

Koori Fathering Program



Pilot Phase Evaluation Report

January 2006

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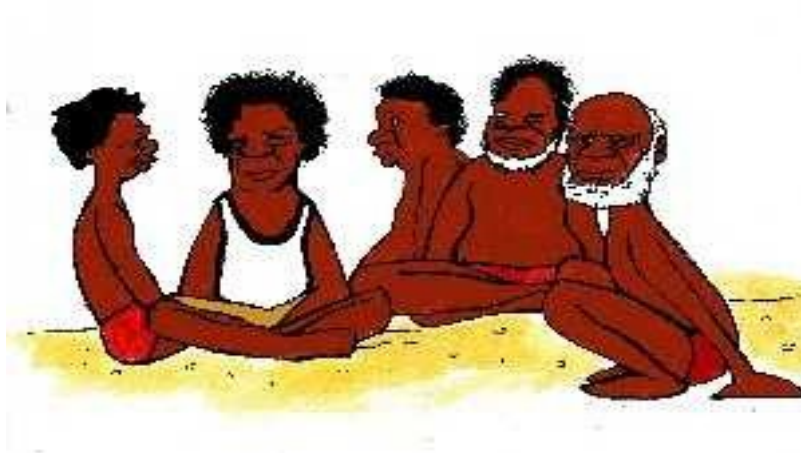
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PLEASE NOTE: When reading the word Aboriginal in this document, it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The *Koori Fathering Program* was developed in response to demand from local Aboriginal organisations and individuals to improve the health and wellbeing of their communities. Family functioning was a stated priority and specific requests were made for training around parenting skills and relationships. A literature review reinforced this felt need by highlighting how the quality of early childhood experiences, including parenting style, affects children's social, cognitive, emotional and physical development and wellbeing and, consequently, their overall physical and mental wellbeing throughout their lives.

An extensive local mapping process found that, although many parenting programs were available, Aboriginal men were not accessing them. Informal community consultations indicated this was largely because Aboriginal fathers found the existing programs to be too female-oriented, not culturally-relevant, difficult to access and insensitive when classes were missed due to family or community crises.

Another extensive search found few parenting programs designed specifically for men and even less for Aboriginal men. Indeed, fathers had, generally, been identified as a group requiring further attention when developing parenting programs as they were not being easily accommodated within current early intervention and parent support programs and services. The literature review did, however, identify a number of issues and principles of importance when developing Aboriginal parenting programs, as well as some key elements of successful parenting programs.

The findings of these literature reviews, along with comprehensive feedback from a number of focus groups with local Aboriginal men, were used to develop the *Koori Fathering Program* – a 15-week course offering Aboriginal men and, indirectly, their partners and children, a new beginning by supporting them to:

- develop more positive relationships with their children;
- develop more positive relationships with their partners, or ex-partners;
- improve their understanding of children's development and needs;
- understand and accept the responsibility of fatherhood;
- improve their communication skills;
- understand the importance of showing affection; and
- learn and practise effective, positive discipline strategies.

Methods

Two rounds of this newly-developed *Koori Fathering Program* were delivered – one in 2002 and another in 2003 – and comprehensively evaluated as a pilot program. It was run on Friday mornings, with lunch provided after each session – to encourage more informal reflection and discussion of the session's information and activities. Transport to and from the group and childcare were provided free of charge, as needed.



This pilot phase of the *Koori Fathering Program* was co-facilitated by the three main facilitators from the *Rekindling The Spirit* program, from which participants were recruited – as they were among the Aboriginal men who had expressed a strong desire to improve their parenting skills. As all three *Koori Fathering Program* facilitators were fathers, they also acted as participants, sharing their own experiences and feelings along with the other men.

As we were piloting the *Koori Fathering Program*, this evaluation explored a wide range of indicators:

- **Process indicators** – to explore how well it was implemented and attended and how satisfied participants and facilitators were with it.
- **Impact indicators** – to explore its perceived impact on participants' knowledge and attitudes about parenting issues and techniques.
- **Outcome indicators** – to explore its perceived impact on participants' parenting skills, practices and confidence, as well as on their relationships (with children, partners and the broader community) and other aspects of their lives.

Participants

Across the two pilot rounds, and excluding the facilitators, 25 local Aboriginal men attended at least one session of the program, including four men who attended sessions in both rounds – giving a total of 29 “enrolments”. These men were:

- aged between 18 and 53 years;
- had between zero and eight children each, with ages ranging from newborn to 21 years+; and
- had been involved with *Rekindling The Spirit* for between three months and three years, except for one participant had not attended at all.

Approximately two thirds of the men were living with their partners during their attendance at the *Koori Fathering Program*. The overall picture of participants' experiences of being fathered, for those who remembered their fathers, was one with little positive physical or emotional connection or encouragement but much anger and physical punishment, often influenced by alcohol or other drug usage. All participants reported fathering, or trying their best to father, quite differently from their recollections of how they were fathered.

Process results

Excluding the three facilitators, of the other 29 participants attending at least one *Koori Fathering Program* session:

- 10 men (34%) attended more than half the available sessions – the **Completers**, who attended an average of 9.3 program sessions each (range = 5 – 13)
- 8 men (28%) had to stop attending due to other factors – the **Starters**, who attended an average of 2.6 program sessions each (range = 1 – 4)
- 11 men (38%) stopped attending for no known reason – the **Testers**, who attended an average of 2.0 program sessions each (range = 1 – 4)



While the numbers in each group were too small for meaningful statistical analyses, the demographic information collected suggested that Completers tended to be older; to have more, and older, children; to have at least one son; to be currently living apart from their partner; and to have attended the *Rekindling The Spirit* program for longer before starting the *Koori Fathering Program*.

The main reasons given for participating in the program were: wanting to improve their knowledge or understanding – of fathering and about their partner; wanting to improve, or learn new, fathering skills; wanting to develop a support system with other Koori fathers; feeling a need to overcome their own lack of a positive fathering role model; wanting to be a better father, man and/or partner; and wanting to improve their relationships with their children and partners.

All participants and facilitators gave very positive feedback about their experiences while attending/facilitating the *Koori Fathering Program*, with the majority reporting that it had completely met their expectations, or even exceeded them. Participants whose expectations were not completely met explained this was because they still needed or wanted to continue learning more. All participants expressed a strong desire for the program to continue and to keep participating in it themselves. Both participants and the facilitators made a number of suggestions for things they would like to see more or less of in future rounds of the program.

Impact results

Questions asked in pre and post video interviews found changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes and understanding about a range of parenting issues, including: the age-related stages and skill-related types of child development; the different ways or techniques people use to communicate with each other; and alternative discipline techniques for managing children's behaviour. In the post video interviews, most participants also discussed various ways in which they felt attending the *Koori Fathering Program* had helped them with their understanding of a broad range of parenting issues, including those areas mentioned above. The facilitators also reported similar perceived changes in the participants' awareness and understanding levels.

Outcome results

During most of the weekly program sessions, as well as in the pre and post video interviews, participants rated how they felt they were going with their fathering generally and with their relationships with their partners and children. While the number of participants with these ratings is small, and there is considerable intra-participant variation, there were general visual trends for some increase in most self-ratings over the course of the program. Exploration of the more qualitative responses given with these self-ratings help with understanding how the participants felt their fathering, and their attitudes to it, were changing.



In the post video interviews, most participants discussed various ways in which they felt attending the *Koori Fathering Program* had helped them with their parenting skills, practices, confidence and support and in their relationships with their children, their partners, other family members and even the broader communities in which they lived. Many participants also identified a number of ways attending the *Koori Fathering Program* had helped them in other aspects of their lives, including: making them more aware of, and taking responsibility for, the consequences of their actions; helping them realise the need to be self-motivating; helping them learn new ways of solving problems; helping them to understand themselves and their own feelings better; helping increase their self-esteem; helping them to be able to share their own experiences and to come to terms with issues about how they were fathered; helping them with giving up alcohol and other drugs; and helping them to stay out of jail.

Again, the facilitators also reported perceiving similar changes in many of the same aspects of the participants' parenting skills, practices, confidence, support and relationships.

Limitations and recommendations for future evaluation

While these results provide some very positive feedback about this pilot program's development, content, implementation, acceptability and impact on participants, they need to be viewed somewhat cautiously – as they have come from only a small number of participants in a non-experimentally designed project. However, this was only a pilot study which, primarily, aimed to see whether this type of program could successfully engage Aboriginal fathers – making such an initial first step quite appropriate. The results presented have certainly demonstrated the *Koori Fathering Program*'s success at meeting this primary aim, as well as consistently suggesting it has contributed to positive impacts across a range of targeted and untargeted process, impact and outcome indicators. Therefore, it definitely appears to warrant further development and exploration of its effectiveness – in larger implementations, with more systematic evaluation of the factors impacting on attendance rates and program impact. These factors should include those explored and suggested in this report, as well as the various others it will be possible to explore with larger numbers and types of participants and group structures.

Conclusions and recommendations for future implementation

The development and implementation of the *Koori Fathering Program* have resulted in a parenting program which is very acceptable to Aboriginal men and seems to have helped improve their knowledge, attitudes, skills, practices and confidence across a range of parenting issues, as well as helping with their relationships with their children and/or partners. The process of developing and implementing the program has produced many lessons about factors and processes which seem to have made important contributions to the program's successes and failures. These lessons form the basis of a number of recommendations which, we believe, could help further enhance the impact of future larger-scale implementations of the program – including the following:

- Given the high levels of demand for the program, more facilitators should be trained and future programs should definitely be offered to Aboriginal men and families across the North Coast region



- with consideration given to the apparent findings from this study about who is more or less likely to complete and benefit from the program.
- Facilitators in future programs should continue the philosophy of being, primarily, a genuine participant in the group – as this seems an important key to building a safe and trusting relationship with, and enhancing the benefits for, the other participants.
- Future programs should continue to offer free transport and childcare (and any other supports required by potential attendees) and be run in the morning followed by a free communal lunch.
- If participants are allowed to join the program after Session 1, a process needs to be established to make sure they still complete a pre video interview. Similarly, if participants leave before the end of the program, attempts should be made to complete a post video interview.
- Future programs may benefit from increasing the number of weeks they are run over and/or trial more formal structures for establishing ongoing support groups for the participants at the end of the parenting program – as all *Koori Fathering Program* participants expressed a strong desire for ongoing support and the results of this pilot suggest there was much more progress during men's second round of attending.
- Future programs need to work with both fathers and mothers – either separately or together – to ensure increased levels of consistency in parenting practices.
- Future programs are likely to need to adapt further if they are to successfully engage younger Aboriginal fathers – some suggestions would be to trial younger facilitators and/or groups targeting new or young parents.
- Parents with violence and/or substance abuse issues, particularly longstanding ones are likely to benefit from attending at least 12 months of a more generic program (like *Rekindling The Spirit*), to help them start dealing with these other issues, before attending a parenting-focused program.
- For programs targeting parents trying to overcome violence and/or substance abuse issues, it would be helpful if a more generic program (like *Rekindling The Spirit*) was ongoing during and after the parenting program – to deal with the non-parenting issues raised during the parenting program and to provide ongoing support to families after the parenting program ends.



BACKGROUND

What is the *Koori Fathering Program*?

The *Koori Fathering Program* is a locally-developed 15-week course offering Aboriginal men and, indirectly, their partners and children, a new beginning by supporting them to:

- develop more positive relationships with their children;
- develop more positive relationships with their partners, or ex-partners;
- improve their understanding of children's development and needs;
- understand and accept the responsibility of fatherhood;
- improve their communication skills;
- understand the importance of showing affection; and
- learn and practise effective, positive discipline strategies.

The contents and implementation of the *Koori Fathering Program* are described in more detail in the *Methods* section of this report.

Why was the *Koori Fathering Program* developed?

Demand from local Koori men and organisations

In 1999, the Northern Rivers Area Health Service committed funding, via the Health Promotion Unit, to develop and implement a plan to improve the health of local Aboriginal communities. An extensive consultation process sought opinions from local Elders, community members and the many organisations involved in local Aboriginal health, education and wellbeing. Improving family functioning, especially with regard to its impact on children, was a common and central theme among the priorities identified (1). Supportive, educational programs for Aboriginal parents were considered a major priority, especially for Aboriginal fathers, who were more reluctant, than Aboriginal mothers, to access mainstream parenting programs (1).

As these consultations were nearing an end, some men participating in *Rekindling The Spirit* groups began asking for more information and training specifically aimed at improving their fathering skills and relationships with their children. *Rekindling The Spirit* is a local program helping Aboriginal families to deal with, and break, the cycle of various social problems (eg: family violence, drug and alcohol abuse) in a culturally-appropriate way (2).

Evidence of need

Major literature reviews happening within the Health Promotion Unit around the same time supported the importance of these expressed needs (1, 3, 4). The quality of early childhood experiences, including parenting style, affects children's social, cognitive and emotional development and wellbeing and, consequently, their overall physical and mental wellbeing throughout their lives (5). The literature also



clearly indicates how colonisation has resulted in very high rates of dysfunction among Aboriginal individuals, families and communities: traditional lifestyles have been lost and the role of adults as parents, providers and teachers of culture has been undermined (6, 7). Evidence suggests that the most effective way of breaking the cycle of dysfunctional communities is through programs which have a parent, child and family focus (7).

The role of males in traditional Aboriginal culture has been systematically undermined through the generations: colonisation has eroded Aboriginal males' roles as landowners, providers, decision-makers, leaders and educators (6-8). This erosion has been enhanced as Aboriginal fathers have often been absent from families and communities due to illness, incarceration, social conflicts or functional unavailability (8-10). Consequently traditional Aboriginal male parenting practices have been lost.

Lack of existing appropriate programs

An extensive local mapping process found that although many parenting programs were available, Aboriginal men were not accessing them (1). Informal community consultations indicated this was largely because Aboriginal fathers found the existing programs to be too female-oriented (participants and educators) and insufficiently culturally-relevant (content and philosophy). They also reported frequent transport difficulties in getting to programs and administrative insensitivities when classes were missed due to family or community crises.

How was the *Koori Fathering Program* developed?

Review of literature

An extensive search found few parenting programs designed specifically for men and even less aimed specifically at Aboriginal men (1). Indeed, fathers had, generally, been identified as a group requiring further attention when developing parenting programs as they were not being easily accommodated within current early intervention and parent support programs and services (11). The literature review did, however, identify a number of issues of importance when developing Aboriginal parenting programs:

- programs should aim towards healing the emotional pain of transgenerational trauma, to improve parenting practices and to enhance relationships across generations (12);
- programs should be directed at the whole extended family so that the integrity of the traditional approach is encouraged and maintained (9);
- programs should involve community elders, incorporate Aboriginal principles of community development and acknowledge the importance of the traditional extended family parenting practices and the role of healing in resolving community disorder (9);
- male support, positive role models and relationships are important for increasing Aboriginal fathers' sense of belonging and involvement (9, 13);
- Aboriginal fathers need support in order to develop their fathering skills, learn parenting strategies and nurture their instincts (9, 13);



- Aboriginal fathers need a safe environment to explore their boundaries, their inner self and the importance of being a father (9, 13);
- programs should acknowledge and address the complex issues facing Aboriginal fathers, including discrimination, low self-esteem and limited levels of education, employment opportunities, positive role models, parenting skills and knowledge about issues such as nutrition and child development (9, 13, 14); and
- working with Aboriginal fathers needs to come from the heart and not be based only on theoretical knowledge (13, 14).

More generally, the literature review also identified some key elements of successful parenting programs:

- being empowering, supportive & encouraging (rather than blaming & punishing);
- being preventive, starting prenatally wherever possible;
- having a positive message, not necessarily health-related;
- being well-structured and of high quality, including having well-trained staff;
- developing general life skills;
- targeting families, and broader communities, together;
- addressing psychosocial wellbeing (eg: by cognitive behavioural and rational emotive therapy techniques); and
- considering long-term sustainability (5, 15, 16).

Focus groups with interested Aboriginal men

Three focus groups were conducted with existing members of the *Rekindling The Spirit* program who had expressed interest in attending a fathering sub-program. These focus groups explored a range of issues (see Appendix A for the full question lists), including:

- the men's perceptions of fathering and how various factors influence their fathering – in both positive and negative ways (eg: where they live, their daytime activities, their culture / heritage, how they were parented, external agencies, being Aboriginal in Australia today);
- the men's perceptions of factors that help them with overcoming the difficulties of being fathers;
- the men's perceptions of factors that could help them become better fathers (eg: changes in their local environment, skills they would like to learn);
- the men's expectations of a fathering program;
- how they would like to see the program run (eg: number and types of fathers to be involved, where and how often the group should meet, how long each session and the overall program should run);
- the issues the men would like covered in the program;
- the preferred format for program materials (eg: pamphlets, videos); and
- issues which may limit the men's ability to attend the program regularly.



