Protecting Australia’s Children: Using the First 1000 Days to build health and wellbeing in families and communities

Professor Kerry Arabena
@ArabenaKerry
The First 1000 Days Family knows:

- This period of time determines the Health and Wealth of the World.
- The F1000D is inspired by and encourages us to be Champions.
- Necessarily involves community leaders, family members, practitioners, policy makers, systems innovators, thought leaders and researchers.
- We need to challenge the status quo – our ‘normal’ is not working anymore.
- We need champions who can work in Indigenous conceived of and led initiatives.
The First 1000 Days: An Unstoppable Force

- A People’s movement and a Nation Building exercise.
- Genesis point – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Architects of the road ahead – First Peoples and those who believe in and value freedom.
- Uncompromising standards to co-create the very best First 1000 Days – Family led decision making.
- Aimed at achieving full citizenship in unprecedented times.
- Systemic failures, crises and fear that failure is inevitable are reasons why a new approach is needed.
- We need to return to values and ethics that have underpinned our progress sine time out of mind.
We need a continuum of success derived from within our own family experiences.
Protecting Australia’s Children:

- ‘Protection’ was an underpinning discourse in policy and practices that facilitated child removals from families, denigrated our kinship arrangements and disrupted extended family networks.
- Culture is very rarely thought to have protective factors – rebuilding cultural protective factors is paramount in the First 1000 Days leadership group.
- Our policies are formed in discourses that seek to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children from men, rather than protect the family unit from the perpetual harm caused by colonial and neo-colonial paradigms and way of life. Our communities deserve a rethink of the issue of violence.
- We also need to protect our families from professionals who are forensic, not compassionate.
We are not born into a society, we are born into an ecosystem. Participating in modernity = Biocide.

“Carried in the wombs of our mothers, born in the wombs of our fathers.”

We are precious, and extraordinary, and powerful and smart and capable beyond words.

Families need to formulate the ways in which health equity is achieved. Not services. Not multinationals.

“These wrap around services are suffocating us! How can we be responsible when everyone else is responsible for us?”
Overview of Presentation

• Catalysing Environment
• Design Principles for First 1000 Days
• The Australian First 1000 Days Model
• Engaging with Cultural Protective Factors
• What Works in Regions
• Role of the University
Holistic Health in National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013 - 2023:

“Aboriginal health” means not just the physical well-being of an individual but refers to the social, emotional and cultural well-being of the whole Community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being thereby bringing about the total well-being of their Community.

Health must be achieved in a racist free health system, culture is central to all health and wellbeing.
Impetus for First 1000 Days focus

- Chair of NATSIDAG: Importance of Brain growth and development for healthy ageing. ‘...Pregnancy is the new public health intervention for healthy ageing...’
- Understanding policy drivers and decisions made by at-risk populations: S&RH, Adolescents.
- Chairing NATSIHEC – FASD, Abecedarian project.
- Expanding view of an international nutritional intervention for Australian contexts.
- Increase in young women represented in prison populations.
- Invisibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and fathers in policy, interventions, and science.
Catalysing Environment: MJA Article


What about children that cannot attend school full time because of behavioural or developmental reasons?

Change the agenda: from one of school preparation to one that addresses developmental delays early so children are better prepared for school.
Aboriginal Children’s Commissioner:

“...2015 Report on Government Services notes the number of Aboriginal babies and children in Victoria being placed into statutory care rose by 42% in just 12 months to June 2014.... Increase of 386 children rising from 922 to 1308 children.”

Cannot improve lives of children by applying Band-Aid solutions
Significant system deficiencies in respect of cultural connections
Male perpetrated family violence, alcohol and drug abuse present in 90% of families where children were removed.
Children in out of home care make up significant number of children in youth justice, they are disconnected from education.
Many have contact with criminal justice system and later incarceration.

