Title: Research as empowering intervention to improve social and emotional wellbeing among Aboriginal youth.

1. Summary – describe your research (max 400 words)

I am passionate about using my research to improve the social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) of Aboriginal Australians. To achieve this I solely use participatory research approaches that empower participants both during the research process as well as in the resulting resources. Using participatory research methods is essential with Aboriginal communities to ensure the research addresses priorities set by the community and incorporates Aboriginal cultural perspectives. My research focuses on the development, evaluation and dissemination of evidence-based community and school-based drug and alcohol prevention resources for Aboriginal youth.

Since 2013, I have been working in partnerships with three Aboriginal communities in regional NSW to implement a suit of 12-15 community-based initiatives in each community, targeting underlying determinants of drug and alcohol-related harms, such as service access, community and cultural connectedness, education, boredom and empowerment. These initiatives reached between 1,000 and 2,000 community members and led to measurable reductions in alcohol-related harms and improvements in community safety and empowerment (see Table 1 attached). This study was the first to use a multiple baseline research design with Aboriginal communities in Australia. Using this quasi-experimental design made this study the most rigorously conducted study with Aboriginal communities to reduce alcohol-related harms.

Even though this project finished in 2016, I am continuing to work in partnership with schools in two of these communities (and new Queensland communities). Currently, I am developing an Australia-first computerised school-based drug prevention program that is culturally appropriate for Aboriginal high school students. This program uses illustrated storytelling to share drug prevention messages, combined with classroom activities. I am working with Aboriginal high school students on a Photovoice project to collect stories about students’ lives in communities to inform the characters and storylines of this program. Photovoice is an empowering, participatory research method in which the students collect the data (through photos) and analyse the data (through selecting photos and discuss these in groups). Students remain involved in the development of the storylines and characters of the stories. I’m also continuing to be connected with the third community thought the supervision of a local Masters by Research student, who investigates internal community conflict as a factor contributing to drug and alcohol-related harms in Aboriginal communities.

My research’s impact has been acknowledged by the public health and the research communities through my two recent awards: 2016 Kevin Rozzolli Community Impact Award from NDARC and the 2017 PHAA NSW Branch President’s Award for Contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

2. Focus - Describe how your research illustrates Innovation (200 words)

My research is innovative in its research approach, design and methodology. My community-based work with Aboriginal communities combined high levels of community participation with a
rigorous research design. This was one of the first studies in which part of the research funding was directly accessible to the community and local Aboriginal project coordinators were hired to oversee the project in their community. The participatory approach was evident from qualitative interviews with the community representatives who indicated that they experienced high levels of participation throughout the project (see quotes from interviews in Appendix). One of the communities presented me with a painting for supporting their community (see photo in appendix). I was the first to use the quasi experimental multiple baseline design to evaluate the outcomes, making it one of the most rigorously conducted community-based evaluations with Aboriginal communities to date. In my current work I am using the innovative Photovoice research method with young Aboriginal people, in which they collect the data (photos) and analyse the data (through group Aboriginal discussion).

3. Potential Impact – Summarise the potential contribution to and/or implications for society (maximum 200 words)

My research has contributed to strengthening local capacity in the participating Aboriginal communities. Thirty-five Aboriginal service providers were trained in the delivery of the Family Wellbeing Empowerment program (an Aboriginal-specific SEWB program), which they have now integrated into their daily service delivery. I have further strengthened research capacity by managing fulltime and part-time Aboriginal project workers, and training them in data collection methods. This resulted in one of them taking on the role as CEO of the local Aboriginal Lands Council and another to commence her Masters by Research under my supervision.

In terms of broader impact, the participatory research approaches combined with rigorous research methods I use in my research have the potential to improve research with Aboriginal communities across the country, and thereby improving health, social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal Australians. I have advised the Australian Council for International Development and the NSW Department of Family and Community Services about how they can implement these participatory approaches in their work with Aboriginal communities. Finally, my current work on developing and disseminating evidence-based drug prevention resources for Aboriginal high school youth, their teachers and parents has the potential to reduce substance-related harms experienced by Indigenous youth around the country.

