

TOWNSVILLE ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER HEALTH SERVICE

Yamani Meta Family Wellbeing House





Doing It Our Way – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led early intervention program

From 2020 to 2021, SNAICC – National Voice for our Children identified good practices of early intervention and family support programs that are being delivered by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations across the nation.

This is one of 11 profiles that demonstrates how community-controlled organisations are achieving positive results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families, including supporting these children to be kept safe from harm, uphold their right to grow up within their own family and community, and access critical health and early education services.

Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service
Yamani Meta Family Wellbeing House
Townsville, Queensland

ACRONYMS

ACCO	Aboriginal community-controlled organisation
TAIHS	Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service



OVERVIEW

Yamani Meta is the dedicated community space for the Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service (TAIHS), where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families enjoy culturally safe supports that are of benefit to them, their children and young people. Run through TAIHS's Family Wellbeing service, Yamani Meta prides itself on feeling like a welcoming family home rather than a clinical setting, implementing a unique service-delivery approach that harmonises the culturally responsive physical environment with the supportive interactions of all people who work in and visit the house.

Since its inception, Yamani Meta has focused on providing child-centred culturally safe programs and activities that empower parents and caregivers in their roles to raise smart, healthy, *dearly* children and young people. Within three years, the home has been able to offer award-winning family development programs and networking and peer-mentoring opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. It is an easy-access point to other TAIHS services and a friendly safe place for those who might be ill-at-ease or distrustful of mainstream non-Indigenous medical services. With a whole-of-community focus, Yamani Meta is also open to all in the Townsville region.

"It is a great place. I love how culture is involved with the learning. It is a great social environment"

Yamani family member



THE HOME

Yamani Meta has welcomed hundreds of families into the home since it was established in 2018. It is open on all weekdays during business hours for families to drop in for a yarn, attend a wide range of programs and activities, receive health information, and be supported through referrals and advice. Each week, the Yamani team finds that these visits range from a *casual cuppa* to more serious crisis management, and the team allows each interaction to take on whatever form is needed to support a family.

The house's indoor design purposefully reflects its connection to culture and the local communities, demonstrating to visitors that it is a trusted space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and it was purposefully and respectfully named in language: *Yamani* = Rainbow; *Meta* = House. The health service also aims to always have at least one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team member who is well-connected to the community in attendance at the house.

Every day, at least three Family Wellbeing team members are based on-site. Other TAIHS staff and professionals regularly visit to assist in delivering group work, co-facilitate activities, or provide targeted family support. A wide range of professionals, peers and community members who are external to the TAIHS team also attend, allowing families to build informal support systems that stretch beyond the health service.

The home's programs and activities have been designed to empower families and are available to all community members. These cover the key family development domains of early learning, playgroups, responsive caregiving, safety and security, nutrition and health, storytelling, adult group work, cooking groups, and cultural activities. All aim to build up the skills, confidence and self-esteem of families in different areas of child development and parental capacity.

"It is a great place. I love how culture is involved with the learning. It is a great social environment"

Yamani family member

PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

TAIHS puts significant importance onto the prevention element of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle¹ (ATSICPP). This element seeks to protect children's rights to grow up in family, community and culture by redressing the causes of child protection interventions. TAIHS also recognises the long-term benefits of early intervention, particularly in the first 1,000 days of a child's life.

The Child Placement Principle recognises that to achieve the prevention element, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families need to be supported to achieve equitable access to quality service supports, including through (but not limited to):

- a full range of culturally safe universal early childhood, education, health and social services
- targeted and intensive supports to address issues in family functioning, promote healing, and address specific parental issues, including trauma, substance misuse, mental health issues, family violence and poverty
- culturally safe family violence prevention, legal and support services
- an integrated and holistic service system that provides vulnerable families with the opportunity to readily engage with the full range of supports that they require.²

To address prevention and early intervention, the TAIHS Family Wellbeing service looked for ways to create a family wellbeing house that would be open to community and assist families at the earliest possible opportunity. The result of this has been Yamani Meta.

The house has been purposefully located in a home near TAIHS's other services, to create service integration opportunities and referral pathways while providing targeted family support through its suite of culturally safe programs. It also uses its space and resources to build up supportive communities, progress effective community-controlled support approaches, and recognise and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews of child-rearing and development.

