

SHARING THE WISDOM OF OUR ELDERS



Promoting
dementia
awareness and
prevention across
the life course with
Aboriginal
communities



Aboriginal
Health & Ageing Program



NeuRA
Discover. Conquer. Cure.

Acknowledgement of Country

I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on Aboriginal land and pay my respect the traditional custodians of this land and their Elders – past, present and emerging. I also extend my respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today & acknowledge all the people who have contributed to our research and knowledge translation projects over many years.

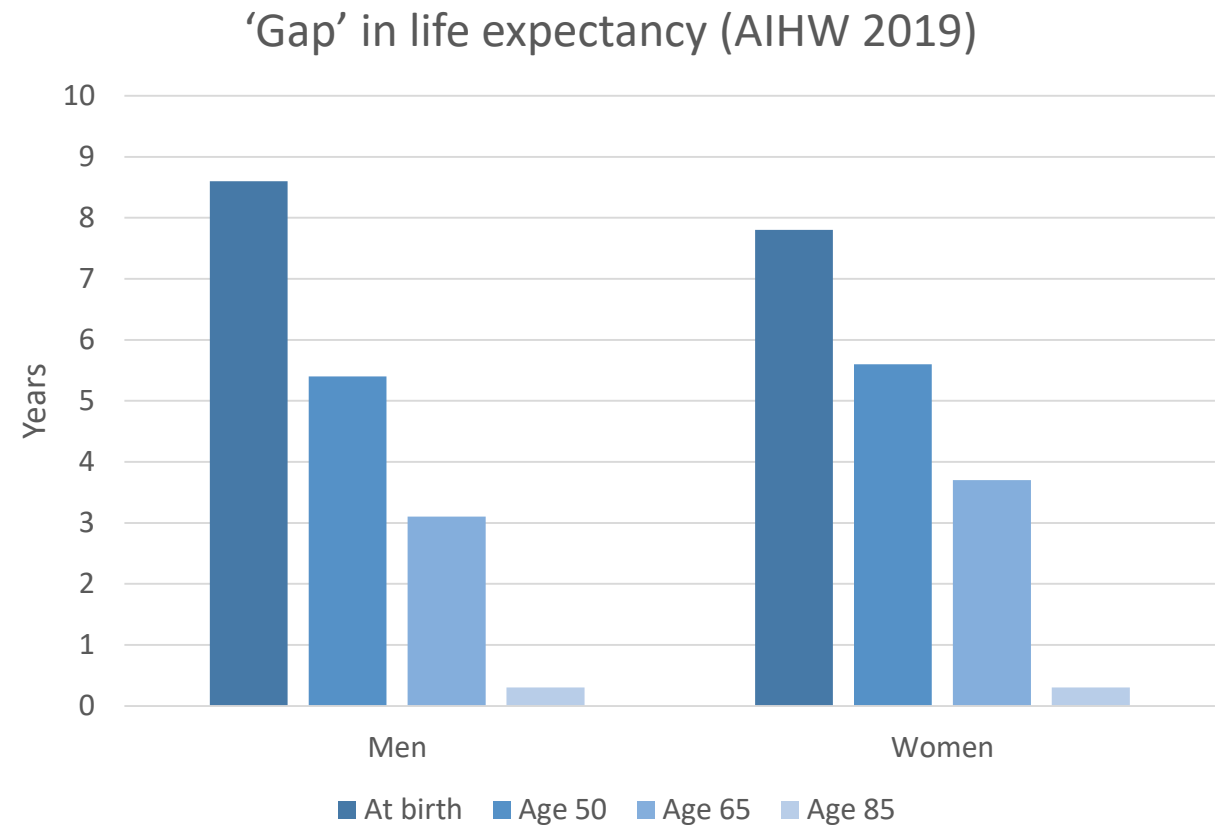


Sharing the Wisdom team: Terry Donovan, Kylie Sullivan, Alison Timbery, Margaret Anderson, Dr Wendy Allan, Madeleine Nichols, Prof Gail Garvey, Gail Daylight, A/Prof Kim Delbaere, Prof Tony Broe, Dr Louise Lavrencic, Dr Kylie Radford

