

July 2006



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"

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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 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 Nyoongar word for "children's".

'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.'

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 National NAIDOC Ball in Cairns

Left to right: Jo-Anne D'Cress, Naomi Wenitong of Shakaya and Tracey-Lee Edwards from Kulunga,

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Newsletter produced by the
Kulunga Research Network of the
Telethon Institute for Child Health Research

Farewell Adele and Rani

It is with sadness that we farewell two of our colleagues, Adele Cox and Rani Param.

Adele has been on staff at the Institute for 4 years as the Communications Manager for the WA Aboriginal Child Health Survey.



Above: Adele Cox



Above: Rani Param

Rani is now a lecturer with the Centre for Aboriginal Medical and Dental Health and Research Officer with the School of Paediatrics and Child Health

Both Adele and Rani are still associated with the Institute as students.

Adele has taken up a position at the Centre for Aboriginal Medical and Dental Health and the Rural Clinical School at the University of Western Australia.

We'd like to thank both Adele and Rani for their contribution to the Institute and Kulunga and wish them all the best in their current positions and future endeavours.

Rani has been on staff at the Institute for 15 months as Executive Officer.

WA Yorga wins National NAIDOC Youth of the Year

At the recent National NAIDOC Award Ceremony and Ball in Cairns held on the 8th July 2006, Jo-Anne D'Cress from Bunbury, WA, was awarded the NAIDOC Youth of the Year.

The National NAIDOC Awards recognise the outstanding contributions that individual Indigenous Australians make to their own communities and the broader Australian community.

At 23 years of age, Jo-Anne has already achieved many impressive accolades, but is looking forward to the prospect of impending motherhood.

Jo-Anne is a very popular member of the West Australian community, making outstanding contributions to help improve and empower Indigenous people, particularly young people, through her active involvement in community services.

She was invited to a private reception with the Western Australian Premier and the Queen in 2000, and during that same year won several awards including West Australian Youth of the Year, Young Citizen of the Year, and the West Australian

Young Australian of the Year – Community Service Award.

During Jo-Anne's recent scholarship at the Drug and Alcohol Office in WA, she developed a booklet to support and assist Indigenous people and communities on dealing with alcohol and liquor licensing issues.

The booklet is currently being produced by the Drug and Alcohol Office for distribution.

Jo-Anne is a member of the 2005–06 National Indigenous Youth Leadership group.

She is one of only 17 Indigenous youth who are consulted directly by the Australian Government about their perspectives on Indigenous issues.

NOTE: 'Yorga' is a noongar word for woman.



Above: Jo-Anne D'Cress and her NAIDOC Youth of the Year Award

Darwin the focus for National NAIDOC Week in '07'

Kulunga's Manager Colleen Hayward and Communications Officer Tracey-Lee Edwards attended the National NAIDOC Award Ceremony and Ball in Cairns earlier this month.



Above: Kulunga Manager Colleen Hayward and Troy Cassar-Daley

The star-studded event featured entertainers Shakaya, Yothu Yindi, Seaman Dan, Troy Cassar-Daley, and was hosted by prominent actor, writer and director Leah Purcell.

As part of the proceedings, it was recognised that next year will be 50 years since NAIDOC was first established.

In 1957, the National Aborigines Day Observance Committee (NADOC) was formed with the support and cooperation of the Federal and State governments, the churches and major Aboriginal organisations.

In 1991, NADOC became known as NAIDOC to include Torres Strait Islanders.

NAIDOC is now used widely to refer to all the events and celebrations that go on during National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Week.

In 2007, it is anticipated that Darwin, NT will host the 50 year celebration. Darwin hasn't hosted National NAIDOC Week celebrations since 1993.



Above: Kulunga's Tracey-Lee Edwards and Jo-Anne D'Cress

New Kulunga Team Members Profiles



Jennine Pickett
Administrative and
Research Assistant

Jennine was recently recruited from the Australian Government Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination and previously worked for the Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Services (ATSIS).

She has an extensive background in administrative and corporate service duties and has been involved in various roles throughout her time in ATSIC and ATSIS, most notably as the administrative assistant for the ATSIC WA State Council (AWASC).

Jennine is a Noongar woman who has extensive family ties in Perth and throughout the South West of WA.



Dr Clair Scrine
Senior Research Officer

Dr Clair Scrine recently moved to Perth from Canberra. Clair was working as a senior officer at the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination and was previously a policy officer with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).

In 2003 Clair received her doctorate from Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW. Her thesis examined the development of gynaecology and obstetrics as a medical specialisation in the nineteenth century, and the impact of this on attitudes and beliefs about the female body. During the completion of her doctorate Clair undertook a student residency at the Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine (within the University College of London) and at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.



Daniel McAullay
Senior Research Officer

Daniel has returned to the Institute after gaining a few years experience working as a Senior Policy Manager at the Health Department of Western Australia.

He has returned to work as a Senior Research Officer with the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research and commence PhD studies with the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute at the Australian National University.