METHODS

How did the *Koori Fathering Program* operate?

Content

Based on the information gathered during the literature review and focus groups, a 15-week program was developed, with the following session titles. Appendix B provides more detail about each session's aims.

- Session 1: Gaining informed consent, pre video interviews with participants and setting group rules.
- Session 2: What is Communication?
- Session 3: Communication Maintenance.
- Session 4: What is Discipline?
- Session 5: Building Relationships.
- Session 6: Review of Sessions 2-5.
- Session 7: Self-Reflection & Connecting.
- Session 8: Sharing Responsibility.
- Session 9: Showing Affection.
- Session 10: Review of Sessions 7-9.
- Session 11: Child Development.
- Session 12: Sex, Pregnancy & Babies.
- Session 13: Hunters & Gatherers.
- Session 14: Review of Sessions 11-13.
- Session 15: Post 1 (or post2) video interviews with participants.

Setting Group Rules

The first task of the first session of the *Koori Fathering Program* was for all the participants to discuss and agree on the rules the group would abide by. The rules agreed during this pilot phase were:

- Confidentiality.
- No put-downs.
- Speak from your own experience and feelings.
- No advice giving unless asked for.
- Listening without interruption.
- No rescuing.
- On time for each session.
- Equal opportunity for all participants.
- Stay on focus:
 - No Minimising.
 - No Lying.
 - No Blaming.



Implementation

Each *Koori Fathering Program* session lasted around three hours and followed a similar structure:

- *Recap* – a brief review of the previous session;
- *Check-in* – on how the last week had been for each participant, including how they had been feeling, their progress with any homework tasks from the previous session and how they would rate their relationship(s) with their partner and/or child/ren (around 2-3 minutes each);
- *Introduction* – to the session's topic, content and structure;
- *Activity 1* – for participants on the session's topic – these varied but could last 10-30 minutes and included reading handouts, reflecting on the handouts' contents, group discussions and roleplaying;
- *Tea break* – time for a cuppa and more informal discussions;
- *Activity 2-4* – another two or three activities for participants on the session's topic;
- *Debrief* – a brief review of the information covered during the session, a check of how the participants were feeling, an explanation of any homework activities to be done before the next session and a facilitator-led discussion of the participants' feedback about the session – what they liked and how it could be improved.

The *Koori Fathering Program* was run on Friday mornings, with lunch provided after each session – to encourage more informal reflection and discussion of the session's information and activities. Transport to and from the group and childcare were provided free of charge, as needed.

Staffing and participants

This pilot phase of the *Koori Fathering Program* was co-facilitated by the three main facilitators from the *Rekindling The Spirit* program. As all three facilitators were fathers, they also acted as participants, sharing their own experiences and feelings along with the other men. Program participants were recruited from amongst existing *Rekindling The Spirit* clients. Therefore, the men participating in the *Koori Fathering Program* had already established a rapport with both the facilitators and most of the other group members – enhancing feelings of trust, comfort and safety.

Through their time in *Rekindling The Spirit*, these men had already begun the process of sharing, learning from and coming to terms with any bad experiences from, and since, their childhood – with most of the same people. They were also the men initially expressing interest in a more parenting-specific group. Therefore, they were mentally and emotionally ready for this more targeted type of educational program.

However, the men attending *Rekindling The Spirit* are all dealing with a range of serious personal issues – with all having been involved in some form of domestic violence (including some being referred to the program as an alternative to jail); most having grown up in families where violence, substance abuse, long-term unemployment, disconnectedness and, not surprisingly, a lack of hopes and aspirations are commonplace; many are battling their own drug and/or alcohol abuse issues (often of multiple substances); and many of those no longer living with their partners, have very limited access to their children (for legal and/or geographical reasons). Naturally, their success at dealing with these issues varies according to time and other things happening in their lives – and impacts on their ability to attend and/or benefit from the program and can make them a very difficult group to reach.



Most *Koori Fathering Program* participants were also still attending weekly *Rekindling The Spirit* sessions. This was helpful when more generic, non-parenting issues were raised during the fathering program as they could be acknowledged but, ultimately, held over for further exploration back in the main program.

How was the *Koori Fathering Program* evaluated?

Types of information collected

As we were piloting the *Koori Fathering Program*, we were interested to monitor a wide range of indicators:

- *Process indicators* – to explore how well it was implemented and attended and how satisfied participants and facilitators were with it.
- *Impact indicators* – to explore its perceived impact on participants' knowledge and attitudes about parenting issues and techniques.
- *Outcome indicators* – to explore its perceived impact on participants' parenting skills, practices and confidence, as well as on their relationships (with children, partners and the broader community) and other aspects of their lives.

How information was collected

Five main sets of information were collected:

Evaluation Tool	Information Collected	How?	When?
<i>Attendance log</i> (see Appendix C)	• Participants' basic family information • Session attendances / absences • Reasons for absences / leaving the program	Facilitators completed	At each weekly session
<i>In-session self-ratings</i> (see Appendix C)	• Ratings of participants' relationships, with their partner and/or children, and their fathering generally over the previous week (1 – 10 scale)	Participants verbally self-rated	At each weekly session
<i>Participant video interviews</i> (see Appendix D)	• Participants' knowledge and experiences of fathering/parenting • Their reasons for participating in and expectations of the program • Their perceptions about the nature and quality of their relationships (with partner and children) • Their understanding of child development stages, discipline techniques and communication skills • The perceived outcomes/benefits of attending • Their views/suggestions regarding the ongoing implementation of the program	Facilitators interviewed participants	Before and after the whole program
<i>Participant satisfaction survey</i> (see Appendix E)	• The facilitators' overall performance, against five criteria (4 point scale)	Participants completed	After the whole program
<i>Facilitator survey</i> (see Appendix F)	• Facilitators' expectations of the program • The perceived outcomes/benefits of facilitating the program • The perceived outcomes/benefits for men attending the program • Their views/suggestions regarding the ongoing implementation of the program	Facilitators completed	After the whole program



Ethics approval for the *Koori Fathering Program*

Both the development and pilot phases of the *Koori Fathering Program* were approved by the Northern Rivers Area Health Service's Human Research Ethics Committee.

RESULTS

This report presents results from information collected across the first two rounds of the *Koori Fathering Program*: June – October 2002 and August – December 2003. Three men participated in both rounds of the program.

Summary of the data collected

The table below summarises the number of men completing each of the evaluation tools outlined on the previous page.

Evaluation Tool		Number Collected		
		Round 1	Round 2	TOTAL
<i>Attendance log</i>		3 facilitators 16 participants	3 facilitators 13 participants	3 facilitators 26 participants
<i>Participant video interviews</i>	<i>Pre</i>	3 facilitators 8 participants	2 participants	3 facilitators 10 participants
	<i>Post1</i>	3 facilitators 4 participants	nil	3 facilitators 4 participants
	<i>Post2</i>	3 participants	nil	3 participants
<i>In-session self-ratings</i> (2+ ratings completed)		(sessions 5 – 10 only) 3 facilitators 7 participants	(all sessions) 2 facilitators 7 participants	3 facilitators 7 participants
<i>Participant satisfaction survey</i>		7 participants	nil	7 participants
<i>Facilitator survey</i>		2 facilitators	nil	2 facilitators

***Koori Fathering Program* participants' characteristics**

Demographic characteristics

First round (June – October 2002)

The first round of the program included three facilitators who also acted as participants. These facilitators:

- were aged 31, 42 and 43 years;
- had three or four children each, with ages ranging from two to 24 years;
- were all currently living with their partners; and
- had been involved with *Rekindling The Spirit* for between four and seven years.



Sixteen other men attended the first round of the program at least once, 10 of whom were currently living with their partners. These 16 men:

- were aged between 18 and 53 years;
- had between zero and eight children each, with ages ranging from newborn to 21 years+; and
- had been involved with *Rekindling The Spirit* for between three months and two years, except for one participant had not attended at all.

Second round (August – December 2003)

The second round of the program included the same three facilitators who also acted as participants and had similar demographic and family characteristics to the first round – although they and their children were now all a year older.

Thirteen other men, including four who had also participated in the first round, attended the second round of the program at least once. Nine of these men were currently living with their partners. These 13 men:

- were aged between 19 and 49 years;
- had between one and eight children each, with ages ranging from one to 21 years; and
- had been involved with *Rekindling The Spirit* for between three months and three years.

Participants' own experiences of being fathered

Participant video interview

The video interviews asked the men: *Do you father differently to your father's fathering? If so, in what ways?* (see Appendix G, Question 2 for detailed responses). Three pre, two post1 and one post2 respondents found this difficult to answer as they had not known their own fathers very well, or at all. Of the other men interviewed, while a few acknowledged some similarities, all reported feeling that they fathered quite differently to their own fathers – or, at least, they were trying to father differently. The only example given of how the men's fathering was similar to their own fathers' was when they were abusive or short-tempered. The overall picture of the experience of being fathered for these men was one with little positive physical or emotional connection or encouragement but much anger and physical punishment, often influenced by alcohol or other drug usage.

Do you father differently to your own father?

- ❖ *Sometimes I'd say I do and sometimes I'd say I don't - there's times that I sort of remind myself of my dad - that's when I go off and that. (Participant A, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *Yeah, definitely, yeah, like, I didn't really have a relationship with my dad – um, yeah, I do do it differently - my father was very, um, distant and very domineering and what he said, y'know, what dad said, everyone just obeyed by that. (Participant D, pre interview)*
- ❖ *I didn't get a lot of support, didn't get a lot of love, didn't get a lot of encouragement. (Participant E, pre interview)*
- ❖ *I try to cos my father was an alcoholic who was never there – or when he was there, he was always drunk or hungover. (Participant L, pre interview)*



The main ways in which the men felt their fathering differed from their own fathers' included that they:

- were more involved in their children's lives, spending more time with them;
- had built better and more loving relationships with their children;
- encouraged and supported their children more;
- behaved more responsibly, especially in relation to alcohol and other drugs; and
- disciplined their children differently, specifically avoiding verbally or physically aggressive techniques.

How do you father differently to your own father?

- ❖ *I suppose, the way that I do it differently is, first, that I'm there for my children - on more of a regular basis than my dad was. (Participant C, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *I try to be more loving to my son and I try to communicate with him we have physical contact as well, y'know, we hug and we play and I never had that with my dad. (Participant D, pre interview)*
- ❖ *The most important thing is showing love and affection, support and encouragement. (Participant E, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *Yeh well I've changed now I've give up drinking and it's sort of making me better with my relationship with my um Mrs now and I'm going pretty well with my youngest daughter. (Participant N, pre interview)*

Process indicator results

Program implementation

All sessions of the *Koori Fathering Program* were delivered as outlined in the *Methods* and Appendix B. However, an important aspect of the program was its flexibility and mindfulness of the participants' needs and obligations towards other major community events (eg: funerals, holidays). Therefore, the 15 sessions were delivered over about a 20-week period – due to planned and unplanned events which would have prevented a large proportion of participants from attending any scheduled session. Similarly, while it was intended for participants to attend the whole program, men were allowed to join after it had started. Both these variations were driven by the desire for the *Koori Fathering Program* to be scheduled to meet the participants' needs, rather than the other way around.

Program attendance

First round (June – October 2002)

During the first round of the program, all three facilitators attended at least 11 of the 13 program delivery sessions. Of the other 16 men, six attended regularly, missing only 1-4 sessions each. Of the remaining 10 men, who attended 1-4 sessions each: one got fulltime work; one moved out of the region; one had other personal crises needing attention; and seven were not ready for, or sufficiently engaged by, the program. The number of men, including facilitators, attending each session ranged between seven and eleven, with an average of nine participants per session.



Second round (August – December 2003)

During the second round of the program, one facilitator attended all 12 program delivery sessions while the other two dropped out of the program early due to competing work commitments. Of the other 13 men, four attended regularly, missing only 1-5 sessions each. Of the remaining nine men, who attended 1-4 sessions each: one got fulltime work; one began a fulltime training program; three moved out of the region; and four were not ready for, or sufficiently engaged by, the program. The number of men, including facilitators, attending each session ranged between four and nine, with an average of over six participants per session.

Overall – rounds 1 and 2 combined

Excluding the three facilitators, of the other 29 participants attending at least one *Koori Fathering Program* session:

- 10 men (34%) attended more than half the available sessions – the *Completers*, who attended an average of 9.3 program sessions each (range = 5 – 13)
- 8 men (28%) had to stop attending due to other factors – the *Starters*, who attended an average of 2.6 program sessions each (range = 1 – 4)
- 11 men (38%) stopped attending for no known reason – the *Testers*, who attended an average of 2.0 program sessions each (range = 1 – 4)

Were the *Completers* different to the *Starters* and the *Testers*?

While the numbers in each group are too small for meaningful statistical analyses, Table 1 shows how the *Completers* tended to be more likely to:

- be older – with *Completers* having a median age of 38 years, compared to the *Starters* (median = 32 years) and *Testers* (median = 28 years). Comparing across age-groups – 55% of participants aged 35+ years became *Completers*, compared to only 29% of 18-24 year olds and 20% of 25-34 year olds.
- have more children – with *Completers* having a mean of 3.4 children, compared to the *Starters* (median = 3.0 children) and *Testers* (median = 1.9 children). Comparing across family sizes – 57% of participants with one or four children became *Completers*, compared to only 33% of those with 2 children, 12½% of those with 3 children and 0% of those with no children.
- have at least one son – with 90% of *Completers* having a son, compared to 75% of *Starters* and 50% of *Testers*. Comparing across children's genders – 47% of participants with a son became *Completers*, compared to only 14% of those with no son; yet only 35% of participants with a daughter became *Completers*, compared to 44% of those with no daughter.
- have older children – with *Completers*' children having a mean age of 12.3 years, compared to the *Starters*' children (mean = 10.6 years) and *Testers*' children (mean = 11.1 years). Comparing across age-groups – only 37½% of participants with children aged under 5 years became *Completers*, compared to 57% of those with children aged 18+ years, 50% of those with children aged 12-17 years and 56% of those with children aged 5-11 years.
- not be living with a partner – with only 50% of *Completers* currently living with a partner, compared to 75% of *Starters* and 50% of *Testers*. Comparing across family structures – only 26% of participants living with a partner became *Completers*, compared to 50% of those not doing so.



- have attended *Rekindling The Spirit* for longer – with *Completers* having attended *Rekindling The Spirit* for a mean of 17.4 months before starting the *Koori Fathering Program*, compared to the *Starters* (mean = 13.6 months) and *Testers* (mean = 10.8 months). Comparing across attendance lengths – only 20% of participants with less than 12 months' attendance at *Rekindling The Spirit* became *Completers*, compared to 31% of those with 12-23 months' attendance and 66% of those with 24+ months' attendance.

Table 1: Characteristics of men completing or not completing the *Koori Fathering Program*

Characteristic		Completers (> ½ sessions) n = 10	Starters (stopped WITH reason) n = 8	Testers (stopped WITHOUT reason) n = 11
Participant's Age	Range	19 – 48 years	18 – 49 years	19 – 53 years
	Mean	34.0 years	30.4 years	30.4 years
	Median	38 years	32 years	28 years
	Aged 35+ years	60%	25%	30%
Number of Children	Range	1 – 8 children	0 – 6 children	0 – 3 children
	Mean	3.4 children	3.0 children	1.9 children
	Median	3 children	3 children	3 children
	Have 1+ child	100%	87½%	82%
Children's Gender	Have 1+ son	90%	75%	50%
	Have 1+ daughter	60%	75%	62½%
Children's Ages	Range	½ – 21+ years	1 – 20 years	2 – 22+ years
	Mean	12.3 years	10.6 years	11.1 years
	Median	14 years	11 years	11 years
	Have child < 5 years	12%	15%	23%
	Have child 12+ years	56%	45%	46%
	Have child 18+ years	24%	10%	23%
Partner status	Living with partner	50%	62½%	82%
Time at <i>Rekindling The Spirit</i>	Range	0 – 36 months	3 – 27 months	3 – 24 months
	Mean	17.4 months	13.6 months	10.8 months
	Median	18 months	12 months	12 months
	Attended for 12+ months	80%	62½%	54%
	Attended for 24+ months	40%	12½%	9%

Reasons for participating in and expectations of the program

Participant video interview

The post1 and post2 video interviews asked the men: *Why did you come along to the Koori Fathering Program – what motivated you to come along?* (see Appendix G, Question 12 for detailed responses) and *What do/did you want or expect to get from the Koori Fathering Program?* (see Appendix G, Question 13 for detailed responses). The main motivations / expectations suggested included:

- wanting to improve their knowledge or understanding – of fathering and about their partner;



- wanting to improve, or learn new fathering skills – including different ways of disciplining children;
- wanting to develop a support system with other Koori fathers;
- feeling a need to overcome their own lack of a positive fathering role model;
- wanting to be a better father, man and/or partner; and
- wanting to improve their relationships with their children and partners.

