

Indigenous consensus methodology: A bricolage qualitative exploration



Clinton Schultz (Gomeri)^{a,*}, Jemma Collova^b, Justyce Pengilly (Gomeri)^a, Roz Walker^{c,d}, Leilani Darwin (Quandamooka)^e, Fiona Shand^a, Ee Pin Chang^b, Rob McPhee^f, Pat Dudgeon (Bardi)^b

^aBlack Dog Institute, University of New South Wales, Randwick, New South Wales, Australia

^bSchool of Indigenous Studies, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, Western Australia, Australia

^cNgangk Yira Institute For Change, Murdoch University, Murdoch, Western Australia, Australia

^dSchool of Population and Global Health, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, Western Australia, Australia

^eFirst Nations Co, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

^fDanila Dilba Health Service, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia

Abstract

Purpose Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders are establishing new research methodologies that are grounded in cultural ways of knowing, being and doing. This paper weaves together Indigenous standpoint theory, yarning and consensus modelling to 1) develop a novel Indigenous consensus methodology and 2) outline the application of this methodology in co-designing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander systems approach to suicide prevention.

Methods Members from an expert advisory group were invited to participate in this study, which involved a co-design phase grounded in an Aboriginal participatory action research approach. The expert advisory group informed the consensus process, which involved the completion of a survey followed by a consensus yarn. The group of 15 yarned until there was consensus regarding items that were important in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander systems approach to suicide prevention.

Main findings and principal conclusions Group consensus was reached on 134 statements. This study demonstrates how the Indigenist consensus methodology, grounded in the principles of bricolage (i.e. deliberate mixing of qualitative methods), offers a transformative lens to designing more culturally responsive ways of strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing and preventing suicide.

Keywords: Indigenous methodologies; Consensus; Social and emotional wellbeing; Suicide prevention

*Corresponding author.

E-mail address: c.schultz@blackdog.org.au (C. Schultz).

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Elsevier B.V. on behalf of Lowitja Institute (National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Ltd). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fnhli.2025.100097>





Highlights

- This study demonstrates how research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can and should be collective and culturally grounded by prioritising Indigenous voices, narratives and interpretations, while emphasising trust, collaboration and mutual respect.
- The integration of Indigenous methodologies, standpoint theory, yarning and consensus modelling provides a holistic, culturally sensitive and decolonised approach to research about the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- This study demonstrates the utility of Indigenous methodologies in refining and validating decisions, ultimately leading to more depth of involvement from stakeholders and true consensus among the group.

Introduction

The exploration of system approaches to significant social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) disturbances and suicide prevention among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is an under-researched area in both practical and theoretical aspects. To fill this gap in knowledge, there is a need for a qualitative investigation to fully grasp the complexities involved and identify ways forward. A key aspect of this effort involves decolonising the knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing. This paper describes how an Indigenist bricolage methodology, which focuses on consensus modelling, can be used as an approach to examining issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in Australia.

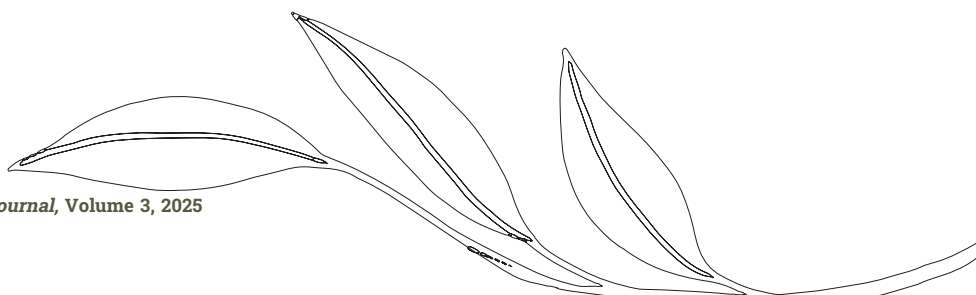
Bricolage

Qualitative framework bricolage, as defined by [Kincheloe \(2005\)](#), is a method that allows researchers to generate findings by making use of existing methodological tools. Like creating a patchwork quilt, the 'bricoleur' creatively fills any gaps in the research process with what 'is available' or creates something new to fill the void by deliberately mixing qualitative methods ([Association For Qualitative Research 2024](#); [Denzin and Lincoln 2011](#)). This rigorous approach frees

researchers from the constraints of traditional methods, enabling them to move beyond the boundaries often found in social science studies and reveal many dimensions and perspectives through the consideration of processes, relationships and interconnections. For these reasons, an Indigenist¹ bricolage as a method of explaining culturally located realities has been encouraged by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and allies (e.g. [Dudgeon and Walker 2015](#); [Schultz 2020](#)).

This paper was centred on consensus modelling, around which elements of Indigenist standpoint theory, systems analysis, critical theory and yarning were woven to create a holistic bricolage approach. Specifically, it leveraged and combined empowering traditional applications of a Delphi study ([Barrett and Heale 2020](#)) to produce an adapted methodology that promotes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems. Each of these methodologies is briefly reviewed below, followed by application of an Indigenist bricolage method, in the context of

¹The term Indigenist is used in this paper when referring to global Indigenous influenced concepts, models and frameworks. "Indigenous" is used for anything in relation to Indigenous peoples including and beyond Australia. "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander" is used when discussing anything related specifically to Australian First Peoples.





developing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander systems approach to suicide prevention, through a consensus methodology.