His PhD project is investigating what contribution primary health care has made to maternal and child health of selected communities in Western Australia.

Daniel's involvement with the Institute began in 1999 when he was founding Manager of the Kulunga Research Network.



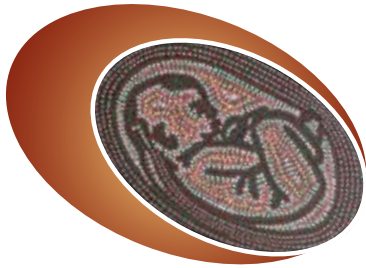
Dr Roz Walker
Research Manager

Roz Walker has over 20 years experience in Indigenous education in teaching, curriculum development, academic co-ordination, research and evaluation including the development of the teacher education program for Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers in rural and remote areas in WA.

Roz was appointed as a Senior Research Fellow with Curtin Indigenous Research Centre (CIRC) in February 1997 and Deputy Director in January 2001. Roz has conducted many research activities that have significant policy relevance including evaluating the role of sport as a positive intervention to improve health, education and other social outcomes in Indigenous communities in the North West of WA funded by Rio Tinto Stronger Families.

Start Out Strong: A healthy beginning in life

The urgent need to improve the health and well-being of Indigenous children was the focus of a two day national symposium held in Perth on the 9th and 10th May.



Above: The Symposium Branding

The START OUT STRONG: A healthy beginning in life symposium was hosted by the Rio Tinto Child Health Partnership, an initiative of the Telethon Institute.

The Rio Tinto Child Health Partnership is an innovative collaboration that brings together the research experience of the Institute and our Kulunga Research Network with corporate partners Rio Tinto Ltd and the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation and government partners in Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia.

This ambitious partnership aims to deliver improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander maternal and child health by translating research findings into policies and health promotion programs that make a real difference to indigenous communities.

Chair of the Partnership, Professor Fiona Stanley said the symposium looked at ways to promote healthy pregnancy, and would highlight programs that are achieving results in three major areas:

- Reducing substance use during pregnancy
- Improved nutrition, including breastfeeding
- The first years of life.

"It's so important that Aboriginal mothers and families are empowered with information and supported with adequate resources so they can make good choices to improve the on-going health of their babies." Professor Stanley said.

Professor Stanley said it was appalling that Indigenous children in Australia continued to suffer much higher rates of infant mortality and poor health including low birth weight, chronic infections and disability. As the pathways to both poor and good health start before birth and are heavily influenced by childhood factors, getting a good start is most crucial to enhance adult health as well.

Over 170 delegates attended the symposium representing a range of sectors including community-based health care organisations and clinics, Indigenous communities, State and Commonwealth government agencies and leading research institutes in Australia and overseas. All the presentations were of the highest standard and covered a range of issues and experiences.

The symposium was a great success and an invaluable opportunity for so many working in this important area to come together and share their success stories, expertise, research and resources.

The main issues raised during the symposium have been captured in a report which also highlights the successful approaches in Indigenous maternal and child health promotion programs.

The report and other information about the symposium are available on the Kulunga website at www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/kulunga.



Above: Over 170 delegates attended the two days of the symposium



Above: Kulunga Manager Colleen Hayward and Professor Fiona Stanley



Above: International Keynote speaker, Dr Caroline Tait from Saskatchewan, Canada

NAIDOC Week celebrations at the Institute

NAIDOC week was celebrated in style this year with people across the Institute actively participating in a range of activities coordinated by the Kulunga Research Network.

Highlights of the week's events included the flag raising, bush tucker sampling, hands-on lessons in traditional tool making, a damper morning tea and an oral history account of the South West Region



Above: Institute Director, Fiona Stanley and Kulunga's Glenn Pearson raise the flags at the official opening of NAIDOC Week 2006



Above: Noel Nannup told an oral history of significant sites in the South West region



Above: Bush Tucker Tastings served in style

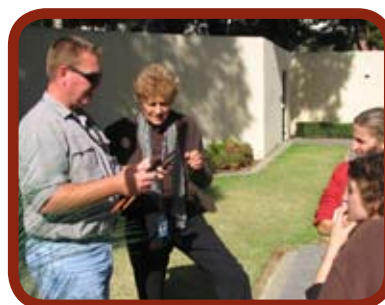
Institute staff were also able to test their knowledge in both a daily and general knowledge quiz.

This year's theme was 'Respect the Past – Believe in the Future', was uniquely captured in different ways in Noel Nannup's creation story of the significant sites across the South West Region, and in the seminar on contemporary Indigenous Research Methodologies presented by Michael Wright, a Team Investigator with the Indigenous Capacity Building Grant.

Kulunga Manager Colleen Hayward said that it was positive to see more people across the Institute participating and supporting the activities during the week.

"The highlight for me was seeing people getting into the tool making. It was an interactive activity where people could take away something they had just made."

NAIDOC Week at the Institute will continue to educate by bringing people together to celebrate the uniqueness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in an enjoyable, informative, thought provoking and most of all, welcoming and all-inclusive way.