Why did you come along? What did you expect to get?

- ❖ *To build a network between the guys that do the program - so we can support each other to become, not only better fathers, but better men. (Participant B, pre interview)*
- ❖ *I wanted to learn new skills, y'know, because I grew up with no father and the fathering skills that I did have, I wasn't happy with. (Participant B, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *I'd just like to get some skills that I don't have or don't know about - just to learn some new and positive ways of parenting. (Participant C, pre interview)*
- ❖ *To be the man that I really am – and to be the father that I really wanna be. (Participant F, pre interview)*
- ❖ *To be, to be an overall better father, a better partner, um and um really improve my relationship with my children and my partner. (Participant J, post2 interview)*

Participants' satisfaction with the program

Participant video interview

The post1 and post2 video interviews asked the men: *Would you say your expectations were completely met, partly met or not at all met?* (see Appendix G, Question 14 for detailed responses). In the post 1 interviews, two participants felt the program had completely met their expectations, two that it had met and exceeded them, two that it had mostly met them and one that it had partly met them. Participants whose expectations were not completely met explained this as because they still needed or wanted to continue learning more. Feelings were similarly positive in the post 2 interviews, with both participants asked saying that their expectations had been partly or mostly met, due to a desire to continue learning.

Were your expectations met?

- ❖ *They was pretty much, full on, complete and met. (Participant A, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *Yeah, I believe they were met completely cos it's helped in a whole realm of different things and I think it's gone beyond that cos we've created a kind of a support mechanism for different guys. (Participant B, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *Yeah, it met and went far beyond my expectations. (Participant C, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *Well, I suppose, at this stage, partly, cos it's always ongoing. (Participant D, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *Um, mostly – like I've often said prior that I want to learn more about the stages of development that children go through. (Participant E, post1 interview)*



The final question in the post1 and post2 interviews asked the men: *And do you have any other comments about the Koori Fathering Program or about this interview?* (see Appendix G, Question 21 for detailed responses). All the comments made were very positive, often expressing a quite overwhelming sense of gratitude about how helped the men felt by the program and of their desire for the program to continue, including for it to reach out to other Koori men.

Other feedback about the program

- ❖ *I sort of just like went to them at the start for my missus - and for our family cos they wanted me to go to them sort of thing - they thought they'd help me and, like, they have, but I go to them now for myself, like, you know, cos they're good, they're heaps good. (Participant A, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *Next year I want to be involved in the program again. It's a good program. I wish my dad could have been in one of these years ago you know, um because I think that I would have turned out different if he was. (Participant A, post2 interview)*
- ❖ *It's been an honour really for me to sit in a group with a group of men and to be so open and honest about our stuff and about how hard it is to be a dad - and particularly a Koori dad. (Participant C, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *I think it's crucial that Aboriginal men have a place where they can pick up new information and some skills but, at the same time, get to share the good and bad times of being a father. (Participant D, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *I think we could really make a big thing of this y'know to help other communities and their dads y'know. Have programs and support groups and fathering groups for dads y'know and I think we can be a catalyst for that and y'know I'm hoping to be a part of that. (Participant D, post2 interview)*
- ❖ *It's helped me lots, heaps lots - cause otherwise I probably would have been drunk somewhere, stoned or something - not worrying about my kids and missus - y'know, just thinking where I'd get my next drink or smoke from - but now - I can worry about my missus and kids now - and I do, y'know - I support them, with their books and their school, y'know - done me a lot of thinking, y'know. (Participant K, post1 interview)*

Participant satisfaction survey

All seven participants completing this feedback rated the facilitators as either very good or excellent on all five criteria:

	<u>N rating facilitators as...</u>	
	Excellent	Very Good
• Providing appropriate resources	4	3
• Sharing their own experiences	6	1
• Understanding where you're coming from	4	3
• Listening to & addressing the issues raised	1	6
• Their availability to give support outside of the group	4	3



Participants' desire to continue with the program

Participant video interview

The post1 and post2 video interviews asked the men: *Would you like to see the KFP continue? If so, would you like to keep coming along?* (see Appendix G, Question 18 for detailed responses). All participants expressed a strong desire for the program to continue and for themselves to continue participating in it.

Do you want the program to continue?

- ❖ *Yeah, for sure - shit yeah, definitely. (Participant A, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *Yeah, definitely - I see it as a good support mechanism. We as, not only Aboriginal men, but as men, need to change the way that we were fathered and the only way we're going to do that is to support one another through groups like this - to change so that our children, when they're growing up, they will not need to come along to groups like this - cos they'll have the skills to be appropriate fathers and appropriate mothers. (Participant B, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *For me, I think as long as it keeps running, I think I'll always be involved in some way or other. (Participant C, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *Yeah, I'd definitely like to keep coming along. (Participant D, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *It's gotta continue - if we want our men to be better fathers - and if we want a future for our children where they don't have to go through what we've been through - and want a brighter outlook on life - we need it to continue. (Participant E, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *Yeah - I definitely do - cos, like I said, there's still a lot of learning about the kids. (Participant J, post1 interview)*

Participants' suggestions to improve the program

Participant video interview

The post1 and post2 video interviews asked the men: *Could you suggest any ways the KFP could be improved?* (see Appendix G, Question 17 for detailed responses). Four post1 participants, including one facilitator, and both post2 participants suggested things they would like to see more or less of in future programs:

- more guest speakers;
- more concentration on specific topics;
- having outings where the men could bring their children;
- having shorter general "check-in" sections;
- more role-plays;
- watching more videos;
- making videos for other Koori men; and
- having a similar program for the men's partners.



Facilitators' satisfaction with the program

Facilitator survey

Both facilitators completing this survey felt the program had partly met their expectations, which were to develop a program to help Koori men improve their relationships with their partners and children. Expectations were only partly met due to the program's pilot and evolving nature. Overall, both facilitators considered the program was very useful and felt it was very important that it continue. Both facilitators felt that being involved in the program had helped improve their own parenting skills and relationships with their partners and children.

Impact indicator results

Changes in participants' knowledge and attitudes about parenting

Participant video interview

The video interviews asked the men: *In your opinion, what is fathering? What does fathering mean to you?* (see Appendix G, Question 1 for detailed responses). Similar key themes emerged from the pre, post1 and post2 interviews – that fathering is about:

- behaving responsibly;
- doing your best;
- being a role model to your children;
- teaching, or guiding, your children as they grow up
- understanding your children;
- looking after your children's needs across a wide range of issues
- being there for, or supporting, your family; and
- being actively involved.

What is fathering?

- ❖ *I see my role as a father as teaching my kids, I guess, the boundaries of life and the boundaries that we can establish in ourselves. (Participant A, pre interview)*
- ❖ *Fathering, to me, means, um, a number, a lot of things. The first thing that comes to me now, since being involved with the program, is being responsible - responsibility is a big part of what it means to me. Being responsible, in the sense of being there for my kids, but also being responsible in regards to the parenting - in regards to supporting my partner in that. (Participant C, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *Fathering to me is being part of my son's life, and taking responsibility in his upbringing and um, you know, emotionally, intellectually. (Participant D, post2 interview)*
- ❖ *Fathering, is , um, nurturing your children – um, being there for them – um, making sure they get an education – um, yeah just being there for them – just anyway you can. (Participant J, post1 interview)*

In the post1 and post2 video interviews, the men indicated feeling that the program had helped them with the following aspects of their knowledge and attitudes about parenting (see Appendix G, Questions 1, 4, 15 and 16 for detailed responses):



- understanding better how their own behaviour, and parenting, affects their children; and
- understanding that parents are responsible for their children's behaviour.

Ways the program helped with understanding parenting

- ❖ *I get a lot of help and a lot of information out of it.* (Participant A, post1 interview)
- ❖ *I've been given a new set of skills and I've been able to try and practice them.* (Participant D, post2 interview)
- ❖ *I think it has helped me – to, um, think about the consequences of my actions before I act – and what sort of consequences it has on my kids – the parenting style that I did have in the beginning – um, emotionally and physically – just given me a whole new insight on the behaviour of your child if your parenting's wrong.* (Participant J, post1 interview)

Facilitator survey

The facilitators felt the program helped improve participants' knowledge and attitudes about parenting by:

- helping them learn from the good aspects of their parents' parenting; and
- acknowledging the good aspects of their own parenting, increasing their confidence in their abilities as fathers.

Changes in participants' knowledge about child development

Participant video interview

The video interviews asked the men: *What stages does a child go through as it grows from baby to adult? What do you know / understand about child development?* (see Appendix G, Question 9 for detailed responses). At the pre interview, most of the men said that the knowledge they had came from their own experiences, that they understood the early years were important and that they wanted to learn more about it but few mentioned any particular stages or types of child development. At the post1 and post2 interviews, the men still acknowledged the influence of their own experiences but also expressed awareness of a broader range of age-related stages and skill-related types of child development.

In the post1 and post2 video interviews, the men indicated feeling that the program had helped them to better understand children's physical, emotional, hormonal and behavioural development (see Appendix G, Questions 9 and 15 for detailed responses).



Ways the program helped with understanding child development

- ❖ *Just to have me alert to what's coming up for the boys. (Participant A, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *Yep, it's helped me - like my eldest daughter's like 13 - so she's going through some stuff emotionally, development physically - so it's helped me there ... and even with my son - just understanding the testosterone is really gonna kick in soon - so I've gotta be prepared for it - not only give me an understanding ... but helping him through it, so he's not just left there to deal with it. (Participant B, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *... learning ah children's behavioural patterns and, um, learning how kids react in to certain things. (Participant J, post2 interview)*

Changes in participants' knowledge about communication

Participant video interview

The video interviews asked the men: *Can you tell me what is communication?* (see Appendix G, Question 11 for detailed responses). The main themes among the responses were similar at the pre, post1 and post2 interviews – that communication involves:

- talking;
- listening to what the other person is saying;
- respecting the other person;
- acknowledging the other person is sharing their feelings or views; and
- sharing your own feelings or views.

However, some more specific issues and techniques to improve communication that were first mentioned at the post1 or post2 interviews included:

- asking questions to help understand what the other person is saying;
- paying attention to non-verbal cues;
- getting down to children's height when talking to them;
- maintaining eye contact;
- answering questions put to you;
- watching the other person; and
- staying calm and not shouting.

In the post1 and post2 video interviews, the men indicated feeling that the program had helped them to better understand the importance of good communication and the different ways of communicating – both verbally and non-verbally (see Appendix G, Questions 11 and 15 for detailed responses).



Ways the program helped with understanding communication

- ❖ *I think it's helped me with my communication ... It has helped me to understand my own feelings. I'd refer to understanding different emotions, different feelings that people communicate - that they communicate in different ways ... probably listening and communication - the way that different people use body language to communicate. (Participant B, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *The fathering program has been really helpful in just sitting down and talking to the kids. (Participant J, post2 interview)*
- ❖ *It helped me to communicate more with my kids, and my missus – and, um, support them all – y'know, and understand them. (Participant K, post1 interview)*



Changes in participants' knowledge about discipline

Participant video interview

The video interviews asked the men: *Can you tell me about different ways of discipline? What's your understanding of the word "discipline" – what comes to mind when you hear it?* (see Appendix G, Question 10 for detailed responses). Several men discussed their own experiences of being disciplined physically and most admitted having used such methods themselves, although they weren't happy using them and most no longer did so. The main themes that emerged at the pre interview tended to describe the purpose of discipline rather than techniques for achieving it. The overarching theme was that discipline was about teaching children about responsibility and that actions have consequences. However, in the post1 and post2 interviews, the men more often mentioned examples of disciplinary techniques to help achieve this, including:

- using time out – to encourage children to think about their actions and to give themselves time to calm down before dealing with the issues further;
- explaining to children why their behaviour is not acceptable;
- encouraging good behaviours;
- setting boundaries;
- grounding children;
- stopping children's privileges; and
- not shouting or swearing.

In the post1 and post2 video interviews, the men indicated feeling that the program had helped them to better understand the importance and purpose of good, constructive discipline and to learn about different ways of disciplining their children (see Appendix G, Questions 10 and 15 for detailed responses).

Ways the program helped with understanding discipline

- ❖ *I think I'm always learning new ways of disciplining because, as children grow, your disciplining needs to change with the child - I suppose my first idea about discipline was that if a child needed disciplining, you gave them a hiding or slapped them, gave them a whack on the bum ... but I suppose one thing I've learnt since being involved with the program is appropriate ways of disciplining children. (Participant C, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *I think the main thing I'm trying to focus on is that - is to try to separate my son from the behaviour ... I want him to understand that, um, he has some type of responsibility ... I think discipline, for me, that I've been trying to use is that I need to set boundaries - my son needs to know why I need to communicate with him what he's actually in trouble for. (Participant D, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *Before I come to the parenting program, there was only one way of discipline that I knew – and that was to, um, punish your kid, with a smack, if they done wrong – and, um, over the time I've been in the parenting program, I've found, um, - other ways to discipline without the physical ... like rules and boundaries, for starters – and following through with them – and make sure that your partner – um, it doesn't work without your partner – you've both got to be in it. (Participant J, post1 interview)*



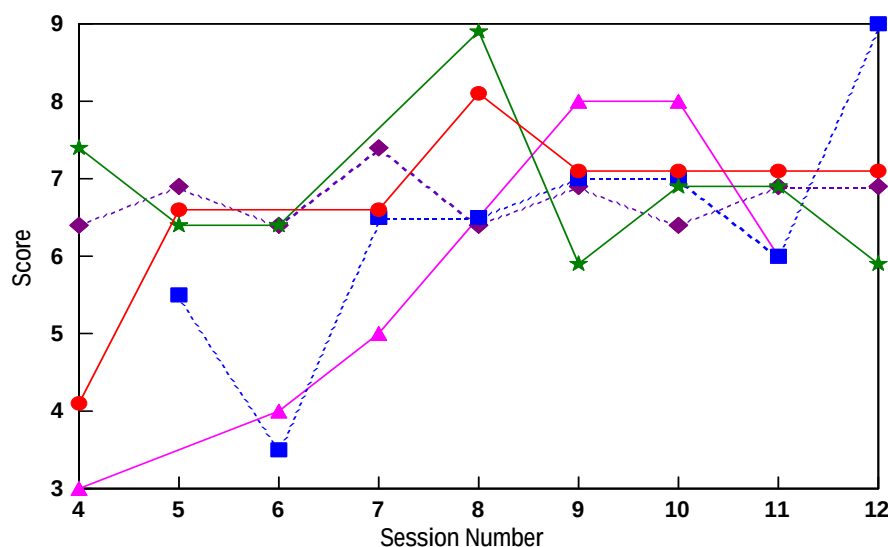
Outcome indicator results

Perceived changes in participants' parenting skills and practices

In-session self-rating

During each weekly group check-in session (from Week 4 of the second round of the program), the men were asked: *In the last week, how would you rate your fathering overall – on a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (great)?* Figure 1 below shows the changes in the ratings given by the six men with three or more ratings, including one facilitator: while there are, naturally, ups and downs, the ratings tend to increase across time for most of the men.

Figure 1: Men's weekly self-ratings of their overall fathering – during the previous week (2nd round)



Note: Some participants' scores have been adjusted throughout by ± 0.1 to improve the readability of the graph.