Rationale for qualitative research

The decision to adopt a qualitative approach in this research was based on three factors:

1. Literature gap: The paucity of research focusing on a systems approach to SEWB disturbances among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia highlights the need for qualitative inquiry (Creswell 2007; Liamputtong 2009).
2. Research objective: The study's primary aim was to explore the systemic factors influencing the SEWB of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, while considering different perspectives and contexts. Qualitative research aligns well with this objective as it emphasises depth and nuance (Creswell 2007; Liamputtong 2009).
3. Cultural context: The aim of this study was to gather insights from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professionals, academics, knowledge holders (including through lived experience) and leaders. This requires a methodology that is mindful of both cultural sensitivities and professional intricacies (Liamputtong 2009).

Indigenous methodologies: A paradigm shift

Historically, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have often been treated as 'test-subjects' in scientific research (Moreton-Robinson 2004). In Australia, research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has occurred through a lens of misconception, racism and prejudice (Dudgeon et al. 2014; Nakata 2007b). Despite being the focus of research for decades, little progress has been made in improving health outcomes (Thomas et al. 2014).

Recent shifts acknowledge the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars who utilise Indigenous methodologies. These approaches enable researchers to view the world through Indigenist lenses, challenging, reshaping and decolonising dominant cultural narratives (Dudgeon and Walker 2015; Porsanger 2011; Rigney 2001). The formation and use of Indigenous research methodologies is supported by multiple clauses of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, by human rights frameworks, and by ethical standards, such as those set by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in Australia (NHMRC 2018). Indigenist research is that which centres Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing within traditionally Western research (Martin and Mirraboopa 2003).

Indigenous standpoint theory

This framework, supported by scholars such as Martin Nakata, Aileen Moreton-Robinson and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, focuses on highlighting the viewpoints and experiences of Indigenous communities (Moreton-Robinson and Walter 2023; Nakata 2007a; Smith 2021) and centralising research from these narratives. Indigenous standpoint theory is both a political and methodological strategy that challenges Western views by emphasising the depth of Indigenous knowledge systems, histories and cultural traditions. The inclusion of lived experience in research and evaluation reflects the collectivist values of Indigenous methodologies and is crucial in establishing a true Indigenous standpoint. By embracing an Indigenous standpoint, researchers give importance to perspectives, stories and understandings, therefore promoting empowerment, self-determination and cultural revitalisation (Dudgeon et al. 2020).





Yarning

Yarning is a research method commonly used in Indigenous studies to facilitate knowledge exchange among participants (Bessarab and Ng'Andu 2010; Kennedy et al. 2022). This conversational approach deeply rooted in Aboriginal culture is less formal than an interview. The process can begin with building rapport, for example, through a 'social yarn', where the researcher and participant engage in an informal conversation to establish trust. As the discussion naturally unfolds into the research topic, participants can freely share their narratives and experiences. At the core of this method is the sharing of stories, where both researcher and participant equally contribute to create a space where every voice is valued and knowledge is gathered.

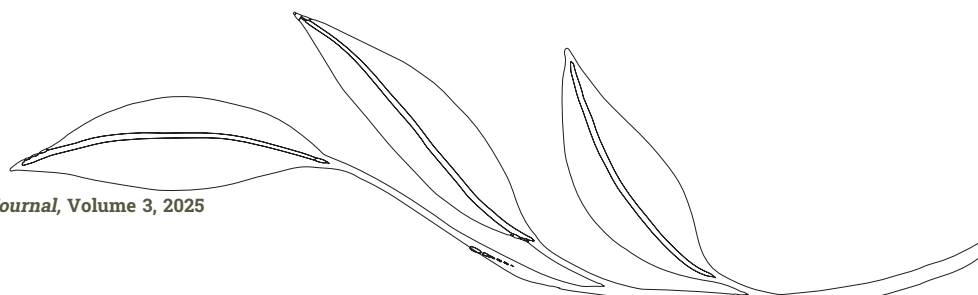
For yarning to be effective, it is essential for the researcher to establish a relationship based on accountability and respect towards the participants. In the current research, the participants were peer researchers, meaning that they played the role of both participants and researchers. This dual role allowed for collaborative interpretation, where all parties worked together to ensure understanding. Emphasising a bilateral exchange, the researchers also shared their stories to enrich the dialogue. By respecting Indigenous communication traditions and building trust, rapport and connections, engaging in yarning proves to be a valuable method for investigating issues related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It also provides a platform for negotiation and compromise, reaching agreements that align with the principles of collective decision-making (Bessarab and Ng'andu 2010).

Consensus modelling

At the core of the current paper's methodology lies the consensus research approach, which is a

collaborative technique that aims to reach agreement among stakeholders. This method prioritises collective wisdom over majority rule by emphasising negotiation and compromise through open dialogue. Negotiation refers to the dialogue between parties with different viewpoints, aiming to reach an agreement through finding mutual ground. Compromise, meanwhile, signifies the willingness of parties to adjust their positions to achieve a collectively agreeable outcome that remains beneficial or in agreement to an acceptable extent to all parties. Practice of both negotiation and compromise allow for consensus to be achieved. These practices, deeply rooted in Indigenous ways of doing business, have been employed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for millennia, emphasising collaboration, trust, shared objectives and mutually beneficial outcomes.

