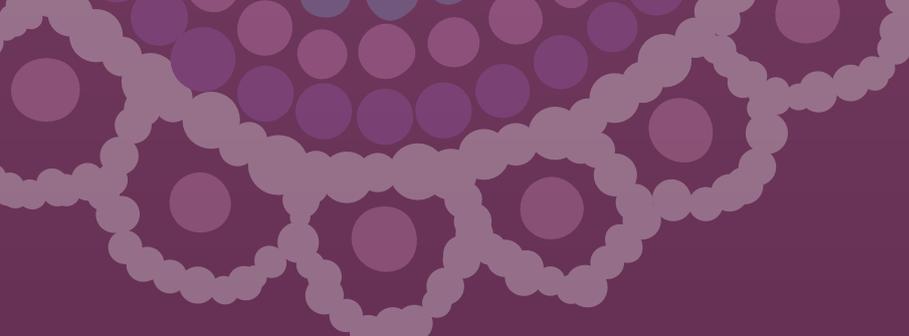




**Murdoch**  
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**Ngangk Yira Research Centre for  
Aboriginal Health and Social Equity**



## **Acknowledgement to Country**

*We acknowledge the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation as the traditional custodians of the land on which Murdoch University stands and pay respect to Elders past, present and future.*

*We recognize the long history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia. In doing this, we acknowledge that the past is not just the past but continues to impact on the present and the future.*

*Ngangk Yira can influence the future alongside Aboriginal people by seeking the guidance of the Elders, the wisdom of the community and co-design and other collaborative measures to ensure our research is meaningful.*

## **About Ngangk Yira**

### **Murdoch University's Ngangk Yira Research Centre supports the University's deep commitment to improving Aboriginal health, wellbeing and social equity.**

The Centre was established in May 2018 to undertake innovative and translational research to answer urgent and complex questions – also known as ‘wicked problems’ – about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and social equity.

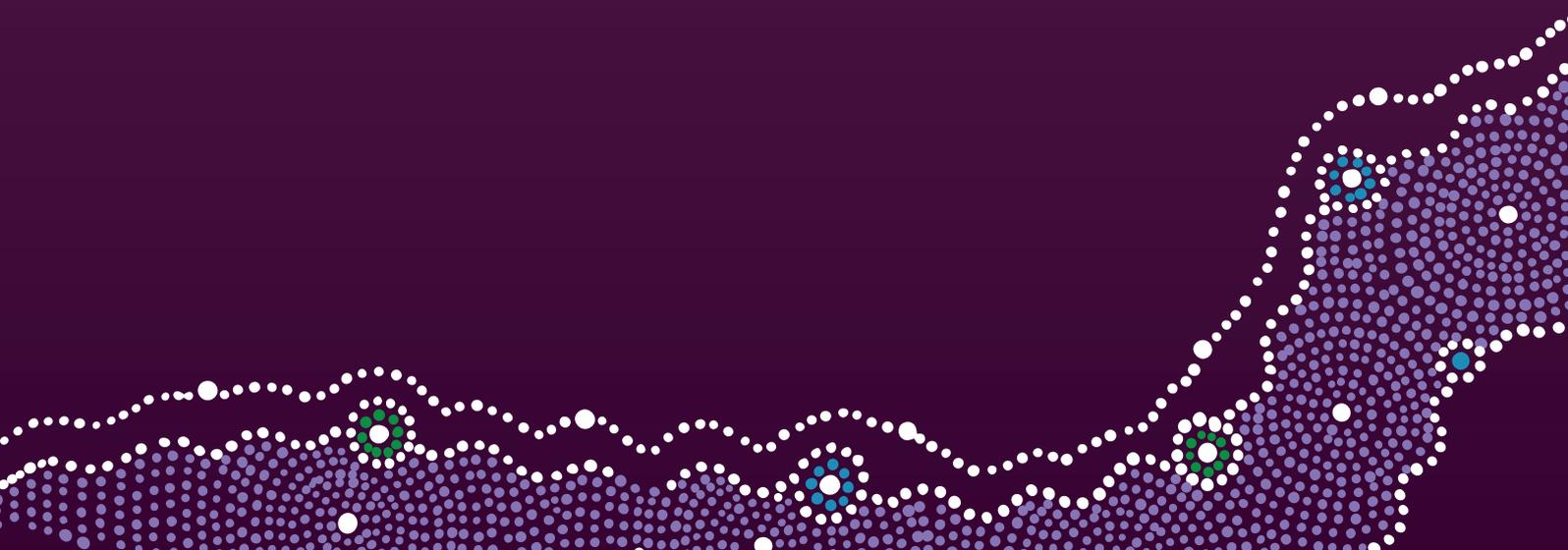
Ngangk Yira's research takes a connected life course approach from pregnancy, young adulthood, to parenthood and the transition to older adulthood, recognising the evidence that a strong start in life is fundamental for healthy and resilient children, families and communities. The Centre's projects are led by Aboriginal researchers in partnership with non-Aboriginal colleagues and with the close involvement of community Elders and friends.

