

## *Aspirations, Resilience and Identity*

### *Developing and protecting culture and identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*

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#### FAST FACTS

- First 1000 Days Australia is a research and implementation movement building on international First 10000 Days program.
- This period of time is important for brain growth
- Children need to be played with, sung to, and read to to build cognitive capacity
- Nutrition is critical for lifelong health and wellbeing and is influenced by family contexts
- The Australian movement has been conceived of and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.
- Broader than the original nutrition focus to include preconception and up until a child's second birthday and holistic of family programs and coordinated service response
- First 1000 Days Australia is premised on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families being the primary site for developing and protecting culture, identity, health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Uses place based approaches to promote loving, safe, secure homes

*First 1000 Days Australia is Indigenous led and conceived*

#### **1. First thousand days from conception to a child's second birthday is important**

This period of time is when the foetus and infant are most vulnerable but also presents a direct and lasting opportunity to maximise wellbeing and health across generations.

- Supporting families to focus on this period will lay the foundations for future healthy and happy lives.
- Children need early stimulation, they need to be played with, sung to, read to, to build cognitive capacity
- Nutrition is critical to lifelong health and wellbeing and is influenced by family contexts

#### **2. First 1000 Days Australia broadened the international definition of the First 1000 Days**

First 1000 Days Australia incorporates governance, implementation and research. It recognises the centrality of culture reinforces and strengthens families, and uses a holistic view of health and wellbeing.

- Led by the First 1000 Days Australia Council, regional governance committees, and ultimately by family self-determination
- Uses place based approaches to promote loving safe secure homes
- Combines Indigenous methodologies of knowing, doing and being with epidemiological methods.
- Premised on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families being the site for developing and protecting culture and identity and the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.



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### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

- Change language in policy documents from deficit to strengths
- Include preconception in early childhood policy
- Support family commissioned and led initiatives
- Develop place based evaluation frameworks
- Collective Impact models involving departments, community organisations and business development led by a dedicated First 1000 Days Australia lead agency
- Capacity building includes engaging families, frontline workers and organisations
- Integrate evidence generation into program implementation

#### 4. Practical strategies translating research into early years policy and practice

First 1000 Days Australia is locally developed and implemented in regions using a postcode approach and is guided by the Charter for the Rights of Children yet to be Conceived.

A dedicated First 1000 Days Australia lead agency in a regional area establishes a network of families, frontline workers, organisations and services to collectively describe the aspirations of families and children living in their region. It uses collaborative engagement, program development and research processes to generate and use evidence about what local solutions work to support family agency in meeting their aspirations.

The process of engagement is initiated around a community driven research project 'First 1000 Days Australia Household Survey'. Engagement and success is supported by localised events, such as:

- Welcome Baby to Country
- Aha Aspiration Workshops
- Business development mentoring
- Life coaching
- Engaging father programs

The results of the survey are fed back to the lead agency and drive service responses directly informed by family aspirations. With families engaged in the development from the onset, they are driving and directing the service response.

First 1000 Days Australia further supports workforce to be ready to respond to family led decisions, and to develop First 1000 Days Australia initiatives by delivering short courses, master level subjects at the University of Melbourne and peer researcher training.

\* This summary paper was written by Rebecca Ritte, Kerry Arabena and Luella Monson-Wilbraham

#### READ FURTHER:

Ritte, R, et al 2016, 'An Australian model of the First 1000 Days: an Indigenous-led process to turn an international initiative into an early-life strategy benefiting indigenous families', *Global Health, Epidemiology and Genomics*, 1, e11.

# RESEARCH SUMMARY

Queensland  
Family & Child  
Commission



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