Throughout history, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribal or clan groups have utilised approaches to conducting business by employing negotiation and compromise. Representatives from each group would come together for discussions on matters ranging from marriages to resource negotiations and tribal conflicts. These lengthy gatherings ensured that each representative advocated for their group's interests while aiming for outcomes that considered the group's position, in consideration of roles and responsibilities though connections, rather than individual desires for personal advantage. The concept of *makarrata* embodies a negotiated consensus-driven approach both in traditional and contemporary forms. According to The Referendum Council (2017a), *makarrata* is described as a process of 'coming together after a struggle'. Moreover, *makarrata* emphasises the importance of truth-telling as a fundamental step in addressing these historical injustices. While the traditional practice of *makarrata*





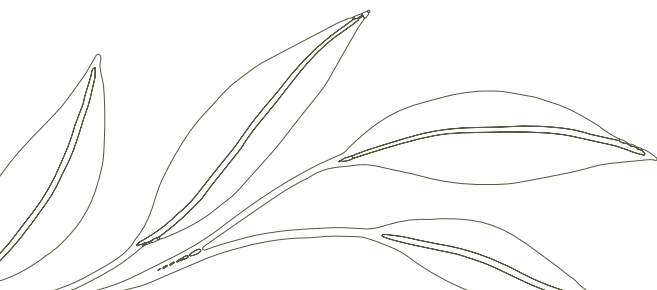
might appear forceful, it serves a collective benefit for both the perpetrator and the community. Decisions on lores broken, people offended and impacted are discussed, as are potential punishments for perpetrators.

The contemporary use of *makarrata*, referring to a process of restoring peace after a dispute, is positioned as a meaningful process through which the principles of the Uluru Statement from the Heart can be achieved, emphasising collective voices to negotiate amicable outcomes for all parties ([First Nations National Constitutional Convention, 2017](#); [The Referendum Council, 2017b](#)). The Uluru Statement from the Heart, a monumental testament to consensus modelling, emerged from 13 regional dialogues involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These dialogues aimed to achieve a unified vision of constitutional recognition. The consensus that emerged was a tripartite reform process of 'Voice, Treaty, Truth'. While the majority converged on this consensus, a few delegates diverged, underscoring the importance of collective decision-making even amidst differing opinions. The largely agreed upon principles of the Uluru Statement from the Heart were achieved through negotiation and compromise between delegates of the final meeting at Uluru. These principles were presented to government in 2018.

The Gwalwa Daraniki experience further exemplifies the use of consensus modelling in native title claims and land management. Gwalwa Daraniki, translating to 'our land' in the Larrakia language, is an association that received the title for the Kulaluk Special Purpose Lease in 1979. Within this framework, consensus modelling, facilitated through yarning, played a pivotal role in decision-making processes, ensuring that diverse voices from differing family groups were heard and considered.

In the journal article titled 'What does Indigenous participatory democracy look like? Kahnawà:ke's community decision making process', [Horn-Miller \(2013\)](#) delves into the intricacies of the Kahnawà:ke community decision-making process. This process emerged as an answer to the community's aspiration for a decision-making mechanism that more closely resonates with the cultural values and traditions of the community. Its inception can be traced back to the 1979 Community Mandate, which sought a shift towards traditional government. Serving as a bridge to aid the legislative facet of Kahnawà:ke governance, this process is more than just a procedural change; it embodies the spirit of Indigenous participatory democracy. [Horn-Miller \(2013\)](#), a native of Kahnawà:ke and a Kanienkehaka (Mohawk), portrays Kahnawà:ke's community decision-making process as a dynamic embodiment of participatory democracy, echoing the age-old principles of valuing individual perspectives while achieving unanimous decisions, reminiscent of the practices of her ancestors; in essence, achieving collective consensus. This process stands as a testament to the seamless blend of theory and practice, bringing ancestral wisdom to contemporary governance.

As outlined above, consensus modelling has been used as a culturally informed way of decision-making among Indigenous communities for many years. In academic research, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders are also turning towards consensus-based methodologies. For example, Redvers and her colleagues employed consensus modelling in their study on the determinants of planetary health from an Indigenous perspective ([Redvers et al. 2022](#); also see [Dale et al. 2021](#); [Stearne et al. 2022](#)). The research by [Redvers and colleagues \(2022\)](#) convened a diverse group of global Indigenous stakeholders, ensuring the amplification and integration of their insights. The





research group comprised Indigenous scholars, practitioners, land and water custodians, esteemed Elders and knowledge bearers. Their collective endeavour was to delineate the determinants of planetary health, rooted in Indigenist worldviews. The study identified interconnected determinants pivotal to planetary health and sustainability, exemplifying the essence of consensus modelling in research.

Indigenous consensus methodologies versus traditional Delphi approaches

As outlined above, consensus methodologies align with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing, and are therefore emerging as a popular approach to research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (e.g. [Redvers et al. 2022](#)). Delphi studies are one type of consensus methodology, whereby consensus is achieved through obtaining expert opinions. Delphi studies can vary in their approach ([Waggoner et al. 2016](#)), but typically involve experts who provide anonymous feedback via a survey over several rounds, until consensus is achieved ([Barrett and Heale 2020](#)). In this context, consensus is typically defined as a percentage of group agreement (e.g. 80% of respondents agreeing with the inclusion of an item). Although Delphi approaches can provide a powerful tool for obtaining expert consensus, there are elements of their traditional application that do not always align with cultural ways of doing business. For example, anonymous voting does not always allow for open negotiation, compromise and accountability. Further, in typical Delphi studies, each vote is equally weighted. However, when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, there may be instances where certain opinions should be given more weight than others, depending on the specific research topic (e.g. Elders or people with lived experience). Fundamental to Aboriginal knowledge systems is an understanding that people are responsible for what they know and should only speak or act on what they know, and not act

from a position of pretending or presuming to know; hence, the importance of men's and women's business in Aboriginal societies. Further, Delphi is typically used in situations where there is no or limited existing evidence and experts are brought in to develop a position, a set of guidelines, or protocol, whereas the current approach was operating from an Indigenous-determined evidence base, of which consensus is part of.