Its work is already pioneering the practical changes that will transform the life course of the next generation of Aboriginal youth and which will inform translatable outcomes to state and national policy, practice and education.

A recently completed four-year NHMRC-funded collaborative study has outlined important practical changes critical to closing the gap in maternity care and childbirth outcomes for Aboriginal mothers and their babies.

Other studies are identifying and addressing risk factors for mental wellbeing in mothers and young families and look at ways to build resilience in Aboriginal youth.

Ngangk Yira brings together an experienced team of researchers, led by Professor Rhonda Marriott. Professor Fiona Stanley and the Federal Minister for Indigenous Health, the Hon Ken Wyatt, are patrons of the Centre.



## Foreword from the Vice Chancellor



### Murdoch University has shown a deep commitment over several years to improving Aboriginal health, wellbeing and social equity.

Under the leadership of Professor Rhonda Marriott, the Ngangk Yira Research Centre brings together a wealth of knowledge and experience to help grow strong Aboriginal communities. The Centre has already taken huge steps towards this goal in the area of maternal and children's health with its Birthing on Noongar Boodjar Project. Its recommendations will inform practical changes that will improve maternity care and childbirth outcomes for Aboriginal mothers and their babies. The research is the first step towards closing the gap between the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal women and other Australians, and will help plot a better future for many young women and their children.

The inclusive approach of Ngangk Yira is an exemplar of Collaboration, and is inspirational for other research groups in Western Australia.

Deeply involving the community and linking them with experts across the clinical and academic fields is the essence of powerful and meaningful translational research. As a research-intensive University, we place a high value on our collaborations. They enable us to be a creative force in addressing challenges with a better understanding and evidence base.

I am looking forward to Ngangk Yira's ongoing achievements, and wish Professor Marriott and her team well as they work towards making positive practical changes for Indigenous Australians.

**Eeva Leinonen**  
Vice Chancellor, Murdoch University

## Message from the Director



### Research should positively improve health, wellbeing and educational outcomes for Aboriginal people and their families.

Our Ngangk Yira Research Centre is strongly committed to ensuring our Aboriginal families are healthy and resilient. Ngangk Yira focuses on translational research that is led by Aboriginal people who share our deep commitment to bring about change in partnership with fellow Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers and the community. Combined, our researchers have extensive national and international profiles and are held in esteem in their professions for contributions to complex issues in Indigenous health and social equity.

Ngangk Yira has an extensive interdisciplinary team of researchers from a range of disciplines that include: Nursing midwifery, neonatal nursing, child health, general practice, medicine, psychiatry, clinical psychology, paediatric and child psychology, organisational psychology, trauma and recovery counselling, social work, education, health promotion, sociology, Indigenous Australian community management and development, health economics, epidemiology, biostatistics, population health and child protection. This provides unique

opportunities to address 'complex problems' in collaborations with practitioners, members of the Aboriginal community, policy makers and service delivery stakeholders. We are advised by our Kaadininy Aboriginal Advisory Committee and the many Elders, Aboriginal senior women and men and younger Aboriginal people who provide their wisdom to our specific project Aboriginal Advisory Committees.

As the inaugural Research Director, it is my honour and privilege to work with this strong team of researchers and community members who are deeply committed to improving the experience of Aboriginal people's health, wellbeing and social equity.