"The support through this journey means the world to me, to finally have a friendly face to guide a bit of a lost soul back on track without judgement, and for that I'm ever so grateful"

Yamani family member

EARLY CHILDHOOD FRAMEWORKS AND STRATEGIES

Over the past three years, the Yamani team has offered programs that purposefully target the five interconnected domains of the 2018 World Health Organisation's *Nurturing care for early childhood development: A Global Framework for Action and Results*.³ These domains are health, nutrition, safety and security, early learning and responsive care, and all are vital for children to achieve their developmental potential. The team uses this framework to plan, develop and deliver programs that promote activities that protect children's rights to grow up in family, community and culture.

The framework recognises that "early childhood experiences have a profound impact on brain development – affecting learning, health, behaviour and ultimately, adult social relationships and their earnings."⁴ A stable and safe environment is also necessary to ensure children's good health and nutrition, protect them from threats, and give them opportunities for early learning through interactions that are emotionally supportive and responsive.

"Nurturing care is essential for child development and lays the foundation for life-long health and wellbeing ... [It] ensures that [the] young child grows well, is healthy, protected from danger and is an active confident learner about other people and their world"⁵

Yamani's early childhood programs are also underpinned by the evidence-based framework, the Abecedarian Approach.⁶ This is a set of teaching and learning strategies that consist of four interconnected elements that support children's development from birth to school-age: language priority, learning games, conversational reading, and enriched caregiving. When Yamani Meta first

opened, all Family Wellbeing and Yamani team members were trained in the approach to be able to consistently employ these strategies at the house and across the Family Wellbeing service.

The original Yamani team also trained in Parents as First Teachers (PAFT)⁷ foundation curriculum, which is designed to enhance school readiness by improving parents' knowledge of early childhood development. This curriculum supports caregivers to detect development delays and health issues as early as possible as well as supports children to enter the education system ready to learn and achieve school success. It also supports parents to improve their parenting knowledge and skills and helps families promote children's language and literacy.

"Friendly staff are always approachable. They have good knowledge and understanding"

Yamani family member

These frameworks and the curriculum ensure that the Yamani team provide strong early childhood education and early intervention support to attending Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and parents. All Yamani team members role model healthy behaviours to participating parents by sitting with the children at their level, actively listening, and using basic language techniques. The team also creates opportunities for peer collaboration, establishes contexts that are conducive to learning, and provides social and emotional guidance to build parenting skills and promote harmonious relationships. The team includes at least one qualified teacher who is responsible for guiding and facilitating learning at the house, including promoting children's innate drive for independent learning.

The delivery of sensory-rich play experiences has been the perfect vehicle for engaging Yamani parents in quality interactions with their children and fostering an understanding of the benefits of play. Parents have become noticeably more involved in their children's learning during Yamani activities and evidently developed improved parenting capabilities.

"I just want to thank you all for what you have done for me as a mother with this program, as it has helped me grow stronger as a parent and as an individual in coping and handling some every day-to-day challenges when it comes to my beautiful but cheeky good boys"

Yamani family member

WRAPAROUND FAMILY SERVICES

Every few months, in line with Queensland school terms, a Yamani calendar of programs is shared with the community and professional networks to advertise Yamani's activities on offer for that term. All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are welcome, coming to the house through self-referrals, Family Wellbeing service case management support or referrals from other stakeholders.

Yamani's most popular and longest-running program is the supported playgroup, *Yamani Play*. This program is designed to enhance the confidence of parents/caregivers and amplify the idea of them as their children's first teachers. Through age-appropriate activities and discussions, parents strengthen their capacity and build social connections with other community members and families.

While the focus of these sessions is to introduce the young child and parent to play as a foundation for literacy and education, it also provides a valuable platform for the team to warmly facilitate families' referrals to other services. The team invites other early childhood services to attend and connect with families, while being careful not to have an excessive number of professionals outweigh the number of families. During this safe time and space, families can become familiar with other service providers and work on breaking down any distrust or hesitancy to engage.

"[What I like about Yamani Meta is] being able to watch my child grow socially in a friendly environment"

Yamani family member

In 2019, the monthly average attendance at *Yamani Play* was regularly above 40 people, showing consistently strong engagement. The majority of these children went on to kindergarten and school, and the Yamani team are now developing new connections to rebuild numbers. Their engagement efforts, which also follow COVID-19 pandemic closures across 2020, are proving to be effective, with the team currently connecting with more than 20 family members at each playgroup and the monthly average attendance having risen from 10 people in February 2021 to 25 people by June 2021.

