



# **Full Report**

## ***'Talking Families'***

**Examining cultural differences in the role of family and community-level risk and protective factors on parental empowerment, informal and formal help seeking**

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## Executive Summary

For the purpose of this report we analyse data derived from the 2015-2016 Talking Families Survey, conducted by Ipsos Australia. The Talking Families Survey captured experiences relating to parenting, coping, help seeking and engagement in a culturally diverse sample. Ipsos previously examined and reported a number of significant bivariate findings with regards to parental empowerment and efficacy, as well as help seeking (both formal and informal), amongst other outcome measures. Here, we focus on the parent subsample (n=1991). We build on the existing Ipsos research by undertaking a series of multivariate analyses, with a particular focus on the role of domestic and family violence, community and neighbourhood factors and cultural differences in parental empowerment and efficacy, help seeking and engagement. We examine the role of individual characteristics and risk factors along with family- and community-level risk and protective factors. Findings are generated for the overall parent sample and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific subsample of parents.

We observe a number of similarities between the overall and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subsample. These include the role of individual factors, such as financial hardship, which lowers parental efficacy and empowerment for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents. Connectedness to friends, family and neighbours on the other hand increases parental efficacy and empowerment along with the likelihood of informal help seeking and formal engagement in both samples. These findings highlight the role of extended family and neighbourhood level measures as protective factors; especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents. Despite the accumulation of risk for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, connectedness at the family and community level contributes substantially to greater parental efficacy and empowerment and encourages help seeking and engagement.

We are particularly interested in the role of domestic and family violence (hereafter DFV) in predicting parental engagement and empowerment in this survey sample. Interestingly, it played a very small role in explaining differences in our outcome measures. In the overall sample, the presence of DFV predicts lower levels of parental empowerment and efficacy. However, once we control for informal support and neighbourhood social support variables, this relationship is no longer significant. This suggests that the effect of DFV on parental efficacy and empowerment can be reduced by protective factors at the family, friends and community level. Further, the presence or absence of DFV does not predict parental empowerment and help seeking in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subsample. Yet other individual, informal support and neighbourhood social support factors do strongly affect parental empowerment, help seeking and engagement among parents, including those individuals who had experienced DFV.

We further examine the role of cultural connectedness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents. Findings derived from this sample highlight the importance of cultural connectedness for parental efficacy and empowerment, informal parental help seeking and engagement with formal parenting services. For respondents with a strong sense of cultural identity and/or those connected to country and engaging in cultural activities fared significantly better across all three outcome measures.

## Contents

Executive Summary .....	2
1. Methodology .....	4
1.1 Talking Families Survey .....	4
1.2 Focus.....	4
1.3 Sample .....	5
1.4 Analysis.....	6
1.5 Variables.....	6
2. Results .....	7
2.1 Findings relating to the overall sample .....	8
2.1.1 Factors influencing parental efficacy and empowerment measures (PEEM) .....	8
2.1.2 Factors associated with informal (family/ friend) help seeking .....	9
2.1.3 Factors associated with formal help seeking (in form of parenting education and/ or services).....	10
2.2 Differences observed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents .....	11
2.2.1 Parental Efficacy and Empowerment (PEEM) .....	11
2.2.2 Informal help seeking .....	12
2.2.3 Formal help seeking.....	13
3. Summary and Implications.....	15
3.1 The role of DFV.....	15
3.2 The role of informal (family and friends) support.....	15
3.3 The role of neighbourhood social support.....	16
3.4 Culturally specific observations with regards to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people ..	16
Appendix 1 - Sample information for overall sample and ASTI Subsample .....	18
Appendix 2 – Detailed description of variables and analytical techniques.....	20
Appendix 3 – Table 1. Ordinary least squares regression predicting parental efficacy and empowerment .....	23
Appendix 4 – Table 2. Ordinary least squares regression predicting informal help-seeking behaviour..	25
Appendix 5 – Table 3. Logistic regression models predicting formal help-seeking behaviour (0 = did not seek help and 1 = sought help).....	27
Appendix 6 – Table 4. Ordinary least squares regression for parental efficacy and empowerment scale for Indigenous respondents only. ....	29
Appendix 7 - Table 5. Ordinary least squares regression for seeking informal parental support .....	31
Appendix 8 – Table 6. Bivariate analysis predicting formal parental help seeking.....	32
References.....	33

# 1. Methodology

## 1.1 Talking Families Survey

This research uses survey data from the Talking Families Campaign commissioned by the Queensland Family and Child Commission. For the purpose of this report we analyse data derived from the 2015-2016 Talking Families Survey, which was conducted by Ipsos Australia with participants from metropolitan, inner and outer regional areas, as well as remote to very remote areas in Queensland (Ipsos Social Research, 2016). The Talking Families Survey captured experiences relating to parenting, coping, help seeking and engagement in a culturally diverse sample.

The quantitative survey was delivered online using a computer assisted self-administered questionnaire. In cases where individuals were unable to complete the survey online, they completed the survey in person with the assistance of a trained interviewer. Participants were recruited through online survey panels, random digit telephone sample, and face-to-face networking. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants were recruited through local liaison officers at Winangali's Ngara Network. A disproportionate stratified sample was used resulting in a diverse sample of Queensland respondents (Ipsos Social Research, 2016). The survey over-sampled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals to reflect their disproportionate representation in the Child Protection System (Tilbury, 2009) and to enable separate and detailed analysis of this cohort.

Ipsos previously examined and reported a number of significant bivariate findings with regards to parental empowerment and efficacy, as well as help seeking (both formal and informal), amongst other outcome measures (Ipsos Social Research, 2016). We build on the existing Ipsos research by undertaking a series of multivariate analyses, with a particular focus on the role of domestic and family violence, community and neighbourhood factors and cultural differences in parental empowerment and efficacy, help seeking and engagement. We examine the role of individual characteristics and risk factors along with family- and community-level risk and protective factors. For the purpose of this report we generate findings for the overall parent sample and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific subsample of parents.

## 1.2 Focus

The focus of this research was to generate knowledge on parental help seeking and engagement. In order to do this, we examine a number of risk and protective factors that affect parents' perceptions of efficacy and empowerment, along with their likelihood of seeking informal and formal support in relation to parenting. We include the role of parental empowerment and efficacy because research has highlighted its relevance in understanding and fostering parental engagement with different sources support (Dempsey & Dunst, 2004; Minnes, Perry & Weiss, 2014; Nachshen & Minnes, 2005; Vuorenmaa, Perälä, Halme, Kaunonen & Åstedt-Kurki, 2015). We are interested in whether differences in parental empowerment and help-seeking behaviours are associated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status and speaking a language other than English. While we examine the role of various risk and protective factors associated with our outcome variables from a theoretical perspective (i.e. parental empowerment and help-seeking literature), we are particularly interested in the role of DFV and family and neighbourhood/ community support and connectedness on these outcomes. Further, looking specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, we examine the extent to which cultural connectedness influences parental empowerment and help-seeking behaviours for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents. The following research questions guide our analysis:

- Are there differences in parental efficacy and empowerment, informal and formal help seeking for Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants and English language and non-English language speakers?
- How do experiences of DFV influence parental efficacy and empowerment, informal and formal help seeking?
- How does informal (family and friends) support influence parental efficacy and empowerment, informal and formal help seeking?
- How do neighbourhood social support factors influence parental efficacy and empowerment, informal and formal help seeking?
- How does cultural connectedness influence parental efficacy and empowerment and help-seeking behaviours for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents?

### 1.3 Sample

For our analyses we use the parent subsample of the Talking Families Survey. This sample comprises 1,991 participants who have a dependant under the age of 18 years in their care, either part or all of the time. Appendix 1 provides the characteristics of the sample. We also provide an in-depth analysis of parental empowerment and help-seeking behaviours in the subsample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (n=510) specifically.

With regards to examining if and how findings around parental empowerment and efficacy, help seeking and engagement differ for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents we need to note some limitations regarding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parent subsample. From our examination of the socio-demographic characteristics of this subsample, it is clear that it is not representative of Australia's overall Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. Ninety-six percent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents captured in the parent subsample reside in major cities with the remaining four percent residing in inner and outer regional locations and only one respondent identifying as residing in a remote community. This residential distribution therefore under-represents those residing in regional, rural and remote communities. Australian Census data for example shows that in 2011, only around one third (34.8%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lived in major cities (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2013a).