Indigenous scholars have recently started to modify Delphi approaches to align with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing (e.g. [Dale et al. 2021](#); [Redvers 2022](#)). The current paper considers how the traditional Delphi approach can be further interwoven with other Indigenous methodologies, to prioritise group consensus through open and relational negotiation and compromise.

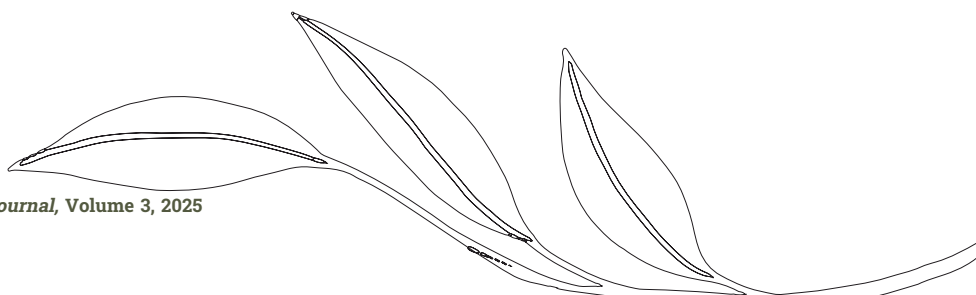
Developing an Indigenous consensus methodology: A research example

The remainder of this paper weaves together Indigenous standpoint theory, yarning and consensus modelling to develop an Indigenous consensus methodology within an Aboriginal participatory action research framework ([Dudgeon et al. 2020](#)). This approach was guided by and co-designed with an expert advisory group. This paper explores the development and application of this methodology to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SEWB. The overarching aim of this project was to develop a systems approach framework that outlines the actions required for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention and flourishing SEWB.

Methods

Indigenous governance and co-designing the consensus approach

Indigenous governance was ensured throughout the entire process, driven by the senior Aboriginal leaders involved (CS, PD, RM, LD, JP). This project was first





conceptualised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, who expressed the need for a transformative Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander systems approach to suicide prevention. In line with an Aboriginal participatory action research approach (Dudgeon et al. 2020), as a first step, an expert advisory group was convened to co-design the project. The co-design process itself also followed a consensus approach, whereby the research design and scope were decided by the expert advisory group using group consensus methodology; that is: there was group consensus that an Indigenist consensus methodology should guide the development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander systems approach to suicide prevention. The group also defined what this Indigenist consensus methodology should look like: for example, the group explicitly discussed the benefits and limitations of a traditional Delphi approach as a consensus methodology. In particular, the anonymous nature of traditional Delphi studies was considered to work in contrast to cultural ways of open negotiation and compromise. An anonymous voting approach also did not allow for cultural ways of knowledge sharing, such as through yarning and storytelling. Instead, the group expressed a desire for an adapted Indigenist consensus methodology, whereby the group would come together and yarn until consensus was achieved (as further outlined below).

This project aligned with the NHMRC guidelines and Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) principles for research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (NHMRC 2018; AIATSIS 2020). Ethics approval was obtained through AIATSIS (EO356_20221025).

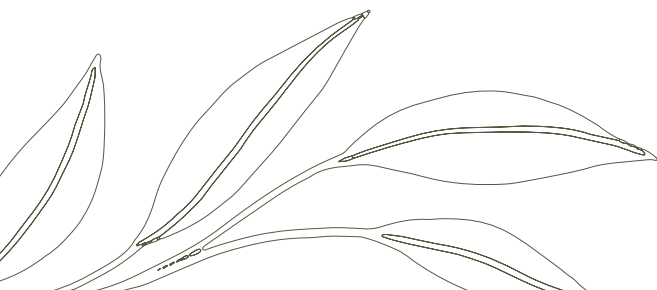
The expert advisory group

Members of the expert advisory group were invited to participate in the consensus process. Each person

was invited by a senior Aboriginal researcher, based on their relevant experience and expertise. Collectively, the group provided a depth and breadth of experience and knowledge across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing and suicide prevention, Indigenous knowledges, lived and living experience, systems approaches, research, policy and community participation. In total, 15 people responded to the survey and 15 took part in the following consensus meeting (eight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, three non-Indigenous people working for an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation, and four non-Indigenous people working in mainstream academic organisations but with experience in Indigenous suicide prevention). One additional Torres Strait Islander person did not complete the survey/meeting but provided written feedback, which was incorporated into the results following the consensus meeting.

Procedure

The research occurred in a two-step approach. The first step involved the individual completion of a survey, containing statements about what should be included in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander systems approach to suicide prevention. The survey contained 134 items, each presented as an action statement relevant to suicide prevention. The items were compiled by a small working group (JC and RW) and checked by a senior Aboriginal researcher (PD). These items were derived from a targeted literature review, focused on factors/actions that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention and which privileged Indigenous knowledges. The literature review primarily focused on findings and recommendations from two resources: 1) a comprehensive review of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (ATSISPEP) report (Knight et al.