"It has given us as, grandparents and general community members, opportunities to attend playgroup with our grandson to build his confidence and connection to community"

Yamani family member

Another longstanding initiative is Yamani's *Book of the Week*. This literacy program provides every family that visits Yamani Meta with a different hardcover picture book each week. The greatest distribution is at *Yamani Play*, where the book is read in a group setting and time is taken to focus on the children's engagement with and comprehension of the story. This program not only supports families in building their own home library but also provides parents with skills development and positive experiences of reading with their children.

Since 2018, evidence-based programs have been offered at Yamani Meta through a model that pairs a TAIHS team member with a co-facilitating professional who is a specialist in that topic. Other TAIHS teams and partners have also used the space to deliver their own family support programs.

In offering this space to others, the Yamani team has cultivated an integrated and holistic service space that creates culturally safe engagement opportunities between families and a wide range of services.

"The staff are like family. They help support me to grow and nurture my beautiful family through nutrition sessions and Prep-for-Prep"

Yamani family member



Once-off information sessions by TAIHS staff and external stakeholders have also featured in the Yamani calendar. Topics have ranged from diabetes education, caring for sick children, autism in children, encouraging breastfeeding, technology and children, and healthy sleep habits.

See tables on following pages.

Further to the programs, Yamani Meta also provides wraparound support through innovative community engagement techniques such as the Yamani transport service. This service involves more than just picking up and dropping off Yamani families. On arrival at each residence, the Yamani transport officer disembarks from the Yamani bus to check in with the family and see if any help is needed with final preparations to leave the home. This extra time and care, and the yarns enroute, have become important in establishing Yamani Meta's family-friendly atmosphere. The yarns on the drive provide valuable opportunities for team members to receive informal updates about families and gather feedback on families' experiences of Yamani Meta and insights for program improvements.

In one instance, the Yamani transport officer used a visit to a family home to build rapport with another family member who had previously declined TAIHS case management support, despite a child safety referral. Through this rapport, the Yamani officer was able to convince the other mother to start attending *Yamani Play* sessions. This mother has now decided to work with a TAIHS Family Wellbeing worker to address child safety concerns and attend other Yamani programs.

"I like that [through] doing the programs here, I have learnt a lot as well as it has helped with building a stronger relationship with my children. They support you and don't judge, no matter the circumstances or background you come from"

Yamani family member

COMMUNITY CONTROL

Yamani Meta's base within an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation (ACCO) is one of its key elements of success. The Yamani team operates through a culturally controlled framework embedded through the ACCO's 47 years of health service experiences.

TAIHS was established in 1974 as Australia's fourth Aboriginal community-controlled health service, and is now the largest ACCO within the Townsville region. The organisation's vision is to provide a truly comprehensive model of care that responds to the physical, social, emotional, cultural, and spiritual needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the region.

All members of TAIHS's Board of Directors are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, and all have all been voted in by the organisation's members to represent community. The board works directly with the organisation's chief executive officer to achieve excellence in the delivery of culturally appropriate services that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to enjoy positive health and wellbeing outcomes.

The service has over 400 members and currently employs approximately 200 staff. Sixty-four per cent of TAIHS staff identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which guarantees that an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective is central to all activities and interactions.

TAIHS is more than a health service, with close to 100 staff not working directly inside primary healthcare but rather across a range of community services, including the Family Wellbeing service and Yamani Meta, as well as the *Mums and Bubs* clinic, the Social and Emotional Wellbeing team, Youth Support services, the Family Participation program, and the Foster and Kinship service. Led by TAIHS's organisational values, staff work in partnership with the community to empower families and support self-determination so that families can address their own health and wellbeing needs.

While the Yamani team demographic has varied with staff changes, currently half of the team identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. The team's own community connections and cultural awareness ensures that all the house's interactions, programs and advice come with a strong cultural perspective. Team members also offer a familiar face when families first enter the space, helping to quickly build trust and rapport as well as indicate that families will be understood, equal and respected in their communications and interactions while in the house.

