

# The Child Injury Prevention Partnership (CHIPP)

*Community-led Solutions to Prevent Aboriginal Child Injury*

The Child Injury Prevention Partnership (CHIPP) is a partnership between several organisations working to develop a culturally safe child injury prevention program tailored to meet the needs of families with Aboriginal children in Walgett. CHIPP included Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service Limited (WAMS), Kidsafe NSW and researchers from UNSW, The George Institute for Global Health and the University of Wollongong.

The project built on the partnership between researchers at UNSW and the Dharriwaa Elders Group, Walgett (DEG). 'Yuwaya Ngarra-li' (meaning 'vision' in the Yuwaalaraay language of the Walgett region) aims to improve the wellbeing, social, built and physical environment, and life pathways of Aboriginal people in Walgett through community-led research, evidence-based programs and capacity building. CHIPP aligned with the vision of DEG, as described below:

**“Our vision is that Aboriginal children and young people in Walgett can learn, work, be safe, supported and thrive within a robust sense of belonging to their families, community, culture and Country”**

Dharriwaa Elders Group, Yuwaya Ngarra-li Action Plan for Children and Young People (Dharriwaa Elders Group & UNSW, 2018)

The program was co-designed and delivered through WAMS' existing playgroup Goonimoo Mobile Children's Services (Goonimoo means "mother breast/to nurture"), who work in partnership with other local children's services and the broader program of health services provided by WAMS. Goonimoo has been providing a safe and positive mobile children's service since 1985 to communities and townships surrounding Walgett to Gamilaraay, Yuwaalaraay, and non-Aboriginal families and children between the ages of 0-5 years. Goonimoo staff are all qualified Early Childhood Educators with a minimum of a Certificate three in Early Childhood Education and Care, and child first aid training.

## Why do we need the program?

Aboriginal families and communities have been keeping children safe for well over 60,000 years but injury is now a major cause of death in children. Aboriginal Community-led interventions are likely to be the most effective means of preventing child injuries, but there has been little research or evaluated programs to show what works best.

## How was the program developed?

The CHIPP program was developed by Goonimoo staff with the research team. Designing the CHIPP program involved:

- Research yarns with parents and carers, WAMS staff and other child and family service providers.
- A rapid review of literature about injury prevention programs for Aboriginal children.
- Environmental scan of mainstream child injury prevention programs and resources.
- Ongoing and regular discussions between Goonimoo staff and UNSW and other researchers to plan and revise program.
- Workshops with injury experts and peak injury bodies (Kids and Traffic, Royal Life Saving Society Australia, Kidsafe NSW)
- Goonimoo staff worked with families to improve the program as it was being delivered.

## What did the program involve?

The program was co-designed and delivered through Goonimoo's existing playgroup. The playgroup explored three main topics across the school terms about child injury prevention and keeping children safe:

- Term 1: Gali- Safety in and around water
- Term 2: Yuruun – Road safety
- Term 3: Goondi – Safety around the home

Families and children at Goonimoo participated in activities and were provided with resources to improve their knowledge and skills around child injury prevention and management. Activities included weekly swimming lessons, age appropriate activities in centre, and yarning with parents and carers about safety around drowning, roads, and at home. The delivery of the program was designed to be flexible and continually be guided by families and playgroup team.

Manuals were developed for each -topic as a resource to help support other educators to deliver the program.

Goonimoo staff participated in training to build injury prevention capacity at WAMS and throughout Walgett. For example,

- two Goonimoo staff completed AUSTSWIM Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety training so that they could hold water safety playgroup sessions at the pool.
- 10 WAMS staff participated in training on car restraint fitting so that they can check seats if families request it, and make sure their transport services are using seats correctly.

The CHIPP program also held community events about child injury prevention. This included the Goonimoo Open Day and a community Pool Day, both of which were featured in the local newspaper. Key safety information and resources were shared around community.

## Goonimoo in Action Open Day

About 120 people came to the Goonimoo Open Day, which showcased Goonimoo's newly built centre and highlighted their safety focus on Child Restraint fitting and advice. Students from local schools performed Gamilaraay Language and Dance, and there was face-painting and a small Animal Petting area to entertain kids. Road safety messages and resources were displayed throughout the centre. Parents and carers were also invited to book a car seat assessment and fitting by Autobarn, to check their new car seats. The fitter demonstrated individually what to check for, as well as the expiry dates of seats. 18 child seats were checked by the fitter, and 18 more were distributed to families.





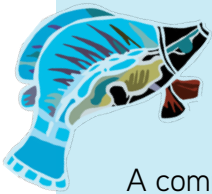
## Was the program successful?

