Guiding Good Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research

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Aim
To document important issues and effective strategies when researching health in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander settings and develop practical resources to guide researchers and research supervisors.

Questions that shaped the guides
What are the key characteristics of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research environment?
What is different about doing research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander settings?
How can supervisors best support emerging Indigenous researchers?
How can researchers engage community in all stages of the project?
How do we collaboratively plan robust, culturally acceptable projects?
How can supervisors best support emerging Indigenous researchers?

Collaborative development approaches
Bringing together Indigenous organisations, academic institutions and government agencies to share knowledge and advice.

More than asking what people wanted – it included bringing people together, listening and learning, drawing on what people know, using the networks, asking who else should have input, following up, requesting permission to quote published sources.

Project methods included:
- workshop and meetings with stakeholders
- literature search and drawing on published and unpublished work
- interviews, yarning
- regular editorial workshops: planning, action, reflection, refinement.
- systematic review involving more than 60 people from community and academic research, service delivery, education and policy sectors.

What we learnt
Investment in relationship building and collaborative approaches resulted in strong engagement in the project and sharing expertise. This engagement supported diverse content from around Australia, including case studies and examples, evidence-based advice, step-by-step processes and recommended resources.

It takes time to work in this way. It is necessary to be flexible, open to ideas, and responsive.
Working collaboratively with the potential users of the guides enabled the development of well-targetted, original and useful resources.

Outcomes – Two practical guides and a web resource

The Web Resource on the Lowitja Institute website has more research case stories and information for researchers about Indigenous health research policies, structures and collaborations, resources and links (www.lowitja.org.au).

‘… unlocks important research information and makes it more accessible for Indigenous people.’

Acknowledgments – A truly collaborative effort
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