Further, the subsample was not representative with regards to educational attainment. Nearly 70% of the Talking Families Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parent sample had at least completed year 12, compared to an average of nearly 25% in the overall population captured in the 2006 census data (Australia Human Rights Commission [AHRC], 2008). The current sample further shows an underrepresentation of single parent households in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subsample, with 39.4% reporting single parent status compared to around 75% in the overall population (AHRC, 2008). Findings relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are therefore limited to this particular survey sample and cannot be generalised to the broader population<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Overall survey data used by Ipsos in their report based on the full survey sample (N=4,261) was weighted. Data used for this report has not been weighted based on the fact that our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subsample is a non-random sample, which is not representative of the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. From a methodological point of view, data can therefore not be weighted because it does not allow the generation of generalizable characteristics within this non-random, non-representative sample.

## 1.4 Analysis

We use step-wise regression models to examine the role of socio-demographic factors (step 1), individual risk factors (step 2), family and friend support measures (step 3) and neighbourhood social support measures (step 4) in understanding variation in parental efficacy and empowerment, informal (family and friend) support and formal help seeking (we define these measures in the next section). We then use the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parent subsample and consider the association between connection to culture and our outcome variables. We note that the original sample is based on probability and non-probability techniques, and although the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample is largely representative of the population from which it is drawn this does not apply to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample. Any inferences from our analyses are therefore only attributable to the sample and not the wider population. For more details on the analytical techniques and models, please refer to the technical appendix (Appendix 2).

## 1.5 Variables

Our variables are grouped into several categories: (1) socio-demographic characteristics (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestry and Non-English Speaking background); (2) individual risk factors (including experiences of DFV); (3) family and friends support factors; and (4) neighbourhood social support factors. Some of our socio-demographic variables arguably constitute risk factors from a theoretical point of view. These include single parent status, socio-economic status measured in form of hardship and having a child with a disability. For the purpose of this analysis, their inclusion under one or the other group of variables does not affect the overall outcome as they are entered in step 1 and maintained throughout the models.

In our analyses, we consider the influence of these variables on the following ***dependent variables***:

- Parental efficacy and empowerment measure (PEEM scale)
- Informal help seeking (from family and/ or friends in relation to parenting concerns)
- Formal help seeking (in form of parenting education and/ or parenting services)

Our ***predictor variables*** are as follows:

### *Socio-demographic variables*

- gender
- age
- single parent status
- financial hardship
- Indigenous (Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander) status
- speaks (a language other than) English at home
- custody arrangement
- children with disability
- number of children
- education

- employment
- (geographical) remoteness

#### *Individual risk factors*

- childhood trauma
- diagnosed mental illness
- stressful life events
- crime
- DFV
- problem drinking (behaviour), and
- difficulties coping with parenting role

#### *Family and/ or friend support*

- family connections (frequency of contact with family),
- family support (quality and availability), and
- having special people/ a special support person in their life

#### *Neighbourhood social support*

- perceived neighbourhood capacity
- contact with neighbours
- perceived neighbourhood parenting norms

For the properties and coding of each variable, please refer to the technical appendix (Appendix 2).

The correlations of all variables were below 0.50 and Variance Inflation analyses did not reveal any multicollinearity in any of our analyses.

## 2. Results

Variables were entered into step-wise regression models (we used ordinary least square regression for PEEM and family/ friend support and logistic regression for seeking formal parenting education or support). In the first step, socio-demographic variables were entered, followed by individual risk factors, family support measures and neighbourhood social support measures. Only significant results are reported here. For a full overview of variables and their significant levels, please refer to the relevant tables provided in appendices 3 to 8.

## 2.1 Findings relating to the overall sample

In our first set of analyses we examine differences in parental empowerment and efficacy, informal and formal help seeking for the overall parent sample (n=1991).

### 2.1.1 Factors influencing parental efficacy and empowerment measures (PEEM)

Of our socio-demographic variables, we find that women and those who are employed report higher levels of parental efficacy and empowerment than men. Single parents and parents who have at least one child with a disability on the other hand score lower on the parental efficacy and empowerment measures. This is in line with other findings on parental empowerment showing that the stress associated with being a single parent and having a child with a disability can negatively affect parents' perceived levels of empowerment and efficacy (Nachshen, & Minnes, 2005; Vuorenmaa, Perälä, Halme, N., Kaunonen & Åstedt-Kurki, 2015). In addition, the presence of financial hardship is a strong predictor of lower PEEM scores. Parents who struggle to pay rent and cover their household expenses, for example, are less likely to feel empowered and effective in their parenting practices. As financial hardship increases, empowerment and efficacy continues to decrease.

With regards to cultural diversity, we find that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents as well as those speaking a language other than English at home report higher levels of empowerment and efficacy. While cultural diversity and minority status have been associated with a number of risk factors also relevant to parental efficacy and empowerment (see for example Hill, 2006), bivariate and multivariate analyses in our research show that compared to Anglo-Saxon Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and parents from a non-English speaking background report a higher sense of parental efficacy and empowerment.

In the second step of the analysis for PEEM, we find that parents affected by DFV report lower parental efficacy and empowerment. While the measure of DFV relates to the presence of DFV within the household and does not identify whether the respondent is a victim or perpetrator, this observation is consistent with other research findings. A number of studies show that DFV has a negative impact on parenting capacity and the parent-child relationship for both the abusive and non-abusive parent (Levendosky & Graham-Berman, 2001; Featherstone & Peckover, 2007). We further find that parents who report they struggle to cope with everyday parenting report significantly lower levels of parental empowerment and efficacy. Again we would expect this relationship as both measures are self-report measures of perceived parental capacity and therefore likely to reflect similar perceptions.

In the third step we enter our family and friends support measures, including frequency of contact, quality and availability of contact and whether parents have a special person they can rely on in their life. All three factors are significant and predict higher levels of efficacy and empowerment. In addition, they mediate the role of gender, non-English speaking background and the presence of DFV: these variables are insignificant once family and friend support measures are accounted for, suggesting that access to informal support plays a greater role in predicting parental efficacy and empowerment than individual characteristics and risk factors. In other words, being connected with family and friends, having access to quality informal support and having a special person in one's life has the capacity to reduce the impact of risk factors, such as the presence of DFV for example.

In the last step of this analysis, we enter neighbourhood social support measures, including perceived community perceptions of parenting roles, regular visits with neighbours and neighbourhood capacity. All three variables are significant in predicting parental efficacy and empowerment. Thus even after controlling for an individual's kinship ties, parents who are connected to their neighbourhoods, describe their neighbourhood as close-knit, safe and supportive and believe that parents are not being



stigmatised within their community for seeking support, report significantly higher levels of parental efficacy and empowerment.

### 2.1.2 Factors associated with informal (family/ friend) help seeking

We repeat the same four-step models to examine the association between our variables of interest and informal parental help seeking. We find that women and younger parents are more likely to agree they have asked for help or support from friends, family and neighbours when compared to men and older parents. This is true for parents with full custody of their children when compared to those with different custody arrangements. This finding suggests that parents with full custody arrangements may experience greater parenting concerns due to their full-time parent role and may therefore be more likely to draw on family and friends for support. Parents living in regional and remote as opposed to metropolitan areas on the other hand were less likely to agree they would seek help from family and friends. This last observation may in part be due to a certain level of isolation associated with living in outer regional and remote communities. Research suggests that people living in rural and remote communities are often somewhat isolated from informal and formal support sources, which can have a negative impact on help-seeking behaviours (Ragusa, 2012).

In the next step we enter individual risk factors and find that parents with an accumulation of stressful life events (such as changes in family formation, experiences of serious health concerns) are more likely to report informal help seeking from family and friends. This indicates that parents in this sample may rely on family and friends for support when experiencing challenging life events. Parents who feel they would be stigmatised for seeking help are less likely to agree that they engaged in help seeking from family and friends. Conversely, those who report higher levels of parental efficacy and empowerment are more likely to agree that they relied on family and friends for parenting-related support and advice. While this may seem counter-intuitive, it is not uncommon. Other studies reveal parental empowerment plays a significant role in parental help seeking with those feeling more empowered and effective in their parenting also feeling more confident in seeking support if needed (Dendy, 2012). Entering the individual risk factors mediates the effect of gender and custody arrangements, meaning once we account for other individual risk factors, these socio-demographic characteristics no longer predict informal help seeking.

In the third step we enter the family and friends support measures, including connectedness with family and friends, access to quality support from family and friends and having a special person in one's life. Similar to our findings reported for parental empowerment and efficacy, all three informal support variables are significant and increase parents' agreement that they draw on family and friend support with regards to parenting concerns. The inclusion of these variables further mediate some of the previously significant socio-demographic characteristics. Thus having a variety of informal support mechanisms in place may increase the likelihood of drawing on these resources, regardless of age and geographic location. For those residing in outer regional and remote communities this finding highlights the importance of being connected to family and friends.

In the last step we enter the neighbourhood social support variables. In this model, only neighbourhood capacity predicts informal help seeking. Those who ascribe greater capacity to their neighbourhoods are more likely to agree that they have asked for help or support from their informal networks.

