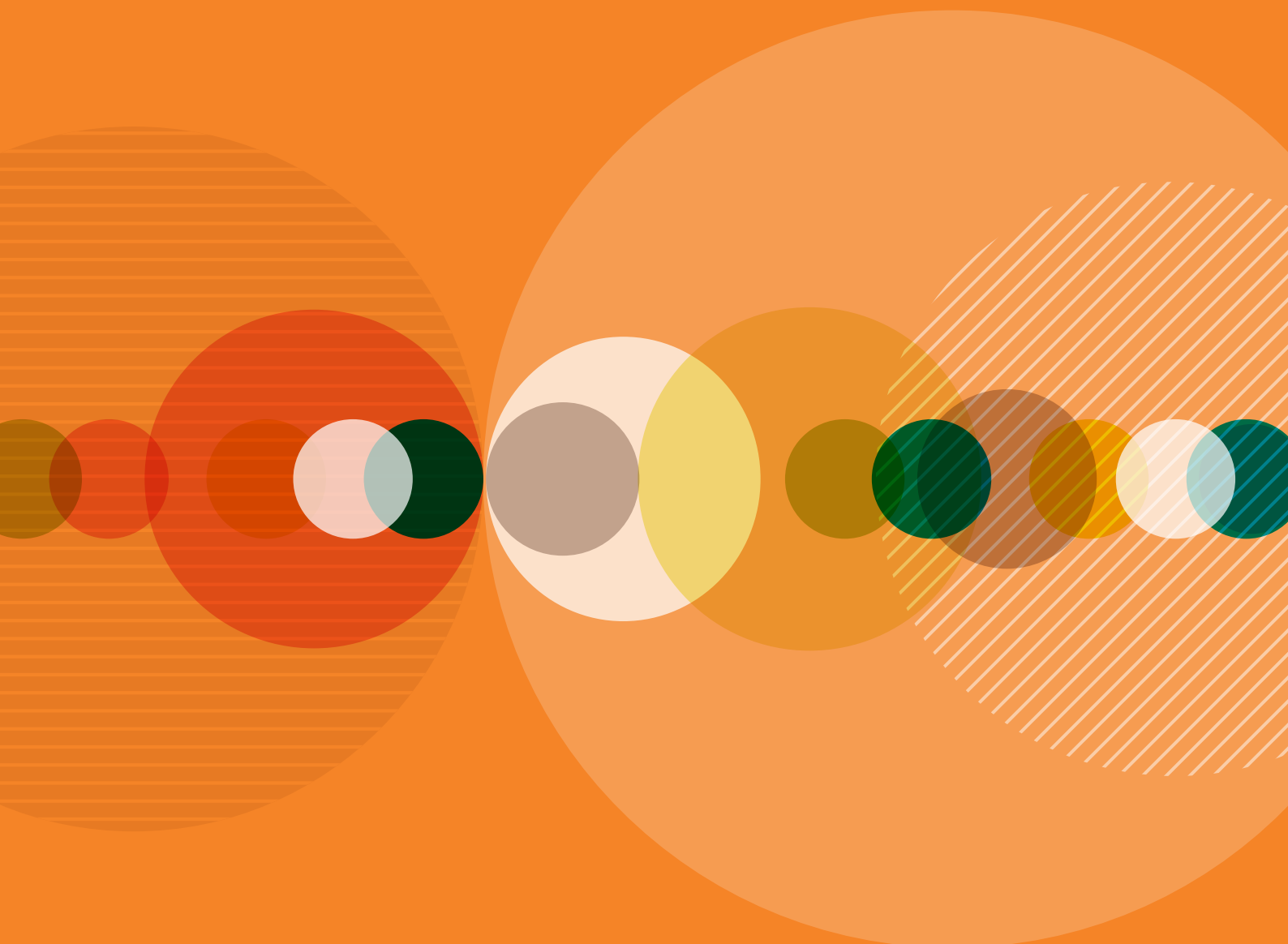


# working together

TELETHON KIDS INSTITUTE COMMITMENT TO  
ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES 2013 - 2017



