



Improving the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Development of resources to support service providers working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants, children and families

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Report by **The Healing Foundation** and **Emerging Minds**



Contents

1.	Project overview	1
2.	Co-design and cultural knowledge production process	2
3.	Contributors	3
4.	Key themes	4
5.	What we heard, what we learnt, what we know	6
	5.1 Social and emotional wellbeing	6
	5.2 The nine guiding principles	8
	5.3 Resources and service responses	9
	5.4 Frameworks	10
	5.5 Child development stages	11
	5.6 Key developmental knowledge areas	16
	5.7 Developmental resources	16
6.	Recommendations	19
7.	Knowledge referencing	22
8.	Glossary	23

1. Project overview

Emerging Minds and The Healing Foundation have partnered to develop resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers working with children and families. The aim is to improve the mental health and social and emotional wellbeing and reframe the narrative of intergenerational healing for children and young people aged 0 – 18 years old.

Developed through a co-design process involving two knowledge circles and further research, this report brings together the expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family mental health service providers and wellbeing experts to plan for developing and delivering targeted, culturally safe systems and resources.

These resources will be developed to more effectively support the workforce to respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, carers, families and communities.

Resources will be designed to support positive mental health and wellbeing, increase understanding of age appropriate and developmental expectations of parents, communicate what affects positive connection and attachment and illustrate what an attachment theory looks like.

Resources will include strategies to increase positive attachment to parents, kinship systems and cultural ecology. An increase in the understanding of the impact of intergenerational trauma, recognition of protective factors associated with connection to kinship, culture, country and cultural practices will also be a key feature of this work.

Acknowledgement of ancestral trauma and its ongoing impact on the attachment and connection of subsequent generations needs to be exposed as the dominant trauma story. Once this occurs we can reconnect, strengthen and develop our strong attachment story and weave back in the knowledge and structures necessary to be strong, proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

2. Co-design and cultural knowledge production process

Two knowledge circles were held to identify key themes and generate cultural knowledge. This included a panel of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts who were invited to give feedback to the first knowledge circle report and provide further consultation for the strategic direction of content development. Opportunities for feedback from participants in the knowledge circles were enabled through the cultural knowledge and development phase and will continue throughout content production and resource development phases.

In the spirit of reconciliation, Emerging Minds and The Healing Foundation have created the space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led knowledge creation. This is an example of how we can challenge dominant discourses of political and power structures and create new ways of working together. Through this process Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, pedagogies, theories, perspectives, knowledge systems, practices, protocols and stories have been honored.

A common vision and goal was shared in this process while acknowledging, respecting and celebrating our diversity through a flexible culturally safe knowledge circle process. This knowledge circle involved facilitated discussions, establishing key themes for recording and providing opportunities for feedback and the creation of a shared knowledge.

We acknowledge and honor the collaboration and self-determination of the panel of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts from across Australia who have generously shared their cultural knowledge and expertise, culminating in the creation of a final report. This work will create a common ground and cultural interface as the implementation and roll out commences with partnering organisations, practitioners, families and communities.

All content should acknowledge the impact and complexity of intergenerational trauma through disconnection from culture, including cultural ecology, kinship systems and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practices and the ongoing impact on families with the emphasis on the use of trauma aware and healing informed care practices.

Knowledge circle participants explored some critical questions that guided the process of developing resources for support service providers working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants, children and families. How do we get parents to move to a thriving preferred story rather than the dominant story of just surviving? How can we support the recognition of culture as a protective factor instead of as an indicator for concern? How do we create holistic social and emotional wellbeing responses that are positive messages grounded in culture?

Knowledge circle participants also recognised that there is a gap in service provision for cases of complex intergenerational trauma. This is due to a lack of skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners trained in trauma aware healing informed approaches that are grounded in culture along with a lack of culturally appropriate assessments.

3. Contributors

Foundational to all of the work from The Healing Foundation is a co-designed approach that has been refined through more than 100 partnership projects with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities over 10 years. Co-design incorporates the key principle of working directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, women and children to empower them to develop solutions for themselves.

The knowledge circle comprised of representatives from The Healing Foundation, Emerging Minds and recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family mental health and wellbeing experts, collaboratively working together as a team to guide this project.

Knowledge experts

Professor Helen Milroy, Consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist, University of Western Australia

Associate Professor Catherine Chamberlain, Nurse midwife, Associate Professor, La Trobe University

Judith Lovegrove, Metropolitan Senior Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Worker, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

Felix Kerry, Department for Child Safety and Director at Kowa Kazil Youth Performing Arts

Sue-Anne Hunter, Sector Development Manager, SNAICC and Sue-Anne Consultancy

Virginia Slattery, Senior Clinician at Queensland Forensic Mental Health

Rowena Lawrie, Private Practice, Social Worker, Yamurrah

Bill Wilson, CEO, Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority, Empowering Communities

Shirley Young, Two Worlds Consultancy

Project support team

Rosie Schellen, Workforce Development, Emerging Minds

Amanda Warren, Project Support Officer, National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health, Emerging Minds