### 2.1.3 Factors associated with formal help seeking (in form of parenting education and/ or services)

In our last analyses using the full sample, we consider if there are differences in the predictors of formal parental help seeking when compared to informal parental help seeking. Again we enter our socio-demographic variables in the first step of the analysis. In contrast to our earlier analyses for informal help seeking, women are less likely to seek formal parental support than men in our sample. Financial hardship and having a child with a disability are also associated with higher odds of seeking formal help on parenting related issues. While these factors can be associated with social stigma and isolation, they also indicate a greater need for support. It is therefore encouraging to see that those who have a child with a disability and experience financial hardship in this sample (which are associated with lower PEEM scores) are more likely to make use of formal parental support. Both circumstances may also be associated with a greater likelihood of being in contact with different types of (family) welfare services (Morris, 2013). As a result, parents who experience financial hardship or have a child with a disability may be connected within a service system that is likely to offer or refer to formal parental support services.

In the next step, we enter individual risk factors. A mental illness diagnosis, a criminal conviction and experiencing an accumulation of stressful life events all increase parents' likelihood of engaging with formal parenting education and other support services. This is an important observation because it suggests that those parents who are most vulnerable due to the presence of one or more risk factors are also more likely to seek formal parental support. In part, this may have a similar underlying explanation as that of financial hardship. Those with substantial risk factors (e.g. crime, mental health problems) could be more likely to be engaged with statutory agencies (Morris, 2013), which in return may facilitate parental help seeking at a formal level.

In step three of our formal help-seeking model, we enter our informal support variables. When examining these variables in relation to formal help seeking, only those with more frequent contact to family and friends (i.e. those who are more connected) are more likely to seek formal support. The availability and quality of informal support and whether parents have a special person in their life on the other hand has no significant influence on parent's formal help seeking.

In the last step we enter our neighbourhood social support variables and find that those who have frequent contact with neighbours are also more likely to seek formal parental support. Interestingly, this last variable mediates the role of informal connectedness. Once we control for the frequency of neighbour contact, frequency of contact with family and friends is no longer significant. This suggests that connectedness at the neighbourhood level plays a greater role in predicting formal help seeking than connectedness at the individual family/ friend level, at least for this sample.

Despite some observed differences in the role of informal support and connectedness for our three outcomes variables, overall findings presented in this report reveal that family and friends support along with neighbourhood social support play a key role in explaining parental efficacy and empowerment along with formal and informal help seeking beyond the role of individual characteristics and risk factors. Particularly noteworthy are some of the mediating effects observed for the informal and community support variables. These suggest that while individual characteristics and risk factors may individually affect parental outcomes and engagement, it is the level of connectedness at the family and neighbourhood level that increases the likelihood of help seeking, even for those facing individual level risk factors. This is particularly relevant when we consider the differences in our outcome measures attributable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status or non-English speaking backgrounds. In this sample, what matters above and beyond these factors are connectedness with family, friends and one's neighbourhood. Similarly interesting are the findings relating to DFV in our analyses. To start with, DFV

only affects parents' sense of efficacy and empowerment but not their help-seeking decisions and engagement in this sample. Further, where it negatively affects parental efficacy and empowerment, this impact is reduced once we control for family, friends and neighbourhood support factors.

## 2.2 Differences observed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents

One of the objectives of this research is to examine if and how some of the overall findings around parental empowerment and efficacy, help seeking and engagement differ for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents. We therefore conduct the previously described analysis on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parent subsample.

### 2.2.1 Parental Efficacy and Empowerment (PEEM)

In our first analysis, we examine the predictors of the PEEM score for the participants in the Talking Families survey who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. We used the same analytic approach as with our first set of analyses. In the first step we enter our socio-demographic variables. Similar to the overall sample findings, women in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subsample reported higher levels of parental efficacy and empowerment. In addition, the number of children is significant. Women who have three children as opposed to one or two report lower efficacy and empowerment. However, the same relationship cannot be observed as number of children continues to increase. In other words, having three children as opposed to one or two lowers parents' sense of empowerment and efficacy whereas having four or more children does not. While these findings need to be interpreted with care given the non-representative sample from which these observations emerge, it is possible that the increase from having two to three children is a tipping point with regards to parental coping whereas having more than three children may not be. Number of children is only predictive in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subsample. It does not contribute to explain parental empowerment and efficacy in the overall sample.

Similar to findings reported for the overall sample, increasing financial hardship significantly lowers parental efficacy and empowerment. In the subsample, we further observe that employment status has an effect on parents' sense of efficacy and empowerment. Except for retired respondents, those without gainful employment (e.g. students, stay-at-home parents) reported lower PEEM scores.

In the second step we enter our individual risk factors. Similar to the findings observed for the overall model, parents who report they are struggling to cope with parental responsibilities on a weekly basis also report a lower sense of efficacy and empowerment. In addition, we find that a mental illness diagnosis lowers parental efficacy and empowerment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, although this was not the case in the overall parent sample. Other research, however, identifies a general negative relationship between parental mental illness and parents' sense of efficacy and empowerment (see for example Dolman, Jones & Howard, 2013). In addition, culturally specific data show that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are significantly more likely to suffer from psychological distress (ABS, 2013b; Australian Indigenous Health *InfoNet*, 2015). Given the link between mental health and parental empowerment, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents in this sample, this overrepresentation is particularly concerning.

With regards to DFV, we find no significant effect on parental efficacy and empowerment among the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parent subsample when accounting for other individual characteristics and risk factors. While this finding must be interpreted with caution due to the non-representative nature of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sample, it may suggest that the

presence of DFV is less important for parental efficacy and empowerment among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents in comparison to other individual level characteristics and risk factors.

In the third step, we enter our family and friends support measures. Parents who are in frequent contact with family and friends report higher PEEM scores. In addition, those who report higher levels of accessibility and quality for support from family and friends also report significantly higher PEEM scores. Availability of quality informal support is a key predictor in this model because it predicts the largest variation in reported efficacy and empowerment at the bivariate level (12.5%) of all variables tested in this model. This observation is supported by other sources, which highlight the importance of connectedness to family and friends for social and emotional wellbeing, including parental wellbeing, among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, 2015).

In the next step we enter our neighbourhood social support measures and find that having regular contact with one's neighbour(s) predicts a higher sense of parental efficacy and empowerment. This finding is particularly interesting because it mediates the initial influence of other factors. Once we include contact with neighbours, other risk factors, including increasing number of children, a mental illness diagnosis and struggling to cope with parental responsibilities are no longer significant. At least for this sample, connections with neighbours has a positive impact on parental efficacy and empowerment, perhaps even for those with a mental illness diagnosis or those struggling to cope in their role as a parent. Recent contact with neighbours can therefore be seen as a protective factor for parental efficacy and empowerment.

In the last step we examine the role of parents' connection to country. We find that parents who report that they are living on homeland and parents who engaged in four or more cultural activities (such as fishing, hunting, traditional storytelling, attending cultural or spiritual ceremonies) within the month prior to data collection report significantly higher levels of parental empowerment and efficacy. This finding highlights the role of cultural engagement and connectedness in predicting better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents with regards to parental efficacy and empowerment.

### 2.2.2 Informal help seeking

In our next analyses, we examine the factors associated with informal help seeking from family and friends among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents. Similar to findings reported in the overall model, having full custody of their children is associated with a greater agreement that they have sought help from family, friends or neighbours. In addition, having three as opposed to one or two children also influences informal help seeking. This finding was not significant using the complete parental sample, thus it is possible that the association between seeking informal help and having more children is related to the role of extended family in raising children for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Research shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are more commonly being raised with the support of an extended family network (Tilbury, 2009). Involving extended family in the raising of children, especially in families with an increasing number of children, may therefore be interpreted as drawing on family or friends for parental support in our sample.

In the next step we enter our individual risk factors and find that parents struggling to cope with the responsibilities of parenting are more likely to agree that they have asked for informal help on parenting related matters. This is a noteworthy observation because in the previous model we note that struggling to cope reduces parental empowerment and efficacy. Observing an increase in informal help seeking therefore suggests that although people who struggle to cope feel less empowered and effective in their parenting, they are not reluctant to draw on family and friends for support.

In the next step we enter our family and friends support measures and find that availability and quality of family and friends support along with having a special person that can be trusted in one's life are all associated with increased agreement that informal help was sought from family, friends and neighbours.

In the fourth step we enter our neighbourhood variables. Only perceptions of neighbourhood views of help-seeking parents influence participants' agreement that they have sought support from family and friends. Those who believe that help-seeking parents are seen as weak or incapable are less likely to disclose their need for support to family and friends.

In the last step we enter our measures around parents' connectedness to country. Here, cultural identity (i.e. identifying with a traditional family or language group) increases parents' likelihood of drawing on family and friends for support. This may mean that those who feel more culturally connected are also more confident in relying on extended family for support. The role of cultural connectedness has been raised in other research and is said to have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Gee, Dudgeon, Schultz, Hart & Kelly, 2014).