Protecting Australia’s Children: The First 1000 Days
Catalysing Environment: BMJ Article

- Understanding **adolescents are implementers of equity gain** in families in the next decade. They need skills to take responsibility.
- **Family violence is the main reason for out of home care.** Support for identification of disability related violence, gender roles and healthy relationships is required.
- Young people will be **thrust into parenthood without knowledge, skills or support.**
- **New approach needed in health:** sexual health, reproductive planning, empowerment, reduction of violence and personal development.
- Need a **nested approach (child, family, community)** to education and social and emotional well-being.
- Need to **draw sectors together – whole of government, whole of community approach.**
Sir Michael Marmot: Commenting on Social Standing and Life Expectancy for Australia’s First Peoples

“Changing the marginal position in society of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people will need an approach that takes in the whole of life, starting with women of child bearing age, focusing on the care of infants and young children and proceeding through the life course...”

Additions to Michael Marmot’s Comments:

“Changing the marginal position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is not only the job of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples but for all Australians. We need same opportunity without being made the same. We will need an approach that strengthens culture and takes in the whole of life, starting with women of child bearing age and their partners, extended family, and communities, focusing on infants and young children and proceeding through the life course....”
An Indigenous perspective of the First 1000 Days

The First 1000 Days Australia
Rebecca Ritte & Emily Munro-Harrison/23 May 2016
4 Symposia: Scientific, Research, Community, Policy Reports complete and available from website

Over 380 people from more than 100 organisations involved in the design of First 1000 Days.

Protecting Australia’s Children: The First 1000 Days
Goal of First 1000 Days Work

To provide a coordinated, comprehensive intervention to address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from conception to two years of age, thereby laying the foundation for their future health and wellbeing.
Novel Approach to Early Life Approaches

- Indigenous Conceived, Indigenous Led.
- Interventional not Observational Longitudinal Study.
- Preconception through to First year of Primary School.
- Across three generations, baby, baby’s parents and grandparents.
- Locally driven approach to interventions.

- Baseline study to ascertain impact over time.
- Empowerment through programmatic and business focused solutions.
- Biological, Familial, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Measures
- Service measures
- Development of a workforce focused on First 1000 Days
- Curriculum Development
First 1000 Days Family focused strategies

1. Capacity building within families, using a strengths-based Indigenous approach to best parenting, to raise culturally knowing and motivated children
2. Whole-of-family mentoring and healing programs to end family violence
3. Family-based entrepreneurial solutions to welfare dependence, e.g., accessing micro-business solutions, establishing family-based and local enterprises
4. Early literacy programs using Abecedarian approaches
5. Early nutritional programs for babies and families
6. Preconception family planning (delaying first child by 1 year, long-term contraception), sex education and health checks
7. The role of fathers and extended family in ensuring the health and wellbeing of children in the First 1000 Days
8. Improved access to Comprehensive Primary Health Care using a case management approach centred around family empowerment programs
9. A whole-of-service approach
10. A national network of First 1000 Days Australia practitioners
Holistic Intervention and Longitudinal Study

- Sustainable Family-based economies, delivery of services where people live.
- 10 family strengthening interventions – e.g. parental mentoring, nutrition programs.
- Quantitative Data Sets, longitudinal studies re: adolescent surveys, infant surveys and children’s participation in schools.
- Health, Education, Child Protection Service System Responses.
- Preconception Programs
- Family Led Decision Making
- Cultural Authority and Morality
- Workforce Development

Overseen by Community Governance Committee and validated by Scientific Committee

- Sustainable Family-based economies, delivery of services where people live.
Interventions: Community and Alliances Decide

Promote multi-agency strategies that engage families to focus on the early period of child development, from conception to age 2 years.