These results are confirmed by looking at the average self-ratings shown for each session – which show more variation but still with a tendency to increase throughout the program:

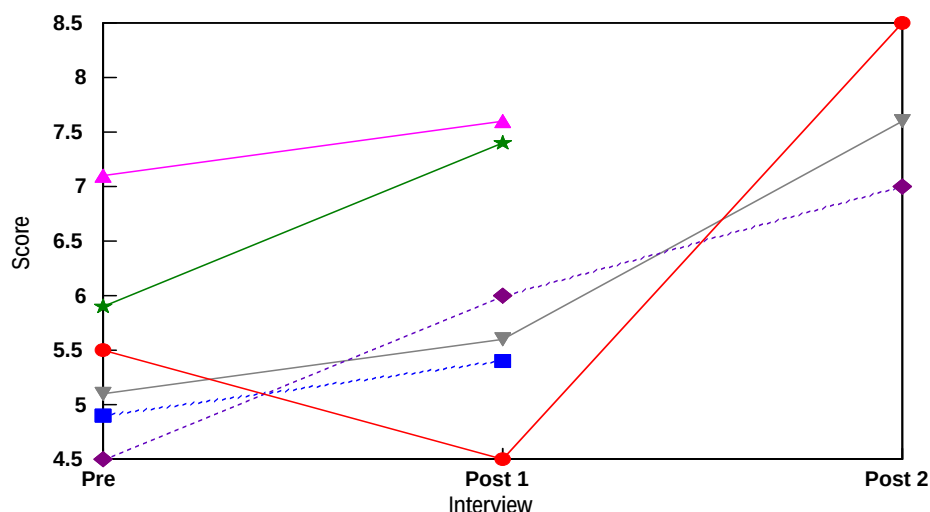
Session:	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Average rating:	5.25	6.37	5.12	6.37	7.50	7.00	7.10	6.75	7.25

Participant video interview

The in-session results above are strengthened by those from a similar question asked of the men during the video interviews: *How would you rate yourself as a father – overall – on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 = poor and 10 = great – on average?* Figure 2 below summarises these ratings for men with both pre and post1 ratings. The three lines without post2 ratings represent the facilitators, all of whom rated their fathering more highly at the end of the program. The other three lines represent men who participated in both rounds of the program, giving them two post ratings: two of them rated their fathering more highly at the end of the first round and all three did so, by quite considerable amounts, by the end of the second round.



Figure 2: Men's pre and post self-ratings of their fathering – overall



Note: Some participants' scores have been adjusted throughout by ± 0.1 to improve the readability of the graph.

The video interviews also asked the men: *How do you see yourself as a father? What are the qualities/ ways you father?* (see Appendix G, Question 4 for detailed responses). The predominant theme across the pre, post1 and post2 interviews was that most men indicated feeling that they had room for improvement but were making a real effort to do so – with some signs of improvement and good qualities being acknowledged.

How do you see yourself as a father?

- ❖ *Try to help out when I can but other times just sit back.* (Participant A, pre interview)
- ❖ *I'm learning but I can't say I'm the best by any means yet – I just hope I can say that one day but I'm just learning.* (Participant A, post1 interview)
- ❖ *I do the best I can all the time you know ... so I see myself as a pretty good dad.* (Participant A, post2 interview)
- ❖ *On occasions, I have to remind myself that I am a father - cos I get caught up in my own world - and I've really got to be aware that I am a dad and that it's not just me.* (Participant D, pre interview)
- ❖ *Yeah, I think overall I'm a fair and ok dad - try my hardest.* (Participant D, post1 interview)
- ❖ *Well some days I don't see myself as a very capable dad and other days I see myself as being a really competent dad ... honestly some day it's hard work and other days I'm just so grateful to be a father.* (Participant D, post2 interview)
- ❖ *At the moment, pretty fair ... because I'm still down with my past – y'know, it's hard to, um, to get over some of the stuff I had in the past and to try to find new ways of living.* (Participant J, pre interview)
- ❖ *Pretty good – y'know, like some days are better than others ... I'm definitely willing to learn.* (Participant J, post1 interview)
- ❖ *Getting better at it, um, especially learning all this new stuff.* (Participant J, post2 interview)



In the post1 and post2 video interviews, the men indicated feeling the program had helped their parenting skills and practices in the following ways (see Appendix G, Questions 15 and 16 for detailed responses):

- making them feel more confident as fathers;
- learning alternative discipline techniques, including about setting boundaries;
- preparing them to know what to expect with future stages of their children's development;
- unlearning old negative parenting habits;
- understanding and accepting the responsibilities of fatherhood; and
- encouraging them to get more involved in their children's schooling.

Ways the program helped with parenting skills and practices

- ❖ *Well, it's, with the older boy, I didn't use to spend as much time with him as I do now - it used to be just 20 minutes and then I'd call his mum to come and get him - but now I can sit there and play with him for hours and do whatever with him - and I don't get frustrated and that. (Participant A, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *I guess I've become more confident with myself around doing my fathering, you know and knowing what I've learnt from here. (Participant A, post2 interview)*
- ❖ *Not only have I learnt new skills regarding being a dad - I've also unlearnt inappropriate, or bad, skills. (Participant C, post2 interview)*
- ❖ *I've picked up some skills around communication, um, around discipline, um, around actual, um, an emotional commitment. (Participant D, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *It's also hearing from other fathers - different, alternative methods that they're using that you haven't used and, um, taking them on board to use in your own life. (Participant E, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *I changed my discipline strategies with my kids - it's influenced the way I talk to them - and, um, the rules and stuff - learnt to set for them. (Participant J, post1 interview)*

Facilitator survey

The facilitators felt the program helped improve participants' parenting skills and practices by:

- showing them alternative ways of doing things; and
- increasing their confidence in their abilities as fathers.

Perceived changes in participants' parenting support

Participant video interview

The post1 and post2 video interviews asked the men: *Do you feel you could call on any of the other group members for support now the program has finished - definitely not, maybe some of them, definitely some of them, definitely all of them? Would you feel free enough to call on any of them or only some of them?* (see Appendix G, Question 19 for detailed responses); *And how likely do you think it is that you will contact another group member for ongoing support - not at all likely, fairly likely, very likely or definitely will?* (see Appendix G, Question 19A for detailed responses); *And would you be happy for another group member(s) to call on you for support now that the group has finished - definitely not, maybe some of them, definitely some of them, definitely all of them?* (see Appendix G, Question 20 for detailed responses); and *And how likely do you think it is that any of the group members will contact you for ongoing support - not at all likely, fairly likely, very likely or*



definitely will? (see Appendix G, Question 20A for detailed responses). All the men reported being confident in seeking support from, and in providing it for, other participants. Most men felt it was fairly or very likely that they would call on this support network in the future – and that other participants would call on them for support.

Feel able to get and give support to other group members?

Seeking support

- ❖ *If I needed somebody to talk to, I'd definitely go and see someone and just have a yarn.* (Participant A, post1 interview)
- ❖ *Yeah, I think, if needed, I can talk to any of the guys in the group for support.* (Participant C, post1 interview)
- ❖ *Definitely, some of them, like yesterday, I did with one person.* (Participant D, post1 interview)
- ❖ *Yeah, yeah – a few of them – probably definitely will.* (Participant K, post1 interview)

Giving support

- ❖ *Yeah, I wouldn't mind if any of them come around – that'd be likely - cos like, when we see each other down the street, we just have a yarn about "how you been" and all that and that's what I mean.* (Participant A, post1 interview)
- ❖ *Yes I would - definitely any of them – Definitely will.* (Participant B, post1 interview)
- ❖ *If I can be there, I will be there but if I can't be there, I suppose the way the supports built up – is that if one person can't be there, there's always someone else.* (Participant C, post1 interview)
- ❖ *Yeah, any of them - Yeah sometimes.* (Participant D, post1 interview)
- ❖ *Definitely, any of them – yeah, cos I think that's the key to it all – supporting each other.* (Participant J, post1 interview)

In the post1 and post2 video interviews, the men indicated feeling that the program had helped them to feel supported in their parenting by (see Appendix G, Questions 15 and 16 for detailed responses):

- showing them that others are facing similar issues;
- building a support network they could call on if they needed to;
- giving them strength, and learning, from listening to other men's stories about fathering; and
- seeing other men keen to become better fathers.



Ways the program helped with parenting support

- ❖ *I think the thing I found most appropriate was that it's real – like, I can come along, and not only share about how hard it is for me to be a parent - I can share how hard it is for me to just be me - y'know in the community. (Participant C, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *It's helped me build a better support network - I know now that I'm not the only daa going through what I was going through. (Participant C, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *I get a lot of strength from other men sharing about their fathering stories ... and I've been able to share the good times and the bad times over the last, y'know, 12 weeks or so – about how it is being a father. (Participant D, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *Yeah, hearing from others about what they're doing and how it could work – and how if you start to do it in your life, it can affect what happens between you and your children. (Participant E, post1 interview)*

Facilitator survey

The facilitators felt the program helped improve participants' parenting support by:

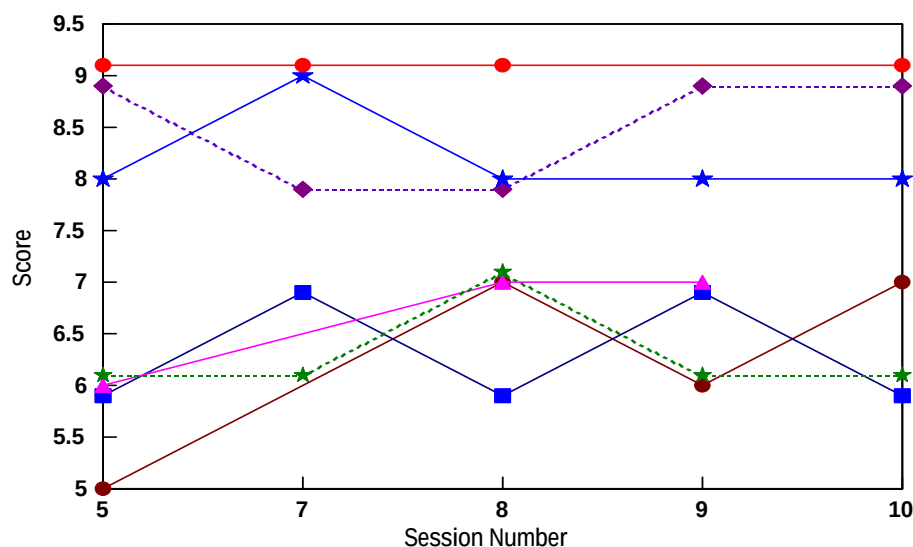
- providing a safety net, allowing them to know support was available if and when it was needed.

Perceived changes in participants' relationships – with their partners

In-session self-rating

During each weekly group check-in session (from Week 5 of the first round of the program), the men were asked: *In the last week, how would you rate your relationship with your partner – on a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (great)?* Figure 3 below shows changes in the men's ratings of their relationships with their partners during the first round of the program, for those with partners and with three or more ratings. The top three lines represent the facilitators, who rated their relationships with their partners consistently well throughout the program. Of the other four men, all showed some improvements on their initial ratings but only two rated their relationships higher at the end of the program, with the other two rating them the same.

Figure 3: Men's weekly self-ratings of relationships with their partners – during the previous week (1st round)



Note: Some participants' scores have been adjusted throughout by ± 0.1 to improve the readability of the graph.

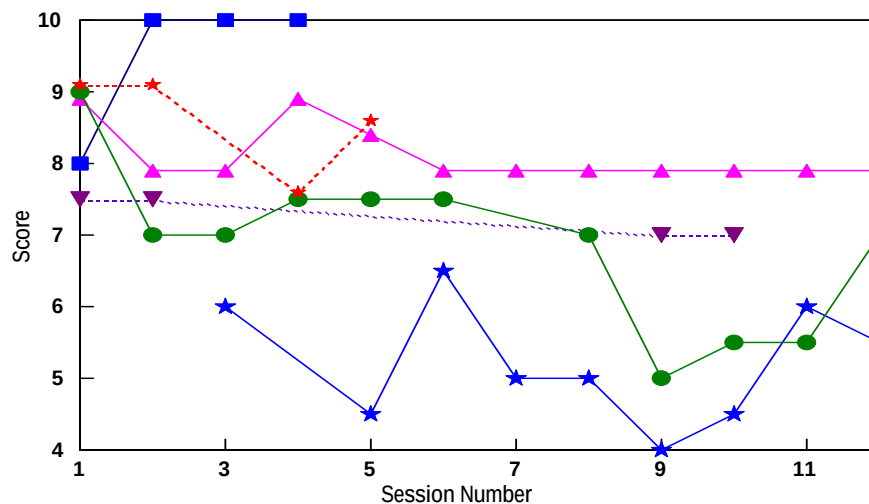


These results are confirmed by looking at the average self-ratings shown for each session – which show the facilitators' ratings were consistent over time, while the participants' ratings showed more variation but still with a tendency to increase later in the program:

Session:	5	7	8	9	10
Average rating – Facilitators:	8.67	8.67	8.33	8.67	8.67
Average rating – Participants:	5.75	6.50	6.75	6.50	6.33

Figure 4 below shows changes in the men's ratings of their relationships with their partners during the second round of the program, for those with partners and three or more ratings. The second and third lines from the top represent the facilitators, who rated their relationships consistently well throughout the program. Of the other four men, two showed quite a lot of variability in their ratings, ending the program a bit lower than they started and the other two had only four ratings each, showing little variation.

Figure 4: Men's weekly self-ratings of relationships with their partners – during the previous week (2nd round)



Note: Some participants' scores have been adjusted throughout by ± 0.1 to improve the readability of the graph.

These results are somewhat confused by looking at the average participants' self-ratings shown for each session (excluding the facilitators) – indicating a considerable decline in the participants' ratings over the first half of the program but some change back upwards again in the second half of the program – although one participant's very high ratings contributed largely to the high average rating in the first few sessions:

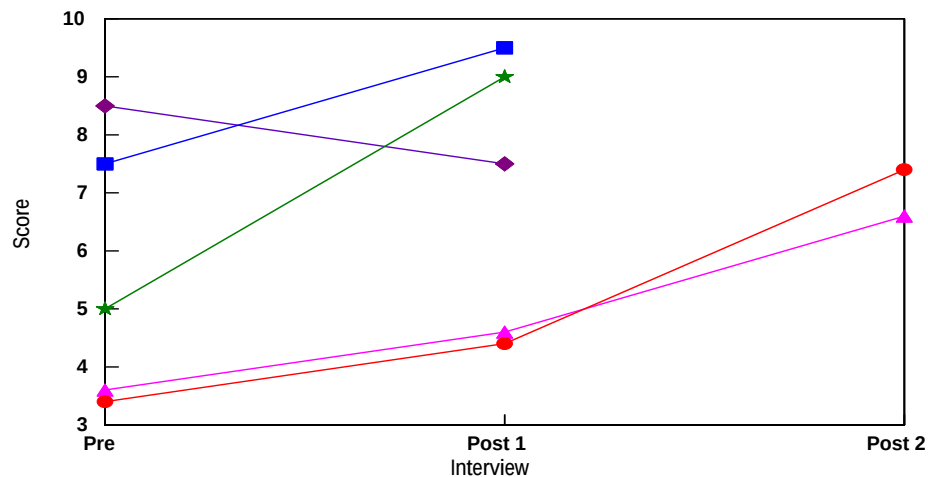
Session:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Average rating – participants only:	8.17	8.17	7.67	8.75	6.00	7.00	5.00	6.00	5.33	5.67	5.75	6.25

Participant video interview

In contrast to the above results, Figure 5 below summarises the men's self-ratings of their relationships with their partners, in response to the video interview question: *How do you rate your relationship with your partner – on average – again, on the 1 – 10 scale, where 1 = poor and 10 = great?* These results suggest more improvement than the in-session ratings, especially for the men attending both rounds. Again, the three lines without post2 ratings represent the facilitators.



Figure 5: Men's pre and post self-ratings of their relationships with their partners – generally



Note: Some participants' scores have been adjusted throughout by ± 0.1 to improve the readability of the graph.

The video interviews also asked the men: *So, how well do you know your partner?* (see Appendix G, Questions 5 and 5A for detailed responses). Overall, while some men acknowledged issues that still needed addressing, especially in the pre interviews, most felt they had basically good relationships with their partners. In the post1 and post2 interviews, most men reported overall improvements in their relationships with their partners, giving more examples of ways in which they knew them than they did in the pre interviews. A common improvement seemed to be in the area of understanding their partners' moods and emotions, which was mentioned by all three post2 respondents.