### 2.2.3 Formal help seeking

For our examination of results on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents formal help seeking in form of parenting education and support services we present bivariate findings. Due to the substantial level of missing data on some of the variables of interest to us<sup>2</sup>, we were not able to conduct multivariate analyses without introducing further systematic bias into the sample. We discuss the results of the bivariate analyses in the same order as all other models, i.e. socio-demographic variables followed by individual risk factors, followed by family and friends support measures, followed by neighbourhood social support factors and concluded with factors specific to cultural connectedness. Bivariate results are presented in table 6 (see Appendix 8).

Looking first to the influence of the socio-demographic variables, similar to our other analyses, we find gender is significant at the bivariate level with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women almost twice as likely as men to seek formal parental support. Education was also significant. Parents who hold a university qualification are nearly 3.5 times more likely to seek formal parental support than parents who did not complete grade 12. However, respondents who finished grade 12, or obtained a trade/ TAFE qualification were not significantly different in their formal help seeking when compared to those who did not finish high school. That only university qualifications are significantly associated with formal help seeking suggest that this group might have greater access to information about parental support programs and support services and may thus be more likely to access such services.

With regards to employment, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents who are unemployed are significantly less likely to seek formal parental support than those who are employed. Financial hardship on the other hand appears to have no significant impact on the formal help-seeking decisions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents. Number of children has no predictive ability on formal parental help seeking whereas having a child with a disability increases Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents' likelihood of formal help seeking more than two-fold. Observations made for the role of having a child with a disability are in line with the positive relationship observed in the overall sample. Number of children is not significant in explaining formal parental help seeking in the overall sample but has been associated with increased formal support seeking in other research (Redmond, Spoth & Trudeau, 2002).

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<sup>2</sup> Variables of employment and education caused a sample size drop of almost 40% for this outcomes variable, which has substantial impact on statistical power of the model.

With regards to individual risk factors, experiences of childhood trauma are associated with greater formal help seeking among parents. Those who had experienced the loss of a loved one, parental divorce or separation, a severe illness, childhood (sexual) abuse, and/or family contact with the child protection system were almost twice as likely to engage with formal parenting education or support services as those without reported childhood trauma. This observation may suggest that parents in our sub-sample who share adverse childhood experiences are more attuned to the availability and potential benefits of formal parenting support services. However, these findings need to be interpreted with caution due to the nature of this particular variable. Childhood trauma was captured as a dichotomous variable that measures the absence or presence of childhood trauma rather than the absence, presence and accumulation of traumatic events. Research on the presence of childhood trauma, however, alerts to the compounding effects of an accumulation of traumatic events (Bellis, Lowey, Leckenby, Hughes & Harrison, 2014; Nurius, Green, Logan-Greene & Borja, 2015). This finding may be different if the properties of the variable allowed us to distinguish between parents with single incident trauma and those with an accumulation of childhood trauma events. None of the other individual risk factors examined in the other models were significant in explaining formal parental help seeking among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents at the bivariate level. This includes, parental criminality, mental health problems, and DFV.

Of particular interest to us is the absence of predictive ability of DFV. Despite the overrepresentation of DFV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Phillips & Vandenbroek, 2014), DFV makes no significant difference in parents' formal help seeking. Just over half (51%) of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parent sample reported on here disclosed the presence of DFV in their household. While formal help seeking was slightly higher for those affected by DFV (24% compared to 18%), this difference is not statistically significant. This finding may be partly affected by the nature of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parent subsample. While research shows that DFV frequently has an isolating effect on its victims, especially those of cultural minority status and affected by social marginalisation (Phillips & Vandenbroek, 2014), the level of marginalisation observed in this Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subsample is not as severe as it is in the general Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

We further examine the role of family and friends support measures in explaining formal parental help seeking. Interestingly, none of the informal support measures (i.e. frequency, quality, and availability of family and friends support or the presence of a special person in one's life) predicted formal help seeking. On the other hand, respondents in regular contact with their neighbours and those who perceive high levels of neighbourhood capacity are 2.5 and 1.5 times more likely to engage in formal parenting support services respectively.

As with our analyses on parental efficacy and informal help seeking, using the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subsample of parents, we also examine the bivariate relationships between our measures of cultural connectedness and formal parental help-seeking actions. Parents who identify with a traditional family or language group are almost 3 times more likely to engage in formal parental support than those who do not identify with their culture in the same way. Other measures of cultural connectedness, including living on homeland and engaging in cultural events had no effect on parents' likelihood of seeking formal support. This suggests that in the context of this sample, formal parental help seeking is predicted by cultural identity, however, these findings need to be interpreted with caution due to the characteristics of the subsample. As discussed earlier, the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents captured in this sample live in major cities rather than regional, rural or remote communities. While connectedness to land has been identified as a protective factor for engagement, health and wellbeing among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Gee et al, 2014), it may be less relevant to those residing in major cities and this variable might have a different effect on the help seeking of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents living in regional, rural and remote

communities, which are not captured in large enough numbers in this sample to draw any meaningful conclusions from their help-seeking decisions.

### 3. Summary and Implications

In this summary we focus on the key findings and their implications as they relate to our original research questions. Findings are therefore summarised under the following themes:

- The role of DFV with regards to parental efficacy and empowerment, informal and formal help seeking
- The role of informal support (family and friends) with regards to parental efficacy and empowerment, informal and formal help seeking
- The role of neighbourhood social support factors with regards to parental efficacy and empowerment, informal and formal help seeking
- Culturally specific observations with regards to Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people

#### 3.1 The role of DFV

The role of DFV was of particular interest to us, given its often isolating effect on victims, especially with regards to help seeking (Evans & Feder, 2016; Meyer, 2012). Interestingly, DFV plays a very small role in predicting parental engagement and empowerment in this survey sample. In the overall sample, the presence of DFV predicts lower levels of parental empowerment and efficacy. However, once we control for informal support and neighbourhood social support variables, this relationship is no longer significant. This suggests that the effect of DFV on parental efficacy and empowerment can be mediated by protective factors at the family, friends and community level. Those with strong connections to family, friends and neighbours experience significantly higher parental efficacy and empowerment. In addition, the presence or absence of DFV has no predictive power with regards to parental empowerment and help seeking in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subsample. While this may partly be due to the nature of this subsample (as alerted to in sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.3) it may also suggest that even in communities and populations exposed to disproportionately high levels of DFV, other individual, informal support and neighbourhood social support factors can act as protective factors to ensure the engagement and help seeking of parents, including those affected by DFV.

The challenge arising here is that a number of studies have highlighted the level of social isolation suffered by many victims affected by DFV. In some instances perpetrators strategically isolate victims from informal and formal support sources (Meyer, 2012). In other instances, the shame and self-blame associated with DFV simply prevents victims from disclosing these experiences (Evans & Feder, 2016). Increasing individual and community awareness and education around DFV, its complex nature and the challenges associated with help seeking for many victims are therefore crucial factors in strengthening connectedness, engagement and help seeking of those affected by DFV (Meyer, 2012).

#### 3.2 The role of informal (family and friends) support

In the context of our overall sample as well as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subsample, informal family and friends support played a significant role in parents' empowerment and efficacy, help seeking and engagement with formal parenting services; in many cases above and beyond the explanations offered by socio-demographic variables and individual level risk factors. With regards to

parental efficacy and empowerment, being connected to family and friends mediated the negative effect of DFV, along with other individual level variables. Having a special person in one's life along with access to quality support by family and friends in general significantly increases parents' sense of efficacy and empowerment and their likelihood of seeking informal and to some extent formal support. In the context of this sample, this is true for the overall sample as well as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subsample. This finding is important as it clearly points towards the role of family and friends in the lives of parents, especially those experiencing a number of risk factors. Similar to the implications discussed around parental empowerment and efficacy, implications point towards the importance of public and community awareness around social support, help seeking and parental risk and protective factors to build capacity for parents to become and remain engaged and connected.

### 3.3 The role of neighbourhood social support

In our analyses, community social support factors were highly significant across all three outcome variables. Recent contact with one's neighbours acted as a protective factor across a number of models and predicted an increase in parental empowerment and efficacy as well as engagement in formal parental support and education. These findings were observed for the overall sample as well as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subsample, highlighting the importance of connectedness at the individual neighbour level across cultural contexts. Given the positive impact observed for regular neighbour connectedness, implications point towards greater capacity building at the community level. It is important for people to understand the value of social connectedness at this level, especially in contemporary society with increasing levels of social disconnectedness and anonymity (Jorgensen, Fallov & Knudsen, 2011). Implications therefore point towards the role of community education, awareness raising and skill building to foster neighbourhood social support and strengthen individual responses to improve outcomes for parents and their children (Reece, Staudt & Ogle, 2014).