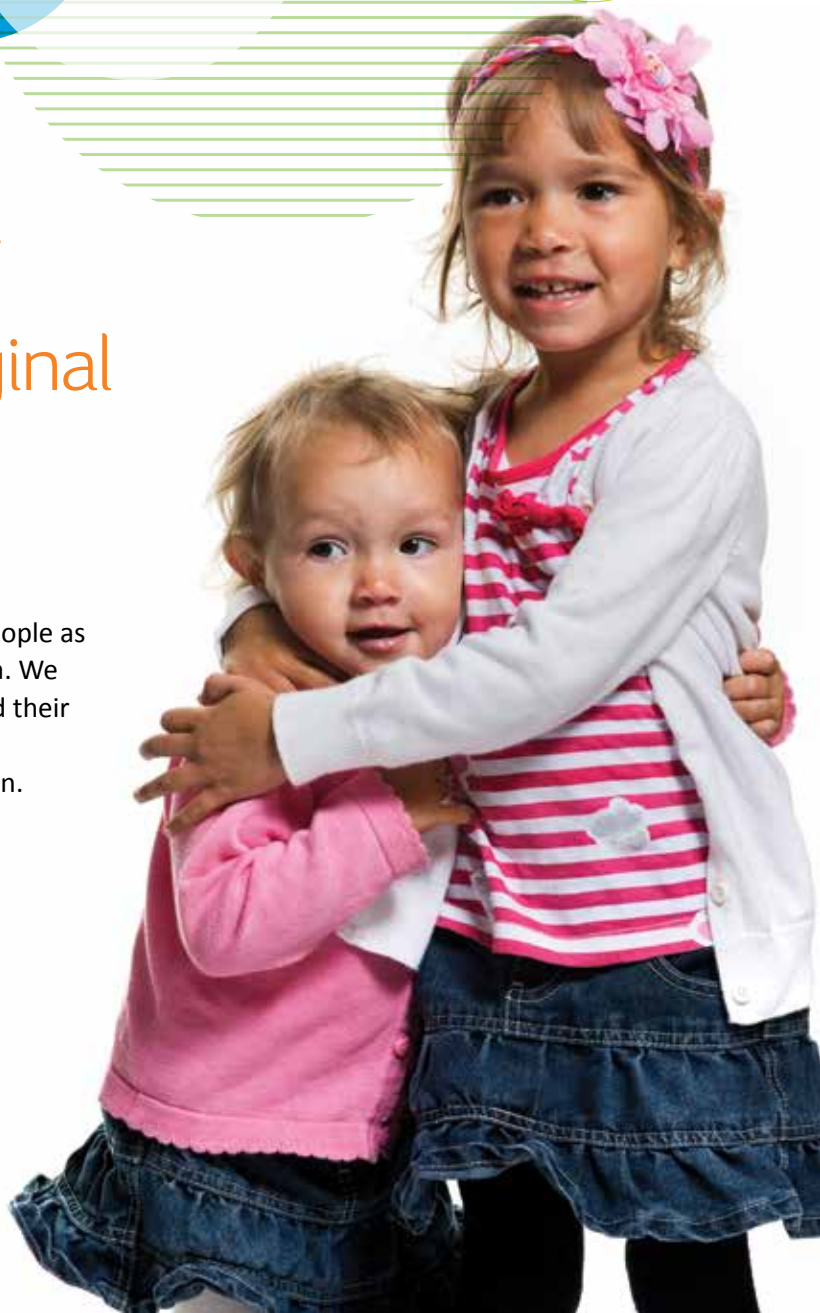


# Acknowledgement of Country and to Aboriginal people as Traditional Owners

The Telethon Kids Institute acknowledges Aboriginal people as the Traditional Owners of the land and seas of Australia. We also acknowledge the Whadjuk Elders, their people and their land upon which the Institute is located and seek their wisdom in our work to improve the health of all children.

In this document, the term “children” is used to encompass children and young people

We have used the term Aboriginal to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people



## Statement from Director Professor Jonathan Carapetis

On behalf of the Telethon Kids Institute, I am pleased to present this Commitment to Aboriginal Children and Families (2013-2017) as a guiding statement for our work with Aboriginal communities across Western Australia and beyond, to improve the health and wellbeing of their children.