**Adolescents** — through healthy behaviour modification, delaying pregnancy and parenting education;

**Men and Women of reproductive age** — with preconception care, good nutrition, healthy lifestyle education and strategies to reduce gestational diabetes;

**Neonates** — through promoting breastfeeding, good nutrition, and family support and preservation; and

**Infants and Children** — with good nutrition, stable workforce and appropriate learning and stimulation.
Regional Alliance Sites (RAS)

1. Organisational Advocate

Lead Agency of Regional Alliance Site (RAS):

- Long term commitment RAS
- Manage “Community Capacity Profile and Needs Assessment”
- Facilitate workshops
- Manage relationships with individual organisational advocates/sites
- Coordinate and access relevant data
- Commit resources for engagement ($>$20k)
- PD of staff(s) to include UoM engagement
- Support breadth of interventions developed
- Local governance
- Ensure all organisations have RAP
- Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce
- Sign Memorandum of Understanding

2. Champion

- Committed to family centred approach delivering interventions during the F1000D: ACCOs; Child protection; Early learning; Education and training; Justice; Legal services; Health; Hospitals; & Local government
- Committed to family-led decision making
- Regional governance in place
- F1000D Workforce
- Commit ‘core’ funds
- Master’s &/or PhD student project(s)
- Peer reviewed publications

3. Alliance Site

- Capacity Profile and Needs Assessment
- Collaborate on Analysis
- Ethics application & publication of papers
- Implement proof of concept
- Recruiting longitudinal pilot study project
Questions

• What measures can be developed across three generations and why?
• What is the immediate and long term benefit of collecting these measures?
• Can we identify a relationship between SEWB, environmental and biological measures and how?
Life events across the First 1000 Days Australia Longitudinal Study

Preconception
- Family environment and formation
- Family Planning
- Delaying pregnancy
- Parenting
- Sexual health
- General health and wellbeing

Conception
- Connection with Aboriginal Health Nurse
- Health and Wellbeing
- Planned conception
- Access to health services

Pregnancy
- In utero environment
- Whole of family – household approach
- Interventions addressing smoking, nutrition, stress
- Staying connected
- Parental and extended family education
- Service intersection
- Interventions - control who/how
- Workforce changes

Birth
- Growth and development
- Early markers of chronic disease
- Natural/caesarean birth and/or intervened birth
- Dilation at time of presentation
- Age of mother/father
- Clinical factors
- Environmental factors

2 & 6 Years
- Growth and development
- Playgroups – informal/cultural
- Early literacy interventions
- Transition into kinder
- Social and cultural determinants (child, parents, g'parents, family, community, etc)
Research Design considerations for a preconception, intervention, multigenerational, predominantly urban living, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focused longitudinal cohort study

- Household leveled survey with Victorian Aboriginal Housing Cooperative. Build capable workforce from among householders.

- Four sites coming on line and developing coordination, service delivery and data linkage capacity. Western Melbourne, Mornington Peninsula, Bubup Wilam and Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Cooperative.
Collection must have potential to contribute to health and wellbeing:

- Contribute to the Centre for Indigenous Genomics.
- Assist families document multi generational narratives.

Possibility of Understanding Impact of:

- Microbiome and gastro intestinal conditions and diabetes.
- Environmental toxins including impact of experience of racism
- Infectious diseases
- Chronic inflammation
- Maternal depression on health and wellbeing
- Housing related stress
1. Household/Family
Community Conducted survey

Identification of potential parents, capacity building and needs analysis, service mapping
Cross section of family environment

2. Place based coordinated program of work

Process and impact outcomes implementation
What do they do?
Who to?
How well?
What is the impact?

non-controlled process/impact evaluation of services, programs and systems

3. Cohort Study

Individual data on pregnancy and birth and family environment (multigenerational)

Multiple domains outcomes determinants services/support
Follow-up at age 2 years
Follow-up at 6 years

HILDA
LSIC

Communities for Children
Partner Effectively with others
Ensure Effective Governance

**Academic Convenors**: Discuss issues of common concern, facilitate discussions, champion cause, advocacy, coordination.