Our research positions Murdoch as a leader in practical, translational research to address current and future issues in Aboriginal health and social equity.

**Rhonda Marriott**  
Director, Ngangk Yira



## Patrons and Chairs

### Chair of Ngangk Yira Advisory Board, Alan Johnson

Alan Johnson AM has had 30 years in academia and is an Emeritus Professor at the University of Technology Sydney and an Adjunct Professor in the School of Business at the University of New South Wales. His last academic posting was as Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) at the University of Adelaide. He has Masters degrees in Technology and Social Change and Strategic Planning in Universities, a Doctor of Philosophy and a Doctor of Science in biology. He worked with the US Department of Agriculture as a Fulbright Fellow and served a term as an Executive Director of the Australian Research Council.



Emeritus Professor Johnson now runs a small but globally focused company assisting universities, medical research institutes and hospitals increase their research profile. Because of his extensive business, management and leadership focus he has been elected as a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. He was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 2006 and is a National Director of the Order of Australia Association.

### Chair of Kaadininny Aboriginal Advisory Committee, Denese Griffin

Denese is a Ngikina and Jaru woman born in Derby in the Kimberley, Western Australia. With a Bachelor of Applied Science in Aboriginal Community Management and Development, Denese has developed her leadership skills through her roles and participation in Aboriginal leadership programs, including the Department of Health Leadership Excellence and Development Program. She has 20 years' experience in Indigenous policy and practice, contributing to strategic directions and operational leadership of substantial program areas. After first working in Derby at Community Health, which provided health services and support to local and remote communities of the central west Kimberley; she then worked in Aboriginal education in the Pilbara, in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's legal services sector, and at a state-wide policy level with Department for Communities. Denese returned to work in Aboriginal health in a variety of roles, all the while developing and implementing Aboriginal health programs and services aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal community.



Denese is currently Director, Aboriginal Health Strategy at East Metropolitan Health Service, leading the strategic direction of Aboriginal Health in partnership with the Aboriginal community and the organisation. For the past five years she has been an Investigator on the Birthing on Noongar Boodjar Project, Chair of the Project's Cultural Leadership and Brokerage Stream and is the Chairperson of the Kaadininny Aboriginal Advisory Committee for Ngangk Yira Research Centre.

### Patron, Professor Fiona Stanley AC

Trained in maternal and child health, epidemiology and public health, Professor Stanley has spent her eminent career researching the causes of major childhood illnesses including the patterns of maternal and child health in Aboriginal populations.



Her major contribution has been to establish the Telethon Kids Institute and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, a national organisation of researchers, policy makers and practitioners.

For her research on behalf of Australia's children and Aboriginal social justice, she was Australian of the Year in 2003. In 2006 she was made a UNICEF Australia Ambassador for Early Childhood Development. She is a board member of the Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation, a Governor of The Ian Potter Foundation and a former member of the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council.