2024) and accompanying resources including the ATSIPEP report, and 12 roundtable consultation reports (Dudgeon et al. 2016); and 2) evidence from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander National Suicide Prevention Trial sites, which aimed to develop a systems approach through an ATSIPEP framework (Currier et al. 2020). The ATSIPEP was an Aboriginal-led initiative to reduce suicide rates through evaluation of the effectiveness of existing suicide prevention services, aiming to strengthen the evidence base for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention and develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural framework for suicide prevention services and programs (Dudgeon et al. 2016). ATSIPEP involved extensive community consultations and the group decided to honour the community input from those consultations; therefore, further yarning circles and consultations were not conducted. The decision to focus on these resources was informed by the expert advisory group. The second step involved the consensus meeting, whereby the expert advisory group gathered (virtually) to yarn about action statements with less than 80 per cent agreement. Through this yarning, the group came to a consensus about what the systems approach model should look like.

Step one: Survey completion

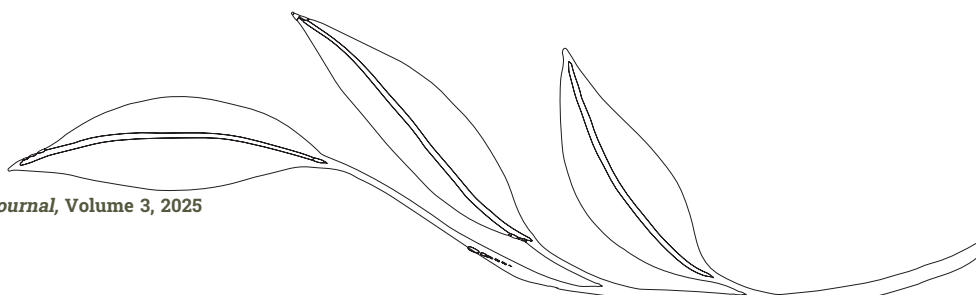
Participants completed the survey independently, at their own pace over a two-week period. Participants responded to each statement by typing whether each item was relevant to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander systems approach to suicide prevention. Participants typed their response as 'Yes', 'No' or 'Unsure'. Participants could also make direct changes to item wording or expand on their response. This method enabled participants to have a more active voice in shaping the statements, rather than just providing a categorical/rating response.

Participants sent their responses to one researcher (JC) who compiled responses and calculated the percentage agreement to each statement. Items with less than 80 per cent agreement were then discussed during the consensus yarn (Phase 2). To be conservative, 'unsure' responses were considered as a 'No' response. Out of the 134 statements, six statements had less than 80 per cent agreement for inclusion. Unlike traditional Delphi approaches to consensus decision-making, the consensus yarn involved open discussion and negotiation until the group agreed on a path forward (as outlined below).

Step 2: Consensus yarn

The consensus yarn was convened online (via a Microsoft Teams meeting), as members were located across Australia. Only individuals who completed the survey were invited to take part in the meeting. This decision was made to ensure that the conversation remained topic-focused, and that all participants understood the background of the project and the items being discussed in the context of all other items.

A senior Aboriginal researcher (PD) led the meeting, with support from two non-Indigenous researchers (JC, RW). The meeting started with an Acknowledgement of Country and introductions. Each participant introduced themselves by sharing their name, connection to Country/ancestry (where relevant) and affiliation. These introductions helped to build a collaborative, collective and relational environment through connecting participants to each other in a culturally relevant way (also see Dudgeon et al. under review). This process also encouraged participants to explicitly state their positionality (Olmos-Vega et al. 2022). These introductions promoted social yarning, which then naturally flowed into research-topic yarning (Kennedy et al. 2022).





Research-topic yarning focused on the six items that received less than 80 per cent consensus. Each participant was given an opportunity to speak, sharing their thoughts about whether that item should be included and why. Although all voices were heard, Aboriginal voices were prioritised, and this process was driven by the senior Aboriginal leaders with support of the non-Indigenous research team. Although the prioritising of Aboriginal voices was agreed early in the process, this was more of an implicit than explicit way of working. The Aboriginal leaders did not dominate the conversation or explicitly assert authority during the meeting; instead, they engaged in the process as participants, and made space for all voices to be heard, while privileging Indigenous ways and knowledges. The selection of participants was critical in ensuring that a safe space was created, where Indigenous knowledges and worldviews were prioritised. The group was also a majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, to ensure prioritisation of these perspectives.

Research topic yarning was grounded in respectful and relational ways, whereby participants were able to negotiate and share concerns in a respectful and accountable way. Any concerns or uncertainties were raised in the open, followed with an in-depth conversation about these. Although responses to the survey were anonymous, participants were usually accountable for their responses and spoke openly about their concerns, following cultural ways of open negotiation and compromise.

The group yarned until all members were happy with the decision to include/exclude, or with the wording proposed. There was unanimous group consensus that each of the six items were important in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander systems approach to suicide

prevention but required changes to the wording. One researcher (JC) made notes and changes to wording live on screen, for immediate group validation and consensus. The group also reached consensus regarding the addition of four new statements.

The meeting ended with the senior Aboriginal researcher (PD) reaffirming the collective nature of the project and shared ownership over any outputs. There was a shared commitment to continue working together on this critical work to develop an Indigenous integrated systems framework.