**Create scientific evidence** to support parents who experience vulnerability

**Design, implement and evaluate** preconception, early childhood and parental support **interventions**

Implement **knowledge exchange**

**Evaluate** new initiatives and service innovations.

Facilitate novel **Birth Cohort Studies** (inclusive of fathers and grandparents with mothers and children)

In December 2015, the Australian Human Rights Commission’s Children’s Rights Report 2015 recommended that the Australian Government support the First 1000 Days program, stating that:

*Recommendation 14: The Australian Government Department of Social Services support the work of Professor Arabena and the Indigenous Health Equity Unit at the University of Melbourne to progress the early intervention research agenda under the First 1000 Days initiative. (AHRC 2015)*
Indigenous Health Equity Unit

- **Workforce development** – re-orientate toward the First 1000 Days
- **Facilitate transitional Interventions** within and between services, between institutions and outreach
- **Develop curriculum** (short course, graduate certificate, Masters Degrees)
- Focus on **life span** approaches in regions
- Engage, convene, support **develop capacity of partners, end users** and scale as appropriate
- **Seed monies for First 1000 Days** initiatives with hospitals, State and Commonwealth Departments and Industry partners.
First 1000 Days ‘Where to From Here?’:

- Papers on the Australian Model of the First 1000 Days.
- Meeting to discuss biological samples and genomics components of project.
- Confirm Community Governance, Family Strengthening and Research Questions in Early Life work.
- Research Design Workshop.
- Negotiating with services on implementation of birth cohort and other intervention studies.
- Set up First 1000 Days Governance and Foundational members of the First 1000 Days Scientific Committee.
- Logo and Logo Governance arrangements.
- Student projects for PhD and Masters Students work.
- Seeking funding support – Applications in to VicHealth, Department of Social Services, Australian Indonesian Council, a Philanthropic Group, State Government, Federal Government.
- Research funding after research design has been confirmed and partners on board.
- Short Courses have started.
- Work on Prospectus
- Secure Fundoing
International Indigenous and Tribal Peoples First 1000 Days: Australia’s First Peoples, Indonesian Tribal People, Norwegian Sami.
Day 640 in the First 1000 Days

A systems entrepreneurial approach to policy formulation – create responses mirroring real life complexity, move from consultation and policy process to impact.

Radical transformation not incremental change for 10000 plus children born into the experience of vulnerability since July 2014.

There are opportunity to close the gap in early life outcomes under the ‘Close the Gap’ campaign.

Opportunity to create peer reviewed evidence about what works, missed opportunity to redesign workforce and to keep children in the care of their families.
What can we do together?

[Graph showing trends in deaths per 100,000 from 1998 to 2018, with lines indicating Indigenous rate, Non-Indigenous rate, Target Indigenous rate, Projected non-Indigenous rate, and Indigenous variability bands.]

Protecting Australia’s Children: The First 1000 Days
What can we do together?

Protecting Australia’s Children: The First 1000 Days

- NAHS - CCHOs funding certainty
- Deaths in Custody Report
- Land Rights Activism
- Homelands Movement
- Bi Lingual Schools
- ATSIC – Regional Elections

The Gap is Widening

2000 Reconciliation Australia

2005 ATSIC Abolished Practical Reconciliation

2007 NT Intervention

2010 Change in procurement laws, NCAFP, RAPs, Recognition, Constitution, More children in care, less employment in APS or decision making; IAS, Rise of Racism (Adam Goodes).
First and Last 1000 Days together?

http://www.presentperfectfilm.com
The Great Work: Our Way into the Future

“Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance.”

Samuel Johnson
Thank you

• Watch this Space!
Go Fund Me Campaign: First 1000 Days Oz!
• @ArabenaKerry
• @First1000DaysOz
• First 1000 Days Short Courses 21 - 22 July & 29 - 30 Sept 2016.
• http://www.onemda.unimelb.edu.au/first1000days
• kerry.arabena@unimelb.edu.au