### Patron, Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP

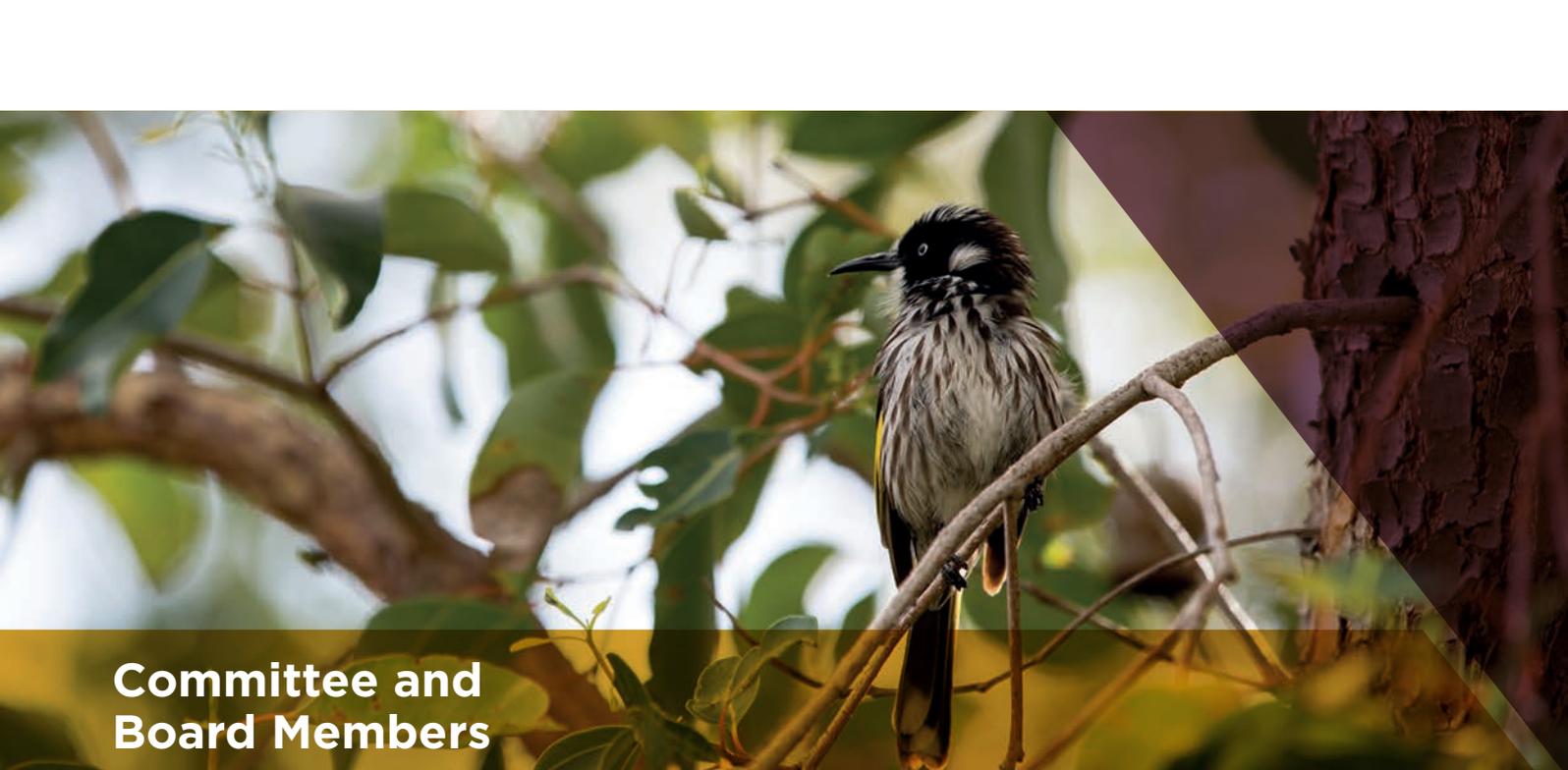
Ken Wyatt is a proud Noongar, Yamatji and Wongi man and was elected in 2010 as the Federal Member for Hasluck, the first Aboriginal Member of the House of Representatives.



In 2015, he became Assistant Minister for Health, and in January 2017, he was appointed Minister for Aged Care and Minister for Indigenous Health.

Before entering politics Ken worked in the fields of health and education including as District Director for the Swan Education District, and Director of Aboriginal Health in New South Wales and Western Australia.

His enormous contribution to the community, in training and mentoring young people was recognised in 1996 when he was awarded the Order of Australia. In 2000, Ken received a Centenary of Federation Medal for improving the quality of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Australian society in education and health.



## Committee and Board Members

### Ngangk Yira Advisory Board Members

**Emeritus Professor Alan Johnson AM (Chair)**

Chair, Director Research Management Services International

**Prof. Rhonda Marriott**

Research Director and Ex-Officio Member

**Prof. John Challis**

Consultant Researcher to Murdoch University

**Prof. Paul Morrison**

Dean School of Health Professions and Acting Dean School Psychology and Exercise Science, Murdoch University

**Aunty Marie Taylor**

Respected Noongar Elder and member of the Murdoch University Honorary Elders Group

**Ms Terri-Lee Barrett**

President Australian College of Midwives; Midwifery Director Statewide Obstetric Support Unit, Department of Health, WA

**Ms Leanne Durrington**

CEO, Western Australian Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA)