In the post1 and post2 video interviews, the men indicated feeling that the program had helped them with their relationships with their partners in the following ways (see Appendix G, Question 16 for detailed responses):

- improved their communication with their partner;
- improved their understanding of, and their ability to support, their partner; and
- given them a better understanding of the differences between men and women, including the role of women's menstrual cycle on their emotions.

Ways the program helped relationships with partners

- ❖ *Yeah, definitely - it's helped me in my relationship with my partner.* (Participant C, post1 interview)
- ❖ *I learnt, um, the difference between a male and a female – and their functions, y'know – and moods – well, y'know girls' moods, y'know – in case you have daughters – so you know what to expect when their cycle starts and stuff like that – so, um, that was pretty, um, helpful.* (Participant J, post1 interview)
- ❖ *Yeah, definitely - it's helped me in my relationship with my partner ... y'know, not being violent to my missus anymore.* (Participant K, post1 interview)

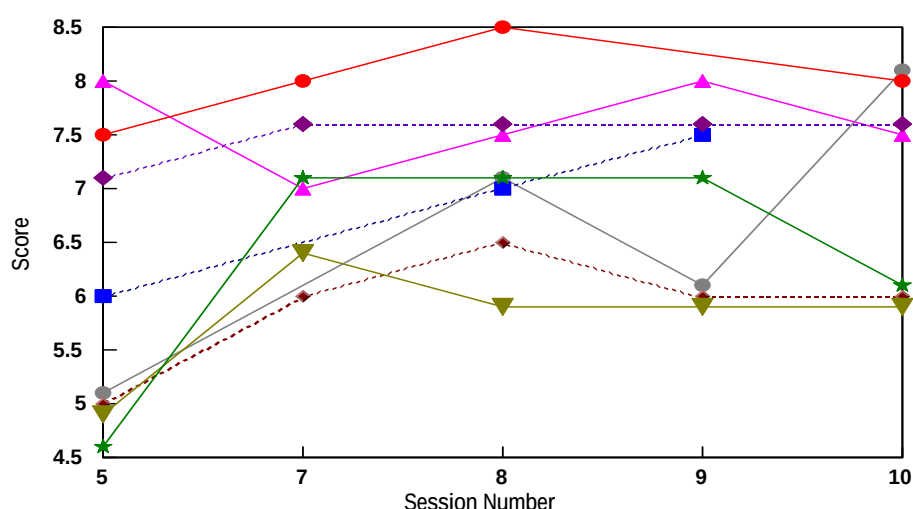


Perceived changes in participants' relationships – with their children

In-session self-rating

During each weekly group check-in session (from Week 5 of the first round of the program), the men were asked: *In the last week, how would you rate your relationship with your child(ren) – on a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (great)?* Figure 6 below shows the changes in the men's ratings of their relationships with their children (averaged across all children for each man) during the first round of the program, for those with three or more ratings. The top three lines represent the facilitators, who rated their relationships with their children consistently well throughout the program, with two ending higher than they started. All the other five men showed fairly consistent improvements on their initial ratings, with all rating their relationships with their children higher at the end of the program.

Figure 6: Men's weekly self-ratings of relationships with their children – during the previous week (1st round)



Note: Some participants' scores have been adjusted throughout by ± 0.1 to improve the readability of the graph.

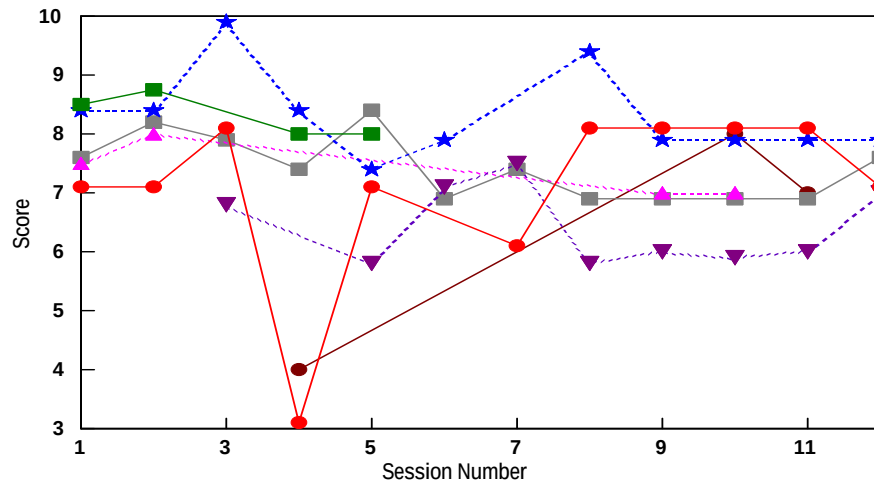
These results are confirmed by looking at the average self-ratings shown for each session – which show the facilitators' ratings were consistent over time, while the participants' ratings showed a more consistent increase later in the program:

Session:	5	7	8	9	10
Average rating – Facilitators:	7.50	7.50	7.83	7.75	7.67
Average rating – Participants:	5.10	6.50	6.63	6.50	6.50

Figure 7 below shows the changes in the men's ratings of their relationships with their children (again, averaged across all children) during the second round of the program, for those with three or more ratings. The two lines with square markers represent the facilitators, who rated their relationships with their children consistently fairly well throughout the program. Of the other five men, all showed some improvements on their initial ratings but all except one ended the program with very similar ratings to where they started.



Figure 7: Men's weekly self-ratings of relationships with their children – during the previous week (2nd round)



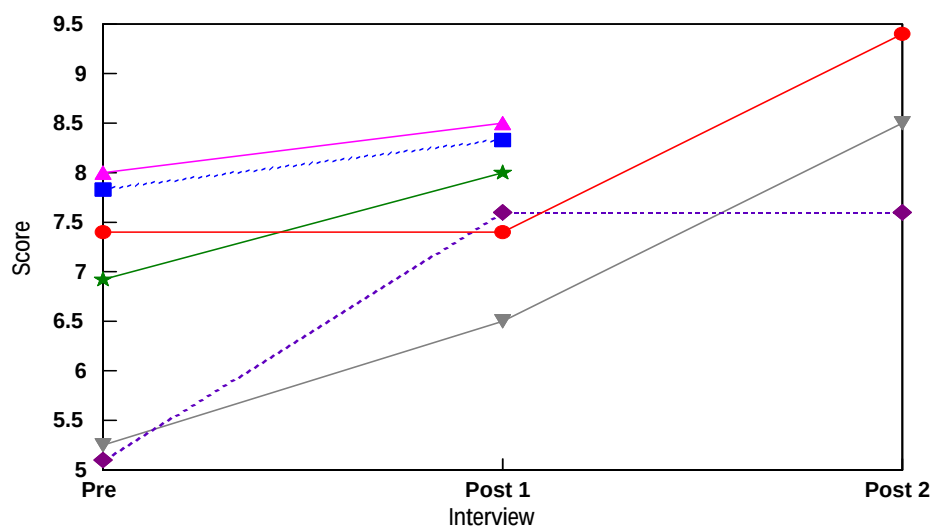
Note: Some participants' scores have been adjusted throughout by ± 0.1 to improve the readability of the graph. These results are confirmed by looking at the average participants' self-ratings shown for each session (excluding the facilitators) – indicating considerable variation in the average ratings, although this was somewhat influenced by the different participants contributing to each average:

Session:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Average rating – participants only:	7.67	7.83	8.33	5.17	6.83	7.50	6.75	7.83	7.25	7.40	7.25	7.33

Participant video interview

In contrast to the above results, Figure 8 below summarises the men's self-ratings of their relationships with their children (again, averaged across all children), in response to the video interview question: *How do you rate your relationship with your children – on average – again, on the 1 – 10 scale, where 1 = poor and 10 = great?* These results suggest more improvement than the in-session ratings, especially for the men attending both rounds. Again, the three lines without post2 ratings represent the facilitators.

Figure 8: Men's pre and post self-ratings of their relationships with their children – generally



Note: Some participants' scores have been adjusted throughout by ± 0.1 to improve the readability of the graph.



The video interviews also asked the men: *So, how well do you know your child(ren)?* (see Appendix G, Question 7 for detailed responses). Most of the men felt they knew their children fairly or very well, with some acknowledging recent improvements at the post1 and post2 interviews. Examples of the ways in which the men felt they knew their children included:

- understanding the differences between their children's personalities and ways of operating;
- understanding their feelings and emotions;
- understanding their different ways of communicating; and
- being able to talk, or relate, to them easily.

Examples of the types of issues or factors which the men felt hampered their relationships with their children included:

- overcoming problems resulting from their earlier parenting style – for older children;
- their child's age – being a difficult one;
- their children not living with them; and
- their children's personalities making it difficult to communicate with them.

In the post1 and post2 video interviews, the men indicated feeling that the program had helped them improve their relationships with their children in the following ways (see Appendix G, Question 15 for detailed responses):

- made them spend more time with their children;
- made them feel more comfortable with their children, more able to support them;
- helped them to not get as frustrated with their children;
- helped them understand their children's feelings better;
- helped them to respond better to their children's needs for affection; and
- improved how they communicate with their children, including listening to them more.

Ways the program helped relationships with children

- ❖ *Most of all it's benefited me with my children and my relationship with them.* (Participant C, post1 interview)
- ❖ *Alright, yeh, yeh it has – it's, my son's loved me back to life.* (Participant D, post2 interview)
- ❖ *It's influenced the way I talk to them [my kids].* (Participant J, post1 interview)
- ❖ *I've learned about how you, sorta – well a lot of changes to these fellas here [pointed to his kids] ... see a lot of changes in these fellas' eyes [pointed to his kids].* (Participant K, post1 interview)

Perceived changes in participants' relationships – with broader community

Participant video interview

In the post1 and post2 video interviews, the men indicated feeling that the program had helped them with many of their other relationships in the following ways (see Appendix G, Question 16 for detailed responses):

- by improving their communication skills, especially the importance of listening and body language;
- by improving their understanding of how other people communicate in different ways;



- by making them more able to open up to other people;
- by encouraging them to relate from the heart rather than from the head;
- by encouraging them to have empathy for other people, especially other parents; and
- by encouraging them to build relationships generally.

Specific relationships mentioned as having improved included:

- with their own fathers;
- with other people's children;
- with doctors;
- with other parents;
- their children's relationships with their grandfather; and
- with other men in the *Rekindling The Spirit* program.

Ways the program helped relationships with other people

- ❖ *I'd refer to understanding different emotions, different feelings that people communicate - that they communicate in different ways - it's helped me. (Participant B, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *It has given me an opportunity to ... build a better relationship with my father - which, um, was difficult because I held a lot of resentment against him. (Participant C, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *It's helped me have empathy for family and friends that have kids - it's helped me be able to communicate a little bit better with other children that I know - like, my own nieces and nephews and friends' children. And I think it's even softened my heart around how I relate to people in general. (Participant D, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *Yeah, it's building relationships everywhere and the more relationships we can have with other people where we're coming from here [pointed to his heart] and not from here [pointed to his head], I think that's the way to go. (Participant D, post1 interview)*

Facilitator survey

The facilitators felt the program helped improve participants' relationships by:

- teaching them different ways of communicating, which had helped them build better relationships, with their partners and children and within their communities generally.

Perceived changes in other areas of participants' lives

Participant video interview

In the post1 and post2 video interviews, the men indicated feeling that the program had also helped them in other areas of their lives in the following ways (see Appendix G, Questions 16 and 21 for detailed responses):

- made them more responsible in considering the consequences of their actions;
- helped them realise the need to be self-motivating;
- helped them learn new ways of solving problems;



- helped them to understand themselves and their own feelings better;
- helped to increase their self-esteem;
- helped them be able to share their own experiences;
- helped them to come to terms with issues about how they were fathered;
- helped them with giving up alcohol and other drugs;
- helped them to stay out of jail; and
- improved their understanding of issues relevant to their work.

Ways the program helped with other aspects of life

- ❖ *It made me realise that I've got to give up the drugs and gotta start providing for my boys and that - and just know I've gotta get out there and do stuff instead of just sitting around and expecting things, waiting for things to happen - I've gotta get up and get motivated and just always be ready to do something - well that's what I've got out of the groups anyway. (Participant A, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *I think it benefits you, not only as a dad and not only in your relationship with your partner but I think it also benefits you as a worker. (Participant C, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *I think the main one is having a bit of compassion for my own parents and, and the way they parented. Like I see that they done it really tough as parents and they didn't have no support really. (Participant D, post2 interview)*
- ❖ *... dealing with issues that they got at school, y'know um, we're more involved in what they do there and what happens to 'em, and how they get educated. And ah health wise, taking 'em to the doctors. (Participant J, post1 interview)*
- ❖ *It helped me, um, to stop smoking grass – that was my big step. ... [without it] I wouldn't be sitting here now, y'know – I'd probably be in jail or something, y'know – it's only for the fathering group – and what we went through, y'know – so, it put a big change to my life. (Participant K, post1 interview)*

Facilitator survey

The facilitators felt the program helped participants generally by:

- helping them understand their feelings better; and
- helping them communicate their feelings better.



DISCUSSION

The results described in this report suggest this pilot *Koori Fathering Program* was well developed and tailored to the target group's needs, was well implemented and very positively received by the men attending it. There appear to have been a variety of changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, skills, practices and confidence across a range of parenting issues – particularly among those attending at least half the sessions.

While these results, from a small number of participants in a non-experimental design project, should be viewed somewhat cautiously, this was only a pilot study which, primarily, aimed to see whether this type of program could successfully engage Aboriginal fathers and warranted further development and exploration of its effectiveness. As approximately a third of men starting the program attended over half the sessions, and just under another third stopped attending for reasons beyond their control, the *Koori Fathering Program* certainly seems to have been successful in its primary aim. These attendance figures, which would be quite respectable for many mainstream weekly group programs, are really quite exceptional here – given the serious multidimensional and transgenerational issues facing the men targeted (through the *Rekindling The Spirit* program) and the almost universal lack of any positive fathering role models. Therefore, we are confident that even higher attendance rates could be achieved among groups targeting men with less complex and entrenched issues.

Much of this success at engaging these men may be attributable to the fact that the *Koori Fathering Program* was developed and implemented by and for Aboriginal men. It arose in response to *Rekindling The Spirit* participants' requests and was developed to bring them evidence-based information around a number of topics, and in ways, that they actively participated in determining. This resulted in a culturally-appropriate program, delivered in a way, and setting, that allowed the men to feel safe enough to expose their honest feelings and experiences – of both childhood and fatherhood – as an Aboriginal man. This was made somewhat easier with these groups of men by their existing involvement with *Rekindling The Spirit*, where they had already established a rapport with both the facilitators and most of the other group members. Therefore, any future programs implemented with groups of men not already familiar to each other may need to allow some extra time for such a rapport to develop before getting into the core program sessions.

Another vital factor in the program's success is that it was facilitated by Aboriginal men (who also contributed as participants), with their own experiences and understanding of life and the issues faced as an Aboriginal child, man, partner and father – as well as a willingness to share the lessons learned from their various ups and downs in each of these roles. By also being participants in the program and sharing their own experiences, the facilitators helped to “normalise” the similar experiences of other participants, while increasing their awareness of alternative parenting styles; to reduce the “shame” often associated with talking publicly about these types of issues; and to create hope among the other participants by providing positive, but realistic, Aboriginal male role models.



Other key aspects of the way the *Koori Fathering Program* was delivered were also seen as particularly important at getting, or keeping, the men engaged in the program – by the facilitators and/or the other participants. These included: providing free transport to and from the groups; offering free childcare services; ending each session with a free, communal lunch where the men could debrief / network more informally about some of the issues raised; and understanding the need for flexibility around other community events / priorities (both planned and unplanned) when scheduling program sessions.

Although a number of factors seemed to increase the likelihood of men attending more than half the sessions (ie: becoming “completers”), the main one was probably the men’s ages – with more than half the older men (those aged 35 years and over), but only about a quarter of the younger ones, completing the program. This age factor probably explains why men with more, and older, children were also more likely to become completers. Some other interesting findings were the apparently substantial impact of having attended *Rekindling The Spirit* for longer, having a son and not currently living with a partner – all of which were related to much higher rates of completing the program. Of course, given the limited sample, these findings are only tentative – but they are certainly worth exploring further in future implementations of the program.