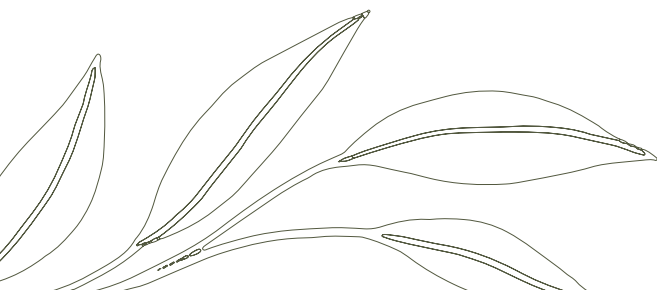
Results

Consensus outcomes

The consensus process successfully identified a comprehensive model for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander systems approach to suicide prevention. Out of the 134 action statements initially proposed based on the literature review, six were flagged for further discussion due to having less than 80 per cent agreement among participants. During the consensus meeting, these items were extensively discussed, modified and eventually included in the revised framework, demonstrating the effectiveness of the consensus methodology in refining and validating key action statements. Additionally, four new statements were introduced and agreed upon, expanding the scope and depth of the approach.

Engagement and participation

The consensus methodology facilitated a participatory and inclusive dialogue, allowing a diverse group of stakeholders to deeply engage with the content. The group comprised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, non-Indigenous allies from academic and community-controlled organisations, and researchers with specific expertise in Indigenous and/or population health suicide





prevention strategies. Their collective engagement through the survey and consensus meeting contributed to a culturally grounded and collaboratively created model.

Relevance of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project framework

The process re-affirmed the relevance of the ATSIPEP key findings and recommendations by integrating these into the action statements (Dudgeon et al. 2016). Each ATSIPEP success factor, recommendation and other relevant literature was expanded upon to operationalise specific actions, ensuring that the proposed suicide prevention model was robust, culturally sensitive and tailored to the unique needs and strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Alignment with Indigenous methodologies and ethical standards

The process demonstrated strong alignment with Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. It emphasised a collectivist approach, where decisions were made for the wellbeing of the community rather than individual interests. This aligns with the Indigenous worldview that views the collective as intrinsically linked to the individual, with individual positions never being prioritised above that of collective wellbeing and balance. The process also showcased shared decision-making practices that equitably distributed power among all voices, ensuring that each participant had the opportunity to contribute to the discussion, while also ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices were championed throughout all phases of the research.

Accountability was a critical component, where participants were encouraged to openly voice disagreements or concerns. The creation of a 'safe'

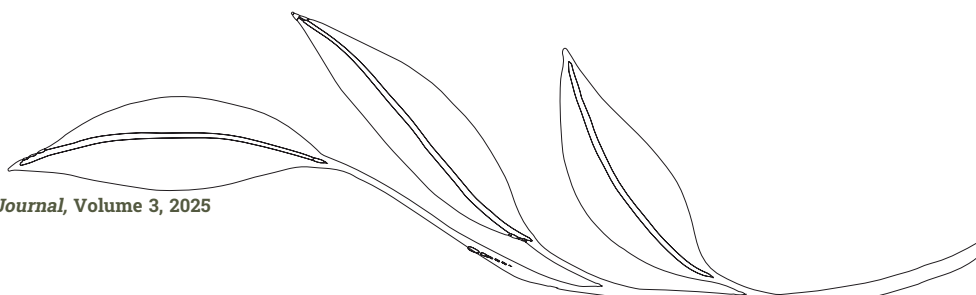
environment ensured that participants felt more likely to practice accountability. Solutions or additional information were then respectfully considered by the group, which facilitated a constructive dialogue and compromise. This method of engagement reflects Indigenous cultural practices of negotiation and respect for multiple perspectives.

Furthermore, the consensus process adhered to the NHMRC ethical guidelines for research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, incorporating principles of responsibility, reciprocity, respect, equity and cultural continuity, as supported by Schultz (2020), as common principles of 'old lore'. These principles were not only upheld but actively demonstrated through the research practices and interactions among the participants.

Discussion and conclusions

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders are establishing new research methodologies that are grounded in cultural ways of knowing, being and doing. The above research example outlines the application of an Indigenist consensus methodology, which weaves together Indigenous standpoint theory and Indigenous methodologies such as yarning and consensus modelling. This example demonstrates how research 'about' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must not only include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, but also prioritise their knowledges throughout the research process.

While other consensus models such as Stearne et al. (2022) and Dale et al. (2021) strive to reach a majority consensus as a means of saving time, the research undertaken in this paper sought complete consensus from the outset, despite the additional time taken. Unlike Stearne et al. (2022), whose Delphi study





reported a 66 per cent consensus threshold and involved a predominantly non-Indigenous participant group, or [Dale et al. \(2021\)](#), whose Delphi yarn method reached 80 per cent agreement, the current approach more closely aligned with Indigenous epistemologies by prioritising relationality, collective negotiation and respectful debate until full agreement was reached. This mirrors traditional Indigenous ‘business’ practices, where processes of negotiation and compromise continue until all participants are comfortable with the outcome, rather than having decisions imposed by a majority. As also demonstrated in [Redvers et al. \(2022\)](#), consensus modelling can be effectively adapted to reflect Indigenous perspectives, which was further advanced in this study by privileging 100 per cent consensus, ensuring broader contentment among members and those they represent, even if the process requires significantly more time.

The Indigenist consensus methodology, grounded in the principles of bricolage, offers a transformative lens to unpacking the complexities surrounding the SEWB of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and designing more culturally responsive responses to strengthening SEWB. By integrating Indigenous methodologies, standpoint theory, yarning and consensus modelling, this research transcends traditional Western paradigms, fostering a holistic, culturally sensitive and decolonised approach. The study underscores the importance of prioritising Indigenous voices, narratives and interpretations, emphasising collaboration, trust and mutual respect. Moving forward, it is imperative to continue championing Indigenous methodologies, ensuring that research is both collective and culturally grounded, ultimately contributing to the betterment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia.