Lou Turner, Acting Deputy Director, Programs, and Knowledge Creation, The Healing Foundation

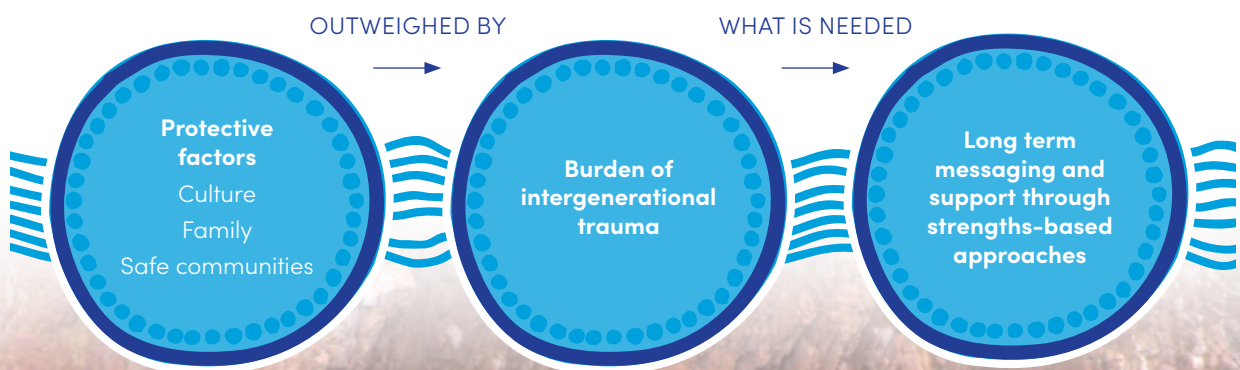
Jo Thitchener, Senior Communications Officer, The Healing Foundation

4. Key themes

The knowledge circles included facilitated discussions where key themes emerged and were then unpacked. These themes highlighted the impact of the Stolen Generations and intergenerational trauma that resulted in the disconnection from kinship systems, connection to country, spiritual and cultural practices and the loss of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parenting practices. It was acknowledged that this has had a devastating ongoing impact on connection and attachment to kinship and ecological systems.

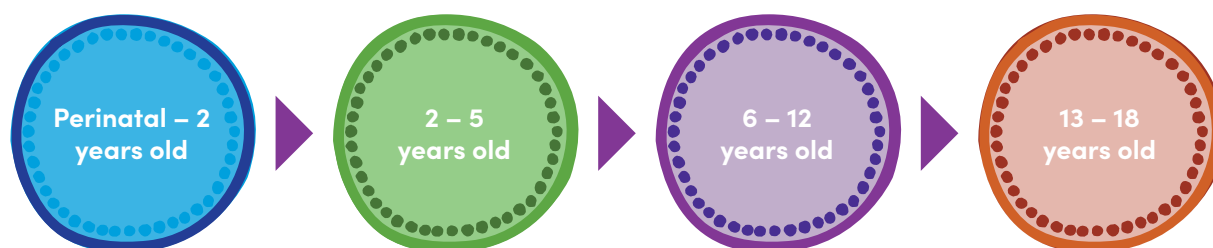
It was also acknowledged that the intergenerational impact of trauma on families was compounded by a lack of trauma aware and healing informed approaches that are culturally safe in current and accessible service systems.

Intergenerational trauma



Four important child development phases were outlined along with age appropriate milestones for each of the age groups. The neurobiology of trauma and importantly the impact on the child's developing brain was outlined during this process.

Four developmental stages



Social and emotional wellbeing frameworks were identified as the most appropriate for use with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, along with the use of narrative practices.

The lack of culturally appropriate assessment continues to impact on the psychopathology of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and lead to inappropriate diagnosis of mental health concerns. Lack of practitioner knowledge of mental health impacts on early recognition and attention of ill health were also discussed.

The importance of understanding Indigenous knowledge systems and enabling cultural stories with a strength based approach was considered essential. This approach will inform and guide the creation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources to better support the social and emotional wellbeing of infants, children and families.

Building a skilled workforce with culturally appropriate workforce training that could identify knowledge gaps and had ongoing supervision and support were seen as a priority for successful implementation. A variety of modalities of training, content and resource development to support all learning styles was recommended, along with drawing on existing resources and the nine principles of social and emotional wellbeing.

Developing culturally appropriate resources for service providers working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants, children and families will need to factor in the nine key principles of social and emotional wellbeing. Neurobiology of the brain, childhood development, positive parenting practices and the need to educate organisations, practitioners, parents and young people will ensure translatable resources are included in a framework approach.

Understanding the links to wellbeing that include the positive aspects of culture as an enabling factor for getting the best out of children and the negative effects of toxic stress, understanding the complexities of trauma and recovery were also considered imperative.

5. What we heard, what we learnt, what we know

5.1 Social and emotional wellbeing

The term mental health is widely associated with stigma and not a term used widely by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The use of social and emotional wellbeing is a holistic term that encompasses connection to kinship, culture, country and spirituality which is necessary for growing kids up strong with healthy connections and attachment.