**Ms Janinne Gliddon**

Aboriginal Senior Health Promotion Officer King Edward Memorial Hospital

**Ms Denese Griffin**

Director, Aboriginal Health Strategy, East Metropolitan Health Service, Chair of the Kaadininny, Aboriginal Advisory Committee at Ngangk Yira

**Ms Janine Mohamed**

Former CEO, Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM)

**Mr Daniel Morrison**

CEO, Wungening Aboriginal Corporation

**Ms Melanie Robinson**

CEO, Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM)

**Prof. Fiona Stanley AC**

Co-Patron of Ngangk Yira Centre and Patron of Telethon Kids Institute (TKI)

### Kaadininny Aboriginal Advisory Committee

**Denese Griffin (Chair)**

East Metropolitan Health Service

**Prof. Rhonda Marriott**

Ngangk Yira Director/PVC Aboriginal leadership

**Isabelle Adams**

Telethon Kids Institute

**Jenny Bedford**

Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service

**Leah Bonson**

Child Adolescent & Health Services

**Wendy Casey**

Aboriginal Policy Directorate, DOH

**Janinne Gliddon**

Aboriginal Health Promotions, KEMH

**Nola Naylor**

South Metropolitan Health Service

**Glenn Pearson**

KARDU, Telethon Kids Institute

**Diann Peate**

Child & Adolescent Health Services

**Melanie Robinson**

CATSINaM

**Cheryl Smith**

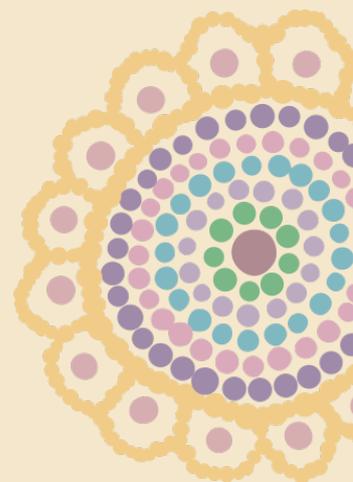
North Metropolitan Health Service

**Dawn Wallam**

Noongar Child Protection Council

**Jade Maddox**

Ngangk Yira, Murdoch University





## Research projects which seek to 'close the gap' in Aboriginal health

### Birthing on Noongar Boodjar



#### Cultural Security & Aboriginal Birthing Women

Birthing on Country is a national priority for culturally secure maternity services. Between 2015-2019, researchers at Murdoch University collected data to better understand the cultural needs of Aboriginal women and different meanings of 'cultural security' when Birthing on Country.

Aboriginal mothers, senior women and Elders were interviewed to examine what

Aboriginal women want and expect from their maternity health services. Midwives were interviewed to gain an understanding of their knowledge and experience supporting Aboriginal women's maternity care.

The study found that more Aboriginal midwives and culturally secure models of care in WA hospitals are critical to closing the gap in maternity care and childbirth outcomes for Aboriginal women and families. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants identified the negative impact of racism and racial stereotyping on Aboriginal women's birthing experiences.

The research showed that better access to Aboriginal staff when combined with family support during pregnancy and childbirth empowers Aboriginal mothers. Three Birthing on Noongar Boodjar project recommendations are aimed at changing the ethos of:

1. Government approaches to maternity care
2. The Western Australian maternity health workforce
3. Education pathways supporting maternity care in Western Australia

#### Research partners:

- Murdoch University
- WA Department of Health's Nursing and Midwifery Office
- Aboriginal Health Policy Directorate
- South Metropolitan Health Service
- Women and Newborn Health Service
- North Metropolitan Health Services, Department of Health, Western Australia
- Telethon Kids Institute
- Pindi Pindi Research Centre
- Derbal Yerrigan Health Service
- St John of God Hospital Murdoch
- The University of Notre Dame Australia
- The University of Kent, UK
- The University of Saskatchewan, Canada

### Baby Coming – You Ready?



#### Baby Coming You Ready?

This screening and assessment tool was designed by Aboriginal women and men to assist young parents during pregnancy until at least one year after the baby is born.

Perinatal mental health issues such as depression and anxiety can result in detrimental impacts on pregnancy and postnatal periods.

'Baby Coming – You Ready' is different from other mental health screening tools because it's shared assessment between the client and the clinical. The goal is to bring clarity to complex situations for the development of agreed outcomes.