We aim to prioritise research that addresses areas of the greatest importance to the health and wellbeing of children, and that builds on existing strengths and strategic advantages. We will continue to search for better ways to diagnose, treat, and cure childhood diseases, improve quality of life for those who suffer disease and disability, prevent disease and maintain good health and wellbeing.

In all that we do which involves Aboriginal health, Aboriginal health will be a priority.

We have a proud history of research and advocacy with Aboriginal families across the state and now we seek to draw upon this, to partner with communities and our stakeholders to address the big issues confronting our children.

We will be implementing a number of measures that will make us more accountable to the community and our stakeholders.

To achieve this will require a strong relationship with Aboriginal families and with primary stakeholders such as the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA), the State and Federal Governments and our corporate sponsors who have stayed with us over our first 23 years.

This Commitment represents the challenge that we have laid down for the Institute to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and families and I seek your support to make this happen.



*We have a  
proud history  
of research  
and advocacy  
with Aboriginal  
families*

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jonathan Carapetis". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.



# Statement from Board Member

## Ms Kate George



On behalf of the Institute's Board, I am honoured to give their full support to this Commitment to Aboriginal Children and Families. For many years, we have used our research to bring about positive sustainable change in the lives of Aboriginal children. Building upon this past success, we are taking a more strategic approach to all that we do and to focus on doing it better - to harness our world-class research facilities and strengths and to apply this in a more coordinated and long-term way. But this is only one part of this approach - we also need a healthy relationship with the Aboriginal families and communities that we work with and for.

The relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in this country has a mixed history and is often fraught with difficulties and challenges.

Research projects over the years focussed on just about every imaginable aspect of our lives. The published outcomes are, therefore, personal to us but of its very nature, becomes public property. For this reason, the results of the research can be searingly painful and confronting to Aboriginal people.

While the approach to research is now governed by ethical and other standards, it still carries a legacy for us as one that was intrusive and carried out in a manner that relegated us, our parents and family members and forebears to the status of subjects of research or objects of curiosity.

There was no collaboration, often no permission sought, no ability for participants to withdraw and no feedback provided. It was seen by many of us as a one-sided and exploitative exercise where people were reduced to statistics and data.

Whilst it has been observed and remarked many times that Aboriginal people are one of the most researched peoples on this earth, and that research was done for the sake of research, one must acknowledge some truly amazing things have happened over recent years that have brought out into the open the realities of life for Aboriginal people and the impact of the underlying issues that have resulted in social and economic exclusion.

Much of this change is as a result of evidence gained through research.

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Ultimately, and importantly, evidence-based research helps to inform decision-making and resource allocation both by policy makers and us Aboriginal people in our family and community settings. This in turn should lead to a better informed public as well as empowered individuals and families and ultimately improved health and wellbeing which reflect what should be everyone's birthright in this country.

As a Putijurra woman and mother, and one who like so many of us was taken away from family and landscape at a young age, I know that our people across the State continue to face issues that have limited the health and wellbeing of our children and grandchildren. I remain optimistic that the spirit of survival, combined with the strength and resilience of our culture and our being, will enable us to return our families to the quality of life that all people should expect. It is by drawing on these inherent strengths, and in working together in partnership, that our research will create the changes that we all desire for all children.

I look forward to seeing the strategies outlined in this Commitment create the way forward for us to do this.

*K.L. George*

*...working  
together in  
partnership  
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children*



# Working Together Strategic Plan (2013-2017)

This year we launched our first strategic plan – Working Together (2013 – 2017) which outlined a blueprint for action for the Institute to continue its work to use our research to answer the questions that confront families in bringing up their children.

Within the Plan we have outlined our vision and the values that we believe will guide all aspects of the Institute's work and the directions of this Commitment.

## Vision

To improve the health and wellbeing of children through excellence in research.

