

AGAINST THE ODDS

OCTOBER 2019,
ISSUE 1

Understanding Indigenous Wellbeing



About the project

For decades, researchers have tried to better understand Indigenous disadvantage by considering what is 'going wrong'. The poorer average social, economic and health outcomes for Indigenous children are a common research focus.

But, often things go right. Many Indigenous children live balanced, fulfilling lives, even in the presence of poverty, health problems or other risk factors. This study aims to learn from such children, their families and their communities.

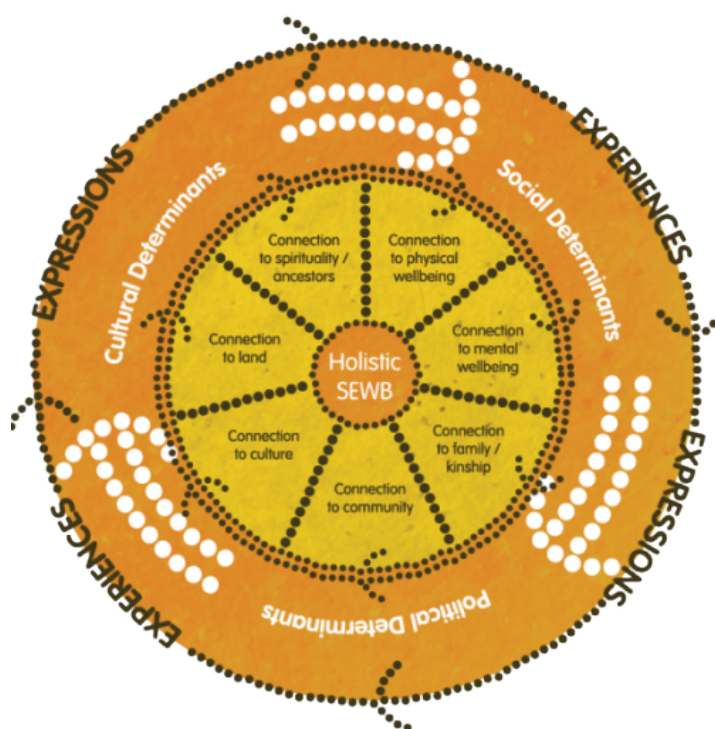
Using big data, local knowledge, advanced analytical techniques and experts from a wide range of disciplines, the project aims to discover how some children beat the odds.

The project is funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council and will run until 2023.

Big data, deep listening

The team will use linked administrative data to develop an index of Indigenous youths' social and emotional wellbeing. The dataset is an extended version of the Northern Territory Data Linkage Project, which was created using new, ethical data linkage methods that joined data from eight different NT and Australian

government agencies. But Indigenous peoples' social and emotional wellbeing, including culture and connectedness to land, can't be explained using only numbers – the voices of Indigenous youth are an additional, essential part of the research project.



Researchers will carry out focus groups, interviews and surveys with young people and community leaders to collect first-hand information.

This approach to data collection has been undertaken successfully in other areas, but the project will be the first ever to systematically study youth social and emotional wellbeing from both a macroscopic and microscopic perspective.

The study lays the foundations for long-term collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers

Building Indigenous research capacity

TRAINING INDIGENOUS ECONOMISTS IS KEY TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT

There are few, if any, Indigenous researchers in economics across Australia's top eight universities. Yet without Indigenous representation, economists cannot develop the skills and cultural understanding needed to tackle Indigenous health issues.

The project is seeking to train two Indigenous post graduate students and two Indigenous postdoctoral fellows, with two of these positions in the field of economics, one in psychology and one in public health.



The project offers a unique opportunity for early-career Indigenous researchers to work with internationally recognised scholars in the fields of economics, psychology and public health, and to directly influence public policy at the highest levels. The project will also help to increase the cultural understanding of non-Indigenous researchers.

And the benefits will persist beyond the end of the project – increased Indigenous representation, particularly in the field of economics, will benefit both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers into the future, with both groups learning from each other.

Internationally recognised experts from a range of fields make up a diverse and experienced team.

The highly experienced team comprises three quantitative and experimental economists, two psychologists one public health specialist/medical epidemiologist, one mathematician, and – most importantly – the leader of a key NT Indigenous health care provider and public policy advocate.



Economics/Statistics Experts

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR STEFANIE SCHURER



Stefanie Schurer leads the Economics of Human Development research node at the Charles Perkins Centre at the University of Sydney. Associate Professor Schurer is an internationally recognised expert in development

economics and has been investigating the wellbeing of children in the Northern Territory since 2014

Health Experts

PROFESSOR PATRICIA DUDGEON



Pat Dudgeon is a Bardi woman from the Kimberley in Western Australia. Professor Dudgeon was the first Aboriginal psychologist to graduate in Australia and has played many roles in research and in public policy. Currently, she is a Fellow of the Australian

Psychological Society, a Research Fellow in the School of Indigenous Studies at the University of WA, and has been a Commissioner for the National Mental Health Commission. Throughout her career, Professor Dudgeon has been instrumental in placing Indigenous mental health on the national policy agenda.

Economics/Statistics Experts

PROFESSOR LISA CAMERON



Lisa Cameron is a Professorial Fellow at the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economics and Social Research. She is an internationally recognised expert working in the area of disadvantage and wellbeing and behavioural economics

and has extensive experience using large quantitative data sets and undertaking field research.

PROFESSOR GUYONNE KALB



Guyonne Kalb is a Professorial Fellow at the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economics and Social Research, where she is the Director of the Labour Economics and Social Policy Program. Professor Kalb has considerable expertise

in household and family economics, labour economics, and social policy issues, including those related to childcare and child development.

DR PETER SHAW



Peter Shaw is an expert in the development of efficient, exact pattern-search techniques and their application in the analysis of clinical data. These algorithms have now been applied in cross-disciplinary

research in fields including child-health bioinformatics, econometrics, prevention of human trafficking and the analysis of social networking.

Health Experts

PROFESSOR STEVEN GUTHRIDGE



Steven Guthridge is a public health physician and medical epidemiologist, and a Professor at the Menzies School of Health Research. Professor Guthridge has extensive experience working in Indigenous health and health

research, and has been closely involved in the development of data linkage capacity in the NT.

MS OLGA HAVNEN



Olga Havnen is of Western Arrernte descent, and grew up in Tennant Creek. She is a prominent Aboriginal leader, advocate and activist in the Northern Territory of Australia, and has held a range of senior public

and non-government sector roles in her long career in Indigenous Affairs. She is currently the Chief Executive Officer of the Danila Dilba Health Service in Darwin, an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service.

MS TANJA HIRVONEN



Tanja Hirvonen is an Indigenous clinical psychologist who specialises in Aboriginal mental health, social and emotional wellbeing, health professionals' self-care and trauma. Ms Hirvonen is currently employed at the Centre for Remote

Health - Mental Health Academic, where she is responsible for research collaborations and promoting mental health education and understandings in remote areas.