NHMRC CENTRE OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE
IMPROVING HEALTH SERVICES FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN
ISAC: Improving Services for Aboriginal Children
To improve health and developmental outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia through improvements in health services

OUR OBJECTIVES (Where we want to be in 5 years)

- Generate new knowledge that leads to improved health and developmental outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Ensure effective transfer of research outcomes into health policy and practice
- Develop the health and medical research workforce by providing opportunities to advance the training of new researchers
- Facilitate collaboration across ISAC and national and international networks
- Work across primary, secondary and tertiary level health services but have a specific focus on improving pathways within primary community care

Knowledge
- Understand the effectiveness of current primary, secondary and tertiary child health services
- Conduct in-depth qualitative research into barriers, facilitators and perspectives of families and service providers
- Develop and implement a rigorous economic framework and evaluation including costs and efficiency of services provided by government and Aboriginal community controlled health organisations
- Test new health service models that focus on improving health outcomes, health service quality (e.g. clinical governance and key performance indicators) and access (e.g. precall systems, maternal health, home visiting and care for development for neonates and young infants)
- Develop robust qualitative and quantitative evidence synthesis pathways including a centre of excellence in evidence synthesis and primary care for disadvantaged children

Co leads: K Edmond & D McAullay & R Bailie

Transfer
- Ensure Aboriginal people, end-users and the wider community are driving all ISAC phases including planning and implementation
- Improve existing Aboriginal child health training programs, courses and curricula and develop new models
- Share knowledge outputs including programs, guidelines and tools across collaborators and externally
- Develop a robust feedback and communication strategy including website, share points, newsletters and meetings

Co leads: A Ruben & F Stanley & V Nossar

Training
- Utilise and improve existing institutional supportive training structures
- Develop a robust training and capacity building governance structure
- Provide a dedicated mentoring structure sensitive to the needs of new and Aboriginal researchers
- Develop dedicated research training pathways for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health professionals

Co leads: R Marriott & D Atkinson

Collaboration
- Develop effective internal structure and governance
- Share research methodology and tools
- Facilitate and extend national collaborations
- Grow external international collaborations

Co leads: M Wenitong & B Kirkwood
### Effectiveness of current strategies
- Utilise rigorous population based data linkage techniques to assess the effectiveness of current strategies to improve access and their effects on child health outcomes, especially those based in primary care
- Analyse high quality primary care audit data to assess the effectiveness of past and current strategies to improve health service quality on child health outcomes
- Analyse population based routinely collected data from child health prevention programs to understand the current gaps in data quality and access
- Assist collaborators and other health professionals in analysing their own child health data
- Assess differentials in access and quality of primary care in high risk groups such as preterm infants and pathways to primary care

### Economic framework and evaluation
- Conduct qualitative research into family, community and service provider perspectives of the important costs and outcomes arising from health services for Aboriginal children, especially those within primary care
- Test new economic evaluation tools within key knowledge and clinical guideline pathways
- Perform incremental cost effective analyses, economic appraisals and evaluations within key ISAC projects

### In-depth qualitative research
- Interview service providers using participatory methodology and other qualitative methodologies to understand perspectives, barriers and facilitators to accessing services and priorities
- Interview families using participatory methodology and other qualitative methodologies to understand perspectives, barriers and facilitators to accessing services and priorities

### Evidence synthesis
- Develop robust qualitative and quantitative evidence synthesis pathways including a centre of excellence in evidence synthesis and primary care for disadvantaged children
- Use mixed methods approaches to synthesise knowledge about access, quality and costs of health services for Aboriginal children
- Improve evidence based Aboriginal child health and maternal clinical practice guidelines in collaboration with primary, secondary and tertiary health services
- Use new knowledge to improve existing and new projects across primary, secondary and tertiary services

### New health service models focused on delivery and specific services
**Our key projects are to:**
- Test new models of peer led targeted support and clinical governance to improve quality of health service care in primary care sites
- Evaluate the efficacy of new models of population cohort pre-call systems in improving access and use of primary care services in pilot sites
- Improve the quality of maternal health care provision and improve neonatal and infant neurodevelopment and anaemia in pilot primary care sites
- Evaluate the efficacy of new models of home visiting and care for development in improving neurodevelopment and speech delay in young infants
- Evaluate current child health preventative program implementation across NT, WA and Queensland.

**We also aim to:**
- Evaluate new models of ambulatory care coordination for Aboriginal children living in regional and urban areas
- Evaluate anaemia and micronutrient supplementation pilot data, implement new models of care and design robust evaluation methodologies
- Evaluate immunisation supplementation pilot data, implement new models of care and design robust evaluation methodologies
- Evaluate pilot data and implement new models that will improve screening (ASQ), diagnosis (Bayley) and evaluation (AEDI) of developmental disability in Aboriginal infants and children
- Evaluate pilot data and implement new models that will improve use of primary care services and enhance developmental outcomes in preterm and non-preterm infants
- Develop other new projects that can improve access and quality of care for Aboriginal children