Parents require information that increases their confidence to make informed decisions regarding how to influence positive social and emotional wellbeing for their child, coupled with the increase of positive developmental outcomes for the child.

Engagement through holistic, trauma aware healing informed, social and emotional wellbeing programs and narrative based approaches is recommended. These work best when they are backed with adequate time to scaffold and support the parent to safely externalise the problem story operating in their life.

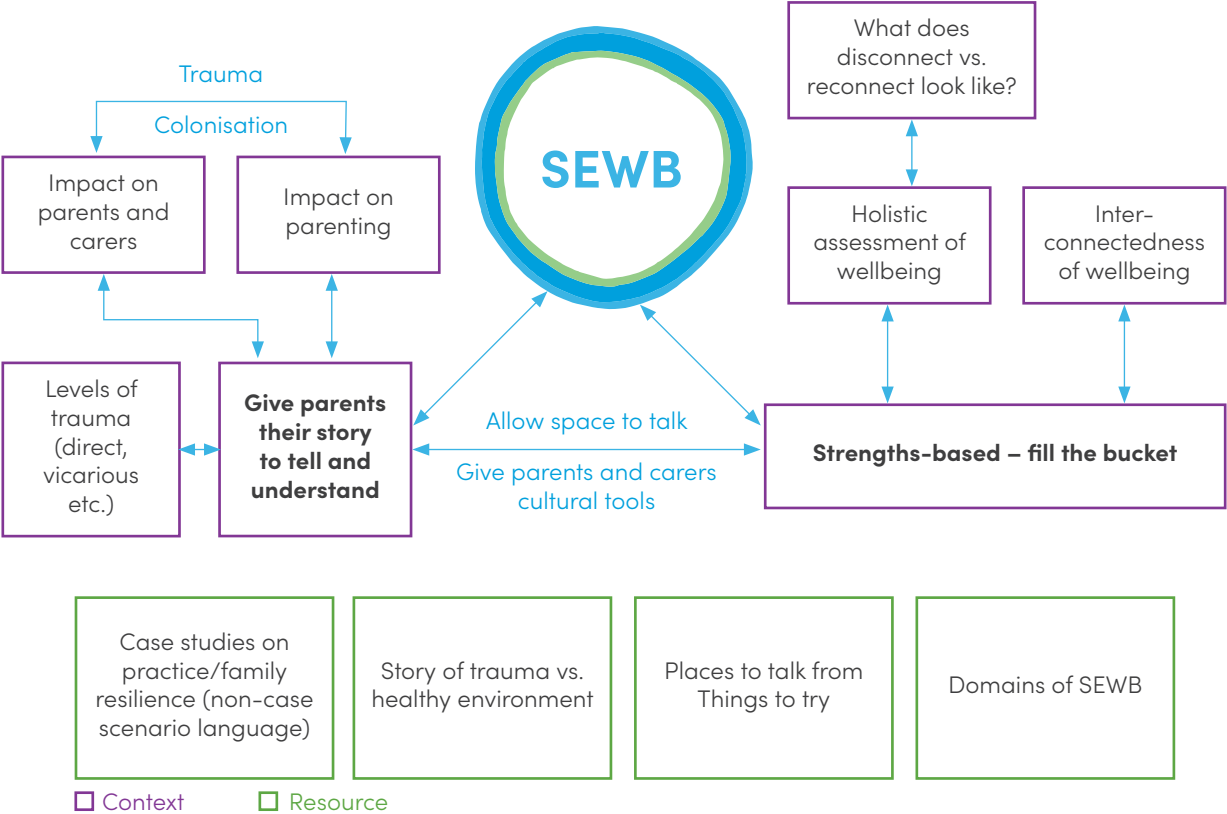
It is also important to find time to locate and deconstruct the origin and tactics of parents' problem story and recognise times when it is not operating. This will create a rich story development and allow the alternative preferred story to be woven through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems and stories.

Great importance was given to the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parenting and collective parenting practices describing flow on effects of positive social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people. Therefore, there is a need to encourage and strengthen these structures and networks in order to provide optimal support to children and young people in the context of their community.

Creation of early interventions encompassing the resurgence of our cultural and ecological connections, kinship systems, practices, songs, dance, stories from our ancestors, reclaiming of our languages and creation of cultural healing programs are vital for our social and emotional wellbeing. Therefore, it is imperative that the above is embedded in culturally safe practices which honor the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.