While both the participants and the facilitators expressed high levels of satisfaction with the program, they also made a number of suggestions about activities they would like to see more or less of in future programs – including focussing more on specific topics, having more guest speakers, and having shorter check-in sessions. Both facilitators and participants also recognised the need for a similar program that their partners could attend – to help maximise the consistency of their parenting and the improvements in their own relationship. This feedback has resulted in the *Koori Fathering Program* becoming the *Reconnecting Families Program*, which targets both parents – and is currently being rolled out across the North Coast Area Health Service, via a “Train-the-Trainer” approach, whereby the first group of twelve Aboriginal health and community workers have been trained and are about to start running their own groups in their own communities (17).

This rollout of the *Reconnecting Families Program* has built on the lessons learned from this pilot *Koori Fathering Program* and, with data from male and female participants across 15+ groups, will allow for more in-depth explorations of the factors affecting how successfully Aboriginal parents and families can be engaged, supported and benefit from the program. The *Recommendations* section of this report makes some suggestions of how the evaluation of the *Reconnecting Families Program* could improve on this evaluation.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the lessons, experiences and tentative conclusions gained throughout the development, implementation and evaluation of this pilot *Koori Fathering Program*:

- Given the high levels of demand for the program, more facilitators should be trained and future programs should definitely be offered to Aboriginal men and families across the North Coast region – with consideration given to the apparent findings from this study about who is more or less likely to complete and benefit from the program.
- Facilitators in future programs should continue the philosophy of being, primarily, a genuine participant in the group – as this seems an important key to building a safe and trusting relationship with, and enhancing the benefits for, the other participants.
- Future programs should continue to offer free transport and childcare (and any other supports required by potential attendees) and to be run in the morning followed by a free communal lunch.
- If participants are allowed to join the program after Session 1, a process needs to be established to make sure they still complete a pre video interview. Similarly, if participants leave before the end of the program, attempts should be made to complete a post video interview.
- Future programs may benefit from increasing the number of weeks they are run over and/or trial more formal structures for establishing ongoing support groups for the participants at the end of the parenting program – as all *Koori Fathering Program* participants expressed a strong desire for ongoing support and the results of this pilot suggest there was much more progress during men's second round of attending.
- Future programs need to work with both fathers and mothers – either separately or together – to ensure increased levels of consistency in parenting practices.
- Future programs are likely to need to adapt further if they are to successfully engage younger Aboriginal fathers – some suggestions would be to trial younger facilitators and/or groups targeting new or young parents.
- Parents with violence and/or substance abuse issues, particularly longstanding ones are likely to benefit from attending at least 12 months of a more generic program (like *Rekindling The Spirit*), to help them start dealing with these other issues, before attending a parenting-focused program.
- For programs targeting parents trying to overcome violence and/or substance abuse issues, it would be helpful if a more generic program (like *Rekindling The Spirit*) was ongoing during and after the parenting program – to deal with the non-parenting issues raised during the parenting program and to provide ongoing support to families after the parenting program ends.
- Future programs should continue, and expand on, the comprehensive evaluation processes of the *Koori Fathering Program* – in order to allow more systematic, larger-scale exploration of the factors impacting on attendance rates and program impact. These factors should include those explored and suggested in this report, as well as the various others it will be possible to explore with the larger number and types of participants and groups which will become involved through the *Reconnecting Families Program* rollout.



CONCLUSION

The development and implementation of the *Koori Fathering Program* have resulted in a parenting program which is very acceptable to Aboriginal men and seems to have helped improve their knowledge, attitudes, skills, practices and confidence across a range of parenting issues, as well as helping with their relationships with their children and/or partners. This evaluation of the pilot phase has resulted in a number of recommendations and other issues which, we believe, could help further enhance the impact and evaluation of future larger-scale implementations of the program.

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APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP OUTLINES & QUESTIONS

Focus groups 1 & 2: What factors impact on Koori fathers and fathering?

Introduction

Some of you have indicated you'd like some sessions focussing specifically on issues around parenting for Koori men. So, today, we want to find out about the things that influence your fathering – and that help or hinder you as fathers. We won't be trying to answer any of the issues raised today though – we're just trying to get a clearer understanding of the issues.

We're tape-recording this group – so we don't have to take lots of notes while we're talking. The tape will be transcribed but we won't be writing down anyone's names or linking any comments to individual guys.

Group Rules

- Only one person speaking at a time.
- Need to respect others' opinions.
- Need to listen as well as speak.
- Try to talk loudly so the tape recorder can pick it up clearly.
- Anything said remains strictly confidential and can't be repeated outside of the group.

Questions

- 1) What is being a father all about for you?
- 2) Does the area where you live have an impact on what you do as a father?
- 3) Thinking of what you do during the day. How does this affect your parenting?
- 4) How does your culture or heritage affect the way you are as a father?
- 5) What about the way life is set up for you. What are the things that make parenting harder?
- 6) Are there ways in which outside organisations such as government departments, agencies or religious organisations affect your parenting?
- 7) If things could change in the world around you what changes would help you as a father?
- 8) Thinking about your particular circumstances as a parent, what skills do you feel would be helpful, and how would you like to learn them?
- 9) Thinking of the difficulties of being a father what keeps you strong or helps you bounce back?
- 10) Is it helpful to discuss parenting issues in small groups or would you prefer to simply watch a video or to receive handouts?
- 11) If there is anything that hasn't been brought up yet about being Aboriginal in Australia today, which makes it harder to be a good dad.
- 12) As Koori fathers are there particular strengths or other good things you bring to the job of parenting?
- 13) Anything else you'd like to add or raise?



Focus group 3: What is wanted from the *Koori Fathering Program*?

Introduction

Many of you have asked the *Rekindling The Spirit* team to run another group to focus specifically on issues around parenting for Koori men. We're now planning to do this and want your help to make sure it's as useful as possible. So, today, we want to find out what you'd like to see covered in the program and how you'd like it to be run. We won't be trying to answer any of the issues raised today though – we're just trying to get a list of issues that we need to cover in the *Koori Fathering Program*.

We're tape-recording this group – so we don't have to take lots of notes while we're talking. The tape will be transcribed but we won't be writing down anyone's names or linking any comments to individual guys.

Group Rules

- Only one person speaking at a time.
- Need to respect others' opinions.
- Need to listen as well as speak.
- Try to talk loudly so the tape recorder can pick it up clearly.
- Anything said remains strictly confidential and can't be repeated outside of the group.

Questions

Ask each main (numbered) question in an open-ended fashion initially to see what responses come up – with appropriate probing for clarifying information and extra responses. When all spontaneous comments have stopped, then ask any of the sub-questions (lettered) that haven't already been addressed during the discussion.

- 1) What do you expect to get from *Koori Fathering Program*/Group?
- 2) How would you like the *Koori Fathering Group* to be run?
 - a) How many members?.
 - b) Types and numbers of members? (existing father, fathers to be, extended fathers).
 - c) Where to meet?
 - d) For how long (each meeting, overall course)?
 - e) Time of day?
 - f) How often want to meet?
 - g) Type(s) and number of facilitators (depending of the different course component, gender issues)?
 - h) Support outside group meetings?
 - i) Support after program completed?
- 3) What issues would you like included in the *Koori Fathering Group*?
 - a) Building relationships with partner and child?
 - b) Understanding a woman's makeup?
 - c) Before, during and after pregnancy?
 - d) Child development?



- e) Child's education?
 - f) What about the feeling of being a father?
 - g) Barriers to being a good father?
 - h) Understanding discipline?
 - i) What is communication?
- 4) In what sort of format would you like the program materials to be presented - eg. Handouts, videos, booklets?
- 5) We're keen that people attend all, or most, of the sessions and we'll provide childcare and transport wherever needed to help people attend – are there any other things we could do that would encourage you (or make it easier for you) to attend each session?



APPENDIX B: OUTLINE OF *KOORI FATHERING PROGRAM*

SESSIONS

SESSION 1: Pre Video Interview

Aims:

- ❖ Conduct pre video interviews with participants.
- ❖ Set Group Rules.
- ❖ Outline the program.

Resources needed for this session:

- ❖ Video camera
 - ❖ Pre video interview questions
- =====

SESSION 2: What is Communication?

Aims:

- ❖ Definition of communication.
- ❖ To understand the different ways (forms) of communication.
- ❖ To understand the difference between effective and ineffective communication.
- ❖ To understand the things that block or encourage communication.

Resources needed for this session:

- ❖ Copy the handouts:
 - *What is Communication?*
 - Poems: *Children Learn What They Live* and *Take a Moment to Listen*
 - Exercise sheet: *Blocking & Encouraging Communication*
- =====

SESSION 3: Communication Maintenance

Aims:

- ❖ To understand the effect that body language has on communication.
- ❖ To understand how feelings affect the way we communicate.
- ❖ To understand the power of words.

Resources needed for this session:

- ❖ Copy the handouts:
 - *Learning to use "I" statements*
 - *The Power of Words*
 - *Your Choice* (page 78 from the book *The Secret Of Happy Children* by Steve Biddulph, 1998)
- =====



SESSION 4: What is Discipline?

Aims:

- ❖ To understand what is discipline.
- ❖ To understand what are boundaries.
- ❖ To understand different ways of setting boundaries.

Resources needed for this session:

- ❖ Copy the handouts:
 - *Parenting Guide*
 - *10 Principles for Discipline of Children*
 - *Practical Guidelines for Discipline*
 - *Why a Child Misbehaves*
 - *Pick Out Parenting 'Mistakes' from the Story*
 - *Parenting & Child Health - Discipline with Love* www.cyh.com/cyh/parenttopics/usr_srch2.stm?topic_id=56&precis=null
 - *Children & Discipline*
 - *Parenting Tips*
 - *Use Words That Help Not Hurt*
- =====

SESSION 5: Building Relationships

Aims:

- ❖ To understand the different elements to building and improving relationships.
- ❖ To understand the different ways of improving relationships.
- ❖ To understand the different ways of working through conflict.
- ❖ To understand the importance of encouragement.

Resources needed for this session:

- ❖ Copy the handouts:
 - *Conflict Resolution Using Twelve Skills*
 - *Boosting Self-Esteem with Encouragement*, by Michael Grose
 - *A Message from the Kids*
 - *What We Leave in our Children*
 - *Our Children Need a Home*
- =====

SESSION 6: Review of Sessions 2 – 5

Aims:

- ❖ To review sessions 2 – 5: *What is Communication?*, *Communication Maintenance*, *What is Discipline?* and *Building Relationships*.
- =====



SESSION 7: Self-Reflection & Connecting

Aims:

- ❖ To identify and discuss a wide variety of feelings and emotions.
- ❖ Understanding own feelings and others have feelings also.
- ❖ To learn to identify feelings/emotions from body language and facial expressions.

Resources needed for this session:

- ❖ Copy the handouts:
 - *Dealing With Emotions and Feelings*
 - *Understanding Your Partner's Feelings*
 - *Reflection*
 - *Some Feelings and How to Handle Them*
- =====

SESSION 8: Sharing Responsibility

Aims:

- ❖ To identify and discuss what is responsibility.
- ❖ To identify and discuss who is responsible.
- ❖ To understand the importance of sharing responsibility.

Resources needed for this session:

- ❖ Copy the handouts:
 - *Being a Dad*
 - *Who is Responsible for Meeting the Needs of a Child?*
 - *Why a Place Just for Fathers?*
 - ❖ Writing paper and pens for group discussions
 - ❖ Whiteboard and whiteboard pens
 - ❖ Coffee, tea, sugar, milk and biscuits
- =====

SESSION 9: Showing Affection

Aims:

- ❖ To understand ways of communicating your love to your child/ren.
- ❖ To identify the five basic ways a child feels loved.
- ❖ To understand unconditional love.

Resources needed for this session:

- ❖ Copy the handouts:
 - *Love Is The Foundation*
 - *Questionnaire*
- =====



SESSION 10: Review of Sessions 7 – 9

Aims:

- ❖ To review sessions 7 – 9: *Self-Reflection & Connecting*, *Sharing Responsibility* and *Showing Affection*.

=====

SESSION 11: Child Development

Aims:

- ❖ To understand what is child development.
- ❖ To identify the various elements of child development.
- ❖ To understand the different stages of child development.

Resources needed for this session:

- ❖ Copy the handouts:
 - *Watch Me Grow 0 to 5 Years*
 - *A Happy Childhood Lasts a Lifetime*
 - *Child Development Chart*
 - *General Developmental Sequence 2 to 5 Years*

=====

SESSION 12: Pregnancy & Babies

Aims:

- ❖ To increase understanding of the female and male reproductive anatomy.
- ❖ To explore the impact of pregnancy and childbirth has on the relationships between parents.
- ❖ To increase knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases/infections.
- ❖ To increase knowledge of menopause.

Resources needed for this session:

- ❖ Copy the handouts:
 - *Male Reproductive System*
 - *Female Reproductive System*
 - *Sexuality and Childbirth*
 - *Men, Sex and Reproductive Health*
 - *How Do I Know if I Have an STD?*
 - *Menopause*

=====



SESSION 13: Hunters & Gatherers

Aims:

- ❖ To increase the understanding of the psychological and emotional differences between females and males.
- ❖ To explore the impact that female and male psychological and emotional differences can and do have on relationships.

Resources needed for this session:

- ❖ Copy the handouts:
 - *Gender Differences*
 - *Communication Styles*
 - *Measure your Knowledge about Men & Women*

=====

SESSION 14: Review of Sessions 11 – 13

Aims:

- ❖ Review sessions 11 – 13: *Child Development, Pregnancy & Babies* and *Hunters & Gatherers*.
- ❖ Discuss any issues of concern from previous sessions.

=====

SESSION 15: Post1 Video Interview

Aims:

- ❖ Conduct post video interviews with participants.
- ❖ Set up a support group, if required.

Resources needed for this session:

- ❖ Video camera
- ❖ Post video interview questions

=====



APPENDIX C: EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETED WEEKLY ATTENDANCE & FEEDBACK LOG SHEET

Participants' Feedback <u>Session Communication 2</u>				
Name	Completed Homework?	<i>In the last week how would they rate their fathering and relationship with wife/partner/ children - On a scale of 1 (as poor) to 10 (as great)?</i> This is not a judgement but an exercise to help us reflect on oneself and help us to be more aware of our relationships with wife/partner & child/ren.	Feelings at the moment	Today's Session Feedback
01.	XXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX
02.	Yes	1 st S- 7	Uneasy; Happy	The role playing help understand the topic; give me hope
03.	Yes	P- 9; 1 st S-8; 2 nd S- 9 ; 1 st D- 9; 3 rd S-5-9;	Contented; happy-cruising	Brought up past and help with desire to continue improving as a father.
04.	Yes	P-7; 1 st S-9; 2 nd S-8;	Upset; Happy	The role-play assist with understanding the impact body language; feelings; power of word affect the way we communicate.
05.	XXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX
06.	Yes	P-8; All children 7-9	Contented - Happy	Enjoyed today and can relate to the topic
07.	Yes	P-8; 1 st D-9; 2 nd D- 8; 1 st S- 8;	Relaxed; content; happy	Understands the impact body language; feelings; power of word effect the way we communicate.
08.	Yes	P- ; All children ; NO RATING	Happy; Content	Will assist me to improve my relationship with partner and children.
09.	Yes	P- 8; 1 st D-8 ; 1 st S-8 2 nd D- 8	Happy; Content	
10.	Yes	P- 10; D-10; All other children 8	Happy; - Sad.	Helps me to improve my relationship with partner and children; also with grandkids.
11.	No	NO RATING	Stressed	
Just for coding: 1 st Son (oldest) 1 st Daughter (oldest) numbering down to youngest child. P for Wife or Partner				



APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT VIDEO INTERVIEW

QUESTIONS

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>
1	In your opinion, what is fathering? What does fathering mean to you?	Y	Y
2	Do you father differently to your father's fathering? If so, in what ways?	Y	Y
3	How would you rate yourself as a father – overall – on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1=poor and 10=great – on average?	Y	Y
4	How do you see yourself as a father? What are the qualities / ways you father?	Y	Y
5	How do you rate your relationship with your partner – on average – again, on the 1 – 10 scale?	Y	Y
5A	So, how well do you know your partner?	Y	Y
6	How do you rate your relationship with your children – on average – again, on the 1 – 10 scale?	Y	Y
7	So, how well do you know your children?	Y	Y
8	Can you tell me what makes a woman tick?	Y	
9	What stages does a child go through as it grows from baby to adult? What do you know / understand about child development?	Y	Y
10	Can you tell me about different ways of discipline? What's your understanding of the word "discipline" – what comes to mind when you hear it?	Y	Y
11	Can you tell me what is communication?	Y	Y
12	Why did you come along to the <i>Koori Fathering Program</i> – what motivated you to come along?		Y
13	What do you want / expect to get from the <i>Koori Fathering Program</i> ?	Y	
13A	What did you want / expect to get from the <i>Koori Fathering Program</i> ?		Y
14	Would you say your expectations were completely met, partly met or not at all met?		Y
15	Do you think coming along to the <i>Koori Fathering Program</i> has helped you with your fathering / parenting? If so, in what ways / how has it helped you?		Y
16	And do you think coming to the <i>Koori Fathering Program</i> has helped you in other areas of your life? If so, in what areas and in what ways?		Y
17	Could you suggest any ways the <i>Koori Fathering Program</i> could be improved?		Y
18	Would you like to see the <i>Koori Fathering Program</i> continue? If so, would you like to keep coming along?		Y
19	Do you feel you could call on any of the other group members for support now the program has finished – definitely not, maybe some of them, definitely some of them, definitely all of them? Would you feel free enough to call on any of them or only some of them?		Y
19A	And how likely do you think it is that you will contact another group member for ongoing support – not at all likely, fairly likely, very likely or definitely will?		Y
20	And would you be happy for another group member(s) to call on you for support now that the group has finished – definitely not, maybe some of them, definitely some of them, definitely all of them?		Y
20A	And how likely do you think it is that any of the group members will contact you for ongoing support – not at all likely, fairly likely, very likely or definitely will?		Y
21	And do you have any other comments about the <i>Koori Fathering Program</i> or about this interview?		Y



APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT SATISFACTION SURVEY

QUESTIONS

Hi, we're interested in how you've found your experiences with the Koori Fathering Program. Now, thinking about the facilitators (Greg, Chris & Anthony), how would you rate them in the following areas:

Please circle your answers

1a Providing appropriate resources?