4. Consumers’ Contribution – Describe any contribution by Mental Health consumers/person with lived experience other than as subjects (e.g. reference group, researcher)(maximum 200 words)

I solely use participatory research approaches that empower participants during the research process. In my research I have engaged Aboriginal community members in every phase of the project. Aboriginal people with or without lived experience have been involved in project steering committees on all my research projects. This has involved engaging Aboriginal communities in the priority setting of the research and identifying the target outcomes of the project in line with

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1 The multiple baseline design is a practical, rigorous quasi-experimental research design in which participating communities all receive the same intervention, but start the intervention in a different point in time. Data collected over multiple time points (e.g. hospital presentations or crime data) are used to assess the outcomes, if the same reduction in the outcome of interest in observed in each community after the intervention is implemented, we can be confident that the change is due to the intervention, rather than extraneous factors.
their needs, by using innovative research and empowering methods (e.g. through photography). It has included engaging community members in identifying and deciding on programs to implement, as well as collaborating closely with various community members on the design of a program through storytelling about their lives. Most importantly, I have employed local Aboriginal community members on my project that aimed to reduce alcohol-related harms, all of whom had experience with alcohol dependence in their direct family and one with lived experience of mental health disorders. Their personal experiences drove the Aboriginal project workers, and now my Aboriginal Master student, to be involved in my research and to improve the situation in their community.
Career Objective and Summary

I am passionate about using my research to make a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of society and, in particular, it’s most disadvantaged members. Combining my Bachelor’s degree in social psychology and my Master’s and PhD degrees in public health, my research has primarily focused on drug and alcohol use and related harms.

Since 2009, I have been conducting drug and alcohol prevention research in The Netherlands and Australia. Following my arrival in Australia in 2012, my drug and alcohol research experience and passion for working with disadvantaged communities lead to my research focusing on drug and alcohol prevention with Aboriginal communities. In my research I use methods based on the community-based participatory research approach. I have particular experience in the participatory development and evaluation of prevention programs and resources that are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal Australians. My doctoral research explored how participatory research and rigorous research can be combined when working with Aboriginal communities. I managed the first community-based participatory research project that used a multiple baseline design to evaluate programs to reduce alcohol-related harms with Aboriginal communities in Australia. I subsequently secured a role as post-doctoral research fellow at the NHMRC Centre for Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use, where I am leading the development of the first culturally appropriate, computerised school-based drug and alcohol prevention program for Aboriginal youth. I am contributing to strengthening research capacity in Aboriginal communities through mentoring and supervising Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff, including a team of three community-based Aboriginal project coordinators and about ten casually employed Aboriginal research assistants. I am currently joint primary supervisor of an Aboriginal master student (Wiradjuri woman). My contribution to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal communities has been acknowledged by the 2016 Kevin Rozzoli Community Impact Award (NDARC) and the Public Health Association of Australia NSW Branch President’s Award for Contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, 2017.

Academic Qualifications

**PhD – Community Medicine and Public Health* 2013 –2017**

University of New South Wales, Sydney
Title: Maldahnalanga: Integrating rigorous research and community participation in Aboriginal community-based research.

*a awarded on 31 July 2017

**M.Sc. – Health and Society 2011 – 2013**

Wageningen University and Research centre, Wageningen, The Netherlands.
Thesis’ title: Indigenous Community Development in Australia: a systematic literature review

**B.Sc. – Social Psychology (with honours program) 2007 – 2010**

Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands.
Research Experience

**Postdoctoral Research Fellow:** Centre for Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales  
2016 – 2018

**Doctoral candidate / research officer:** National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales  
2013 – 2017

**Research Consultant:** Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)  
2013 – 2015

**Research Consultant:** Alcohol Tobacco & Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA)  
2014 – 2015

**Research Assistant:** National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales  
2012 – 2013

**Research Assistant:** STichting AlcoholPreventie (STAP) Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy  
2012

**Research Assistant:** Trimbos Institute – Netherlands Institute of Mental Health and Addiction  
2009 – 2010

Peer-reviewed Publications


**Snijder, M.**, Calabria, B., Dobbins, T., Knight, A. & Shakeshaft, A. (under review). A need for tailored programs and policies to reduce rates of alcohol-related crimes for vulnerable communities and young people: an analysis of routinely collected police data. *Alcohol and Alcoholism*