### 3.4 Culturally specific observations with regards to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

We note some interesting and significant findings regarding the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents. A number of similarities were observed between the overall and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subsample. These include the role of individual factors, such as financial hardship, in lowering parental efficacy and empowerment. Connectedness to friends, family and neighbours on the other hand increases parental efficacy and empowerment along with the likelihood of informal help seeking and formal engagement. Findings observed in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subsample highlight the role of extended family and neighbourhood level measures as protective factors. Despite the accumulation of risk for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, connectedness at the family and community level contributes substantially to greater parental efficacy and empowerment and encourages help seeking and engagement.

We were also interested in the role of cultural connectedness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents. A number of studies have highlighted the positive effects of cultural connectedness on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's health and wellbeing (Gee et al, 2014; Tsey et al, 2010). Findings derived from this research support this growing body of literature. For this sample, cultural connectedness is of significant importance for parental efficacy and empowerment, informal parental help seeking and engagement with formal parenting services. For respondents with a strong sense of cultural identity and/ or those connected to country and engaging in multiple cultural activities, such as



fishing, hunting, traditional storytelling, attending cultural or spiritual ceremonies fared significantly better across all three outcome variables.

Findings derived from the analysis of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parent subsample point towards the role of culturally specific education and capacity building at the community level. Illustrating to parents the benefits of connectedness at the general family and friends and community social support level as well as a cultural level can have positive effects on parental help seeking and engagement. In line with past research recommendations, community education and capacity building must take a bottom up approach and be developed and implemented together with the relevant communities in order to be effective (Cheers et al, 2006).

Appendix 1 - Sample information for overall sample and ASTI Subsample

**Overall Sample**

	<b>No of Participants</b>	<b>Mean% (SD)</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Female	1991	62.48%	--	--
ATSI respondents	1990	25.58%	--	--
Age	1991	35-45 years	18-24	65+
Speaks English		89.39%		
Total number of children	1991	2 (1.16)	1	9
Single parents	1946	24.31%	--	--
Full custody of children	1991	87.39%	--	--
<b>Education</b>	1897			
Did not complete high school	327	17.42%		
Completed high school	325	17.31%		
TAFE/Trade qualification	598	31.86%		
Bachelor degree	338	18.01		
Post graduate qualifications	289	15.40	--	--
<b>Employment</b>	1897		--	--
Employed	1248	65.79		
Retired/Pension	82	4.32		
Home Duties/Other	409	21.56		
Student	45	2.37		
Unemployed	113	5.96		
Lives in major city	1991	57.71%	--	--

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sample

	<b>No of Participants</b>	<b>Mean% (SD)</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Female	510	56.47%	--	--
Age	510	25-35 years	18-24	65+
Speaks English	459	88.24%		
Total number of children	510	2.39 (1.59)	1	9
Single parents	488	41.19%	--	--
Full custody of children	510	78.82%	--	--
<b>Education</b>	410		--	--
Did not complete high school	161	39.27	--	--
Completed high school	90	21.95	--	--
TAFE/Trade qualification	104	25.37	--	--
University qualifications	55	13.41	--	--
<b>Employment</b>	425		--	--
Employed	203	47.76	--	--
Retired/Pension	39	9.18	--	--
Home Duties/Student/Other	115	27.06	--	--
Unemployed	68	16.00	--	--
Lives in major city	510	96.27	--	--

## Variables

Dependent variables: We examine the influences of parental efficacy and empowerment and seeking informal and formal parenting assistance. **Our first dependent variable** is the ***Parental Efficacy and Empowerment Measure (PEEM)***. This is a 20 item scale that measures parent functioning, with a focus on caregivers' sense of control or capacity to engage confidently with the challenges of being a parent. This scale has robust psychometric properties in terms of reliability and validity (see Freiburg, Homel, & Branch, 2014). Based on the current sample, the PEEM scale has high internal reliability ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ). **Our second dependent variable** captures ***informal help seeking*** and asks participants to agree or disagree with the statement "I have asked for help or support from friends, family or neighbours" if they have asked for help or support from friends, family or neighbours. We recoded the response categories for this variable so that strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), agree (4) and strongly agree (5). **Our final dependent variable** measures parents' ***formal help seeking***. This is a dichotomous variable where 0 indicates that parents have never sought support and 1 indicates that parents used a parenting support service or attended a parenting support education program.

Socio-demographic control variables: In all our models we control for a range of socio-demographic characteristics that may influence reported parental efficacy and parental help seeking (Vuoreenma et al, 2015). These include:

- **gender:** This is a dichotomous variable where 0 = female; 1 = male.
- **age:** This is ordinal variable with age ranges from 18-24 (coded as 1) to 65+ (coded as 6) treated as a continuous variable in our analyses.
- **single parent:** This is a dichotomous variable where 0 indicates that the respondent's partner assists with parenting and 1 indicates the participant parents alone.
- **financial hardship:** This is an ordinal scale of hardship ranging from 0 – no hardship to 6 representing extreme hardship. In our analyses, we treat this as a continuous variable.
- **Indigenous (Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander) status:** This is a dichotomous variable where 0 represents non indigenous heritage and 1 indicates an indigenous heritage.
- **speaks English at home:** This is a dichotomous variable where 0 = speaks English only and 1 = speaks a language other than English.
- **custody:** This is a dichotomous variable where full custody = 0 and other custody arrangements = 1.
- **children with disability:** This is a dichotomous variable where 0 = no children with disability and 1 = at least 1 child with disability.
- **number of children:** We treat this variable as a continuous variable in the analyses using the overall sample, however, this variable did not respond as a linear variable in our analyses using the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parental subsample. For our analyses using this sample, we used a categorical variable where 1 = 1 or 2 children, 2 = 3 children, 3 = 4 children and 4 = five or more children. One or two children was the reference category.

- **Education:** This is a categorical variable where 1 = did not complete high school (reference category), 2 = completed high school, 3 = has trade certificate or attended TAFE, 4 = Bachelor's degree and 5=university qualifications. In our Indigenous analyses, due to small cell sizes, we reduced the response categories to four: 1 = did not complete high school (reference category), 2 = completed high school, 3 = has trade certificate or attended TAFE, 4 = university qualifications.
- **Employment:** This is a categorical variable where 1 = employed (reference category), 2 = retired/pensioner, 3 = home duties /other, 4 students and 5 = unemployed. Due to small cell sizes in the Indigenous parental sample, we reduced these categories to four: 1 = employed (reference category), 2 = retired/pensioner, 3 = home duties/students/other and 4 = unemployed).
- **Remoteness:** This is a categorical variable where 1 = lives in a major city (reference category), 2 = inner regional, 3 = outer regional and 4 = remote.

*Individual risk factors:* Empirical research demonstrates how a number of risk factors influence parental empowerment, efficacy and help-seeking behaviour (Martorell & Blunt, 2006; Vuoreenma et al, 2015). In our analyses we include the following risk measures:

- **childhood trauma:** This is a dichotomous variable where 0 indicates no trauma experienced as a child and 1 indicates the participant did experience trauma as a child),
- **diagnosed mental illness** (a dichotomous variable where 0 indicates the participant has not been diagnosed mental illness and 1 indicates the participant has received a diagnosis),
- **stressful life events** (this is an ordinal measure of serious life events ranging from 0 (no serious life events) to 5 (five or more serious life events),
- **crime** (if a respondent was convicted of a crime they were given a score of 1 if not, they were given a score of 0),
- **domestic violence** (this is a single item that asks how frequently domestic violence occurs in the household; treated as a continuous variable in the overall models (with scores ranging from 1=never and 5=always). Due to small cell sizes in the Indigenous sample, for all the analyses using the Indigenous parental subsample, we employ a dichotomous variable where 0 indicates no domestic violence is present and 1 indicates domestic violence is present. due to sample size and associated statistical power and as a dichotomous variable for the Indigenous subsample due to smaller sample size and in order to reflect distributional properties of responses, and
- **problem drinking** (this a categorical variable where 1 = participants feel they should cut down on drinking, 2 = do not see their drinking as a problem and 3 = do not drink (this is the reference category)).
- **difficult to cope with being a parent or caregiver:** This is a categorical variable that asks respondents to comment how frequently they have struggled with parenting in the last month (1 = every day, 2 = several times a week, 3 = once a week, 4 = once a fortnight, 5 = once in the last month and 6 = never (the reference category)).

