



Curtin University

**Transformative research strategies with Indigenous families and communities**

**Ailsa Munns Course Coordinator Postgraduate Child & Adolescent Health Programs**

# The Early Years

- Lifelong health and wellbeing of children are strongly influenced by parental, family and community environments in the pre-conceptual, antenatal and early years (WHO, 2008).
- Addressing challenging social determinants of health and supporting parents are critical to positive child and adult physical and psychosocial health outcomes (Arefadib & Moore, 2017).



- As health professionals, how do we engage with families to facilitate health and wellbeing for the parents and their children?



- How do we work in partnership with parents?

- How do we understand the social and cultural contexts of families?

# Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Families with Children in the Early Years

Successful engagement requires:

- an appreciation of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander history and cultures
- culturally safe practices and culturally competent organisations
- valuing cultural skills and knowledge
- relationships of trust, respect and honesty

Engagement needs to relate to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander concepts of health and wellbeing

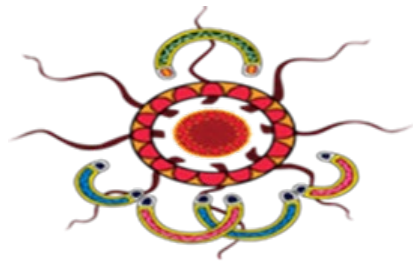
(Hunt, 2013).

# Peer Led Parent Support: Remote and Urban Settings

- 2008 – 2009: Yanan Ngurra-ngu Walalja: Halls Creek Community Families Program.



- 2013 – 2017: Investigation of a Culturally Secure Home Visiting Model for Aboriginal Family and Child Health Support in the Midland Community in Western Australia





# Participatory Action Research

- PAR research is a credible, culturally appropriate methodology used to effect collaborative change
- Enables researchers and practitioners to better understand and help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents navigate sociocultural, economic and relational life experiences (McDowell, 2015)
- True partnership is the key: supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's participation in research, improving quality of investigations (Snijder et al., 2015)
- Fosters self-reflection for researchers, practitioners and participants on what influences parents' everyday perceptions of reality, access to resources and empowering action within their community (McDowell, 2015; Habermas, 1984)



- PAR research studies were undertaken in these settings to develop and evaluate the suitability, feasibility and effectiveness of Aboriginal peer-led home visiting programs in Western Australia.
- A secondary aim was to explore the research methodology used for the studies and provide recommendations for its implementation in other similar situations.

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# Project Development

## Participants

- Aboriginal peer support workers
- Aboriginal parents
- Community support agencies





# Project Development: Methodology & Methods

- Participatory Action Research using Action Learning Sets
- Yarning a key communication strategy
- Allows psychosocial and cultural viewpoints
- All participants able to identify needs and aspirations to inform future planning
- Facilitates culturally relevant and acceptable peer led home visiting parent support

# Methodology: Participant Review

- Participants verified value of Participatory Action Research using Action Learning Sets
- Confirmed key enabling features
  - ✓ Safe communication spaces: supportive, non-judgemental environments
  - ✓ Supportive engagement processes: respectful, collaborative partnerships
  - ✓ Supportive organisational processes
- Recognition of enabling and challenging social determinants of health

- It is vital that views of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peer support workers, parents and community agencies are heard through the use of participatory action research methodology.
- Facilitates collaboration to explore culturally acceptable research strategies for sustainable and acceptable parent support programs (Munns, 2017).

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