The Goonimoo staff and research teams have evaluated the program to make sure it met the needs of families and the community. The team interviewed families and others in the community to hear what they thought about the program.

As a result of the program:

- Parents felt that their knowledge, skills, and capacity to prevent and manage child injury within their homes and communities was improved.
- The importance of safety was encouraged at the individual, family, organisational and community levels. The message that child safety is everybody's business was a core theme of the project.
- Safer environments were advocated for to improve child safety, e.g., a WAMS child car seat policy for transporting children across all its services, and Goonimoo implemented a policy on safe arrivals for children at the centre.

The CHIPP program highlights the positive impact of investing time and resources to work with communities to build local capacity to deliver child injury prevention programs. The success of the program was largely driven by the strength and expertise at Goonimoo Mobile Children's Service, and the importance of delivering the program through a trusted and experienced Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (WAMS). This was particularly evident as WAMS demonstrated their durability and flexibility to adapt to community needs due to changing circumstances including COVID-19, flooding, and drought.



## Goonimoo in Action Pool Day

A community Pool Day was held in Walgett on 30 November 2019 to launch the CHIPP program, in partnership with Mission Australia and Walgett PCYC. 388 people came and a really positive vibe was experienced by all.

There was music, a BBQ and ice blocks for everyone, colourful zinc cream being painted on faces, and lots of sunscreen and drinking water provided. 400 giveaway bags filled with pool goodies were also quickly snapped up. Water safety and harmony was maintained by the constant presence of many team members patrolling the pool perimeters, troubleshooting as they went, answering questions and always receiving compliments.



Walgett Aboriginal Medical Centre's Goonimoo Mobile Children's Services is going to run child injury prevention programs this year, including focusing on water safety.

## Pool Day is cool way to learn about child safety



A PREVENTION Centre project looking at Aboriginal child injury launched its first community event on Saturday, November 30, at Walgett Swimming pool.

Focusing on water safety, nearly 400 people gathered at the pool to swim, talk, play and focus on the wellbeing of their young people.

The Walgett Pool Day was led by local Aboriginal community-controlled organisations as a fun and positive day for families to be together and safety enjoy the pool.

They were first off to the pool for a day of learning, talking about what Walgett Aboriginal Medical Centre (WAMS) Goonimoo Mobile Children's Services will be delivering this year, a barbecue, salad, fruit, food water and the chance to win a family pool season pass.

Injury is the leading cause of death in Australian children.

Programs targeting parents of young children offer an opportunity for engagement and improving health literacy around injury prevention throughout children's lives.

Goonimoo child injury prevention educator Tera Smith said programs also need to target community-level factors that affect injuries like the physical environment and policies.

"Parents are really keen to get involved to keep their kids safe," she said.

They have ideas about what can be done at a community level and they're also keen to learn more about what they can do to prevent injuries.

"They also want to learn first aid - things like CPR and first aid for choking and shade trees - because we've often a long way from help out here. Shade trees are a big issue in our community, so this is a priority area. Parents are keen and always encouraged to have a say about the sorts of activities they want to do," she said.

What to do at Goonimoo's program?

And Tera Smith, manager of WAMS's Goonimoo Mobile Children's Services, said the Child Injury Prevention Program (CHIPP) had been developed by working closely with local community groups.

"We've been having lots of informal chats with parents during playgroups about the sorts of activities they want to do," she said.

"We also held some formal research focus groups with Nalita and Mal from UNiTY at Goonimoo and WAMS health personnel and other local children's services. We asked parents what sorts of injury issues they are concerned about and the topics they'd be interested in covering."

"Tera's focus in 2020 is on delivering and refining the CHIPP program. Tera is currently studying to become an Aboriginal health practitioner."

"It's learning a lot about child injury" she said. "For example, I've just been to Sydney to start the Australian Bachelor of Swimming and Water Safety course so we can do parents and water safety familiarisation play sessions at the pool. Aboriginal families don't really have access to those sort of water activities in Walgett at the moment."

Tera also co-presented about CHIPP with Dr Melissa Anderson at the Australian Injury Prevention Network Conference in Brisbane in November.

Walgett is situated at the junction of the Barwon and Namoi rivers, and the community has a healthy respect for the importance of water safety. CHIPP's focus on water safety in term one was the result of community consultation.

Walgett's pool has always been a strong focus for the community so some people respond from its long, dry summer, particularly now that the rivers are very depleted due to the drought.

"The turnout was great and we think that was a result of a long period of promotion by Goonimoo, and combining forces with Yungba



Robyn Morgan and Aly enjoy Walgett Pool Day.



The line-up for iceblocks at the Walgett Pool Day. It was 30°C.