Process diagram from Knowledge Circle 2 – exploring social and emotional wellbeing principles, factors and values



Note: some of this whiteboard content was titled "Ages and Stages", but the conversation fell into SEWB space

5.2 The nine guiding principles

The nine guiding principles that underpin Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing need to be considered:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health is viewed in a holistic context
- The right to self-determination
- The need for cultural understanding
- The impact of history in trauma and loss
- Recognition of human rights
- Impact of racism and stigma
- Recognition of the centrality kinship
- Recognition of cultural diversity
- Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strengths

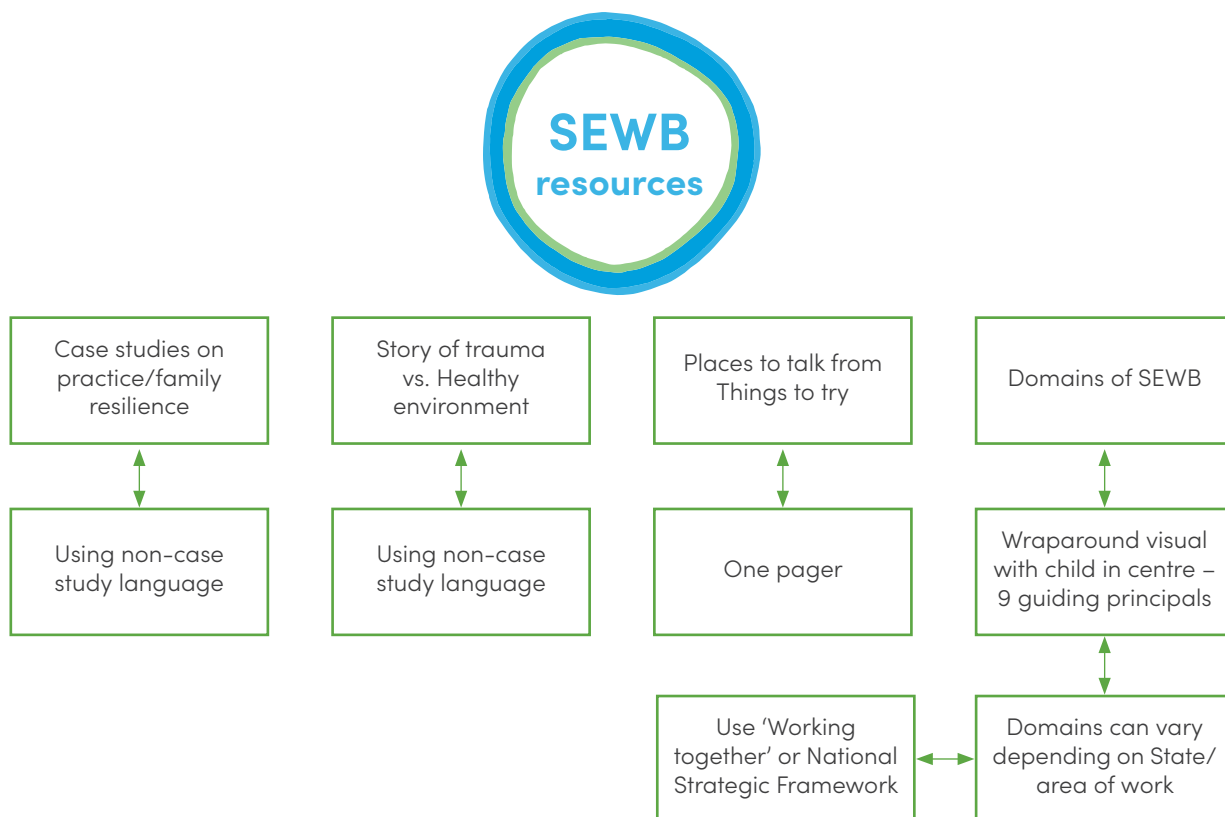
5.3 Resources and service responses

Resources and service responses must be informed by holistic intergenerational social and emotional responses in mind. A framework based on yarning and storytelling is essential, one that utilises ‘mid-range’ literacy in various forms that cater for different learning styles, such as written, pictorial, graphic, video and vignettes.

It was said that stories can be utilised to connect straight to the heart and ‘tell you who you are’ while supporting externalisation, and the creation of a rich story and preferred story development. Resource and service responses must be rooted in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pedagogy, knowledge systems, processes and protocols, practices and responses and not just an add on. Culture must be central to all responses and recognised as a strength and protective factor.

Content development must include topics such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives of child development, including information relating to age appropriate milestones, perinatal biology and the impact that environment has on childhood development.

Scoping the suite of Social and Emotional Wellbeing resources from Knowledge Circle 2



5.4 Frameworks

A framework to assist parents with the development of positive connection and attachment was discussed favorably at the first knowledge circle. It should provide access to positive child development content, balanced with direction for how to seek help early if parents become aware of arising issues.

