

The Stayin on Track project—supporting young Aboriginal fathers through a user-developed website

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The issues for young Aboriginal men becoming fathers are well known: lack of role models, substance abuse, poor housing, few resources and relationship breakdown. What isn't well understood is how to provide support when it is needed.

Mobile phones are widely used by this group for social engagement, entertainment and information gathering. However, web based resources and mobile phone apps focusing on young people's mental health do not currently provide content tailored to this group. Very little information or data exists in Australia regarding either the mental health or fathering of young Aboriginal men.

Stayin on Track will build a phone-optimised website to provide a portal for young Aboriginal men to link in to information and support when it is needed. The project is unique in using the young Aboriginal fathers from urban and rural locations to design the website. Young fathers from Newcastle, Tamworth and Moree in northern NSW will record their own experiences and advise on website design and content.

The *Stayin on Track* mobile app will test sending information on father-infant care, partner support and mental health as SMS. *Stayin on Track* will also test a 'Mood Tracker' and 'Dad Tracker' sending regular text messages to check on how the men are managing the stress which can be part of their fathering role. Two respected mentors from the community, one a senior counsellor, will be alerted to make telephone contact when the young dads indicate distress.

The project is a joint venture of The University of Newcastle and the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre. It is supported by researchers in rural health, fathering, psychiatry and Indigenous health. An award-winning filmmaker will create brief accounts of the young fathers' stories that will be used to engage others. The stories include themes of pride in being a father, tough times, culture and fathers, the emotions on finding out, feeling down, and role models. Young Aboriginal men will be able to see other young dads telling their stories.

Once the website has been approved by the young fathers it will be advertised through Indigenous websites and social media channels. Presentations will be made to Aboriginal-controlled organisations such as Aboriginal Medical Services, Aboriginal men's groups and Indigenous children's services to alert them to the websites' availability. Traffic through the website will be monitored to form part of the overall project evaluation.