautions to prevent unplanned pregnancies."

The findings are based on a survey of 4,839 women taken 12 weeks after delivery. It represents a 10 percent random sample of all non-Indigenous women giving birth in Western Australia.

# Community consultations in the Wheatbelt

During December 2006 members of the Kulunga Team travelled to towns located across the Wheatbelt region to conduct community consultations and focus groups as part of an evaluation project Kulunga is undertaking for the Wheatbelt Aboriginal Health Service.

The evaluation project is intended to assist the Wheatbelt Aboriginal Health Service to measure the improvements in Aboriginal people's access and utilisation of primary health care services, following the introduction of a new brokerage model of service provision. The model has been designed to work across the region utilising Aboriginal Health Workers/Liaison Officers who act as the link between Aboriginal communities and mainstream health providers. Towns visited included Pingelly, Brookton, Moora and Quairading.

In Moora, the team met with a group of mums at the local Best Start Centre. In Quairading, Dr Clair Scrine and Jocelyn Jones attended the local Community Action Meeting at the Aboriginal Progress Association where they spoke to several members of the local Noongar community. They were also invited to the Badjaling Noongar Community where they met with Mrs Winny McHenry.

The consultations have highlighted a range of issues and have been particularly beneficial in providing a greater understanding of Aboriginal people's experiences of accessing health care services in their towns and across the Wheatbelt region.



Left: Kulunga's Jocelyn Jones and Mrs Winny McHenry.



Right: Entrance to the Badjaling Noongar Community

## Travel Scholarships on offer in 2007

The Rio Tinto Child Health Partnership is pleased to be offering travel scholarships worth \$5000 each.

The scholarships are intended to fund travel to enable recipients to attend national or international meetings/conferences to progress their research and/or related work experience.

The aim of the scholarship is to increase knowledge and understanding of maternal alcohol and tobacco use and/or workforce development in maternal and child health, and to translate such information into practical outcomes in Australia. The scholarship is open to all Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people who are either:

- working in community based organisations;
- PhD or Postdoctoral students; or
- can demonstrate substantial involvement working in the area to be further researched.

**APPLICATIONS CLOSE ON WEDNESDAY 28 FEBRUARY 2007. NO LATE APPLICATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

Visit [www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/kulunga](http://www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/kulunga) to obtain the application form and guidelines.

For further information, please contact the Rio Tinto Child Health Partnership on 08 9489 7760 or email at [clairs@ichr.uwa.edu.au](mailto:clairs@ichr.uwa.edu.au)

# “Do you see what I see”? Developmental Pathways Project



Above: Glenn Pearson

With the support of the Kulunga Research Network, Glenn has commenced his Masters Degree that will see him undertake research on the perceptions that white Western Australians, who work within the human services sector (i.e. health, education and social welfare) have of Aboriginal people mediate the effectiveness of the services they provide to Aboriginal clients.

The project is focusing on the Perth Metropolitan area but Glenn will be seeking to expand the project to consider locations such as the Pilbara, Murchison, Kalgoorlie and the South West of the State when he resubmits his research proposal to have it upgraded to a doctorate level in June 2007.

Glenn's research project is one of five projects to be undertaken by post-graduate candidates as a component of the Developmental Pathways in Western Australian Children Project that is funded through the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant.

The Developmental Pathways Project is an innovative collaboration between a number of industry partners which include: University of Western Australia (the Centre for Child Health Research at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research and the Crime Research Centre) and six Government jurisdictions in Western Australia (the Department of the Attorney General, Health, Education and Training, Community Development, Corrective Services and Disability Services).

The Project takes a trans-disciplinary approach and utilises the knowledge, expertise and data provided by the industry partners to answer important questions that will have a major impact on policy and practice and is dedicated to improving the lives of children and families. The Project has five themes - Aboriginal, Child Protection, Social Determinants, Juvenile Delinquency and Education. Glenn's research proposal is included under the Aboriginal research theme.

While the other researchers are undertaking a quantitative approach to their projects Glenn's research will take a qualitative approach interviewing 40 people (20 Aboriginal, 20 non-Aboriginal) over the next three months. The research outcomes are not only of interest to the Aboriginal community but equally to the Industry Partners involved in the Developmental Pathways Project.

## Kulunga Research Network Project Fact Sheets

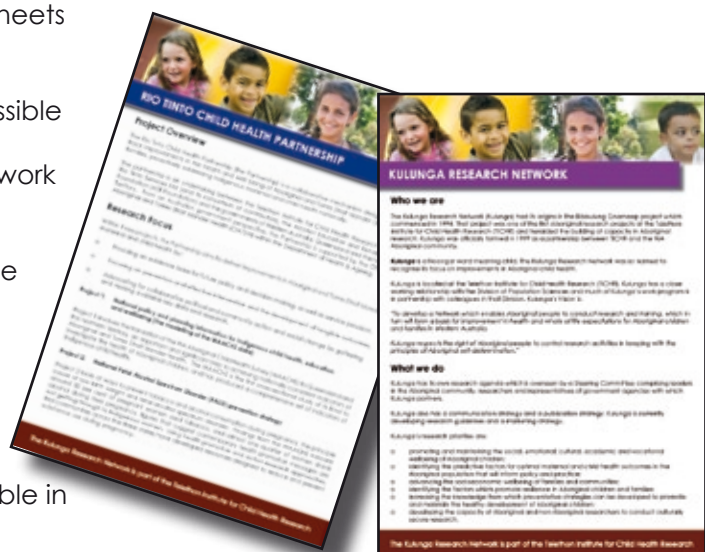
Kulunga has recently produced a series of fact sheets highlighting our major current research projects.