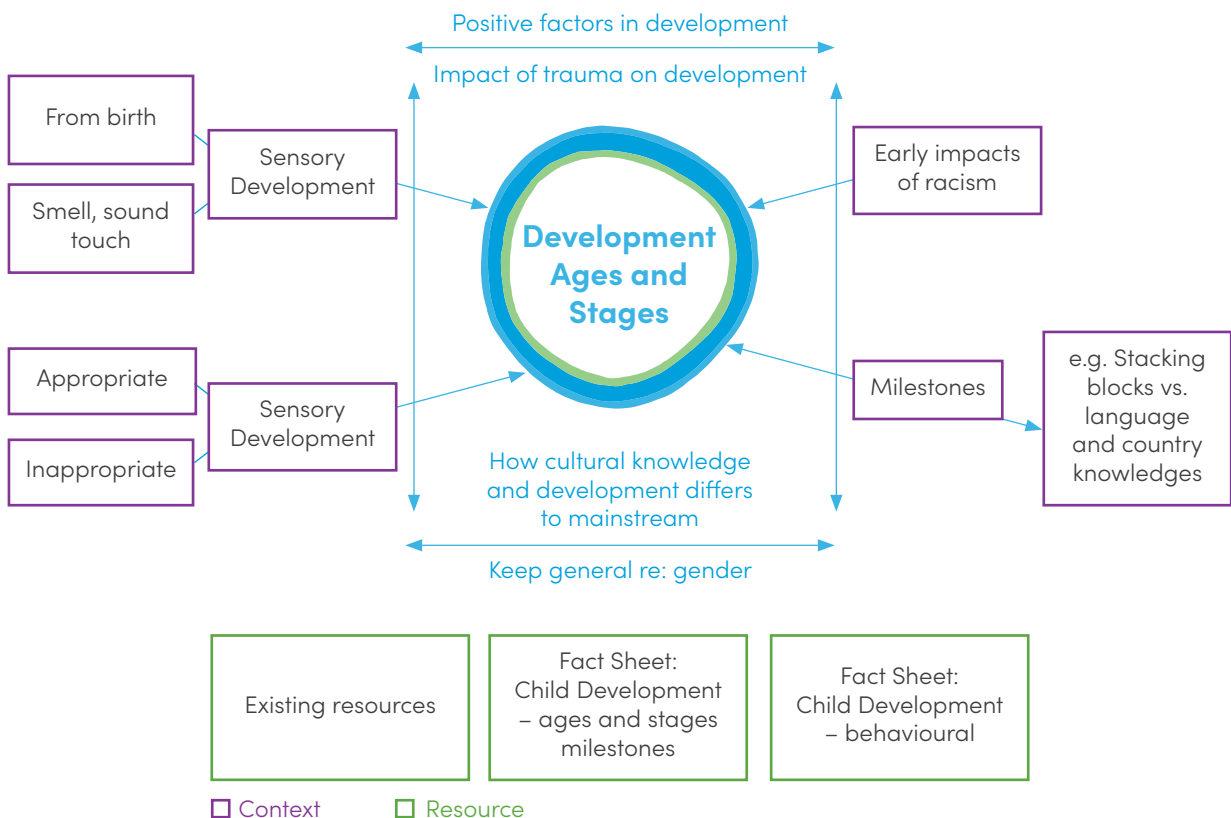
The 'Traffic Light' system was discussed: the green light indicates healthy development with no concerns, the amber light indicates some concern requiring extra knowledge and possible service provider support, and the red light indicates a warning, and that support seeking needs to occur with information about where to access information, resources and referral.

However, it was agreed that not all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities would identify with this framework and that further consideration be given to the creation of a culturally appropriate framework that could be implemented across communities, informed by local stories.

Practitioners across all sectors require uniform, easily accessible, culturally appropriate information and resources, including documents to appropriately support children, parents and communities.

The term 'attachment' is a Westernised term that does not fully describe the term 'connection' that is used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is proposed that the Westernised attachment model be critiqued against a cultural model that explores 'cultural connectedness' in its holistic meaning. The term 'cultural connection' is consistent with language used by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies and organisations. Further to this, it was proposed that a glossary of terms be created to ensure the terms connection/cultural connectedness are viewed from a cultural standpoint. Opportunities should exist to challenge and critique Westernised models against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander frameworks and knowledge systems e.g. attachment vs connection – as the term connection is aligned with but not identical to the Westernised model of attachment.

Scoping the development ages and stages and Indigenous knowledge content creation from Knowledge Circle 2



5.5 Child development stages

All children need to be able to depend on a safe and secure attachment base where they are free to experience the magical time of childhood. Children need to be able to safely explore the world they live in but also require a safe place to return to when feeling insecure. This is buffered by strong kinship systems that are protective and nurturing.

Children develop strong and healthy when their developmental stages are appropriately supported. There are four developmental stages that parents can support if they are aware of what is required.

There is a need for the creation of a model that depicts the 'whole child' that is centrally located within the context of the child's culture, family and community.

Through consultation with Emerging Minds it was agreed that an additional key developmental stage of 13 – 18 years old be developed and included in the proposed framework reflecting a holistic model.

Developmental Stage 1



Emotional regulation and attachment is set up within the first two years of an infant’s life, meaning their experiences at this stage will impact their resilience across their lifespan. Strong attachment and growth is impacted by the mother’s wellbeing and surrounding environment. Fathers play an integral role in supporting the mother and child’s wellbeing through a safe, supportive, loving relationship coupled with a predictable and safe environment.

“Secure infant attachment is really strong in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

This strength has been broken due to colonisation – need to find it again.”



