



Dance2Kinnect: Improving the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children through contemporary Indigenous/cultural dance – June 2025

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS:

- Contemporary Indigenous Dance classes: Unique dance style rooted in Indigenous culture.
- Professional Instructors: Classes taught by NAISDA graduates in Moree and Gosford, NSW.
- Cultural Connection: Gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Indigenous traditions, native food and stories through dance.
- An Aboriginal Youth Reference Group formed with NAISDA and Barang Regional Alliance youth provide oversight and guidance on all aspects of the project to ensure cultural safety for the kids.

BACKGROUND:

- A healthy lifestyle incorporating a balanced diet and physical activity are prerequisites for healthy development.
- For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, connection with family, community, culture and Country are integral to a healthy self-concept.
- Cultural identity and cultural connectedness have been consistently found to be associated with positive mental health outcomes among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.
- Dance has been effective for increasing quality of life, decreasing symptoms of depression and anxiety, increasing subjective wellbeing, positive mood and impacting body image.

AIM:

- This program will explore the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (8-15 years) connecting with culture through contemporary cultural dance in the Central Coast and Moree, NSW, Australia.
- Through this program, we will better understand the factors influencing successful uptake of a cultural dance program aimed at reducing risk factors for non-communicable diseases.

METHODS:

- This project will use Indigenous research methods, tools, principles and protocols that privilege Indigenous knowledges from project design through to implementation.
- Yarning and culturally validated quantitative tools will be used to collect data of participants.
- A decolonising lens will be applied to this project, placing the voices and epistemologies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities at the centre of the research process.

PROJECT CYCLE:
2023 - 2027



PARTNERS:

Barang Regional Alliance
Eleanor Duncan Aboriginal Services
NAISDA Dance College
SNAICC
The George Institute for Global Health, Australia
Yulugi Marumali "Dance to Heal"

SUPPORTERS:

Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF)
2022 Indigenous Health Research Fund

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

A/Prof Julieann Coombes

IMPACT

- For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, dance is closely related to culture, Country and community, all factors necessary to construct a clear identity underpinning belonging, self-esteem and wellbeing amongst children.
- Previous studies have shown that dance has positive impacts on cognitive, emotional and social function in children and is beneficial for body perception, self-trust, self-esteem and self-expression.

CONTACT:

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