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Ageing in Aboriginal communities

- Increasing number and proportion of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Ave. life expectancy is increasing: ~2-2.5 years, 2011-2016; currently 72-76 years
- At older ages, life expectancy is similar to non-Indigenous Australians



Ageing in Aboriginal communities



1 in 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 60-69 have dementia



2 in 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 70-79 have dementia



5 in 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 80+ have dementia

- Higher rates of dementia and cognitive decline documented (Smith et al., 2008; Li et al., 2014; Radford et al., 2015; LoGiudice et al., 2016; Lavrencic et al., 2019)
- Most older people do not have dementia and many are 'ageing well'
- Elders play a vital role in communities

Risk factors: dementia & cognitive decline

	Univariate model		Adjusted model*	
	OR	<i>p</i>	OR	<i>p</i>
Age (years)	2.1	<.05		
Sex (male)	2.6	<.05		
Education (years)	0.4	<.05		
Unskilled work history	5.6	<.001	4.9	.001
Mod/severe hearing problems	5.0	<.001	4.9	.001
Moderate physical activity	0.4	.039	0.2	.007
Polypharmacy	2.2	.055	3.0	.017
ApoEε4	4.2	.011	4.5	.021

*adjusted for age, sex & education

+ ?childhood trauma for younger onset dementia

Lavrencic et al., 2019 (ADF 2019 Poster)





Strong Elders and “ageing well” in Aboriginal communities

- Lowitja Institute: *What is the meaning of good and healthy ageing for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians?*

Sharing the Wisdom of Our Elders:

Understanding and promoting healthy ageing with older Aboriginal
Australians through stories and artwork

- **Outcomes** include development of culturally meaningful, engaging and strength-based resources to raise awareness of healthy (brain) ageing and dementia prevention with Aboriginal people of all ages



Sharing the Wisdom aims to:

1. document health, resilience, social connectedness, and Culture in a diverse group of Aboriginal people who are “growing old well”
2. share their insights into the meaning of healthy ageing and stories of growing old well
3. identify current services and programs to determine whether these align with the needs and expectations of the ageing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population

Over your life time what have you learned is important for growing old well?

- Aim 2: Qualitative study
- Open-ended question
- n=118 (KGOWS-II; aged 64-96 years)
- Audio recorded and transcribed
- Data analysed using a grounded-theory approach to identify key themes
- Data coded in collaboration – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers
- Feedback/workshop with community partners and participants to confirm results





‘Growing old well’ themes

CONNECTIONS TO COUNTRY & CULTURE	... to family, to community, to Country; Kinship
RESPECT YOURSELF, THE ELDERS & ALL THE MOB	Respect for Elders and all the mob, love and respect (self and others), nurture friendships, living a good respectful life
RESILIENCE	What is was like growing up, resilience, happy times, the old days, growing old well
GETTING TOGETHER, YARNING, PASSING ON KNOWLEDGE	Socialising, stories, growing old with dignity, passing on knowledge, intergenerational activities
KEEPING HEALTHY TO LIVE A LONG LIFE	Self care and mental wellbeing, physical health, eating well and health checks, preventing and managing chronic conditions
SMOKING, ALCOHOL & DRUGS	Give up the smokes, say no to drugs, safe levels of drinking
EDUCATION	Cultural learning, school, education, work