Author contributions

C. Schultz: Conceptualisation, methodology, writing – original draft, review and editing, supervision.
 J. Collova: Conceptualisation, investigation, writing – original draft, review and editing. J. Pengilly: Writing – original draft, review and editing. R. Walker: Conceptualisation, writing – review and editing.
 L. Darwin: Conceptualisation, writing – review and editing. F. Shand: Conceptualisation, writing – review and editing. E. P. Chang: Conceptualisation, writing – review and editing. R. McPhee: Conceptualisation.
 P. Dudgeon: Conceptualisation, methodology, investigation, supervision, writing – review and editing.

Declaration of interests

Professor Pat Dudgeon is a Senior Editor of First Nations Health and Wellbeing – The Lowitja Journal. The other authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

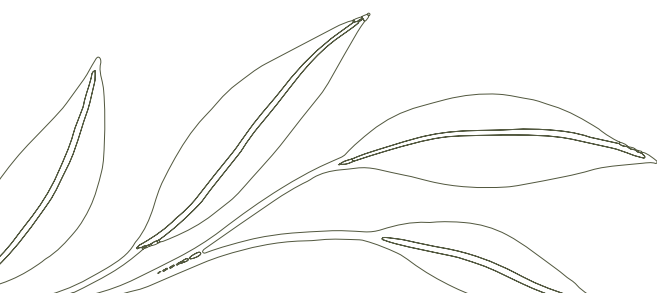
Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Author biographies

Clinton Schultz is a Gomeri man, and a registered psychologist and Director of First Nations Strategy and Partnerships at Black Dog Institute, University of New South Wales, and is co-founder of Sobah beverages.

Jemma Collova has Italian heritage, and is a research fellow, Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention, the School of Indigenous Studies, University of Western Australia.





Justyce Pengilly is a Gomeroi woman, a research assistant at Black Dog Institute, University of New South Wales, and a clinical psychologist.

Roz Walker is the Director at the Coolamon Research and Advocacy Centre, Deputy Director at the Ngangk Yira Institute for Change, and a professor and senior principal research fellow at Murdoch University. She is also a principal research fellow at Transforming Indigenous Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Leilani Darwin is a Quandamooka woman and the CEO and founder of First Nations Co, Brisbane.

Fiona Shand is a senior research fellow at the Black Dog Institute, University of New South Wales, and is part of the NHMRC Centre for Research Excellence in Suicide Prevention.

Rob McPhee is the CEO for Danila Dilba Health Service in Darwin, Northern Territory. His people are from Derby in the West Kimberley and from the Pilbara and Midwest regions of Western Australia.

Ee Pin Chang has Chinese heritage, and is a research fellow, Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention, the School of Indigenous Studies, University of Western Australia.

Pat Dudgeon is a Bardi woman, and a professor, Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention, the School of Indigenous Studies, University of Western Australia.

References

AIATSIS, 2020. AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research. Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, Australia.

Association For Qualitative Research, 2024. Bricolage. Accessed on 22 July 2025 at: <https://www.aqr.org.uk/glossary/bricolage>.

Barrett, D., Heale, R., 2020. What are Delphi studies? *Evid Based Nurs* 23, 2.

Bessarab, D., Ng'andu, B., 2010. Yarning about yarning as a legitimate method in Indigenous research. *Int J Crit Indig Stud* 3, 37–50.

Creswell, J.W., 2007. In: *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*, 2nd ed. Sage Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.

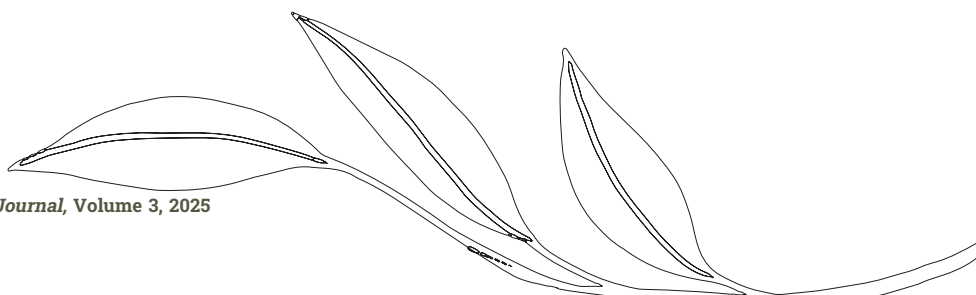
Currier, D., King, K., Oostermeijer, S., Hall, T., Cox, A., Page, A., Atkinson, J.-A., Harris, M., Burgess, P., Bassilios, B., Carter, G., Erlangsen, A., Gunn, J., Kolves, K., Krynska, K., Phelps, A., Robinson, J., Spittal, M., Pirkis, J., 2020. National Suicide Prevention Trial: Final evaluation report. University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Accessed on 1 October 2025 at: https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/11/national-suicide-prevention-trial-final-evaluation-report_0.pdf.

Dale, E., Conigrave, K.M., Kelly, P.J., Ivers, R., Clapham, K., Lee, K.S. K., 2021. A Delphi yarn: applying Indigenous knowledges to enhance the cultural utility of SMART Recovery Australia. *Addict Sci Clin Pract* 16, 2.

Denzin, N.K., Lincoln, Y.S., 2011. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.