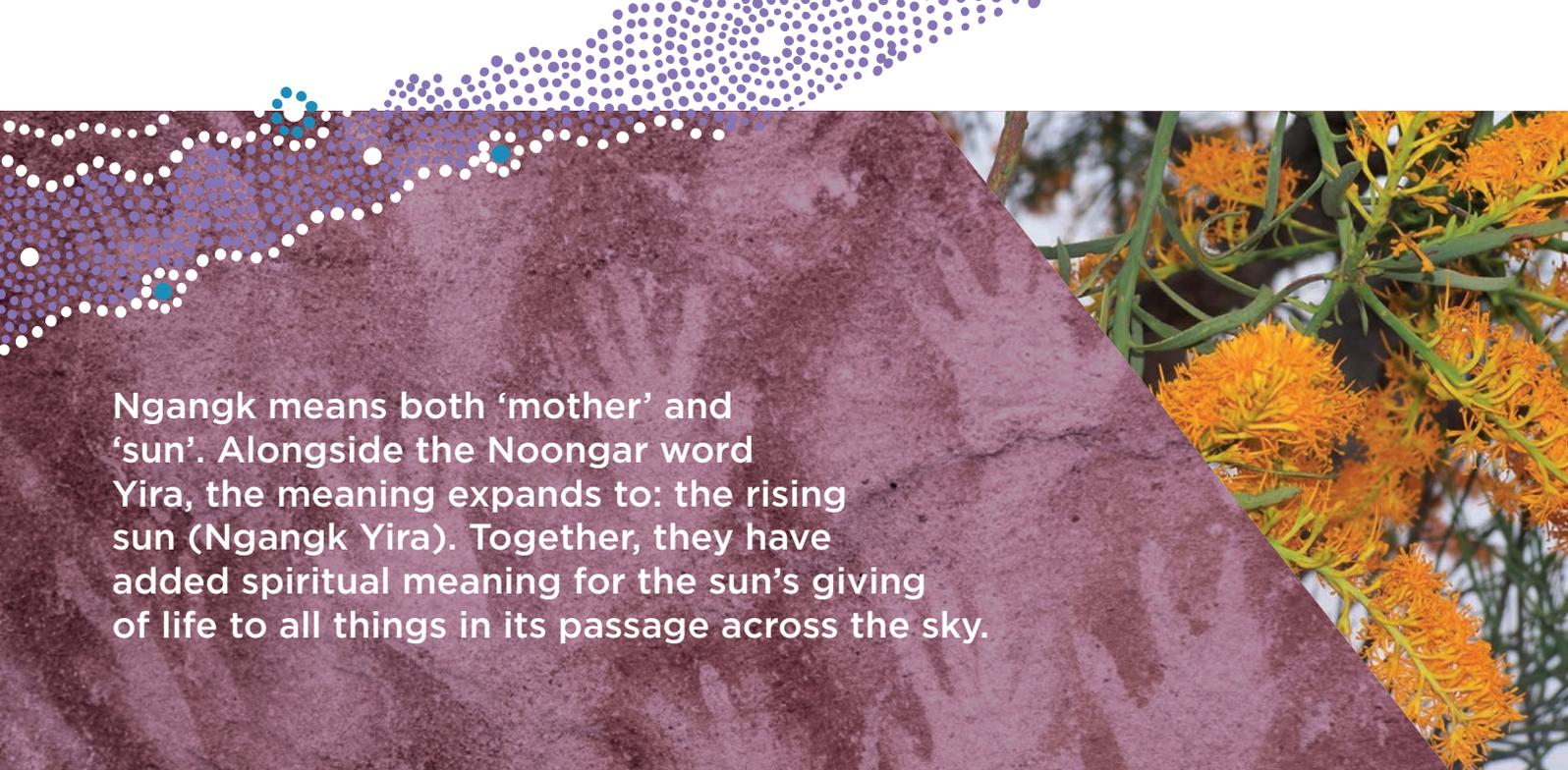
The shared assessment model encourages self-evaluation and reflection, and fosters an understanding for both users.

This web-based interactive app, will do much more than screen for perinatal depression. It will use visual images on a touch screen device to portray emotions, circumstances and events, both positive and challenging, that a mother or father-to-be may be experiencing.