Developmental Stage 2



Between the ages of 2 - 5 years it is important for parents to encourage children to be inquisitive and to explore their world as it supports this stage of their development. Similarly, it is also imperative to provide a safe place for the child to return to when they become unsure or need comforting. This is how the child becomes aware that their world is safe and predictable. If children are released to self care outside of their developmental stage or find their attachment to be scary or unavailable, this will have an impact on their ability to form positive relationships, establish healthy emotional regulation and will hinder their ability to thrive to their full potential.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow with a sense of caring for one another and begin to develop a sense of autonomy early, however, it is important that they are not left to 'bring themselves up' outside of their appropriate developmental stage.

Reduction in attachment to parents, kids are becoming more independent and there is more involvement from other family (usually grandparents) and community

“Older children cannot replace parents – parents are still needed”

“Not enough grandparents anymore to support this”



Developmental Stage 3



From the ages of 6 - 12 years, children are attending school. An important part of their development is a focus on the acquisition of life skills that will grow and develop over time. Children should be learning how to become a capable person, solve problems, control their emotions and behavior and form friendships.

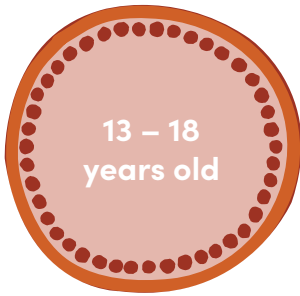
Problem solving and individuality

Behaviour control and self-regulation

Acquisition of skills



Development Stage 4



From 13 years of age up to 18, children will begin to learn men's and women's business regarding sexual and gender role development. It is vital that appropriate resources are available for this very vulnerable age group, as they are often making adult decisions at a time when they are still developing.

Throughout all four developmental stages, indicators of trauma will differ and require a variety of support systems. Due to the dominant trauma story, some families are continually in survival mode and require longer term support to externalise the problem story operating in their life. Support may be required to identify the origin of the problem story and help to name the ways the problem story affects their life.

Times where the problem story is not active must be uncovered to allow people to weave an alternative preferred story that will assist them to develop as parents. In order for this to occur, trauma aware pedagogy and healing informed approaches with a culturally responsive workforce and service provision must be made available.

Kinships and community structures must also be strengthened to create a network of nurture, support and connection for children and families. Grandparents have often been obligated to carry the responsibility for their grandchildren's care and protection when a parent is experiencing intergenerational trauma. The burden of responsibility has also been extended to our children, to respond to the care needs of family members. Evidence demonstrates that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population does not include enough grandparents to provide care and safety for the number of small children, hence the need to broaden the network.

Importance of rites of passage

Sexual and gender roles are being explored

Safe transition from childhood into adulthood



5.6 Key developmental knowledge areas

ATTACHMENT

Historically Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander attachment systems were considered to be highly favourable to healthy connection and attachment due to broad kinship structures, connection to ecological systems, the application of cultural knowledges, principles, practices and structures of care and obligation. However, through invasion, disconnection, assimilation and ongoing colonisation practices, these kinship structures have been damaged intergenerationally.

To understand our own attachment story and recognise its effect on our children we must first understand how our ancestors' attachment and connection was disrupted. This is essential for intergenerational healing.

It is imperative that we interweave ecological frameworks throughout our attachment story for our children, giving them the strong cultural element for growth that comes from being interconnected to country.

NEUROBIOLOGY OF THE BRAIN AND TRAUMA

Some parents, communities and service providers are unaware of the impact of trauma on the development of a child's brain. The earlier the trauma experience occurs, the greater the likelihood of negative impact on neurobiology, early development and attachment. We must provide opportunities to develop parental understanding of trauma and its impact on the developing brain and the potential impact across the lifespan.

Workers must be skilled up to support parent and kinship structures, identify the impacts of intergenerational trauma, recognise early warning signs and have a 'toolbox' of strategies and resources for use throughout engagement with the family and community.

It was acknowledged that neurological pathways are impacted by trauma, however, linking to protective factors in culture has positive effects on brain development and the plasticity of the brain to rewire itself.

5.7 Developmental resources

The knowledge circle co-design process identified the need for a suite of resources to be developed with appropriate content for the workforce and families.

Resources may include an online portal with an app for practitioners, parents and children, companion books to go with an online app; visual video stories, including stories from practitioners, parents and children; story cards for workers, parents and children; and reflective activities, videos and vignettes.

Fact sheets or snap shot information and diagrams, that are of mid-range language and are not too bound in theory should be considered. All resources and content must be created with a variety of learning styles in mind that cater to the different audiences.

WORKFORCE

It is important that the right workforce be targeted to implement the above frameworks and resources. The suggested workforce includes, but is not limited to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community workers, perinatal, early childhood and family support workers, and educators.

It is important to acknowledge that there will be a vast disparity in the level of expertise, training, skill sets and confidence of workers undertaking training modules. However, a demonstrated knowledge of the core principles of social and emotional wellbeing, mental health literacy and promotion, strengths-based practices and capacity building is required for workers to be deemed competent.