Dudgeon, P., Milroy, J., Calma, T., Luxford, D., Ring, I., Walker, R., Cox, A., Georgatos, G., Holland, C., 2016. Solutions that work: What the evidence and our people tell us. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project Report. School of Indigenous Studies, UWA. <https://doi.org/10.26182/m8y6-hn94>.

Dudgeon, P., Rickwood, D., Garvey, D., Gridley, H., 2014. A history of Indigenous psychology, in: Dudgeon, P., Milroy, H., Walker, R. (Eds.), *Working together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing principles and*





- practice. Commonwealth of Australia. Kulunga Research Network, Melbourne, Victoria, pp. 39–54.
- Dudgeon, P., Walker, R., 2015. Decolonising Australian psychology: Discourses, strategies, and practice. *J Soc Political Psychol* 3, 276–297.
- Dudgeon, P., Bray, A., Darlston-Jones, D., Walker, R., 2020. Aboriginal participatory action research: an Indigenous research methodology strengthening decolonisation and social and emotional wellbeing. The Lowitja Institute, Australia.
- First Nations National Constitutional Convention, 2017. Uluru Statement from the Heart. Accessed on 3 November 2025 at: <https://ulurustatemdev.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/UluruStatementfromtheHeartPLAINTEXT.pdf>.
- Horn-Miller, K., 2013. What Does Indigenous Participatory Democracy Look Like? Kahnawà:Ke's Community Decision Making Process. *Review of Constitutional Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2013. at: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2437675>.
- Kennedy, M., Maddox, R., Booth, K., Maidment, S., Chamberlain, C., Bessarab, D., 2022. Decolonising qualitative research with respectful, reciprocal, and responsible research practice: A narrative review of the application of yarning method in qualitative Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research. *Int J Equity Health* 21, 1–22.
- Kincheloe, J.L., 2005. On to the next level: Continuing the conceptualization of the bricolage. *Qual Inquiry* 11, 323–350.
- Knight, J., Mulholland, K., Chang, E.P., Walker, R., 2024. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices have the solutions to suicide prevention: Who's listening and who's taking action? Uptake and influence of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (ATSISPEP). Lowitja Institute, Melbourne, Australia. <https://doi.org/10.48455/6bh0-vr33>.
- Liamputtong, P., 2009. Qualitative data analysis: Conceptual and practical considerations. *Health Promot J Aust* 20, 133–139.
- Martin, K., Mirraboopa, B., 2003. Ways of knowing, being and doing: A theoretical framework and methods for indigenous and indigenist re-search. *J Aust Studies* 27, 76, 203–214.
- Moreton-Robinson, A., Walter, M., 2023. Indigenous methodologies in social research. *Social Research Methods*, 2nd ed. Oxford, South Melbourne, Australia.
- Moreton-Robinson, A., 2004. *Whitening race: Essays in social and cultural criticism*. Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, Australia.
- Nakata, M., 2007a. *Disciplining the savages: Savaging the disciplines*, Aboriginal Studies Press. *Aust J Indig Educ* 36, 131–134. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1326011100004579>.
- Nakata, M., 2007b. The cultural interface. *Aust J Indig Educ* 36, 7–14.
- National Health and Medical Research Council, 2018. *Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders*. National Health and Medical Research Council, Canberra, Australia.
- Olmos-Vega, F.M., Stalmeijer, R.E., Varpio, L., Kahlke, R., 2022. A practical guide to reflexivity in qualitative research: AMEE Guide No. 149. *Med Teach* 1–11.
- Porsanger, J., 2011. Working with traditional knowledge: Communities, institutions, information systems, law and ethics: Writings from the Arbediehtu Pilot Project on Documentation and Protection of Sami Traditional Knowledge. *Dieđut* 2011, 1. Sámi allaskuvla / Sámi University of Applied Sciences.
- Redvers, N., Celidwen, Y., Schultz, C., Horn, O., Githaiga, C., Vera, M., Perdrisat, M., Mad Plume, L., Kobei, D., Kain, M.C., Poelina, A., Rojas, J.N., Blondin, B.S., 2022. The determinants of planetary health: An Indigenous consensus perspective. *Lancet Planet Health* 6, e156–e163.
- Rigney, L., 2001. A first perspective of Indigenous Australian participation in science: Framing Indigenous research towards Indigenous Australian intellectual sovereignty. *Kaurna High Educ J* 7, 1–13.
- Schultz, C., 2020. Factors of holistic wellbeing for members of the Aboriginal health and community workforce. Accessed





-
- on 12 February 2025 at: <https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au/items/56809dcb-9202-4244-8ec3-8c18c241a279>.
- Smith, L.T., 2021. Decolonizing methodologies. Bloomsbury Publishing, London, UK.
- Stearne, E.A., Lee, K.K., Allsop, S., Shakeshaft, A., Wright, M., 2022. First Nations Australians' self-determination in health and alcohol policy development: A Delphi study. *Health Res Pol Syst* 20 (1), 12.
- The Referendum Council, 2017a. Final Report of the Referendum Council. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, Australia.
- The Referendum Council, 2017b. Uluru Statement from the Heart. https://www.referendumcouncil.org.au/sites/default/files/2017-05/Uluru_Statement_From_The_Heart_0.PDF.
- Thomas, D.P., Bainbridge, R., Tsey, K., 2014. Changing discourses in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research. *Med J Aust* 201, 15–18.
- Waggoner, J., Carline, J.D., Durning, S.J., 2016. Is there a consensus on consensus methodology? Descriptions and recommendations for future consensus research. *Acad Med* 91, 663–668.