The interactive tool will be piloted in 2019-2022 and is expected to see improvements in attendance at antenatal appointments, while bolstering the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal expectant and new parents. Better birth and development outcomes for babies are also anticipated.

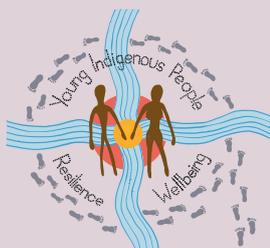
#### Research partners:

- Murdoch University
- Telethon Kids Institute
- Department of Health WA
- Centre of Perinatal Excellence
- Women's and Newborn Health Services
- Ngala
- East Metropolitan Health Services
- Child and Adolescents Health Services
- Department of Communities
- Western Australian Primary Health Alliance
- Commonwealth Department of Health



Ngangk means both 'mother' and 'sun'. Alongside the Noongar word Yira, the meaning expands to: the rising sun (Ngangk Yira). Together, they have added spiritual meaning for the sun's giving of life to all things in its passage across the sky.

## Young Indigenous People's Resilience and Wellbeing



This project is a longitudinal study of Aboriginal youth across two sites; one in Western Australia and one in New South Wales.

Participants, aged between 15 and 24 years old will be recruited.

The project is expected to enhance understanding of Aboriginal youth and improve our knowledge of their resilience and wellbeing.

Improving Aboriginal youth services and community programs to meet the expressed needs for their welfare is a central aim of the program.

### Research partners:

- Murdoch University
- University of New England
- University of Technology Sydney
- The University of Edinburgh
- Telethon Kids Institute

## Parent's and Children's Mental Health Linked Data Project

Parental mental health and its impact on children's outcomes are being examined through the population-based Linked Data Project.

Data collected between 1990 and 2015 is being used for the study. Causal pathways between the mental health problems of parents and the development of Aboriginal children in the early stages of life. In addition, researchers will identify children's mental and developmental outcomes.

The data will address some critical gaps in our knowledge of Aboriginal mental health. Key outcomes will include improved knowledge of the mental and physical health of Aboriginal children in Western Australia, pregnancy outcomes, child abuse and neglect, disability, contact with the juvenile justice system and education.

### Research partners:

- Murdoch University
- Telethon Kids Institute
- The University of Western Australia
- The University of New England
- University of Sydney
- University of Kent
- University of Saskatchewan
- University of Edinburgh



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## Ngangk Yira Researchers

Angela Bowen, Brody Heritage, Caroline Nilson, Carrington Shepherd, Catherine Chamberlain, Corinne Reid, David Palmer, Dawn Bessarab, Debra Jackson, Denese Griffin, Elaine Bennett, Elizabeth Jackson-Barrett, Glenn Pearson, Jade Maddox, Janinne Gliddon, Jayne Kotz, Juli Coffin, Kim Usher, Leanne Monterosso, Libby Lee-Hammond, Megan Galbally, Melissa O'Donnell, Natalie Strobel, Petra Skeffington, Rhonda Marriott, Roz Walker, Sally Kendall, Tracy Martin, Tracy Reibel.



**NGANGK  
YIRA**

RESEARCH CENTRE  
FOR ABORIGINAL HEALTH  
AND SOCIAL EQUITY

## Research Affiliates



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Health**



**ST JOHN OF GOD**  
Murdoch Hospital



**THE UNIVERSITY  
of EDINBURGH**



**THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NOTRE DAME**  
AUSTRALIA



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[murdoch.edu.au/ngangkyira](http://murdoch.edu.au/ngangkyira)

[murdoch.edu.au](http://murdoch.edu.au)

We wish to acknowledge Nellie Green, Badimaya woman from the Yamatji mob, for the rights to use her wonderful designs within our Ngangk Yira productions. We also wish to acknowledge Valerie Ah Chee, Pinjarup/Palyku midwife and artist, as the designer of the Birthing on Noongar Boodjar logo. Barbara Bynder, well known Noongar artist for her 'Baby Coming You Ready' artwork/design, and we would like to acknowledge the young Aboriginal male artist (unnamed) who won the logo competition for the Young Indigenous People's Resilience and Wellbeing project.