Throughout implementation, practitioners will require adequate levels of supervision to scaffold and support new skill development. Practitioners will require skill sets that support a uniform approach across participating organisations. Mentoring from more experienced staff to embed new skill sets will be an integral part of the workforce implementation phase. Social and emotional wellbeing and cultural safety for practitioners will be paramount throughout the implementation and roll out of resources. Practitioners will require access to an online portal with companion guide with practice principles to inform and guide their work. Peak organisations could be approached to disseminate information and provide support to their own staff as they implement the resources.

Resources need to bring cultural knowledge to the workforce - Knowledge Circle 2



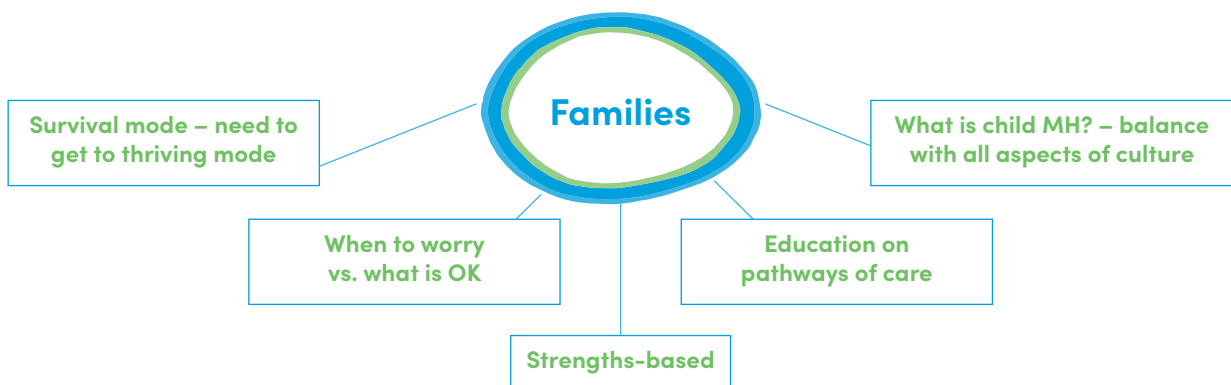


ENGAGING WITH PARENTS

Parents will be engaged via connection to workers in the community and resources available either online or provided by workers. Parents should have access to parenting stories via an online portal specifically aimed at them with the possibility of a companion guide with parent friendly practice principles.

Inclusion of visual or hands on tools to increase parent understanding of brain development, the impact of drug and alcohol use on the brain, stages of child development, etc. have been identified as useful. Resources and tools that already exist should be researched before being recreated.

Resources need to come from strengths-based cultural knowledge for families - Knowledge Circle 2

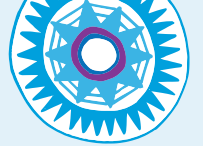
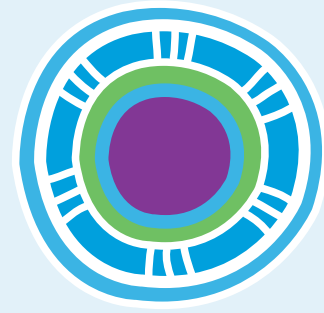


6. Recommendations

Service providers

Increase the understanding of service providers regarding the hidden dominant story and truth telling by:

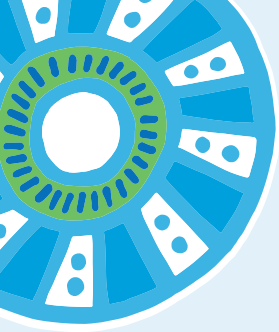
1. Increase understanding of social and emotional wellbeing for practitioners
2. Include children and adolescents in the target group to ensure a holistic model is created
3. Hold high level discussions with participating organisational leaders to ensure responsibility is taken for providing adequate support for their workers, addressing systemic racism and providing ongoing supervision, debriefing, training and evaluation
4. Ensure ongoing training, skill development, and networking for staff providing services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
5. Recognise, empower and strengthen local community support networks and leadership structures that support families
6. Consider ways of linking back to lost Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parenting practices and reconnect to create a resurgence and strength in culture
7. All practitioners be provided foundational theories and knowledge to enable consistent information to be provided to parents when unpacking complex concepts such as autonomy and independence versus lack of supervision



Parents

Support parents to understand the trauma of their ancestors and their own experience of trauma by:

1. Helping parents to seek support to address their trauma in culturally safe spaces
2. Increase awareness of the impact of trauma on the developing brain, focusing on positive development
3. Equip parents to recognise problem child development and understand how to encourage desired behaviours
4. Encourage parents to seek support early
5. Increase parents' understanding of developmental stages and how they can support their child's healthy development
6. Increase understanding of social and emotional wellbeing for parents
7. Provide parents with skills and knowledge to know when to seek help and provide safe entries into support
8. Strengthen community and kinship structures that keep children safe, to account for the lack of grandparents who traditionally provided care and safety
9. Provide opportunities for families to receive the best early start and keep this going across the lifespan
10. Utilise cultural stories to strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parenting practices, connection and attachment