## Values

**We make a difference** by ensuring our research is translated into action now and in the future.

**We challenge** existing ideas and ourselves, and seek innovative and creative ways of working.

**We work together** and with our community to bring better health and wellbeing to children.

**We care** for children and the community, in Western Australia and beyond.

**We respect** the contributions of all who work at and with the Institute.

**We uphold** these values as a measure of our success and the integrity of our work and organisation.





## Our Strategic Goals

- 1** Our research will be driven by its potential to improve health and wellbeing of children
- 2** We will work together with stakeholders to achieve the best health and wellbeing outcomes for children
- 3** We will build capacity and excellence in our people, in recognition that they are our greatest asset
- 4** We will be a great organisation in the eyes of our staff, supporters and other stakeholders
- 5** We will diversify and increase our funding base to sustain our activities and future growth

# Statement acknowledging the shared history between Aboriginal and other Australian peoples and plans for a common future

*The Institute has established a strong relationship with Aboriginal communities over its 23 years and during this time we have discovered much together. It is upon these achievements that we seek to consolidate our efforts and invest our resources into those areas where we can make a more defined difference.*

*Over the next five years we will integrate the needs of Aboriginal families and children into all relevant areas of our work. Our statement and principles below will frame the measures that we implement over the next five years.*

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and original custodians of this land. We acknowledge the loss of land, children and family, languages and cultural identity and the impact this has upon Aboriginal health and wellbeing. We believe that all Australians must better understand the shared past and how it affects the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

It is through a relationship of trust, working as partners toward agreed objectives, that we will pave the way forward.

We commit to translating our research into positive sustainable change in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal children.





# Principles

The Institute is committed to the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research, and observe the following principles in our work:

## RECIPROCITY

A mutual obligation exists among members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities to achieve an equitable distribution of resources, responsibility and capacity and to achieve cohesion and survival of the social order. This mutual obligation extends to the land, animals and other natural elements and features. In contemporary settings the value of reciprocity continues in various forms, and may vary between locations. Examples include the redistribution of income, benefits from the air, land and sea, and the sharing of other resources such as housing.

## RESPECT

Respect for human dignity and worth as a characteristic of relationships between people, and in the way individuals behave, is fundamental to a functioning and moral society. Within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, respect is reinforced by, and in turn strengthens, dignity. A respectful relationship induces trust and cooperation. Strong culture is a personal and collective framework built on respect and trust that promotes dignity and recognition.

## EQUALITY

One of the values expressed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures is the equal value of people. One of the ways this is reflected is a commitment to distributive fairness and justice. Equality affirms Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' right to be different.

## RESPONSIBILITY

Central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies and cultures is the recognition of core responsibilities. These responsibilities include those to country, kinship bonds, caring for others and the maintenance of harmony and balance within, and between, the physical and spiritual realms. A key responsibility within this framework is to do no harm, including avoiding having an adverse impact on others' abilities to comply with their responsibilities. As well, one person's responsibilities may be shared with others so that they will also be held accountable.

## SURVIVAL AND PROTECTION

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to act to protect their cultures and identity from erosion by colonisation and marginalisation. A particular feature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and these efforts has been the importance of a collective identity. This collective bond reflects and draws strength from the values base of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.

## SPIRIT AND INTEGRITY

This is an overarching value that binds all others into a coherent whole. It has two components. The first is about the continuity between past, current and future generations. The second is about behaviour, which maintains the coherence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and cultures. Any behaviour that diminishes any of the previous five values could not be described as having integrity.



## Priorities

It is in light of the statement and these principles we outline the following priorities:

### ABORIGINAL GOVERNANCE

#### *Ensuring a clear Aboriginal voice and influence*

To ensure that the diversity of Aboriginal voices is heard and influences the Institute's work, the following governance measures will be implemented:


- Appointment of an Aboriginal Board member
- Establishment of the Aboriginal Collaborative Council Advising Research and Evaluation (ACCARE) as an advisory group reporting directly to the Director
- Establishment of the Kulunga Aboriginal Research Development Unit (KARDU) (see below)
- Appointment of the Manager Aboriginal Research Development to the Institute Leadership Team.

### SETTING RESEARCH PRIORITIES

#### *Research that reflects the needs of Aboriginal families*

The Manager Aboriginal Research Development will work with the Research Strategy Leaders and other senior researchers to identify and implement measures to prioritise and develop Aboriginal health research projects that target, and have the potential to improve outcomes in, important health and wellbeing issues for Aboriginal children and families.

