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

Families Australia Policy Forum
PLAN Australia, Southbank, VIC

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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
“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.

Protecting Australia’s Children: The First 1000 Days

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.
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 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....”
Way Indigenous Australians define First 1000 Days

Protecting Australia’s Children: The First 1000 Days
Over 380 people from more than 100 organisations involved in the design of First 1000 Days. Policy Focus:
• Overcoming the Silo and Cooperation Gap.
• Funding cycles and issues of sustainability.
• Service provision, integration and access.
• Centralised support and coordination.
• Research and Knowledge Translation.
• Investments in Innovation and Enablers.
• Bi Partisan agreements and longer term commitments.
• Place based and strength based approaches recognising community context.
• Creating family based sustainability, family entrepreneurial thinking and action, and resilience.
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

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First 1000 Days Family focused interventions:

1. Access to Comprehensive Primary Health Care
2. Early Literacy programs (Aberciderian Approaches)
3. Service coordination
4. Addressing family violence
5. Early nutritional interventions
6. Family mentoring – whole of family approaches
7. Raising culturally knowing and motivated children
8. Developing a workforce focusing on family healing and First 1000 Days’ interventions
9. Increasing antenatal and early years engagement
10. Developmental pathways: Department linkage to improve policy and practice
11. How to be the best parents we can be: What is good parenting?
12. Family based entrepreneurial solutions
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.
- Cultural Authority and Morality
- Workforce Development
- Preconception Programs
- Family Led Decision Making
- Sustainable Family-based economies, delivery of services where people live.

Overseen by Community Governance Committee and validated by Scientific Committee
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.
In Regions Alliance Partners must have established Early Learning Centre(s), playgroups and comp PHC:

**Demonstrable criteria**

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce (RAP)
- Existing services accessed by community
- Cultural decision making and local governance
- Local stakeholders - direction setters and decision makers
- Recruit at least 100 babies and manage participants over a sustained period
- Existing programs and infrastructure for First 1000 Days interventions (i.e. “man-shed”)  
- Previous partnerships provide innovative and responsive care
- Must be able to access and link appropriate data
- Must have a preparedness to adapt, change and support family and regional transformation
- Acknowledge this is Indigenous led and its implementation will be controlled and measured by partnership led through The University of Melbourne
- Must provide resources and budget required to deliver scope of responsibilities
- Must guarantee by formal arrangement responsibility and commitment to seek funding to support participation in foundation program
- Linkage with hospital and child and maternal services, and can deliver home based care
- A capacity to collect data, an up to date IT system and ability to meet basic public health requirements
**Indigenous Health Equity Unit, The University of Melbourne:**

**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 are vulnerable

**Design, implement and evaluate** pre conception, 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, The University of Melbourne:

• **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.
- PDs for staff required for project.
- 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
First 1000 Days: Australia’s First Peoples, Indonesian Tribal People, Norwegian Sami?
Day 584 in the First 1000 Days. Policy and Family Opportunities.

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 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 family care.
What can we do together?

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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
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).

2014 Forest Report
What are our collective responsibilities to future proof our way of life for all our children, in unprecedented times?

Top 10 Influential brands that people interact with on a daily basis (2015):

- Google, eBay, Microsoft, Facebook, Woolworths, Apple, Samsung, Bunnings, YouTube, and Coles.
- Companies such as Rio Tinto, Fortescue Metals, Wesfarmers, Rinehart, Murdoch, Packer families.
- Banking interests

- Health and Wellbeing of the oldest living culture on Earth.
- Diversity of cultural expression.
- Regional Impacts – Australia in an Asian Region.
- Technological break through and access.
- Demography and Opportunity.
- Participation in education and business uptake.
- Increasing environmental vulnerability.