Birthing on Mornington Island: culture, identity and our aspirations for the future

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Acknowledgements

- Traditional Owners
  - Ngunnawal
  - Yangkaal & Gangalidda
  - Lardil and Kaiadilt

- Supervisors
  - Prof Sarah Larkins
  - Prof Sue McGinty
  - Dr Lynore Geia

- Centre for Rural & Remote Health, Mount Isa, James Cook University
  - Prof Sabina Knight
Prelude
Introduction

- Prelude
- Background
- Indigenous standpoint
- Literature review – deficit ideology
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Background

“Maternity services should acknowledge and, where possible, accommodate the particular cultural beliefs concerning childbirth held by many Indigenous families, including a preference for ‘birthing on country’.”

Maternity Services Review 2009.
Indigenous Standpoint

I belong to the saltwater people of the Gulf of Carpentaria – to the Yankaal and the Gangalida, sharing country with the Lardil and Kaiadilt.

As an Indigenous researcher it is important that I adopt an approach to research involving my people that has at its centre our cultural knowledge, practices and values and celebrates and upholds our ways of being, knowing and doing.
Literature Review: Deficit Ideology

... a worldview that explains and justifies outcome inequalities by pointing to supposed deficiencies (drawing on stereotypes well-established in the mainstream psyche) within disenfranchised individuals and communities, while simultaneously discounting the socio-political contexts, such as systemic conditions (for example, racism, economic injustice) that grant some people greater social, political and economic access.
Literature themes

- medical hegemony versus midwifery led care
- risk and location of birth
- quality and models of care
- culture/kinship
- colonisation & racism

- Thus our indigeneity, as informed by this “master narrative” prejudices our health
The project

The aim of this project is to:

- Compare and contrast the ontological and epistemological positioning of Aboriginal and non-indigenous people as it pertains to birthing and maternity care:
  - Document the personal experiences of birthing of Mornington Island women;
  - Explore the “cultural” beliefs and practices around birthing on Mornington Island;
  - Explore current maternity care from the perspectives of consumers (Aboriginal women) and Maternity Services providers (including doctors, nurses/midwives, Aboriginal Health Workers working in maternal health, and specialists).
The Project

- Research Design
  - Critical approach
  - Indigenous methodologies & critical social theory
  - Insider research
- Data Collection
  - Focus group (Yarning circle)
  - Semi-structure interviews
  - Two phases
The Project

- Community consultation and approval
  - Mornington Shire Council
  - Junkuri Laka: Wellesley Islands Law, Justice and Governance Association Inc.

- Ethics
  - James Cook University HREC
  - Townsville Health and Hospital Service HREC
Preliminary findings

- Document the personal experiences of birthing of Mornington Island women
Preliminary findings

- Explore the “cultural” beliefs and practices around birthing on Mornington Island

- What we can do now!
Thank you & Questions?