*Family/friend support:* The degree of support and frequency of contacts with family and friends might influence parental efficacy and empowerment and the willingness of participants to seek parental support (Nachshen & Minnes, 2005; Vuorenmaa et al, 2015). We include three measures of personal support in our models. **Connections** represents a scale of 3 items that asks participants to indicate how much contact they have had with family and friends in the last week. The scale demonstrates sound reliability at alpha 0.66. Our next measure is **family support**, which comprises a 10 item scale capturing the availability and quality of family support. This scale is highly reliable at alpha 0.89. Our final scale comprises 3 items that capture the availability of **special people** in the respondents' lives. This scale is highly reliable at alpha 0.95.

*Neighbourhood Social Support:* A large body research suggests that the local neighbourhood has consequences for health, civic actions and victimisation (Mazerolle, Wickes McBroom, 2010; Sampson, Raudenbush & Earls, 1997; Sampson, McAdam, MacIndoe & Weffer-Elizondo, 2005; Sampson, Morenoff & Gannon-Rowley, 2002). It is also possible that the neighbourhood context may influence parental efficacy and encourage help-seeking behaviours of parenting related issues. In our study we include three variables that capture aspects of the neighbourhood. The first variable is perceived **neighbourhood capacity** which is derived from 10 items and is strongly reliable at alpha 0.82. We also include a single item that depicts whether or not participants have **visited with neighbours** in the last week (0 = did not visit with neighbours and 1 = visited with neighbours). Finally, in our models predicting help-seeking behaviour, we included a scale that captures **neighbourhood parenting norms**. There are 4 items in this scale that ask participants to agree or disagree with statements about neighbours' willingness to access and engage with parental support services. This scale is highly reliable at alpha 0.82.

*Stigma:* The literature suggests that stigma may strongly influence help-seeking behaviour (Overstreet & Quinn, 2013). In our models that examine informal and formal help-seeking behaviour, we include a scale of **perceived stigma**. This measure is a scale of 19 items that ask respondents to indicate how others perceive parents asking for support. This is a highly reliable scale (alpha = 0.97).

*Connections to country:* For the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, we sought to examine whether connections to country influence parental empowerment, efficacy, and help-seeking behaviour. In separate analyses we examine the additional influence of the following variables: **identity** is a dichotomous measure of whether or not a participant identifies with clan, tribal (traditional family) or language group (0 = no and 1 = yes); **homeland** is a dichotomous variable that asks respondents whether or not they live on their homeland (0 = no; 1 = yes). Finally we include two continuous measures to capture the level of engagement with indigenous culture: **cultural events** captures how many cultural events the participant has engaged in the last 12 months. It is a dichotomous variable where 0 = 1 to 3 events and 1 = four or more events (of note was that all participants in this sample had attended at least one cultural event in the past 12 months. Our **cultural activities** reflects the number of cultural activities the participant has engaged in the last 12 months. This is a categorical variable where 0 = no activities, 1 = one to three activities, 2 = four to six activities and 3 = seven or more activities. No cultural activities is the reference category.

Appendix 3 – Table 1. Ordinary least squares regression predicting parental efficacy and empowerment

	<i>Model 1</i>		<i>Model 2</i>		<i>Model 3</i>		<i>Model 4</i>	
	<b>B (SE)</b>		<b>B (SE)</b>		<b>B (SE)</b>		<b>B (SE)</b>	
Gender	-4.578	***	-5.932	***	-2.290		-2.434	*
	(1.329)		(1.338)		(1.220)		(1.190)	
Age	-0.270		-0.786		-0.031		-0.463	
	(0.637)		(0.617)		(0.556)		(0.544)	
ATSI	10.111	***	9.649	***	4.589	***	4.298	**
	(1.817)		(1.837)		(1.676)		(1.637)	
English language	4.988	**	5.207	**	2.223		1.774	
	(1.944)		(1.882)		(1.696)		(1.653)	
Number of children	0.125		-0.123		-0.355		-0.327	
	(0.844)		(0.842)		(0.755)		(0.737)	
Full custody	-0.360		0.770		0.746		1.302	
	(1.971)		(1.963)		(1.759)		(1.716)	
Child with disability	-11.031	***	-7.776	***	-8.123	***	-8.005	***
	(1.638)		(1.627)		(1.459)		(1.422)	
Single parenting	-3.113	*	-2.278		-0.160		.0002	
	(1.515)		(1.501)		(1.359)		(1.325)	
Financial hardship	-3.003	***	-1.312	**	-1.449	***	-1.205	***
	(0.388)		(0.424)		(0.381)		(0.373)	
Level of Education (reference category is did not complete high school)								
Completed high school	0.303		-0.371		-1.084		-1.211	
	(2.055)		(2.039)		(1.829)		(1.782)	
Trade certificate	0.002		0.476		0.517		0.304	
	(1.856)		(1.834)		(1.644)		(1.602)	
Bachelor degree	-0.401		0.276		-0.812		-1.454	
	(2.123)		(2.071)		(1.862)		(1.816)	
Post graduate	3.632		4.0328		2.797		1.996	
	(2.196)		(2.149)		(1.931)		(1.884)	
Employment status (full time reference category)								
Retired/Pensioner	-3.015		-3.398		-2.461		-3.091	
	(3.196)		(3.160)		(2.841)		(2.770)	
Home duties/other	-4.601	**	-2.557		-1.132		-1.150	
	(1.602)		(1.563)		(1.404)		(1.368)	
Student	-1.402		-3.540		-2.982		-2.709	
	(3.935)		(3.725)		(3.349)		(3.269)	
Unemployed	-6.116		-4.184		-3.790		-3.361	
	(2.795)		(2.880)		(2.581)		(2.515)	
Residential location (city is reference category)								
Inner regional	-1.541		-0.833		-0.764		-0.963	
	(1.399)		(1.340)		(1.201)		(1.171)	
Outer regional	-6.568	**	-5.084	**	-3.014		-2.829	
	(2.186)		(2.091)		(1.877)		(1.831)	
Remote	0.296		1.203		2.421		3.339	
	(2.745)		(2.624)		(2.354)		(2.294)	
Experienced childhood trauma			-0.670		-1.021		0-.896	
			(1.290)		(1.158)		(1.130)	

Diagnosed mental illness	-0.632 (1.442)		-0.192 (1.292)		0.186 (1.261)	
Stressful life events	0.035 (0.404)		-0.174 (0.363)		-0.062 (.354)	
Convicted of a crime	4.224 (2.589)		3.827 (2.323)		3.906 (2.270)	
Frequency of domestic violence	-2.065 (0.910)	*	-1.420 (0.818)		-1.162 (0.799)	
Problem drinking (reference category is do not drink)						
Problem with drinking	-0.830 (1.630)		-1.561 (1.462)		-2.098 (1.427)	
No problem with drinking	0.931 (1.305)		0.939 (1.171)		0.480 (1.143)	
Difficult to cope with child(ren) (reference category is never)						
Every day	-29.169 (3.502)	***	-19.985 (3.172)	***	-19.634 (3.094)	***
Several times a week	-18.599 (2.302)	***	-15.484 (2.071)	***	-15.912 (2.021)	***
Once a week	-14.154 (2.331)	***	-11.658 (2.093)	***	-11.634 (2.042)	***
Once a fortnight	-9.950 (2.447)	***	-8.704177 (2.194312)	***	-9.000 (2.139)	***
Once in the last month	-4.329 (1.983)	*	-3.827 (1.779)	*	-3.819 (1.734)	*
Refused to answer	1.117 (1.879)		0.888 (1.686)		0.629 (1.644)	
Family/friend connections			5.024 (0.832)	***	3.762 (0.823)	***
Family support			9.529 (0.859)	***	8.457 (0.845)	***
Has special person in life			4.344 (0.736)	***	3.721 (0.721)	***
Neighbourhood parenting norms					2.190 (0.938)	*
Visits with neighbours					3.177 (1.062)	**
Neighbourhood capacity					5.941 (1.019)	***
Constant	160.585	***	169.003	***	108.756	***
					89.376 (5.364)	***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.105		0.206		0.364	
Number of observations	1775		1667		1667	

\* = p < 0.05, \*\* = p < 0.01, \*\*\* = p < 0.001



Appendix 4 – Table 2. Ordinary least squares regression predicting informal help-seeking behaviour