### Other publications


Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and Lowitja Institute (2013). Researching right way. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health Research Ethics: a Domestic and International Review. Canberra: AIATSIS

### Professional Activity & Community Engagement

In my research I prioritise engaging with Aboriginal people and involving Aboriginal persons in every aspect of the research process. This has involved close collaboration with three specific communities in New South Wales and with various other Aboriginal organisations and individuals around the country. To promote a participatory approach when
working with Aboriginal communities, I have presented about participatory approaches to the Australian Council for International Development, the NSW Department of Family and Community Services and the Indonesian Ministry of Social Welfare. My professional engagement with the academic community has included being part of the organising committee for the 2016 NDARC Annual Symposium, membership to the CIPHER early researcher advisory committee and reporting during the 2016 International Conference on Health Promotion and on the Sax Institute’s Research Exchange on peer led education for prevention.

My current professional engagements include:

- **Co-ordinator**, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre Qualitative and Mixed Methods Group
- **Co-facilitator**, CRE of Mental Health and Substance Use: Early Career Researcher Training program
- **Member Project Advisory Group** – Drug and Alcohol Multicultural Education Centre (DAMEC)
- **Professional member**: *International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUPHE)*, *Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA)*, *Franklin Women*
- **Journal reviewer (ad hoc)**: *International journal for adolescent medicine and health*, *Journal of Adolescence*, *Drugs: Education, prevention & Policy*, *Children and Youth services review*, *Journal of Medical internet research*

### Awards, Grants and Scholarships

Despite being early in my career (<1 year post-PhD), I have received various competitive scholarships and prestigious awards, recognising the excellence and innovation of my research.

- **PHAA NSW Branch President’s Award for Contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health**, *Public Health Association of Australia, Sydney Australia, November 2017*

- **Rapid Review of Early Intervention and Prevention of Drug and Alcohol use among at-risk young people ($32,000)**, *Sax Institute*

- **The 2016 Kevin Rozzoli Community Impact Award**, *National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales*

- **Best Poster 2016 NDARC Annual Symposium – Judge’s Award ($250)**, *University of New South Wales*

- **Postgraduate Research Student Support ($2,200)**, *University of New South Wales*

- **People’s Choice Award 2015 Postgraduate Research Symposium - Oral Abstract.**, *University of New South Wales*

- **NDARC Education Trust (NET) PhD Scholarship ($102,000; 2014 – 2017)**, *NDARC Education Trustees*

- **UNSW International Postgraduate Tuition Fee Scholarship ($90,000 living allowance + $30,000 research funding; 2013 – 2016)**, *University of New South Wales*
5 April 2018
TheMHS Awards Committee

To Whom It May Concern,

Re: Recommendation for TheMHS ECR Award- Dr Mieke Snijder

It is my great pleasure to write in support of Dr Mieke Snijder’s application for a 2018 Early Career Researcher Award. I am the Director of the Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use (CREMS) and an NHMRC Principal Research Fellow at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (UNSW). I am also a long term member of the TheMHS Management Committee.

Dr Mieke Snijder is an outstanding Post-Doctoral Research fellow within CREMS at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre. She is a passionate researcher who leads an internationally recognised program in the development and dissemination of drug and alcohol prevention programs for Aboriginal communities. Her impact has been recognised through national grants, significant collaborations with Aboriginal communities and most recently with the prestigious Public Health Association of Australia NSW Branch President’s Award for Contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health. Her commitment to community and the translation of her research was recognised with a 2016 Kevin Rozzoli Community Impact award.

TheMHS awards are prestigious and unique. They shine a spotlight on individuals who have committed themselves to challenging areas, individuals who have a passion to make a difference. In my opinion, Mieke is an outstanding applicant for this important award. Her research is innovative and inspiring, during her PhD she led the first multiple baseline designed study with Aboriginal communities in Australia. This work was only possible with strong and respectful partnerships with Aboriginal communities. It is these true partnerships that set Mieke and her work apart and make her highly deserving of the recognition of a TheMHS ECR Award. Her work has had major impact, successfully reduced alcohol-related harms and improved community safety and empowerment in the three participating communities. In her current role as post-doctoral research fellow with CREMS she is leading the development of the first culturally appropriate school-based drug prevention program for Aboriginal high school students. Her research follows best practice of engaging Aboriginal communities and young people in every aspect of the research. Her expertise in community engagement has been clearly acknowledged through her invited presentations on community engagement to the NSW Family and Community Services, the Australian Council for International Development and the Indonesian Ministry of Social Welfare.