"[What I like about the program is] the feeling of community"

Yamani family member

CULTURAL CONNECTION, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, AND PEER MENTORING

TAIHS, and by extension the Yamani team, recognise that connection to culture is a human right and that this connection is critical to the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The great number and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members who enjoy working, visiting and being in the house demonstrates cultural safety to people attending as well as encourages cultural connections between people on a day-to-day basis. Its strengths-based approach empowers families to directly participate in and have control over the decisions that impact their children.



TAIHS PROGRAMS DELIVERED IN YAMANI META

Programs that have been designed and delivered by TAIHS to be offered at Yamani Meta

Yamani Play	A unique early childhood experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to enjoy time together, with focus on the development of their children aged 0-5 years
Y.A.R.N.	Young And Resilient Nurturers is a women's group designed to build self-confidence, peer networks, and self-care for mothers
Deadly Dads	Men's group to empower fathers as Deadly Dads
H.U.G.S.	Holding Us Generating Sunshine is a warm and welcoming yarning group led by community Elders

YAMANI META EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS

Evidence-based programs co-facilitated by a TAIHS team member and a specialist

Circle of Security	Parenting program designed to build understanding on attachment and the importance of connection between children and their caregivers
Bringing Up Great Kids	Parenting program focusing on building positive and nurturing relationships between parents and their children
Triple P	Flexible and practical family support systems that develop skills, strategies and confidence to handle various parenting situations
D.R.U.M.B.E.A.T.	Discovering Relationships Using Music, Beliefs, Emotions, Attitudes, and Thoughts is a structured-learning program using music, psychology and neurobiology to reconnect with oneself and others
Core of Life	Relationships and reproductive health education program that aims to empower young people to build resilience for healthy parenting futures
Tuning Into Teens	Emotion coaching parenting program that supports caregivers to teach teenage young people to control, understand and express their emotions in healthy and positive ways that develop emotional intelligence

PROGRAMS OFFERED IN PARTNERSHIPS

Other programs that have been offered through the team's efforts to build partnerships with numerous stakeholders and cultivate an integrated and holistic service system

Big Feed Friday	ComplEAT Nutrition	Meal preparation and discussions on healthy alternatives and nutritional options for family cooking
Bubba Yarns	Midwives from the Townsville Hospital and Health Service	A culturally safe space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to access social support during pregnancy and/or after bub is born
Health Matters	Led by Neami National Townsville's Women's Health and Wellbeing Coach	To strengthen understanding of all aspects of health across the wellbeing wheel and develop strategies to enhance wellbeing
Me Before We – Life after Domestic Violence		Personal development sessions aimed to support women in identifying their own values, strengths, and self-esteem to break the cycle of domestic violence
Messy Play	Led by local library staff	Engage children in sensory play
Little Binnas		Enjoying books, rhymes, and story-time
Yarning About Change	Led by Lives Lived Well	A change-management program that addresses unhealthy habits that may lead to, or are currently causing, issues
Breakthrough Our Way		A peer support session for those concerned about a loved one's substance use
Life Back		A peer support group that develops strategies and techniques to manage substance use by building understanding of the psychological, emotional, social and physical factors underlying one's substance use
Safe Dads	Led by North Queensland Domestic Violence Service	To understand the impact of domestic and family violence on children and young people and develop skills for healthy relationships with all family members
Walkie Talkies	Led by TALK NQ Speech Pathologist	Build communication skills in toddlers through fun play-based activities
Prep for Prep		Build vocabulary relating to the classroom and other early literacy and communication skills that prepare kindergarten-aged children for their first year of school through fun play-based activities

"I loved it the week we all sat in the circle having morning tea and singing traditional songs. It brought everyone together and made it feel like old times again"

Yamani family member

There are many examples of the cultural leadership and cultural recognition by TAIHS and the Yamani team, and cultural competency plays a pivotal role in the team being able to facilitate community engagement and peer mentoring at Yamani Meta.

This includes:

- local Elders from the traditional custodians groups provide all TAIHS staff with two days of cultural awareness training
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team members co-facilitate all programs and activities
- Yamani's work is underpinned by the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP) practice standards and guiding principles⁸
- team members take care to respectfully facilitate networking and peer-mentoring opportunities that strengthen community connections and culturally supported networks
- the Yamani team are conscious to demonstrate the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews of child-rearing and development
- all interactions with families acknowledge connection to culture and celebrate pride in cultural identity.