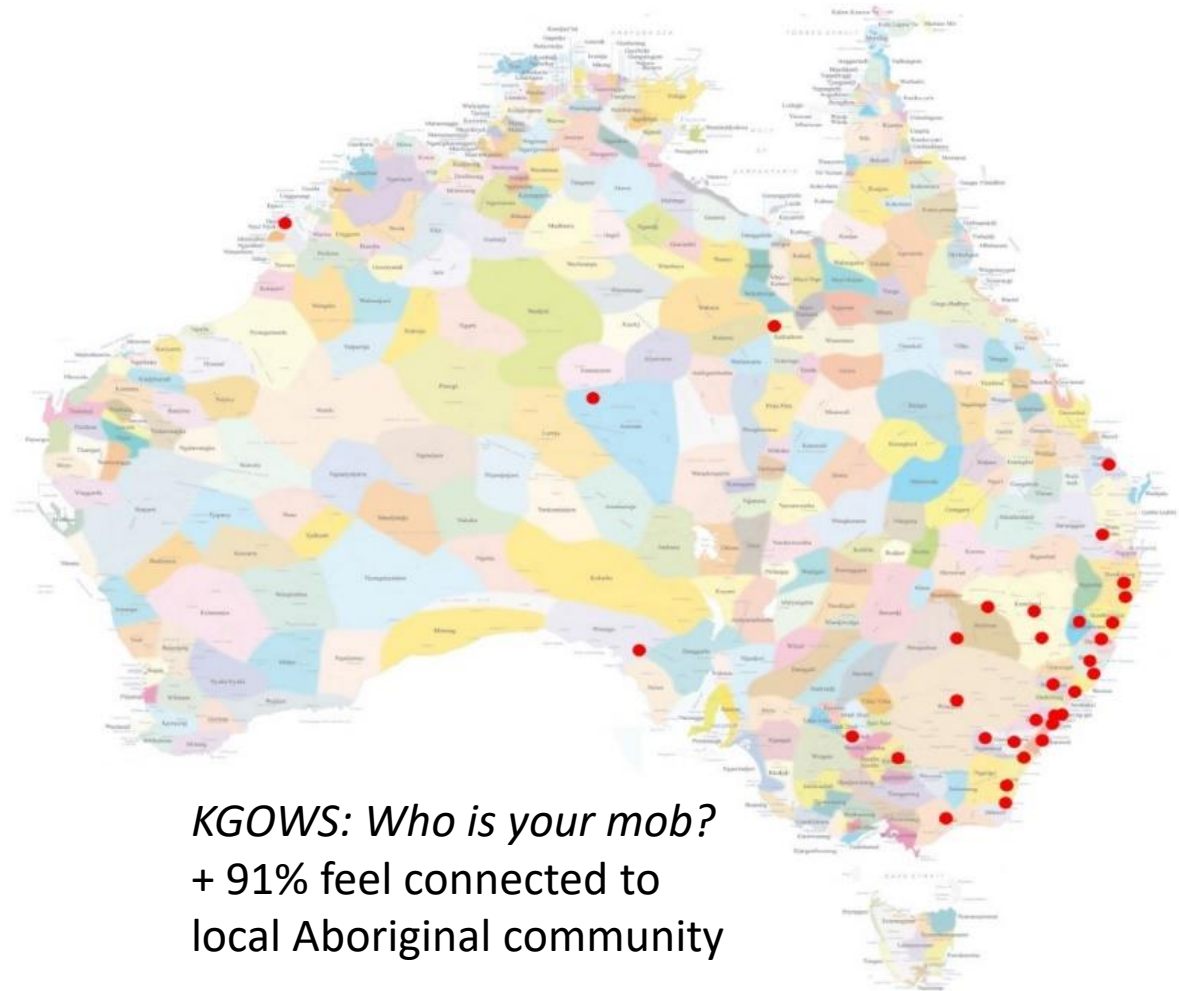
Respect, Resilience & Culture

“Helping young people in regard to connection with Country and Culture. I think it’s important for kids to know where they are from and how they are connected.”