	<i>MODEL 1</i>		<i>MODEL 2</i>		<i>MODEL 3</i>		<i>MODEL 4</i>	
	<b>B (SE)</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>B (SE)</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>B (SE)</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>B (SE)</b>	<b>p</b>
Gender	-0.166 (0.054)	**	-0.064 (0.055)		0.017 (0.053)		0.007 (0.053)	
Age	-0.056 (0.026)	*	-0.057 (0.026)	*	-0.036 (0.024)		-0.043 (0.024)	
ATSI	0.130 (0.074)		-0.011 (0.077)		-0.092 (0.074)		-0.084 (0.074)	
English language	0.002 (0.078)		-0.042 (0.078)		-0.088 (0.075)		-0.093 (0.074)	
Number of children	0.054 (0.034)		0.057 (0.035)		0.044 (0.034)		0.044 (0.033)	
Full custody	-0.164 (0.080)	*	-0.142 (0.082)		-0.149 (0.078)		-0.140 (0.078)	
Child with disability	0.111(0.066)		0.211 (0.067)	**	0.162 (0.064)	**	0.155 (0.064)	*
Single parenting	-0.020 (0.061)		0.028 (0.062)		0.102 (0.060)		0.104 (0.059)	
Financial hardship	-0.001 (0.016)		0.018 (0.018)		0.006 (0.017)		-0.008 (0.017)	
Level of education (reference category is did not complete high school)								
Completed high school	0.081 (0.083)		0.117 (0.084)		0.095 (0.081)		0.091 (0.080)	
Trade certificate	0.029 (0.075)		0.025 (0.076)		0.028 (0.072)		0.025 (0.072)	
Bachelor degree	0.028 (0.086)		0.095 (0.086)		0.073 (0.082)		0.052 (0.082)	
Post graduate	0.086 (0.089)		0.097 (0.089)		0.095 (0.086)		0.078 (0.085)	
Employment status (full time ref )								
Retired/pensioner	-0.025 (0.128)		-0.099 (0.132)		-0.104 (0.126)		-0.112 (0.126)	
Home duties/other	-0.019 (0.064)	**	-0.180 (0.064)	**	-0.145 (0.062)	*	-0.147 (0.061)	*
Student	-0.008 (0.162)		-0.063 (0.157)		0.011 (0.150)		0.026 (0.150)	
Unemployed	-0.141 (0.113)		-0.090 (0.119)		-0.098 (0.114)		-0.089 (0.113)	
Residential location (city is the reference category)								
Inner regional	-0.044 (0.056)		-0.050 (0.055)		-0.048 (0.053)		-0.051 (0.053)	
Outer regional	-0.239 (0.088)	**	-0.172 (0.087)	*	-0.127 (0.083)		-0.128 (0.083)	
Remote	-0.231 (0.111)	*	-0.229 (0.109)	*	-0.194 (0.104)		-0.176 (0.104)	

Experienced childhood trauma	0.068 (0.053)		0.042 (0.051)		0.044 (0.051)	
Diagnosed mental illness	0.084 (0.059)		0.092 (0.057)		0.098 (0.056)	
Stressful life events	0.042 (0.038)	*	0.034 (0.016)	*	0.036 (0.016)	*
Convicted of a crime	-0.041 (0.107)		-0.009 (0.102)		-0.003 (0.102)	
Frequency of domestic violence	0.042 (0.038)		0.050 (0.036)		0.048 (0.036)	
Problem drinking (reference category is do not drink)						
Problem with drinking	0.04 (0.067)		-0.036 (0.064)		-0.048 (0.064)	
No problem with drinking	-0.030 (0.054)		-0.032 (0.052)		-0.040 (0.051)	
Empowerment scale	0.009 (0.001)	***	0.003 (0.001)	**	0.002 (0.001)	*
Perceptions of stigma	-0.181 (0.031)	***	-0.151 (0.030)	***	-0.121 (0.030)	***
Family/friend connections			0.111(0.037)	**	0.091 (0.037)	*
Family/friend support			0.242 (0.040)	***	0.225 (0.039)	***
Has special person in life			0.239 (0.033)	***	0.234 (0.033)	***
Neighbourhood parenting norms					0.074 (0.042)	
Visits with neighbours					0.025 (0.048)	
Neighbourhood capacity					0.146 (0.047)	**
Constant	-2.069	*	-3.355	***	-4.361	***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.029		0.109		0.190	
N	1753		1646		1646	

\* = p < 0.05, \*\* = p < 0.01, \*\*\* = p < 0.001

Appendix 5 – Table 3. Logistic regression models predicting formal help-seeking behaviour (0 = did not seek help and 1 = sought help)

	<i>MODEL 1</i>		<i>MODEL 2</i>		<i>MODEL 3</i>		<i>MODEL 4</i>	
	OR (SE)	p	OR (SE)	p	OR (SE)	p	OR (SE)	p
Gender	0.508 (0.079)	***	0.563 (0.095)	**	0.583 (0.099)	**	0.569 (0.098)	**
Age	1.129 (0.079)		1.133 (0.084)		1.135 (0.085)		1.119 (0.084)	
ATSI	1.172 (0.228)		1.113 (0.240)		1.008 (0.221)		0.989 (0.218)	
English language	0.861 (0.192)		0.814 (0.192)		0.769 (0.183)		0.741 (0.178)	
Number of children	1.102 (0.097)		1.080 (0.104)		1.083 (0.105)		1.088 (0.106)	
Full custody	1.126 (0.239)		1.054 (0.241)		1.055 (0.242)		1.113 (0.256)	
Child with disability	2.590 (0.397)	***	2.396 (0.399)	***	2.310 (0.387)	***	2.253 (0.380)	***
Single parenting	1.147 (0.181)		1.038 (0.176)		1.027 (0.176)		1.036 (0.178)	
Financial hardship	1.156 (0.046)	***	1.149 (0.055)	**	1.130 (0.055)	*	1.130 (0.056)	*
Level of education								
Completed high school	0.713 (0.171)		0.779 (0.200)		0.741 (0.192)		0.734 (0.191)	
Trade certificate	0.988 (0.202)		0.939 (0.204)		0.941 (0.205)		0.926 (0.203)	
Bachelor degree	1.539 (0.349)		1.674 (0.401)	*	1.592 (0.385)		1.551 (0.377)	
Post graduate	1.535 (0.361)		1.573 (0.395)		1.514 (0.383)		1.496 (0.381)	
Employment status (full time ref )								
Retired/pensioner	0.970 (0.33)		0.811 (0.305)		0.836 (0.316)		0.803 (0.306)	
Home duties/other	1.035 (0.176)		1.012 (0.182)		0.999 (0.181)		1.00 (0.182)	
Student	1.505 (0.554)		1.466 (0.548)		1.407 (0.531)		1.364 (0.521)	
Unemployed	0.570 (0.209)		0.523 (0.207)		0.523 (0.208)		0.519 (0.208)	
Residential information (city ref )								
Inner regional	1.302 (0.197)		1.270 (0.199)		1.279 (0.201)		1.286 (0.204)	
Outer regional	0.836 (0.217)		0.755 (0.205)		0.768 (0.210)		0.765 (0.210)	
Remote	0.980 (0.031)		1.015 (0.323)		1.075 (0.343)		1.120 (0.360)	
Experienced childhood trauma			1.129 (0.168)		1.133 (0.170)		1.122 (0.169)	
Diagnosed mental illness			1.393 (0.220)	*	1.414 (0.225)	*	1.465 (0.234)	*
Stressful life events			1.123 (0.052)	*	1.124 (0.052)	*	1.120 (0.052)	*
Convicted of a crime			1.831 (0.527)	*	1.812 (0.522)	*	1.721 (0.501)	
Frequency of domestic violence			1.034 (0.108)		1.044 (0.110)		1.038 (0.110)	
Problem drinking (no drink ref )								
Problem with drinking			1.158 (0.221)		1.147 (0.221)		1.116 (0.216)	
No problem with drinking			1.102 (0.171)		1.141 (0.179)		1.138 (0.179)	
Empowerment scale			0.997 (0.003)		0.993 (0.003)	*	0.991 (0.003)	*
Perceptions of stigma			0.571 (0.056)	***	0.571 (0.057)	***	0.589 (0.060)	***
Family/friend connections					1.270 (0.143)	*	1.191 (0.136)	
Family/friend support					1.230 (0.150)		1.179 (0.145)	
Has special person in life					0.902 (0.090)		0.903 (0.091)	
Neighbourhood parenting norms							1.179 (0.152)	

Visits with neighbours						<b>1.588 (0.236)</b>	**	
Neighbourhood capacity						1.021 (0.144)		
Constant	0.077	***	0.219	*	0.164	*	0.121	*
Pseudo r <sup>2</sup>	0.067		0.099		0.106		0.116	
N	1775		1664		1664		1664	

\* = p < 0.05, \*\* = p < 0.01, \*\*\* = p < 0.001

Appendix 6 – Table 4. Ordinary least squares regression for parental efficacy and empowerment scale for Indigenous respondents only.