Excellent

Very good

Fair

Poor

1b Listening to and addressing the issues raised?

Excellent

Very good

Fair

Poor

1c Understanding where you're coming from?

Excellent

Very good

Fair

Poor

1d Sharing their own experiences?

Excellent

Very good

Fair

Poor

1e Their availability to give support outside of the group?

Excellent

Very good

Fair

Poor

2a How many of the sessions did you manage to go to? _____

2b If less than all → what, if anything, could the facilitators have done to help you go to more sessions? _____

Thank you very much for your time!



APPENDIX F: FACILITATOR SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. First, what motivated you to become involved in the *Koori Fathering Program*?
- 2a. What did you expect from facilitating the *Koori Fathering Program*?
- 2b. Would you say your expectations were met completely, partly or not at all?
- 2c. *If not or partly*, how were they not met?
- 3a. Do you think facilitating the *Koori Fathering Program* has helped you with your parenting?
- 3b. *If yes*, in what ways has it helped you?
- 3c. Do you think facilitating the *Koori Fathering Program* has helped you in other areas of your life?
- 3d. *If yes*, in what ways has it helped you?
- 4a. In what ways do you think the *Koori Fathering Program* has helped the men who came along – with their parenting?
- 4b. And in what ways do you think it has helped them in other areas of their lives?
5. Can you suggest any ways the *Koori Fathering Program* could be improved?
- 6a. Would you like the *Koori Fathering Program* to continue?
- 6b. *If yes*, would you like to keep facilitating it?
- 7a. Do you feel the group members feel able to call on each other for support now that the program has finished?

Definitely not
Maybe some of them
Definitely some of them
Definitely all of them
- 7b. *If yes*, how likely do you think it is that they will contact each other for ongoing support?

Not at all likely
Fairly likely
Very likely
Definitely will
- 8a. Would you be happy for the group members to continue calling on you for support now that the program has finished?

Definitely not
Maybe some of them
Definitely some of them
Definitely any of them
- 8b. *If yes*, how likely do you think it is that any of the group members will contact you for ongoing support?

Not at all likely
Fairly likely
Very likely
Definitely will
- 9a. How many of the sessions did most group members manage to go to?
- 9b. What do you think were the main reasons group members didn't manage to come to all the sessions?
- 9c. What, if anything, could you, the facilitators, have done to help people come to more sessions?
10. And finally, do you have any other comments that you would like to make about the *Koori Fathering Program* or this interview?

Thank you very much for your time today!



APPENDIX G: PARTICIPANT VIDEO INTERVIEW RESPONSES

This Appendix summarises all men's responses to the video interview questions, by overall and sub-themes. The *pre* column covers interviews with 11 men before starting the program; the *post1* column covers interviews with 7 men at the end of the first round of the program; and the *post2* column covers interviews with 3 men at the end of the second round, having completed both rounds of the program. Each letter in the *pre*, *post1* and *post2* columns represents a specific participant, allowing tracking of changes in individuals' responses. Letters B, C and E represent the facilitators. Questions were occasionally missed, including questions 19 and 20 altogether in the post2 interviews, leaving some gaps in the responses.

Q1: In your opinion, what is fathering?		Said By ...		
Overall Theme	Sub-themes	Pre	Post1	Post2
Being responsible	No further explanation	BCD	AC	D
	Being best person can be/ doing your best	BEFHI		
	As a role model, father figure/ a man/ someone to look up to	ABDGL		A
	Not drinking/ drugging	I		
	Not being violent/ abusive	I		
Teaching kids	Guiding/ giving direction/ helping kids mature, develop/ good ways of living	BFHIJL	BK	DJ
	Setting boundaries/ right & wrong	BF		J
	To be/ do the best they can/ make the best choices in life	BE		
	To be themselves/ an individual	L		D
	Skills for future/ things they can pass on	I		
	So they can be good parents			J
Understanding kids	Their needs, likes, dislikes, behaviour/ listening to/ connecting with them	CD	AD	
Looking after kids' needs	General/ caring/ taking care of/ welfare	ABCFHIJ	CDK	AJ
	Protecting from danger/ providing safety, security		AB	D
	Nurturing/ encouraging/ supporting/ helping	CEL	J	
	Loving/ cherishing them	EFI		
	Emotional/ mental needs/ building self-worth/ spiritual	CL		D
	Respecting/ being polite	BI		
	Health/ physical needs	C	D	DJ
	Education/ schooling/ intellectually	J	DJ	DJ
Looking after partner's needs	Protecting from danger/ providing safety, security		B	
Looking after self	Own needs	D		
Being there for/ supporting	For kids	BCDEL	CEJK	D
	For partner	B	C	
	Unconditionally	E	EJ	
Sharing self	Being honest	BI		
Everything	Most important job		DE	
Being involved	Active participation in kids' lives/ hands-on role/ spending time with them	I	D	D
	Playing with them		D	
	Partnership with mother	B	EK	



Q2: Do you father differently to your father's fathering? If so, in what ways?			Said By ...		
Overall Theme	Sub-themes		Pre	Post1	Post2
Overall answer	Yes – different		ADEHI	BCDEJ	DJ
	Trying to be different	Trying to do better/ do my best/ be better parent/ working on it	CGJL	AJ	
	Yes & No	Different in some ways, similar in others	ABF	A	
		Used to be same but different now	BCEJ	K	AJ
		Similarities as own father also improving	F	C	
	Don't know	Father died when young – not know him well	B	B	J
		Never had own father	GI	J	J
		More influenced by mother's parenting			J
Ways like father	When abusive/ short-tempered		B	A	
Ways different to father/ stepfather	Am more involved with kids	Spend more time with kids/ do things with them/ be there for them/ show more interest	DGHIL	ACDE	A
		Show my feelings to my kids more – so they can tell how I'm feeling	C		D
		Being more loving/ affectionate/ hugs	DEL	E	D
		Communicating more with kids/ building better relationships with them	DEFI		ADJ
		Play more with kids	DH		
	Encourage kids more/ more supportive	Encourage kids to do their best/ to take more responsibility	E	E	ADJ
		Allow kids to have their own space		C	
	Am more responsible	No further explanation		A	
		Not getting drunk/ taking drugs	JL	AJK	J
		Treating all kids equally/ not having favourites	I		
		More aware of impact of own behaviour on kids	L		J
	More aware of feelings/ more of an emotional investment	Own feelings		B	D
		Kids' feelings		BD	D
	Discipline differently	Not using anger/ raising voice/ physical punishment/ instilling fear	DEI	DK	ADJ
		Not tormenting/ being mean to kids (psychologically)	I		
	Having chance to do KFP/ get better understanding of being a father				A



Q4: How do you see yourself as a father? What are the qualities/ ways you father?			Said By ...		
Overall Theme	Sub-themes		Pre	Post1	Post2
Overall comment	Reckon I'm really good		IH		
	An OK father – think I do fairly well/ pretty good		BFGJ	D	A
	I've struggled to accept the responsibilities of fatherhood				A
	Not very good – when I'm stressed		F		
	Some days are better than others/ hard to say		EL	J	DJ
Doing my best	Trying to be/ do the best I can/ working hard at it/ getting better		ACEFL	CJDEK	ADJ
	Think have done good job with my kids		HL		
Good qualities/ skills	Have some good aspects - No further explanation		BC		
	Giving/ trying to give up the drink/ drugs		F	J	
	Helping out around house/ cooking/ sewing		AH		
	Have good relationships with kids	No further explanation	BE		
		They show me love			J
		They show me respect			J
		Spending time with kids/ doing things with them			A
	Have good relationships with kids' friends		E		
	Willing to learn (from others/ mistakes)/ be helped/ ask for help/ support			BCJ	
	Looking out for the kids more				J
	Don't swear at kids		H		
	Showing love			K	
	Not being violent			K	
Having room for improvement	Not the best/ not an expert		AC	AC	
	No further explanation/ have some bad aspects/ need to learn more		CBGJL	J	
	Neglecting family due to work pressures		B		
	Need to remember I'm a father & need to look after family – not just self		D		
I'm learning/ trying to improve	No further explanation		C	ACJ	DJ
	Being father has helped me grow up		D		
	How to build better relationships/ understand better	With kids		BJ	
		With partner		B	
		As whole family		B	
Issues trying/ struggling with	To deal with constant changes as kids get older		J	A	
	To overcome issues from own childhood		J	E	
	To overcome lack of role model/ support from own father		CG		
	It can be frustrating		C		D
	With ex-partner's behaviour in front of kids		I		
	Need to be less hard on myself		L		
	To come to terms with being a dad				D



Q5: How do you rate your relationship with your partner – on average – again, on the 1 – 10 scale?		Said By ...		
Overall	Explanatory comments	Pre	Post1	Post2
Positive explanatory comments	Can be really good for a while	I(ex)	A	J
	Have a good relationship/ understand each other	BH(ex)		AJ
	Respect her			D(ex)
	Have improved/ it's getting better/ been working on relationship/ We're still learning	CH(ex)J	BCJK	AD(ex)J
	Only just started talking again recently	D(ex)		
Negative explanatory comments	We can argue a lot/ starts easily	A	A	
	Neglecting wife due to work pressures	B		
	Got worse when became parents	I(ex)		
	Each worried about being judged by other / Unsure how to treat each other	I(ex)		
	Both got our own problems	J		
	Still need to communicate better/ agree about how to discipline kids		J	
	Still some downhills/ arguments			A
	It's been poor lately			D(ex)

Q5A: So, how well do you know your partner?		Said By ...		
Theme	Sub-themes	Pre	Post1	Post2
Overall comments	Very well/ real well	G	K	
	Pretty good/ pretty well	ABEH(ex)	BEJ	ADJ
	OK	D(ex)		
	Not very well		A	
	Some days very well but other days not so well/ We've had our ups & downs	BC	J	
	Want to know her better	BD(ex)	A	
	Much better than I used to	J		A
Ways do know partner	Know her lucky number		A	
	Know her likes & dislikes		BJ	J
	Know her different moods/ emotions/ can pick up on them	E	BE	ADJ
	Can pick up on her body language			J
	Her personality – good & bad sides			D
	Her dreams/ plans for future			D
	Understand issues she's going through	J	J	
Ways don't know partners	Her favourite colour, etc		A	
	We're both changing/ growing all the time – so relationship grows too	B		
	Still learning about her/ finding out new things	C	BJ	
Good things about relationship	We're really close/ share most things/ She's my best friend	CH(ex)		
	We share responsibilities	C		
	We communicate really well	EH(ex)	E	
	She's opening up more about her past		J	D

(ex) indicates participant rating his relationship with an ex-partner – usually the mother of his kids



Q7: So, how well do you know your children?			Said By ...		
Overall Theme	Sub-themes		Pre	Post1	Post2
Overall comments	Know child(ren) really/ very well		ACEGHI	ACK	J
	Pretty/ fairly well		BJL	BDJ	AD
	Getting to know/ understand child better recently			BCK	A
	Don't know child very well		DFI	A	
	Kids know me really well/ can tell my moods/ how I'm feeling		C		
	See relationship as a friendship rather than father as superior			C	
Ways know kids	Understand wants/ needs/ different natures	No further explanation	L	A	A
		Their feelings/ emotions	E	B	D
		Their different natures/ personalities/ listen to them as individuals	CDHI	BC	D
		Different ways they communicate	B	B	AJ
		Why they do what they do/ how they operate/ When I'm invading their space	BEJ	BC	
		Their likes & dislikes			AD
		When he wants to play	A		D
	Can talk to/ relate to them	Open & honest relationship	DEHI	E	
	When they're sick		J		
Things not know	Still room to improve/ still learning about them	No further explanation	B	B	
		Trying to develop more open relationship	L		
Issues	Need to spend more time with child/ not living with me now/ only seen again recently		ABDI	A	
	Relationship with older kid(s) less good	As not have skills when they were young	E	C	
		As own father had/ has more input with them – interfere more	C		
		As see self at his age – it's confronting	C		
		As teenagers – spend more time with friends	H		
		As teenagers – don't understand that stage	J		
	Relationship with younger kid(s) less good	Scared of baby's fragility – scared to hold/ touch		A	
		Looking forward to kids learning to talk – make communication easier		A	
	Need to start talking to kids about sex/ relationships/ ensure kids feel able to discuss			E	
	It hurts that kids drifted so far away – want to fix it		F		
	Struggle to communicate with kids/ kid kind of quiet & keeps to self/ struggle with kid's moods		CHI	K	
	Kids jealous of each other getting any attention			K	
	Parental fighting disturbing relationship		F		

Note: Answers for individual participants may seem contradictory as most have 2+ kids and relate differently with each.



Q9: What stages does a child go through as it grows from baby to adult? What do you know/ understand about child development?		Said By ...		
Overall Theme	Sub-themes	Pre	Post1	Post2
Overall response	Don't know/ not know much	ADHI		
	Know a little bit	B		
	Know there's various stages a child goes through	EJ	BDK	A
	Pretty good – work with DoCS	CE	C	
	Importance of early years	CDEFGL	C	A
	Know differences between boys & girls	E		J
	Knowledge from own kids	BDEHJ	ABCDJK	ADJ
	Sought knowledge – study or books	CEI	CJ	
	Want to learn more about it	General	ABCDGI	E
		About teenagers' development	BE	
		About boys' development	B	
Stages mentioned	Being born	B	B	
	Baby, Initial growing, Teething (0 – 3)	BL	ABCEJ	A
	Toddler/ Young child, learning to walk (3 – 6ish)	L	BCDEJ	
	Childhood (7ish – 11ish)	L	E	
	(Young) teenager/ adolescent (12ish – 17ish)/ puberty	L	BCEJ	J
	Becoming adult/ establishing independence	L	BE	
Types of development	Physical/ motor skills	BHL	BD	DJ
	Emotional		BJ	AD
	Hormonal		BJ	
	Cognitive (speech/ learning/ intellectual)	EH	D	DJ
	Social/ interacting with other kids	E		DJ
	Learning their boundaries		J	DJ
	Own identity/ values	L		D
Other	Had lots of involvement with kids during early development – strong bond to help with future stages/ difficulties		C	
	Aware of impact of own behaviour on kids' emotional/ attitudinal development	FJ		

Q10: Can you tell me about different ways of discipline? What's your understanding of the word– what comes to mind when you hear it?		Said By ...		
Overall Theme	Sub-themes	Pre	Post1	Post2
Overall response	Don't know	Leave it to the missus	A	
	Partner & I have different thoughts on it		A	
	Self & partner need to be consistent	J	J	
	Always learning new ways of discipline	J	CE	
	Want to use positive methods	D		
	It's very broad/ There are various ways	B	AB	D
	It's about communication			D

Q10 continues over the page ...