(ID 504004)

“...Respect for all the Elders and all the mob ... I’m going to take my nephews out where I was taken. They will have a better chance of growing old well because they listen (to their Elders)”

(ID 403013)



KGOWS: Who is your mob?
+ 91% feel connected to
local Aboriginal community

Respect, Resilience & Culture

- Resilience: strength or necessity? (Young et al., 2017)
- Protective Factors: connectedness, sharing and affection, role models and leadership (McLennan, 2015)
- High levels of resilience observed in KGOWS (CD-RISC10) and protective against cognitive decline over 6 years (Radford et al., 2018)

SHARING THE WISDOM OF OUR ELDERS:

Glenny Naden, artist and carer for her mum who is living with dementia:

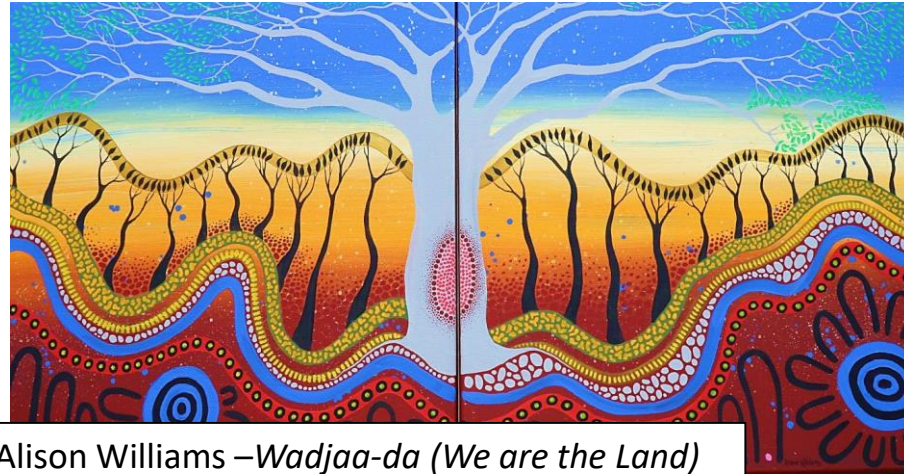
“I learned from her how to be strong and resilient and how to face the challenges that come our way, and I think that formidability has helped me to help her at this stage of her life”



Sharing the Wisdom of Our Elders



Juanella MacKenzie –
*Core Dreaming
(Strong Women,
Strong Future)*



Alison Williams – *Wadjaa-da (We are the Land)*



Alison Williams
– *Jaalumbo*



Danielle Burford
– *3 Turtles*



Glenny
Naden –
*Sharing
the
Wisdom
of Our
Elders*



Worldwide dementia prevention

- 2017 Lancet Commission life course risk factors for dementia:
 - **Early life:** less education
 - **Midlife:** hearing loss, hypertension, obesity
 - **Late life:** smoking, depression, physical inactivity, social isolation, diabetes
- 2019 World Health Organization Guidelines, 'Risk Reduction of Cognitive Decline and Dementia' recommend:
 - Physical activity
 - Smoking cessation
 - A healthy, balanced diet (Mediterranean-like is best)
 - Reducing or ceasing harmful alcohol drinking
 - Management of overweight/obesity and hypertension in midlife
 - Management of diabetes



Conclusions

- This project recognizes the cultural significance and wisdom of Elders to raise awareness of dementia and promote brain health (dementia prevention) across the life course
- Older Aboriginal people emphasize cultural practices and values – including respect and resilience – as central to growing old well, along with well-established factors for health, longevity and dementia prevention
- Findings combined with Aim 3 - semi-structured interviews with 26 local service providers
- Next steps: Implementation of resource package

Figure 2: Priority areas to address the social determinants and cultural determinants of health



My Life My Lead: Opportunities for strengthening approaches to the social & cultural determinants of Indigenous health.
Report on the national consultations, Dec 2017.





“This artwork features a midden. We on the north coast & mid north coast live in midden country. Remnants of hunting, gathering & ceremony all lie beneath the earth, like memories.”

Our Aboriginal Elders have knowledge & memories much the same as a midden. Layers of stories waiting to be told and shared.”

Jaalumbo
Alison Williams