A greatly valued element of support at Yamani Meta is the ad hoc peer mentoring and networking that takes place across all Yamani groups and while families are enjoying their time in the home. The team has identified numerous positive examples, with families reaching out and supporting one another during their time at Yamani Meta and beyond. This form of peer support, which often only shows its benefits outside of the standard work hours, is a powerful protective factor for families.

"It has encouraged lost culture to be found and provides support as I am alone in Townsville"

Yamani family member

Yamani Meta is also helping other stakeholders to overcome engagement barriers and families to trust in these other services. It is not only the use of the space, but more importantly, the support of the team that has resulted in this positive engagement, especially for those stakeholders who have struggled in their earlier attempts to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Many external stakeholders have provided positive feedback to the team after delivering a service at the house. This includes TALK HQ Speech Pathology, who were supported by the Yamani team to develop play-based programs and activities that would support caregivers to enjoy time with their children.

Evolve Therapeutic Services –a Queensland intensive trauma-informed mental health service for children and young people– also recently praised the space and service, noting both the culturally safe and supportive environment and the strong attendance of programs:

"The partnership is invaluable, both to our two services but more importantly to our children, young people, their families and carers. You have a lovely, welcoming space with support and flexibility for participants, which provides them with optimum opportunities to complete the programs in a culturally safe and supportive environment, which has resulted in strong attendance through the programs"

Evolve Therapeutic Services manager

Different mental health clinicians from the Evolve team are involved in each Yamani calendar, co-facilitating parenting programs. The Yamani's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander co-facilitator adds a cultural perspective to the Evolve material and supports cultural safety across the group. This partnership has noticeably enhanced the local Evolve mental health clinicians' cultural awareness and developed the community's confidence in the Evolve service.

The Townsville City Libraries team leader also recently praised the efforts and knock-on cultural and community-building benefits of the Yamani Meta initiative:

"I just wanted to say thank you to you for sharing the video of your Acknowledgement of Country... we have put it into all of our children's programs and the response has been amazing. One lady felt so strongly about it that she wrote a letter of thanks. She told me that growing up she had felt shame to be Aboriginal. She doesn't want her son to grow up feeling that same shame, and this Acknowledgement of Country helps him to feel proud of his culture. I thought you should know of the positive affect you are making outside of TAIHS"

Townsville City Libraries team leader

Recent feedback shared in a *Bringing Up Great Kids* post-course questionnaire by a teenage mother indicates the valuable insights that she and her teenage partner gained from their participation, and the positive outcomes that they have achieved for themselves and their one-year-old child:

"I recognise how stress and arguing and our own childhoods affects our baby. I have learnt to become more understanding of my baby (like what she was exposed to and how she would be feeling). I don't want to let the bad things from my childhood affect the way I do things and parent my baby. I want to break my family's cycle"

Bringing Up Great Kids participating mother

IMPACT OF COVID RESTRICTIONS

While North Queensland has not experienced onerous and ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, Yamani Meta was still closed to community for most of 2020. During this time, the Yamani Meta Facebook page⁹ became a valuable resource for the Yamani team to maintain connections with families.

The team also developed Yamani Play@Home resources to support families with play and learning materials that could be easily enjoyed at home. Information on these activities was offered on the Yamani Facebook page and over 1,000 packs were delivered to families in the region. Yamani families responded positively, sharing positive verbal feedback during each week's drop-off. This feedback focused on the packs' benefits of fostering play, creating positive family interactions, and establishing learning opportunities during the region's longest period of social isolation and school closures.

SCALING UP POSITIVE IMPACTS

The Yamani team dedicates time to collect feedback from families, both informally through one-on-one yarns and formally through feedback forms during and at the end of courses. The intention of this feedback is to learn from families' experiences and adapt programs if and where necessary. While rebuilding engagement since the COVID-19 pandemic closure, there also has been greater focus on community consultation to understand the needs and aspirations of Yamani families.