Health practitioner. "The success of the Walgett Pool Day is down to the strong local Aboriginal community-controlled organisations who collaborated to bring people together. The day was such a success that Walgett Aboriginal Medical Centre decided to hold two additional community pool days this summer to promote community-building, togetherness, health and wellbeing and as a forum for health promotion activity.

"CHIPP will begin again in earnest next year at Goonimoo, aiming to start off in term one at the pool with parents and baby water play sessions. The program will focus around activity and play," Dr Anderson said.

"So, for example, while Goonimoo staff teach parents water familiarisation activities to do with their pool, our staff will also teach about drowning prevention. Each school term will have a different injury prevention focus, including sport and physical activity, home safety and road safety."

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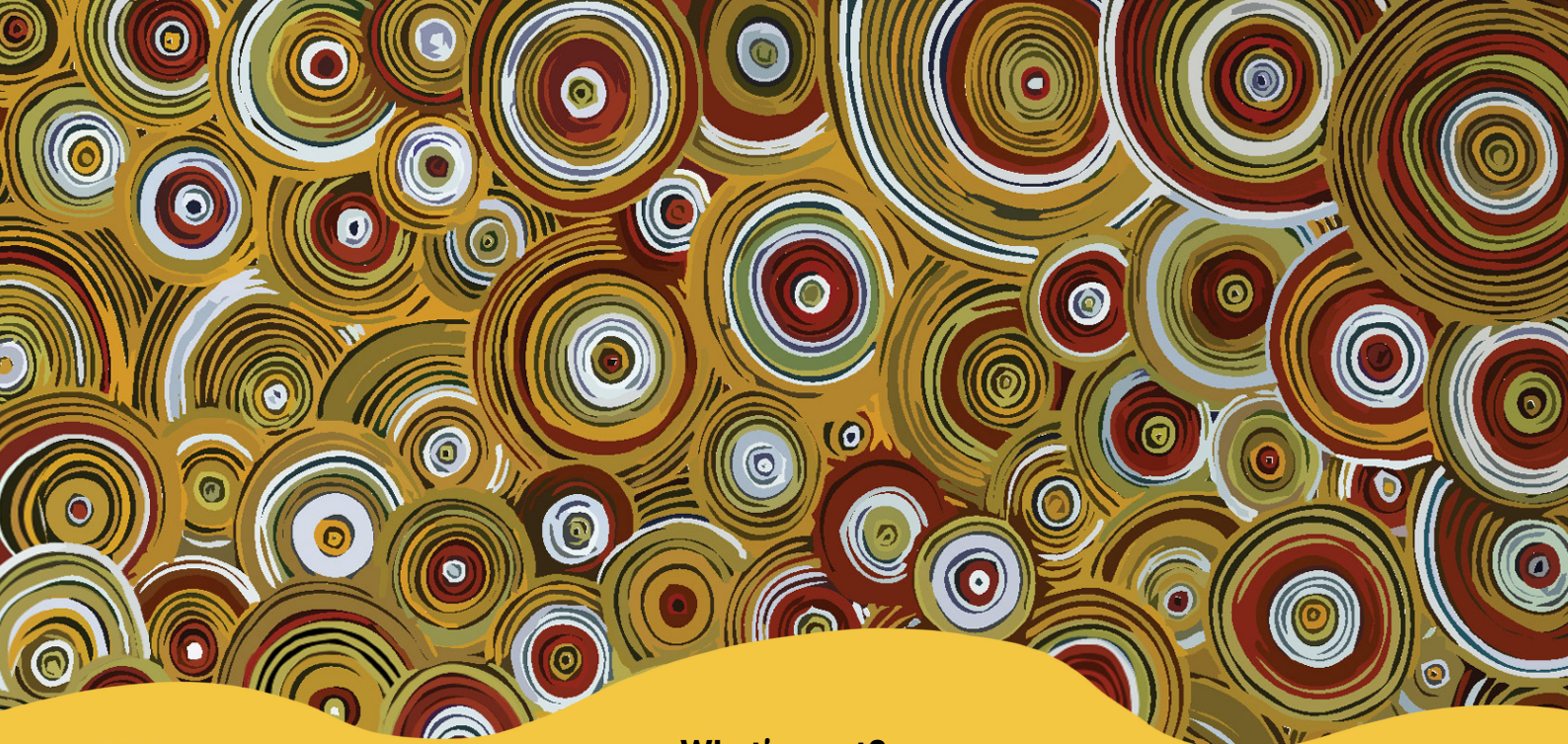
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### What's next?

The CHIPP team is exploring ways to work with other communities to see how they could implement the CHIPP program.

### Who can I ask for more information?

If you have any questions or feedback, you can get in touch with someone from the CHIPP team using the contact details below:

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