In so doing, three areas that were raised during the strategic planning consultations will be considered:

- Aboriginal families
  - working with our young people as they take on the challenges of life
  - food security, clean water and healthy homes.
- 

# ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

## *Developing Aboriginal Staff and Students*

To continue to build the capacity of Aboriginal researchers, a five-year Aboriginal Employment and Career Development Strategy will be implemented and include the following:

- A range of strategies to increase the current research and administrative staff engaged across the Institute with targets of at least 3% of total Telethon Kids staff population
- Specific strategies to recruit, develop and retain senior Aboriginal researchers across all research areas
- Implementation of an Institute cultural security framework
- Establishment of an Aboriginal Staff and Students Forum.



## RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

### *Building Our Capacity to Do Research that Responds to the Needs of Aboriginal Families*

The Kulunga Aboriginal Research Development Unit (KARDU) will be established to focus on facilitating research interest and opportunities in research that involve Aboriginal families and communities as well as building the capacity and development of our researchers working on Aboriginal projects. Specifically, the Unit will be tasked with the following:

- Establish and maintain relationships with Aboriginal communities and the Aboriginal Community Controlled Services Sector
- Support for Research Strategy Leaders and other researchers in Indigenous research methodologies, research design, relationship building with Aboriginal communities and sourcing personnel
- Building the research capacity of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers
- Promote the development of Indigenous Knowledge and its application as a strategy to maximise research outcomes for researchers, Aboriginal families and their children
- Take responsibility for the management of ACCARE, the Aboriginal Research Projects Forum, the Clearing House Forum and the Government Relations Forum (see below).

To complement the new role for Kulunga, a series of forums will be established to focus on those areas critical to a full and meaningful integration of Aboriginal research across the Institute and will include:

- Establishment of an Aboriginal Research Projects Forum (to ensure a consultative process involving Aboriginal people for all researchers planning or conducting Aboriginal health research)
- Clearing House (to monitor and report on Aboriginal health research projects at the Institute)
- Government Relations Forum (to maintain the previous ACCARE links to the State and Australian Governments).

In partnership with the Institute's Communications and Development team, KARDU will develop and present on a regular basis, a series of in-house training modules for research staff on conducting research in Aboriginal communities, to ensure all Institute researchers are trained to do research the right way with Aboriginal people and families.



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## SHOWCASE PROJECTS

### *Demonstrating Our Best*

As the Institute moves into its next stage of its development, a significant focus will be on taking a multidisciplinary approach involving all research disciplines as well as a greater translation of research into health outcomes. Several Showcase Projects will be implemented over the next 12 months. These projects will stand as examples to help the broader community, supporters and stakeholders better understand how we work and make a difference. At least one of these projects will focus on Aboriginal families and children.

## FUNDING SUPPORT FOR ABORIGINAL RESEARCH AND RESEARCHERS

### *Investing in the Future*

The Institute will maintain, and where possible, increase its commitment of resources to Aboriginal research, including new approaches to fundraising. A specific funding strategy - drawing on a mix of competitive research grants, new and ongoing corporate support and philanthropic gifts - will be developed and implemented to target Aboriginal researchers and research. This will continue to build upon the research work of the Institute's Centre of Research Excellence in Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing (CREAHW), the Centre of Research Excellence in Improving Health Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children (CREIHSATSIC) and the Wesfarmers Centre of Vaccines and Infectious Disease.

## COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION

### *Keeping Us Connected to Community*

To ensure that the Institute stays connected to Aboriginal communities across the state, specific strategies targeted at Aboriginal families and organisations will be included within the Institute's communication and dissemination approaches. This will include the development of specific information resources and information forums, in addition to those events organised by the Institute's Consumer and Community Participation Advisory Council (CCPAC).

For more information about our Aboriginal research, please contact:

#### **GLENN PEARSON**

Manager Aboriginal Research Development  
(Incorporating the Kulunga Aboriginal Research Development Unit)  
Telethon Kids Institute  
100 Roberts Road, Subiaco WA 6008

Phone: 08 9489 7758 or 0418 315 813

Email: [glenn.pearson@telethonkids.org.au](mailto:glenn.pearson@telethonkids.org.au)





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