Above: Kulunga's Jason Barrow explains to Institute staff about traditional tool making



Above: Institute's Kirsty Officer has a go at crushing Balga resin



Above: Institute's Carrington Shepherd showing off his own handmade 'taarp'

'Taarp' is a stone/shell knife.

Alcohol and Pregnancy Project Update

Consultation with the community and health professionals and the collection of information and materials about alcohol use in pregnancy are key components of a major West Australian project to address alcohol consumption in pregnancy.

The effects of alcohol use in pregnancy may include physical, mental, behavioural, and/or learning disabilities with possible lifelong effects. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome represents the severe end of the range of abnormalities which may result from alcohol use in pregnancy.

The Alcohol and Pregnancy Project aims to develop 'best practice' health promotion material for health professionals to use when advising women on alcohol use and its effects during pregnancy in consultation with health professionals and women in the community.

The Project is based on previous research which identified the need to provide health professionals with better information about the diagnosis of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and on advising pregnant women about alcohol use in pregnancy.

Our research 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.

Since the Alcohol and Pregnancy Project commenced in January, we have made a lot of progress. A Project Officer has been recruited and is working hard to gather evidence and collate national and international literature and resources on alcohol and pregnancy. This will support the production of evidence-based material for health professionals to use when addressing alcohol use in pregnancy.

We have also set up an Aboriginal Community Reference Group and a Consumer and Community Reference Group to gain a community and consumer perspective on all the activities of the Alcohol and Pregnancy Project. We met with these groups for the first time in March and April, and they are already providing the Project with very valuable advice.

Starting in July, we will be speaking with health professionals (Aboriginal health workers, allied health professionals, community nurses, general practitioners, obstetricians and paediatricians)

about their experiences in communicating about alcohol use in pregnancy and its effects.

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women throughout Western Australia (metropolitan and regional) will also be consulted in the next few months to explore issues relating to the communication on alcohol use during pregnancy and its effects on the unborn child.

Such activities will enable us to produce 'best practice' health promotion material for health professionals and for health professionals to give to women to supplement their advice.

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.

We'd really like to hear from individuals and organisations that have experience with or know about resources on alcohol and pregnancy for health professionals and whether the resources were of any use. Please let us know by emailing janp@ichr.uwa.edu.au.

Responding to violence and abuse in communities

Recent media attention has been given to the issue of violence and abuse in Aboriginal communities. In July, COAG considered the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Summit on these damaging issues and agreed to actions on policing, community education, support for victims and witnesses and the application of Customary Law. COAG also recognised the need to assist in capacity building of individuals, families and communities. Poor child health and educational attainment were also identified as contributing to an intergenerational cycle of social dysfunction and COAG agreed to mechanisms for early intervention in these areas.

It is important to understand that many problems faced by families and communities have arisen from past government policies and support is needed to enable people to deal with these in appropriate ways. Violence and abuse are not acceptable responses. It should also be remembered that many Aboriginal men abhor such responses and are protective of their loved ones.

Young leader appointed

In late May, Kulunga's Communication Officer, Tracey-Lee Edwards was recently appointed as a Director on the board of The Foundation for Young Australians.



Above: Newly appointed Director, Tracey-Lee Edwards

The Foundation for Young Australians is an independent national grant-making organisation, funding and working in partnership with youth-led initiatives which aim to positively contribute to young people and their communities.

Annually, the Foundation commits approximately \$4 million to supporting young people, with approximately 20% of grant funding committed to initiatives that work with young Indigenous Australians.

Tracey-Lee is now the second Indigenous person elected to the current Board and looks forward to making a positive contribution.

Further information can be found on their website at www.youngaustralians.org.au.

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Ensuring a healthy future

In early June, Kulunga Manager Colleen Hayward met with about 150 young women from across New South Wales at the 2006 Leadership Seminar sponsored by The Women's College of the University of Sydney.

The focus of the seminar was "Ensuring a Healthy Future". It provided an excellent opportunity for Colleen to highlight the work of the Institute, which included an overview of the key findings of the WAACHS Volume 3 work "Improving the Educational Experiences of Aboriginal Children and Young People".



Above: Kulunga Manager Colleen Hayward, Professor Marie Bashir, Governor of NSW and Dr Yvonne Rate, Principal of the Sydney Women's College

Other presenters included Professors Elizabeth Elliott, Elspeth Probyn and Jennie Brand-Miller as well as Doctors Ellie Freeman and Mirvat Said.

Colleen's impressions of the forum were very positive. "I was particularly impressed with the maturity of the young women in attendance. They were very socially conscious with a wonderful aptitude to provide support to other young people while on their own journeys. There was a broad range of topics covered by the speakers and the participants actively engaged with each," Colleen said.

"Also of importance was the support offered by NSW Governor, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC, who has a particular interest in improving the life circumstances of Aboriginal children and young people through education and especially those experiencing mental health problems and is very keen to learn more about the great work being done by the Institute and was keen to apply some of that work to the NSW context."

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