

# Enabling Dads Project



# Enabling dads and improving First Nations adolescent mental health: a pragmatic randomised controlled study

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There are few empirically supported social and emotional well-being programmes for First Nations adolescents, and we found none targeting those living in Aboriginal communities in remote areas of Australia. The dearth of social and emotional well-being programmes is concerning given that adolescents in remote Australia are at much greater risk of mental disorder and suicide. Our pragmatic community-based research intervention 'Enabling Dads and Improving First Nations Adolescent Mental Health' is designed by and for First Nations people living in remote communities to promote and support the parenting role and examine the interconnection between men's parenting knowledge and adolescent mental health. The aim is to improve adolescent mental health by strengthening the participating father's empowerment, parenting confidence and engagement in the parenting role. The words Aboriginal, First Nation and Indigenous are applied interchangeably, as appropriate, throughout the article.



Left to Right: Prof Susan Rees, Preston Deemal, Byron Diamond, Craig Koomeeta, Dr Lyndon Reilly, Jordin Diamond, and Prof Uncle Mick Adams.



# **The Intensifying Threat of COVID-19 Among First Nations People of Australia Making Up for Lost Time**

Lyndon Reilly, PhD; Mick Adams, PhD; Susan J. Rees, PhD

Australia reached a tragic milestone on August 29, 2021, with the first COVID-19 death among the First Nations people. Since then, the SARS-CoV-2 Delta variant has infected First Nations people at twice the rate of other Australians. By mid-October 2021, there were an additional 12 deaths, more than 4500 cases, and 550 hospitalized among the First Nations people.

A major concern is that Australia's states and territories will emerge from lockdown, with the expected surge in cases, when only 47% of Indigenous people ( $\geq 16$  years old) have received 2 doses of an mRNA vaccine (vs 74% of the general population).

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36218920/>



# Fatherhood in Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities: An Examination of Barriers and Opportunities to Strengthen the Male Parenting Role

Lyndon Reilly, Susan Rees

Traditional Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies value men's role as parents; however, the importance of promoting fatherhood as a key social determinant of men's well-being has not been fully appreciated in Western medicine. To strengthen the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male parenting role, it is vital to examine current barriers and opportunities. The first author (a male Aboriginal health project officer) conducted yarning sessions in three remote Australian communities, two being Aboriginal, the other having a high Aboriginal population. An expert sample of 25 Aboriginal and 6 non-Aboriginal stakeholders, including maternal and child health workers and men's group facilitators, considered barriers and opportunities to improve men's parenting knowledge and role, with an aim to inform services and practices intended to support men's parenting. A specific aim was to shape an existing men's group program known as Strong Fathers, Strong Families. A thematic analysis of data from the project identified barriers and opportunities to support men's role as parents. Challenges included the transition from traditional to contemporary parenting practices and low level of cultural and male gender sensitivity in maternal and child health services. Services need to better understand and focus on men's psychological empowerment and to address shame and lack of confidence around parenting. Poor literacy and numeracy are viewed as contributing to disempowerment. Communities need to champion Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male father role models. Biases and barriers should be addressed to improve service delivery and better enable men to become empowered and confident fathers.





# **A trial of a community-based intervention to support the active engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in parenting, and to improve men's feelings of empowerment, reduce mental distress and reduce drug and alcohol use.**

Lyndon Reilly, Susan Rees

The paper aimed to advance and promote better translation of knowledge concerned with the challenges for First Nations male parents by evaluating the amalgamation of qualitative studies. We aimed to also develop an explanatory theory from the findings to inform the current thesis, and future research, policy, and practice. The meta-synthesis examined barriers and facilitators to support First Nations men's parenting. A synthesis of the literature with this focus will provide a useful evidence base to highlight systemic issues. The findings intend to inform the development and rationale for appropriate services and programs to support and promote men's parenting.



# First Nations Men Experiencing Fatherhood - A meta-synthesis of qualitative literature

Lyndon Reilly

Evidence suggests that positive parenting can impact men's mental wellbeing and child development, and male parents have a unique and critically important role as parents. Unfortunately, limited literature is available regarding the First Nations male parenting and the challenges they encounter raising children. Furthermore, the qualitative studies examining First Nations male parents do not appear effective for translating policy and practice. In effect, important knowledge from these qualitative studies is not informing or shaping First Nations male parenting programs. A systematic collation and meta-synthesis of existing qualitative studies may strengthen the evidence base and assist with the integrative knowledge into policy and practice.



<https://ijmsch.com/index.php/IJMSCH/article/view/56>

# Men Wellbeing Measure

- Enabling dads and improving First Nations adolescent mental health: a pragmatic randomised controlled study  
<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/13/7/e072202>
- The Intensifying Threat of COVID-19 Among First Nations People of Australia: Making Up for Lost Time  
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36218920/>
- Fatherhood in Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities: An Examination of Barriers and Opportunities to Strengthen the Male Parenting Role  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1557988317735928>
- A trial of a community-based intervention to support the active engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in parenting, and to improve men's feelings of empowerment, reduce mental distress and reduce drug and alcohol use.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10335454/>
- First Nations Men Experiencing Fatherhood :A meta-synthesis of qualitative literature  
<https://ijmsch.com/index.php/IJMSCH/article/view/56>