	<i>MODEL 1</i>		<i>MODEL 2</i>		<i>MODEL 3</i>		<i>MODEL 4</i>		<i>MODEL 5</i>	
	<b>OR (SE)</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>OR (SE)</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>OR (SE)</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>OR (SE)</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>OR (SE)</b>	<b>p</b>
Gender	-5.397 (2.855)		-5.897 (2.962)	*	-2.959 (2.828)		-4.019 (2.799)		-7.011 (2.830)	*
Number of children										
3 children	8.637 (3.667)	*	9.502 (3.725)	*	7.679 (3.491)	*	7.486 (3.461)	*	6.611 (3.414)	
4 children	1.469 (4.129)		0.567 (4.320)		-1.790 (4.092)		-2.259 (4.035)		-3.230 (3.948)	
5 or more children	3.819 (4.395)		4.195 (4.649)		3.658 (4.413)		4.034 (4.351)		2.896 (4.261)	
Full custody	-4.992 (3.172)		-4.302 (3.324)		-1.582 (3.134)		-0.625 (3.097)		-2.033 (3.028)	
Financial hardship	-3.924 (0.744)	***	-2.384 (0.850)	**	-2.605 (0.798)	**	-2.582 (0.786)	**	-2.925 (0.771)	***
Level of education										
Completed high school	4.881 (3.506)		3.666 (3.642)		1.425 (3.444)		1.265 (3.391)		1.839 (3.340)	
TAFE/ Trade certificate	-1.103 (3.400)		-0.967 (3.497)		-0.841 (3.270)		-1.673 (3.242)		-2.228 (3.205)	
University Qualifications	-1.453 (4.169)		1.324 (4.318)		-0.171 (4.053)		-1.469 (4.052)		-2.167 (3.994)	
Employment status										
Retired/pensioner	-9.995 (4.847)	*	-8.749 (5.045)		-6.620 (4.766)		-8.565 (4.745)		-8.559 (4.627)	
Home duties/other/student	-10.490 (3.434)	**	-12.138 (3.496)	**	-10.287 (3.296)	**	-10.061 (3.252)	**	-10.414 (3.239)	**
Unemployed	-11.563 (3.929)	**	-11.305 (4.241)	**	-9.734 (3.996)	*	-9.875 (3.918)	*	-9.483 (3.857)	*
Diagnosed mental illness			-8.908 (3.366)	**	-7.319 (3.163)	*	-6.380 (3.131)	*	-5.848 (3.046)	
Frequency of domestic violence			-0.509 (2.831)		1.222 (2.664)		1.453 (2.637)		0.095 (2.621)	
Difficult to cope with children										
Every day			-2.923 (7.655)		-6.249 (7.171)		-7.759 (7.091)		-10.366 (7.227)	
Several times a week			-7.625 (5.772)		-6.625 (5.401)		-6.951 (5.324)		-9.422 (5.301)	
Once a week			-15.229 (5.836)	**	-9.144 (5.523)		-8.453 (5.447)		-9.885 (5.405)	
Once a fortnight			-10.172 (5.856)		-8.660 (5.471)		-8.828 (5.385)		-9.626 (5.322)	
Once in the last month			-2.631 (4.975)		-2.816 (4.654)		-1.968 (4.580)		-4.145 (4.557)	
Refused to answer			1.626 (4.819)		0.914 (4.517)		2.098 (4.461)		-0.353 (4.482)	
Family/friend connections					4.049 (1.861)	*	2.332 (1.898)		2.345 (1.886)	
Family/friend support					10.102 (2.193)	***	9.999 (2.194)	***	9.665 (2.156)	***
Has special person in life					3.253 (1.945)		2.362 (1.930)		1.625 (1.905)	
Neighbourhood parenting norms							3.150 (1.927)		2.925 (1.883)	
Visits with neighbours							7.773 (2.776)	**	7.033 (2.740)	*
Neighbourhood SCT							1.729 (2.789)		1.059 (2.735)	
ATSI identity									-0.561 (3.132)	
Homeland									6.531 (2.632)	*
Cultural events									-2.791 (2.997)	
Cultural activities										
1-3 activities									1.645 (3.096)	

4-6 activities									8.927 (4.264)	*
7 or more activities									21.383 95.803)	***
Constant	172.114 (3.752)	***	174.723 (5.582)	***	117.541 (9.868)	***	104.542 (12.083)	***	111.988 (11.834)	***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.136		0.1792		0.293		0.324		0.3755	
N	378		349		348		348		348	

\* = p < 0.05, \*\* = p < 0.01, \*\*\* = p < 0.001

Appendix 7 - Table 5. Ordinary least squares regression for seeking informal parental support

	<i>MODEL 1</i>		<i>MODEL 2</i>		<i>MODEL 3</i>		<i>MODEL 4</i>		<i>MODEL 5</i>	
	<b>B(SE)</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>B (SE)</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>B (SE)</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>B (SE)</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>B (SE)</b>	<b>p</b>
Gender	-0.103 (0.075)		-0.045 (0.074)		-0.007 (0.071)		-0.008 (0.072)		-0.052 (0.073)	
Number of children										
3 children	0.207 (0.103)	*	0.136 (0.102)		0.167 (0.098)		0.145 (0.098)		0.145 (0.097)	
4 children	0.247 (0.118)	*	0.225 (0.116)		0.177 (0.111)		0.175 (0.111)		0.216 (0.110)	**
5 or more children	0.329 (0.119)	**	0.280 (0.116)	*	0.264 (0.112)	*	0.277 (0.112)	*	0.252 (0.111)	*
Full custody	-0.324 (0.091)	***	-0.297 (0.090)	**	-0.257 (0.087)	**	-0.266 (0.087)	**	-0.246 (0.087)	**
Financial hardship	0.034 (0.020)		0.035 (0.021)		0.026 (0.020)		0.027 (0.020)		0.021 (0.020)	
Empowerment Scale			0.006 (0.001)	***	0.002 (0.001)		0.002 (0.001)		0.002 (0.001)	
Difficult to cope with children										
Every day			0.432 (0.200)	*	0.326 (0.192)		0.315 (0.192)		0.288 (0.193)	
Several times a week			0.389 (0.156)	*	0.355 (0.149)	*	0.384 (0.149)		0.320 (0.150)	*
Once a week			0.241 (0.160)		0.280 (0.153)		0.317 (0.154)	*	0.274 (0.152)	
Once a fortnight			0.404 (0.169)	*	0.361 (0.162)	*	0.379 (0.162)	*	0.341 (0.161)	*
Once in the last month			0.219 (0.140)		0.177 (0.134)		0.200 (0.134)		0.126 (0.134)	
Refused to answer			0.063 (0.132)		0.013 (0.126)		0.052 (0.127)		0.004 (0.128)	
Family/friend connections					0.080 (0.050)		0.063 (0.050)		0.046 (0.051)	
Family/friend support					0.229 (0.059)	***	0.243 (0.059)	***	0.241 (0.059)	***
Has special person in life					0.207 (0.052)	***	0.200 (0.053)	***	0.185 (0.053)	**
Neighbourhood parenting norms							0.124 (0.052)	*	0.119 (0.051)	*
Visits with neighbours							-0.034 (0.06)		-0.078 (0.076)	
Neighbourhood SCT							-0.017 (0.074)		-0.017 (0.073)	
ATSI identity									0.273 (0.086)	**
Cultural events									0.124 (0.084)	
Cultural activities										
1-3 activities									0.085 (0.084)	
4-6 activities									-0.055 (0.120)	
7 or more activities									-0.158 (0.161)	
Constant	3.704 (0.071)	***	2.593 (0.259)	***	1.525 (0.291)	***	1.250 (0.332)	***	1.246 (0.334)	***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.0661		0.1230		0.207		0.217		0.247	
N	500		500		499		499		498	

\* = p < 0.05, \*\* = p < 0.01, \*\*\* = p < 0.001

Appendix 8 – Table 6. Bivariate analysis predicting formal parental help seeking

	<b>B (SE)</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Pseudo r<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>N</b>
Gender ( <i>0 = Female / 1 = Male</i> )	0.515 (0.130)	**	0.016	510
Disabled Child ( <i>0 = No / 1 = Yes</i> )	2.307 (0.700)	**	0.015	510
Education ( <i>Did not complete reference category</i> )			0.058	410
Completed High School	0.463 (0.197)			
Trade/TAFE Certificate	0.928 (0.313)			
University Qualifications	3.414 (1.173)	***		
Employment ( <i>Employed reference category</i> )			0.139	425
Retired/ Pension	1.020 (0.442)			
Home duties/ Student/ Other	0.935 (0.275)			
Unemployed	0.382 (0.177)	*		
Childhood trauma ( <i>0 = No / 1 = Yes</i> )	1.748 (0.454)	*	0.012	419
Empowerment Score	1.010 (0.005)	*	0.011	510
Visit with neighbours ( <i>0 = No / 1 = Yes</i> )	2.426 (0.673)	**	0.024	510
Neighbourhood capacity	1.578 (0.346)	*	0.010	510
ATSI Identity	2.810 (0.955)	**	0.024	509
Cultural Activity ( <i>No activity reference category</i> )			0.046	509
1-3 activities	1.872 (0.565)	*		
4-7 activities	3.533 (1.223)	***		
7 or more activities	0.230 (0.240)			



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