Q10: Can you tell me about different ways of discipline? What's your understanding of the word– what comes to mind when you hear it?			Said By ...		
Overall Theme	Sub-themes		Pre	Post1	Post2
Types of discipline	Smacking/ Floggings/ aggressive	No further explanation	BCD	B	
		Don't like to do it/ don't use it	ABDEHIL	ADEK	ADJ
		Partner uses it		A	
		Used to do it	CEJL	CJK	
		Doesn't work	F	K	
		Can be necessary (mild)		C	
	Time out/ put in room/ put in corner	No further explanation		AB	
		To think about actions	CI	CE	
		To allow self to calm down		C	A
	Self discipline	In all things	B	B	
		As fathers		B	
		By doing KFP/ learning other ways of discipline	DJ	BCEJ	
		Having a routine/ knowing what's expected of you	D		D
	Passive	No further explanation		B	
	Assertive	No further explanation		B	
	Shouting/ swearing	No further explanation	FH	CK	
		Don't do it			DJ
	Teaching responsibility / consequences/ respect/ building awareness in kids/ guiding	No further explanation	CFHL	D	AD
		For self	EHJ		
		Impact on others	EJ		
		Explaining why actions not acceptable	CIL	CDEK	AJ
	Setting/ teaching boundaries		J	DJ	AD
	Encouraging/ rewarding good behaviour		CE		A
	Stopping privileges/ grounding			CE	A
	Forcing to behave in certain way		D		
	Loving discipline		DI		D
	Being there for them		H		
	Making sure they go to school		H		
Preferred way	Different things work for different kids/ ages/ tailoring		B	C	
	Stopping privileges/ grounding			CE	
	Assertive			B	
	Time out/ put in room/ put in corner		I	A	
	Teaching consequences/responsibility/ respect/ building kids' awareness		CEFH	D	A
	Setting/ teaching boundaries			J	
Own experiences of discipline	Parents used to smack/ flog me	No further explanation	CDJ		A
		When I was young	C	AC	
		Stopped when I was older		A	
		Hit harder as I got older		C	
	Not told what had done wrong			C	
Other	Need to respect child	No further explanation			D
		In order to get their respect	C		
	Good discipline can be difficult/ hard work		D	J	
	Need to separate the child from the bad behaviour			D	



Q11: Can you tell me what is communication?			Said By ...		
Theme	Sub-themes		Pre	Post1	Post2
Overall responses	Don't know/ not sure		G	A	
	Talking	No further explanation	H	ADF	D
		It's more than talking	BC	B	
		Asking questions – to understand other		D	
		Being able to get your point across/ express self	CDI		
	Listening	No further explanation	BCJL	BC	
		To non-verbal as well as verbal stuff		E	A
		Being receptive to what other person's saying/ two-way thing	BCJL	BC	
	Respecting	No further explanation	C	C	
		Knowing when to stop/ not nagging	CL		
		Acknowledging/ understanding other person is sharing feelings/ emotions/ self	BCDL	BE	D
	Understanding each other	No further explanation	IJL	JK	
		Getting to know each other / bonding	AGI		
		Sharing feelings/ emotions/ self	BCDF	BDEJ	
		Helping each other/ sticking together		K	
		Exchanging info/ thoughts			J
		Feeling safe to reveal self	CL		
	Forms of communication	Just being there	H	C	
		Playing	H	D	D
		Singing	H		D
		Laughing	H		
		Touching	H		
		Screaming	H		
	Principles / techniques	Getting down to kids' level			A
		Keeping eye contact			A
		Answering questions			A
		Watching/ observing			D
		Staying calm/ not shouting			A
		Being yourself/ honest	C		
Own experiences	With partner	Don't communicate well/ Argue a lot		A	
		Can be really good		A	
		Good communication leads to most effective parenting		C	
		Good communication is key to good relationship	E	CD	
	As a child	Never listened to		C	
	With kids	Good communication is key to good relationship	EF		
		Like to talk to them a lot	F		
	With others in community	Good communication is key to good relationship	E		
Other	Want to learn more communication skills		CDL	K	



Q12: Why did you come along to the KFP – what motivated you to come along?			Said By ...	
Overall Theme	Sub-themes		Post1	Post2
Heard about it	Through <i>Rekindling The Spirit</i>		A	J
	Was starting at the right time/ when I needed it		D	
Thought it'd be helpful	No further explanation		A	
Initial reason	Someone wanted me to	For wife/ family	A	
	Wanted to learn new/ improve fathering skills	No further explanation	BDEJ	DJ
		Re: teenage stage	J	
		To fill gap from negative/ lack of own father role model	BCDJK	DJ
		Because struggling/ overwhelmed as a father	D	
	Wanted to be a better ...	Man	B	
		Partner	B	D
		Father	BCDJKF	DJ
	For my kids	Give them better opportunities	C	
		Worried about losing them	F	
	To have better relationship with kids	No further explanation	D	
		Than had with own father/ own bad experiences	CE	
		So they feel they can talk to me about anything	C	
	To help with my work	Family support/ pass on skills learned	E	
		So can encourage other men to participate	E	
Reason keep coming	I want to/ I like it		A	
	To help me with my family		A	

Q13 & Q13A: What do/ did you want/ expect to get from the KFP?			Said By ...		
Overall Theme	Sub-themes		Pre	Post1	Post2
Better knowledge/ understanding	No further explanation				
	What to expect as kids grow up	How to help them as they develop	J	AE	AJ
	Of what a father should be		J		
	About partner/ women	Male – female differences		J	
		Women's emotions/ mood swings	B	J	
To be better/ learn new skills/ improve	No further explanation		DG	DE	AD
	As a father/ parent		CEFGIJ	BCJ	ADJ
	As a man		FI	BK	
	As a partner		F		J
	About different ways of discipline/ rules/ boundaries – as kids get older		E	J	AJ
	I can use/ pass on in my work	Family support	E		
	Communicating with children			JK	
To unlearn old negative habits				C	

Q13 / 13A continues over the page ...



Q13 & Q13A: What do/ did you want/ expect to get from the KFP?			Said By ...		
Overall Theme	Sub-themes		Pre	Post1	Post2
Create a support mechanism/ network	To help/ learn from each other	No further explanation	D	K	D
		As fathers	BC		
		As men	BC		
	For it to be ongoing/ there when I need help	Generally		C	J
		For help as kids grow/ enter different stages of life		C	
	Somewhere safe to express self/ issues/ concerns	As Koori father/ parent	D	C	
		As father/ parent	D		
		As a man	D		
	To get feedback	About current parenting	D		
Help with relationships	With self		B		
	With partner		B	E	J
	With children		BD	E	J
	As individuals		B		
	As a family		B		
	Overcoming negative issues	From own childhood/ father – therapeutic	D	C	
Not expect too much	As knew it was a pilot program			D	

Q14: Would you say your expectations were completely met, partly met or not at all met? If not completely met – how were your expectations not met?			Said By ...	
Overall Theme	Sub-themes		Post1	Post2
Overall comment	Completely met		ABCJ	
	Partly met	As need/ want to keep learning/ still room to improve	CDE	D
	Mostly		EK	J
	Gone beyond expectations		BC	
Positive comments	Raised awareness of future stages for kids		A	
	Helped in wide range of ways		B	
	It's created a support network	No further explanation		D
		Within the building	B	
		Informally – when meet on the streets	B	
		Out camping	B	
		Instead of drinking	B	
		That's relevant to us (as Koori men/ fathers)	BC	
		Allowed men to feel comfortable to share experiences/ feelings	ABD	
		Place to get/ practise feedback/ learn new skills	D	D
	Hope it keeps going		D	D
How expectations not met?	Needs to go for longer/ it's an ongoing process		D	D
	Needs more time/ resources			D



Q15: Do you think coming along to the KFP has helped you with your fathering/ parenting? If so, in what ways/ how has it helped you?			Said By ...	
Overall Theme	Sub-themes		Post1	Post2
Overall comments	Yes – certainly/ definitely/ heaps	No further explanation	ABCDEJK	DJ
		Along with <i>Rekindling The Spirit</i>	A	
		Got lots of help/ feedback	AD	
Ways it has helped	In relationship with kids	No further explanation/ we get along better	C	AD
		Spend more time with them	A	A
		More comfortable with them/ feel more able to support them	ABK	
		Don't get as frustrated/ agitated	A	
		Understand their feelings better	BK	
		Respond to their need for affection better/ committing emotionally	BD	
		Changed how I talk to them/ improved communication/ I listen more	JK	J
	Helped me understand kids' development better	Physical	B	
		Emotional	B	J
		Hormonal	B	
		Behavioural		J
	Got lots of info/ learnt new parenting/ fathering skills	No further explanation	ACDEJ	ADJ
		Learnt alternative discipline techniques/ setting boundaries	BCDJ	ADJ
		Helped me prepare for future stages/ know what to expect	B	A
		Unlearnt old negative parenting habits	C	D
	Increased my confidence as a father/ feel more supported	Feel more confident as a father		A
		Built a support network for if/ when needed	C	
		Get strength from hearing others' fathering stories/ Learning from each other	DE	A
		Great to see guys all hungry to be better dads	E	



Q16: And do you think coming to the KFP has helped you in other areas of your life? If so, in what areas and in what ways?			Said By ...	
Theme	Sub-themes		Post1	Post2
Overall comments	Yes/ definitely		BCDEJK	D
	Yes	Along with RTS	A	
Ways helped	Helped me in my work	Family support	C	
	Made me more responsible	Consider consequences of actions more	AJ	
		Realise have to provide better for kids	A	
		Realise got to be self-motivating/ do things	A	
		Understand parents responsible for kids' actions		J
		Got more involved in kids' schooling		J
		Encouraged/ helped me to give up drugs	AK	A
		Better understanding of impact own behaviour/ bad parenting on my kids	J	
		Learnt ways to deal with problems		A
	Improved other relationships/ can support & understand better/ get along better	With partner	CK	DJ
		With own father	C	A
		Softened my heart re: relating to people generally	D	
		Building relationships everywhere	E	D
		Allows my kids to have a better relationship with their grandfather	C	
		Improved relating from heart rather than head	E	
		Helped me have empathy for other parents	D	DJ
		Increased respect shown by guys within RTS	E	
		Stopping violence to partner has changed how my children look at me	K	
	Improved my communication/ communication skills	No further explanation	D	
		With partner	BK	J
		With other children	D	
		Easier to talk to doctors		J
		Helped me understand how people communicate in different ways	B	
		Helped me understand about listening in communication	B	J
		Helped me understand about body language	B	
	Learnt about understanding women	Male – female differences	J	
		Impact of menstrual cycle on women's emotions	J	
	With understanding self	Own feelings	B	
		Knowing that others going through similar things	C	D
		Increased self-esteem		D
		Helped me come to terms with issues re: how I was fathered	C	D
	Been able to share own experiences	Good times	D	
		Bad times	D	
		As a father	D	
		As a single father	D	



Q17: Could you suggest any ways the KFP could be improved?			Said By ...	
Overall Theme	Sub-themes		Post1	Post2
General comments	KFP will evolve as it goes on		C	
	Only see disadvantages if it doesn't continue	Men need ongoing support	CE	
	Not really – you're doing a good job now/ it's helped me with what I needed		JK	
Things to increase/ do more of	More guest speakers	No further explanation	A	
		As specialists in different fields	D	
		With experience working with Koori kids	D	
		As mentors	D	
	More concentrating on specific topics		AB	
	Father & kids outing	Once or twice a year	J	
	More role-plays			D
	More videos	Watching them		D
		Making some for other Koori men		J
	Have partner program	To help deal with differences re: parenting		
Things to decrease/ do less of	Shorter check-ins		AB	

Q18: Would you like to see the KFP continue? If so, would you like to keep coming along?			Said By ...	
Overall Theme	Sub-themes		Post1	Post2
Overall comments – want KFP to continue	Yes – definitely/ certainly/ for sure		ABCDEJK	DJ
Overall comments – want to keep coming	Yes – definitely/ certainly/ for sure		ABCDEJK	DJ
	Would like to encourage others to come along		A	
Reasons to continue KFP	Need to overcome historically bad fathering from Aboriginal fathers		B	
	Need ongoing mutual support to achieve change		B	
	So own children will have good parenting skills and not need a KFP program		BE	
	If we want our men to be better fathers		E	
	If we want a brighter outlook on life		E	
Suggestions for ongoing structure/ format of KFP	Frequency	– every 2 – 3 weeks	BCD	
		– at least once a month	CD	
	Formal or informal		B	
	Revisit topics already covered	It's easy to lose new skills	BD	
	Explore new topics		B	
	Content will evolve but needs to remain group of guys meeting regularly to share experiences/ info		CD	
	Need to get employers on board so guys getting work can still come	As the benefits improve you as a worker as well as as a father/partner	C	
	Need more work on getting guys to understand giving from the heart is more important than giving kids material things – and it's free		E	
Reasons to keep coming along	It's a good support network/ mechanism		B	D
	Still more to learn	So can support kids as they go through different stages	CJ	DJ
		To help be there for children as adults too	C	
		Want to continue developing skills		DJ
	Would like to share the experience with own sons		C	



Q19: Do you feel you could call on any of the other group members for support now the program has finished – definitely not, maybe some of them, definitely some of them, definitely all of them? Would you feel free enough to call on any of them or only some of them? Q19A: And how likely do you think it is that you will contact another group member for ongoing support – not at all likely, fairly likely, very likely or definitely will?		Said By ...
Overall Theme	Sub-themes	Post1
Overall comments – whether could	Yes – a few of them	K
	Yes – maybe some of them	E
	Yes – definitely some of them	AD
	Yes – definitely any of them	BCJ
Overall comments – re: how likely	Definitely would – if needed to	A
	Definitely will	EK
	Very likely	B
	Fairly likely	D
	Maybe	J
Qualifying comments	Only some of the guys could talk to one-on-one	A
	Would be selective about calling at reasonable hour of day	B
	Only a few I'd call if desperate at unreasonable hour	B
	Couldn't exactly call any of them as not all have phones	C
	Think guys would be willing to be there whenever needed	C
	Need to be aware of people's own home lives though	C
	Regular ongoing meetings would provide most support needed	C
	Would also support each other through informal meetings when out & about	C
	Already called on someone for support	D
	Have learnt the importance/ helpfulness of sharing – both good & bad stuff	E

Q20: And would you be happy for another group member(s) to call on you for support now that the group has finished – definitely not, maybe some of them, definitely some of them, definitely all of them? Q20A: And how likely do you think it is that any of the group members will contact you for ongoing support – not at all likely, fairly likely, very likely or definitely will?		Said By ...
Overall Theme	Sub-themes	Post1
Overall comments – whether would be happy to be called on	Definitely – all of them	ABCDEJK
Overall comments – re: how likely	Not likely at the moment but maybe as I get more experience	J
	Likely	AD
	Definitely will	BEK
Qualifying comments	Happy to be there whenever needed	C
	Happy to sit there & listen	A
	Happy to within limits	As long as ... not every day/ when I can/ not too late/ respect my family's space CD
	It's already happened/ Already do support each other	AE
	Supporting each other is the key to it	J



Q21: And do you have any other comments about the KFP or about this interview?			Said By ...	
Overall Theme	Sub-themes		Post1	Post2
Positive comments	I had a good year this year		A	
	Looking forward to next year		A	A
	It's been an honour/ privilege to have been involved in KFP	No further explanation	E	
		Being able to share so openly with other Koori men about difficulties of fathering/ how to be better dads	C	
		Think it's the start of something big – that we can take to other communities		D
		Really grateful for facilitators' help & efforts in putting the program together	J	
	It's crucial for it to continue	No further explanation	E	A
		So Aboriginal men have somewhere they can get new info & skills & share good & bad times of being a father	D	
		Want to continue long term so know what to expect/ how to deal with things as kids get older		A
	It's something we've never had before	An Aboriginal fathering program	DE	D
	It enhances our RTS work		E	
	KFP has been a big benefit to me & my family	In lot of different ways/ it's changed my life	JK	
		Without it, I'd probably be in jail	K	
		Without it, I'd probably be worrying about getting next drink/ drugs – not about my family	K	
		It's helped me be more involved as a father than my father was	K	
	Pamphlets were really good		A	
	Wish my father could have done similar program			A
	Enjoy mixture of guys' kids' ages	Helps to understand different issues at different ages		A
	Would have been helpful to have KFP back when I was first a parent		J	