These fact sheets use a concise and easily accessible format that will assist in informing community, organisations and government of the important work that the Kulunga Research Network undertakes.

The fact sheets are available electronically on the Kulunga website: [www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/kulunga](http://www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/kulunga)

Preparations are under way for similar fact sheets on Kulunga's Patron, Frequently Asked Questions and What is Indigenous Research?

These additional fact sheets should be be available in March 2007.



# Alcohol and Pregnancy Project Update

The Alcohol and Pregnancy Project aims to develop and evaluate evidence-based health promotion material for health professionals to use when advising women on alcohol use and its consequences during pregnancy.

The Project is based on previous research which found that most health professionals do not enquire about or provide women with information on the consequences of alcohol use during pregnancy, and most reported their need for resources such as written material for themselves and for distribution to clients.

The consequences of alcohol use in pregnancy may include physical, mental, behavioural, and learning disabilities with possible lifelong implications. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is a general term that describes the range of effects that can occur in an individual who was exposed to alcohol during pregnancy.

Consultation with the community and health professionals and the collection of information and materials about alcohol use in pregnancy are key components of the Alcohol and Pregnancy Project. An Aboriginal Community Reference Group and a Consumer and Community Reference Group have met throughout the year and have provided valuable input and perspective in several areas of the project.

To inform the development of materials, qualitative data have been collected from a range of health professionals and women in the metropolitan area, the Kimberley and the Goldfields. The interviews and focus groups explored the experiences of health professionals in communicating about alcohol use in pregnancy and its effects, and provided insight into what information and materials may support health professionals knowledge and advice. The project also explored issues relating to the communication on alcohol use during pregnancy and its effects on the unborn child by speaking with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women

The findings from these interviews and focus groups have informed the production of evidence-based health promotion material for health professionals and for health professionals to give to women to supplement their advice. Currently these materials are being pre-tested with health professionals and women in the community to ensure that they would be happy to receive them. Any necessary amendments will be made prior to final production. The *Alcohol and Pregnancy: Health Professionals Making a Difference* materials will be disseminated to health professionals throughout WA early in 2007.

The Alcohol and Pregnancy Project has been made possible by funding from Healthway and is a collaboration between researchers at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, Edith Cowan University, Curtin University of Technology, University of Sydney and the WA Department of Health.

For further information about our alcohol and pregnancy research in Australia, please contact:

**The Alcohol and Pregnancy Project**  
**Ms Jan Payne (Project Manager)**

Telethon Institute for Child Health Research  
100 Roberts Road, SUBIACO Perth, Western Australia 6008

Postal: PO Box 855, West Perth, Western Australia, 6872  
Phone: 08 9489 7752  
Email: [janp@ichr.uwa.edu.au](mailto:janp@ichr.uwa.edu.au)



# Discovery Indigenous Researchers Development

The Discovery Indigenous Researchers Development scheme provides salary support to Indigenous Australian researchers and postgraduate research students to develop research expertise and experience to a level that is competitive with applicants for mainstream funding.

To be eligible to apply for funding, researchers must be of Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. It is strongly recommended that a Mentor (who does not need to be an Indigenous Australian) be associated with the proposal to provide specific expert advice on the subject of the research.

Applicants do not have to hold a PhD to apply, but must have completed a research degree or demonstrate equivalent research capacity and experience. Researchers who are enrolled in higher research degrees may apply for a grant to provide funding towards their degree. In this instance, it is strongly recommended that the student's supervisor (who does not need to be an Indigenous Australian) be associated with the proposal.

The Research Cadetship - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (RC-ATSI) was introduced into the program in 2002. The RC-ATSI provides a salary equivalent to the ARCs Australian Postdoctoral Fellowship. For 2007, RC-ATSI, has been renamed to Indigenous Researcher Fellow.

The Discovery Indigenous Researchers Development Funding Rules for funding commencing in 2008 is now available on the ARC Web Site - <http://www.arc.gov.au/>. Also available is the sample application form and the Eligibility Exemption/Ruling Request form.

**Closing date for submission of IRD Proposals is Friday 4 May 2007.**

**UWA Internal Closing date: Monday 23rd April 2007.**

**Closing date for eligibility Exemption/Ruling requests is Friday 6 April 2007.**

Please contact Dr Judy Berman, Research Development Officer, Research Services at The University of Western Australia on 08 6488 8033 or email at [jberman@admin.uwa.edu.au](mailto:jberman@admin.uwa.edu.au) if you have any questions about this scheme.

## Kulunga Research Network

100 Roberts Road  
SUBIACO WA 6008

PO Box 855  
WEST PERTH WA 6872

T 08 9489 7777  
F 08 9489 7700

[www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/kulunga](http://www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/kulunga)

If you would like to subscribe to our newsletter or to obtain further information, please contact us on:

[enquire-kulunga@ichr.uwa.edu.au](mailto:enquire-kulunga@ichr.uwa.edu.au)

## New member at TAFE WA

Kulunga's Tracey-Lee Edwards has recently been appointed as a member of the Central TAFE Governing Council in Western Australia.

Tracey-Lee's membership was endorsed by State Cabinet. She is a Student Representative building on the experiences of her fellow students from the campus where she is undertaking part-time studies towards a Diploma in Event Management.

During her term as a Member of the Governing Council, Tracey-Lee hopes to make a positive contribution by representing the interests of young people and in particular Indigenous people, especially those exploring non-traditional pathways.



**The Kulunga Research Network would like to thank our contributors:**

**Australian Government  
Department of Health and Ageing  
WA Department of Health  
Child Health Research Foundation**