In a practice of continuous reflection and improvement, the Yamani team have identified two key system changes needed to enhance Yamani Meta's success. These are to improve data collection and community engagement:

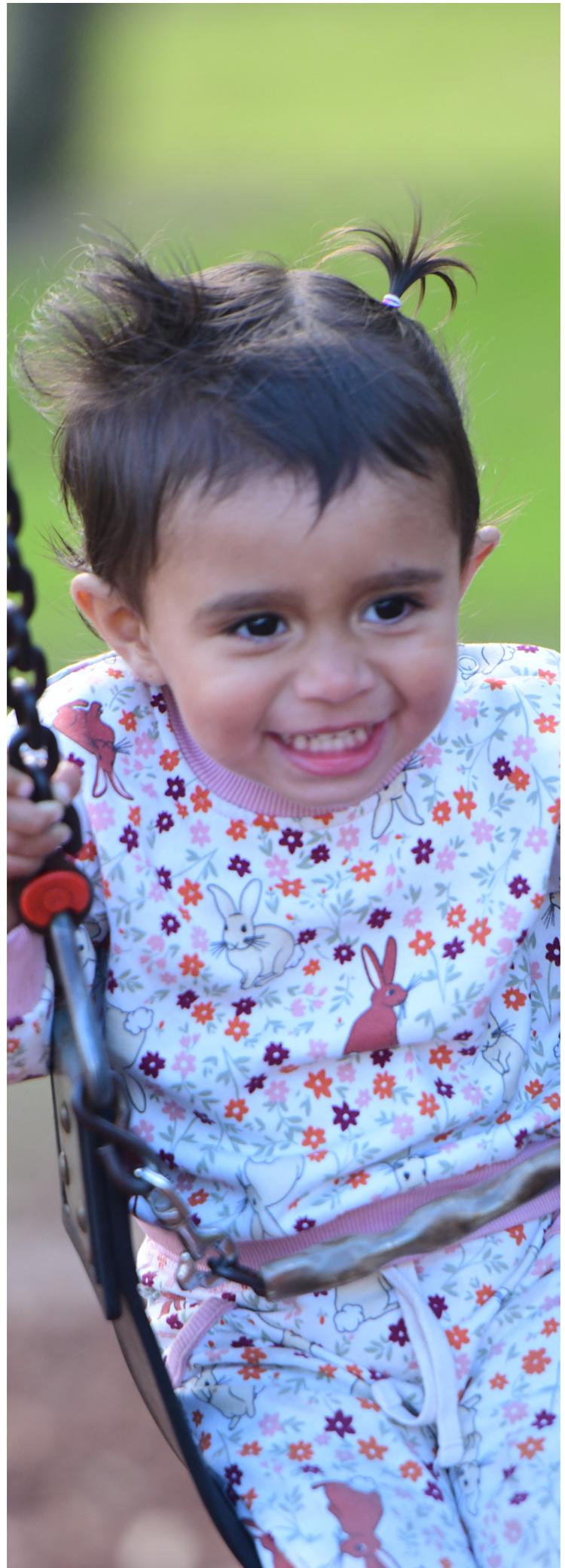
1. Improve the data – measure, monitor, evaluate, report, feedback
 - make data, reporting and feedback forms work for the program and its participants
 - continue to build up the research skills of staff so that they can harness the data and build an evidence base from which to inform team and programmatic efforts
 - know what is working well and upscale
 - identify and focus on areas of improvement
 - include more of what the community wants from the team and the home.

In addressing this theme, the Yamani Meta team recently engaged Ninti One to provide a two-day community researcher training program. Ninti One is an Indigenous professional services organisation that has extensive experience in providing training to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community researchers in data collection and research methodologies. In developing these skills, the Yamani team will advance their own data collection abilities, be able to capture positive outcomes, and formally recognise what works and what needs to be improved at Yamani Meta.



2. Community engagement:

- leverage off TAIHS and its staff to improve community engagement, with a focus on those parts of the community who have not yet been engaged
- consider the benefits of establishing a formal advisory council
- look into how to increase inclusion of community Elders
- find ways for the TAIHS board, staff and engaged community members to provide advice
- explore how to upscale peer mentorships
- increase engagement with people who naturally take on leadership roles within the space, possibly having them take on a more formal role
- improve access to transport, which continues to be a barrier to families' engagement.



CASE STUDY

An Aboriginal mother and Aboriginal father who were expecting their first child together were first brought to Yamani Meta by a TAIHS Family Wellbeing worker in early 2021. TAIHS medical staff recognised high levels of stress and anxiety surrounding the pregnancy due to the mother's fear of her new baby being removed by child safety services, because her first child had been taken from her many years ago when the child was two months old.