Mieke has an excellent ability to communicate her research to a variety of audiences and has presented at 16 leading national and international conferences. Most recently she presented a webinar about effective drug prevention for Aboriginal youth, which to date has been viewed by over 80 people around the country, including health workers, school principals, education officers and other researchers. Her contribution to new knowledge is evidenced by her successful publication in peer-reviewed journals. Since 2015, she has first-authored three research reports (including a commissioned rapid review) and five peer reviewed publication (three as first author), she currently has 4 articles under review.
In summary, Dr Snijder is an exceptional researcher who has made a significant impact and demonstrated innovation in her field. Her passion and strong community engagement in a highly important area of health mean that I have no hesitation in recommending her for a TheMHS Early Career Researcher Award. She would be a highly worthy recipient.

Yours Sincerely,

Maree Teesson

Professor Maree Teesson AC FAAHMS FASSA
Director, NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use (CREMS)
NHMRC Principal Research Fellow
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
The University of New South Wales
Additional referee:

Lexine Stapinski, PhD
Senior Research Fellow – NHMRC Centre for Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales
lstapinski@unsw.edu.au ; (02) 9385 0422
Table 1 – Community survey outcomes of evaluation of community-based program aiming to reduce alcohol-related harms in three Aboriginal communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Community 1</th>
<th>Community 2</th>
<th>Community 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre Mean(sd)</td>
<td>FU1 Mean(sd)</td>
<td>FU2 Mean(sd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol related harms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse</td>
<td>6.1 (2.8)</td>
<td>6.4 (2.4)</td>
<td>5.8(2.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>5.0 (2.8)</td>
<td>5.6 (2.5)</td>
<td>5.3(2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injuries</td>
<td>5.0 (2.7)</td>
<td>5.6 (2.7)</td>
<td>5.0(2.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>7.2 (3.0)</td>
<td>7.1 (2.7)</td>
<td>6.7 (2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night</td>
<td>5.4 (3.2)</td>
<td>4.9 (2.6)</td>
<td>5.3 (2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to make</td>
<td>6.2 (2.4)</td>
<td><strong>6.9 (2.1)</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>7.1 (2.3)</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive changes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Higher score is more often
# Higher score is safer/more empowered
^ p <0.01 compared to baseline scores
* p <0.05 compared to baseline scores

Community 1 experienced improved community empowerment following the implementation of the program. Community 2 experienced reductions in alcohol-related verbal abuse and people injuring themselves under the influence of alcohol. Both communities 2 and 3 experienced improvements in how safe they felt during the night.
Recent awards won acknowledging my research impact:


Quotes from interviews supporting the participatory approach used in my research

Interviews were conducted by an independent consultant who had had no previous involvement in the research. The results of the qualitative interviews will be published in a forthcoming publication: Snijder, M., Wagemakers, A., Calabria, B., Munro, A., and Shakeshaft, A. (in preparation) "We walked side by side through the whole thing." A mixed methods study of community perceptions and key elements of participatory processes in an Aboriginal community-based research project. ANZJPH

“you could see that they [the researchers] were very open to learn what the local issues and what people’s thoughts were about the local issues”

“We walked side by side through the whole thing”

“Thanks for giving my community the chance to empower themselves”

“[The researchers] really handed the reins over to the Implementation Committee ... the decisions would be made at that meeting”

“...having access to data of the emergency department and the police systems, ... it was really good to know that the researchers were going to come with that information to show, over a period of time, where the data is sitting now.”

“The communication was excellent, and it was always, I guess, open and transparent, so that was, it was really positive.”
Painting offered to me by the community as appreciation for the research I conducted with them. Painting by local Aboriginal artist Michael Lyons (left on the photo).