Process implementation testing, researching and evaluating

1. Develop resources that highlight culture as a protective factor
2. Seek user feedback throughout the process
3. Research Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander storytelling themes and examples
4. Honor Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories throughout content and resources
5. Focus on prevention and education with strengths-based messages
6. Development of a research review is required to establish current research, programs, training and development and resources that are currently available
7. All content should be grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander frameworks and knowledge with strengths-based language that is congruent with that of lead Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations such as The Healing Foundation, SNAICC and other Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations
8. Human rights and social justice approaches must underpin all content and resources also reflecting broader overarching strategic frameworks
9. Evaluate and write up the effectiveness of the training and outcomes mapping of parent's improvement and feedback over time

Resources

1. Create resources and service responses that work intergenerationally
2. Include an unveiling of the hidden history of intergenerational trauma in the training content, acknowledging its origin and naming the true problem story
3. Self-determination and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and practitioners to be foremost in the creation of all content and resources
4. Create resources and messages that assist parents and service providers to understand neurobiology and the impact of trauma on the brain
5. Create targeted resources for fathers on topics such as the role of the father, supporting mothers, healthy attachment and strategies for supporting children to grow up strong
6. Create a framework that parents can easily relate to that is culturally appropriate and acknowledges diversity across communities
7. Create companion resources for parents and workers (The Healing Foundation and Emerging Minds Social and Emotional Wellbeing Training book and resources)
8. Create a charter of rights and responsibilities and a principles and practices manual
9. There is a necessity for the creation of a 'glossary of terms' to support understanding of models



7. Knowledge referencing

and terms

Key documents and resources underpinning the co-design process for developing resources

- Glossary of Healing, The Healing Foundation
- Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families and Children Toolkit, Emerging Minds
- Dadirri – A Reflection, Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann
- Healing the past by nurturing the future, La Trobe University
- Growing our Children up Strong, The Healing Foundation
- The Working Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and wellbeing Principles and Practice. Authored by Pat Dudgeon, Helen Milroy and Roz Walker.
- Indigenous pedagogy - Indigenous parenting, Michelle Mc Mahon PhD
- The Whole Brain Child, Daniel Siegel MD and Tina Payne Bryson PhD
- Child Development Stages, Sarah Maclean, Emerging Minds
- National Social Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) Framework
- The Healing Foundation and Emerging Minds SEWB Training Handbook

8. Glossary

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

A person who identifies as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.

Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations

Peak organisations that support the vision of closing the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Attachment Theory

First acknowledged by Bowlby, attachment theory refers to the bond between child and caregiver. Attachment relationships can vary at different levels.

Child Development

A perspective on ages and stages at which a child develops. This includes a neurological aspect as well as social, emotional, physical, sensory development.

Discourses

Described as 'talk'. A set of dominant messages that create assumptions of what is considered the norm. These can further pathologise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in most instances.

Empowerment

To give a position of power and control to individuals with a sense of autonomy, personal agency and self-determination.

Institutionalised Racism

Also referred to as systemic racism – identified as the larger systems or institutions at which racism operates that further disadvantages and limits Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Intergenerational Trauma

If people don't have the opportunity to heal from trauma, they may unknowingly pass it on to others through their behaviour. Their children may experience difficulties with attachment, disconnection from their extended families and culture and high levels of stress from family and community members who are dealing with the impacts of trauma. This can create developmental issues for children, who are particularly susceptible to distress at a young age. This creates a cycle of trauma, where the impact is passed from one generation to the next.

In Australia, intergenerational trauma predominantly affects the children, grandchildren and future generations of the Stolen Generations.

Stolen Generations survivors might also pass on the impacts of institutionalisation, finding it difficult to know how to nurture their children because they were denied the opportunity to be nurtured themselves.

Kinship

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship system is a model that demonstrates relationships with others in the familial setting, as well the roles and responsibilities held by individuals.

Neurobiology

Is the study of neuronal pathways and how the brain functions from initiating physical, sensory, cognitive and affective processes.

Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB)

A philosophy, model and framework that views health from a holistic perspective. Encompassing connections of culture, identity, country, spirituality, etc. to maintain wellbeing.

Stolen Generations Survivors

The Stolen Generations refers to the tens of thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were forcibly removed from their families and communities between the early 1900s and the 1970s. Stolen Generations children were removed as part of deliberate assimilation policies adopted by all Australian governments. The children were sent to institutions or adopted by non-Indigenous families. They were separated from their culture, family, land and identity and many of them suffered abuse and neglect.

Teratogens

External substances that affect pregnant mother.

Trauma aware healing informed practice

Trauma aware healing informed practice is a strengths-based approach to healing that is based on an understanding of, and responsiveness to, the impacts of trauma. It emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for people seeking help and for the helpers. It also creates opportunities for people affected by trauma to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment. It recognises the prevalence of trauma and is sensitive to and informed by the impacts of trauma on the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