A case management support referral had been made to the TAIHS Family Wellbeing service to address the wellbeing domains of parenting, family interactions, health (antenatal care and emotional health), connections (with culturally appropriate services), and material wellbeing (homelessness).

Both Mum and Dad were supported to start attending *Bubba Yarns*, which was launched in support of the Yamani Meta midwifery group practice and co-facilitated with midwives from the Townsville Hospital. Both parents attended the group for two months, and Mum continued to attend morning sessions while Dad had other training and work opportunities to pursue. Mum and Dad were also supported by the Yamani team to strengthen their relationship and parenting skills, enjoy positive interactions throughout the pregnancy and adopt a positive outlook on the arrival of their child. Through the couple's weekly engagements, they were provided with ongoing support to develop their social and emotional wellbeing and antenatal care.

Just days after a positive birthing experience that was free of any complications, Mum returned to the *Bubba Yarns* with her new bub. Her continued attendance meant that the Yamani team and hospital midwives could continue to provide her with information and referrals and advise her on any queries relating to her newborn baby's development. Through her regular attendance, Mum also built a strong support network across TAIHS and other health services.

Mum has also taken up Yamani's *Book of the Week* program, allowing the family to establish an excellent home library. The relating discussions centred on the importance of the first 1,000 days and the role of parents as first teachers. Through the Yamani early childhood teacher's explanations, Mum learnt how babies absorb language when they are inside the womb and that Bub knows parents' voices and can be comforted by these. The family has shared positive feedback with the Yamani team on their appreciation of the books and enjoyment in Dad regularly reading to Mum and Bub.

Every week, Mum engages in conversations with different people at Yamani Meta for advice about her child's development and her own postnatal care. The expected outcomes of a healthy pregnancy for Mum, positive experiences of relationship-building across the family, and the resulting strong start to Bub's first 1,000 days have been achieved. The family's strong connections with the Yamani team and the trust that they have built with other services are now protective factors around the family, and they have increased their confidence in and capabilities to access necessary supports when required. The family also increased their confidence in engaging with Townsville Hospital staff, giving them access to other services that will continue to support their child's development.

After several months of attendance, the TAIHS Family Wellbeing worker noted that the family had achieved all their case plan goals and no longer required case management support. Even with their case closed, Mum and Bub continue to come to *Bubba Yarns* every week. Mum has also started bringing Bub to *Yamani Play* and has recently attended her first *Big Feed Friday* session.

The *Parent Empowerment and Efficacy Measure* (PEEM) is used as part of the case closure process. Mum scored herself the highest score of 10 and said Yamani Meta is the reason for her high score, for knowing how to get useful information about how her children's needs change as they grow; she can work out what to do if any of her children have a problem; she can find services for her children when she needs to; and she can help other families find help when they need it.

It is important to acknowledge the ongoing healing journey that Mum is continuing along with the care and support of her Yamani team. Through her weekly team checks-ins, Mum has shared the traumatic circumstances surrounding the removal of her first bub, when she was a young mother experiencing extreme domestic violence from her then-partner. In experiencing such a contrast in support through the birthing and bonding of her new baby and being able to openly love her second bub, there have been many complex emotions for her to work through. She has used the strong relationships that she has built up over many months to process this and seek information, referrals and advice. Her firstborn, now a young teenager, recently travelled to Townsville during a school holiday, and Mum was able to meet and spend time with the child. Reconnecting as a family has been celebrated by all as a positive step toward family healing and building family connections.



ENDNOTES

1. SNAICC 2019, *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: A guide to support implementation*, VIC, pp. 15-29.
2. SNAICC 2019, p. 15.
3. World Health Organisation May 2018, *Nurturing care for early childhood development – A global framework for action and results*, p. 4.
4. World Health Organisation May 2018, p.7.
5. Ibid.
6. Early Development Resources 2021, *The Abecedarian Approach* webpage; Melbourne Graduate School of Education 2021, 3a - Abecedarian Approach Australia webpage.
7. Parents as First Teachers 2021, *Who are parents as first teachers?* webpage.
8. Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Limited 2016, *Practice standards*; Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Limited 2016, *Practice resources*; Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Limited 2016, *Practice Guide*.
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