Active and Safe: Preventing Unintentional Injury Towards Aboriginal Children and Young People in NSW. Guidelines for Policy and Practice

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Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the Wadawurrung people as traditional owners of the land on which we meet.
Unacceptable inequalities

- Indigenous children disproportionately affected by preventable death and serious injury
- In 2007-2011 Indigenous children made up 5.5% of total child population, but almost 18% of injury deaths
- In NSW, injury-related causes are the leading cause of death of Aboriginal children aged 1-17
- Hospitalisation rates much higher (AIHW: Pointer 2011, Moller et al 2016)
- Higher ED presentations
- Largest relative inequalities were for injuries due to exposure to fire and flame; the largest absolute inequalities for injuries due to falls from playground equipment (Moller et al 2016)
Bigger picture

- Multiple and complex health and social issues
- Lack of coordinated planning around funding, design and delivery of Indigenous services
- Aboriginal people tired of seeing valuable resources wasted on poorly targeted ‘off the shelf’ programs
- Need for genuinely inclusive, community driven approaches

Years of ineffective & fragmented programs & services have failed to make significant inroads into high levels of disadvantage in Aboriginal communities.

(NSW Ombudsman 2011)
Limited research focus

- Few studies of factors associated with Aboriginal child injury
- Few injury prevention programs targeting Aboriginal children
- Lack of Aboriginal engagement in mainstream programs
- Lack of robust evaluation
- Aboriginal attitudes to child injury prevention and perceptions of risk are under-researched
- Risk of ‘pathologising’ Aboriginal population
Seizing the opportunity for action

- In NSW, policy interest in child injury over past decades has been uneven
- NSW Paediatric Injury Prevention and Management Forum and Reference Group 2014 has facilitated key stakeholder engagement
- NSW Health Paediatric Injury Grants (2015-7), included:
  - Preventing Unintentional Injury to Aboriginal Children and Young People in NSW: Developing Guidelines for Policy and Practice
Guidelines at a glance

Purpose
• To provide a resource to assist organisations, communities and individuals to work together to prevent unintentional injury to Aboriginal children in New South Wales in a way that reflects the values and priorities of Aboriginal people

They provide?
• A snapshot of the current state of knowledge
• Overview of available evidence
• Guide to working with Aboriginal communities
• Lessons learnt from research
• What works and what doesn’t work
• Resources and references
Multiple audiences

- Tool for advocacy - evidence
- Guide practice – what’s acceptable? what’s feasible?
- Inform ongoing research
- Inform social marketing and other prevention campaigns
Methods

**Literature Review**
- To identify effective programs and their components and explore Aboriginal community attitudes towards injury and perceptions of risk

**Qualitative Data Collection**
- Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders: researchers, policy makers, practitioners, non-government organisations (n=14)
- Four focus group discussions with Aboriginal community members in urban and regional New South Wales: Nowra, La Perouse, Kempsey, Bourke (n=22)
- Qualitative data management via NVivo software

**Roundtable Discussion**
- To provide broad input into guidelines for effective targeted injury prevention approaches
- 29th June 2016, Sydney NSW
- Brought together 35 injury researchers, practitioners and policy makers; government and non-government organisations; Aboriginal community members and organisations
Nowra, South Coast

La Perouse, Sydney

Kempsey, Mid-North Coast

Bourke, North-West NSW

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Section 1: Aboriginal children and injury: What we know

- Extent of the problem
- Causes of Injury
- Where Injury occurs
- Why the higher rates for Aboriginal child injury
- Injury and social determinants of health
- Data limitations and knowledge gaps

Key messages
- *Australian and NSW data show rates of injury to Indigenous children to be consistently higher than for non-Aboriginal children, with high rates of injury related hospitalisation and mortality.*

- *While the injury mortality rate for non-Aboriginal children in NSW has halved over the past 15 years the rate for Aboriginal children has remained the same.*

- *To address injury inequities we need to prioritise injury prevention, acknowledge the broad underlying social determinants and provide targeted approaches for Aboriginal communities.*
Section 2: Using evidence to develop policy

- Effective countermeasures
- Broad social health policy context
- Need for culturally effective approaches
- Setting the policy
- Summary of policy recommendations from research
- Government strategies and policies that address Aboriginal child safety

Key Messages

- Injury prevention involves many groups and works best when partners work collaboratively; coordination, leadership and sustained commitment from government is an essential component.
- It is important to implement evidence based approaches, but in the absence of best evidence, it is still important to act to prevent Aboriginal child injury.
- Few studies quantify the cost of injury. In Western Australia Aboriginal people make up 3.6% of the total population but account for 7.7% of total injury costs.
Section 3: Doing ethical Aboriginal research

- Adherence to ethical guidelines.
- Acknowledging the importance of Aboriginal research leadership.
- Formal partnerships with Aboriginal organisations
- Aboriginal Reference Groups for specialist expertise cultural oversight
- Aboriginal researchers as CIs
- Capacity building programs
- Understanding Indigenous methodologies
- Communicating findings to community
- Reimbursement for participants.
- Plain English statement
Case Studies

The Coolamon Study
Aboriginal ownership and involvement are crucial to the study. The Coolamon study has support from peak Aboriginal health bodies. The unique collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers, clinical and policy stakeholders, and community members will help to ensure strong translation to practice and plays a critical role in leading to better prevention and management.


The SEARCH Study
The Study of Environment on Aboriginal Resilience and Child Health (SEARCH) is a study of the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal children in urban areas in NSW. SEARCH is built on strong community partnerships and focuses on Aboriginal community identified health priorities of: injury, otitis media, vaccine-preventable conditions, mental health problems, developmental delay, obesity and risk factors for chronic disease.

Section 4: Taking action through Aboriginal leadership and collaboration

• We need a much better understanding of how to effectively engage Aboriginal communities in child injury prevention.
  – Listening to Aboriginal parents and carers
  – Stakeholder collaboration
  – Advocacy and the media
  – Aboriginal leadership
  – Indigenous child injury online resources
Aboriginal voices

- Diverse communities but common safety concerns: home safety; neighbourhood, roads, playgrounds; costs

- Cultural / historical context
  - Stolen generation / forced child removal; concept of ‘shame’; judgement; consequences of reporting injury
  - Diverse parenting/child rearing practices - e.g. ‘shared’ care
  - Acceptable risk taking - children need to learn for themselves

- Preferred education/culturally appropriate strategies – stories, sharing experiences and knowledge
Section 5: What works and what doesn’t in program development?

- Elements of effective programs
- Addressing the challenges to effective program development
- Checklist for action on Aboriginal child injury prevention
Investing in evidence based programs

Effective programs are:

- Based on strong evidence
- Build on community strengths
- Take a holistic approach
- Communicate appropriately with community
- Build local capacity
- Work collaboratively and build partnerships
- Have flexible timeframes
- Be sustainable
- Be well resourced

Buckle Up Safely for Aboriginal children was adapted from a large scale NHMRC funded trial of an educational intervention to increase the use of child restraints in 3 to 5 year olds. Following a pilot study in the Shoalhaven region, the program was then implemented across a further 12 sites, with funding from NSW Health and Transport for NSW. By the end of 2016, 435 restraints had been distributed and 16 community workers had been trained in fitting car restraints.

Key elements to success were: Building on a strong evidenced based model; connecting effectively with communities; building capacity; flexible program.
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References


