

# Undertaking Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations



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Clinical Decisions, Ethical Challenges Conference

March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2007

# History of Research

- Focused on the needs and interests of researchers,
- Exploited Aboriginal people's cultural and other property,
- Unequal power bases,
- Research not considered a priority for Aboriginal peoples,
- Too few Aboriginal researchers



# Development of an Indigenous research strategy

- NHMRC commitment
  - committee membership, funding, working groups, publications, training
- RAWG Road Map
- Capacity development
- Tri-partite agreement - short term exchange program



# RAWG Objective

The overall objective of the RAWG Road Map is to support the NHMRC to advise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities throughout Australia, on the achievement and maintenance of the highest practicable standards of individual and public health, and to foster research in the interests of improving those standards.



# RAWG Priority Areas

Descriptive research which outlines patterns of health risk, disease and death. This information should be utilized to inform the development of sound preventive, early diagnosis and treatment based interventions which are likely to result in meaningful health gain for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

A research focus on the factors and process that promote resilience and wellbeing; in particular but not exclusively, during the periods of pregnancy, infancy, childhood and adolescence and form the basis for good health throughout the lifespan.



# RAWG Priority Areas

A focus on health services research which describes the optimum means of delivering preventive, diagnostic and treatment based health services and interventions to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

A focus on the association between health status and health gain and policy and programs that lie outside the direct influence of the health sector.



# RAWG Priority Areas

A focus on engaging with research and action in previously under-researched Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and communities.

Development of the nation's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research capacity (including training Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers) and health research practice in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



Values and Ethics:  
Guidelines for Ethical  
Conduct in Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait Islander  
Health Research



Values and Ethics:  
Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research



# Context of the Guidelines

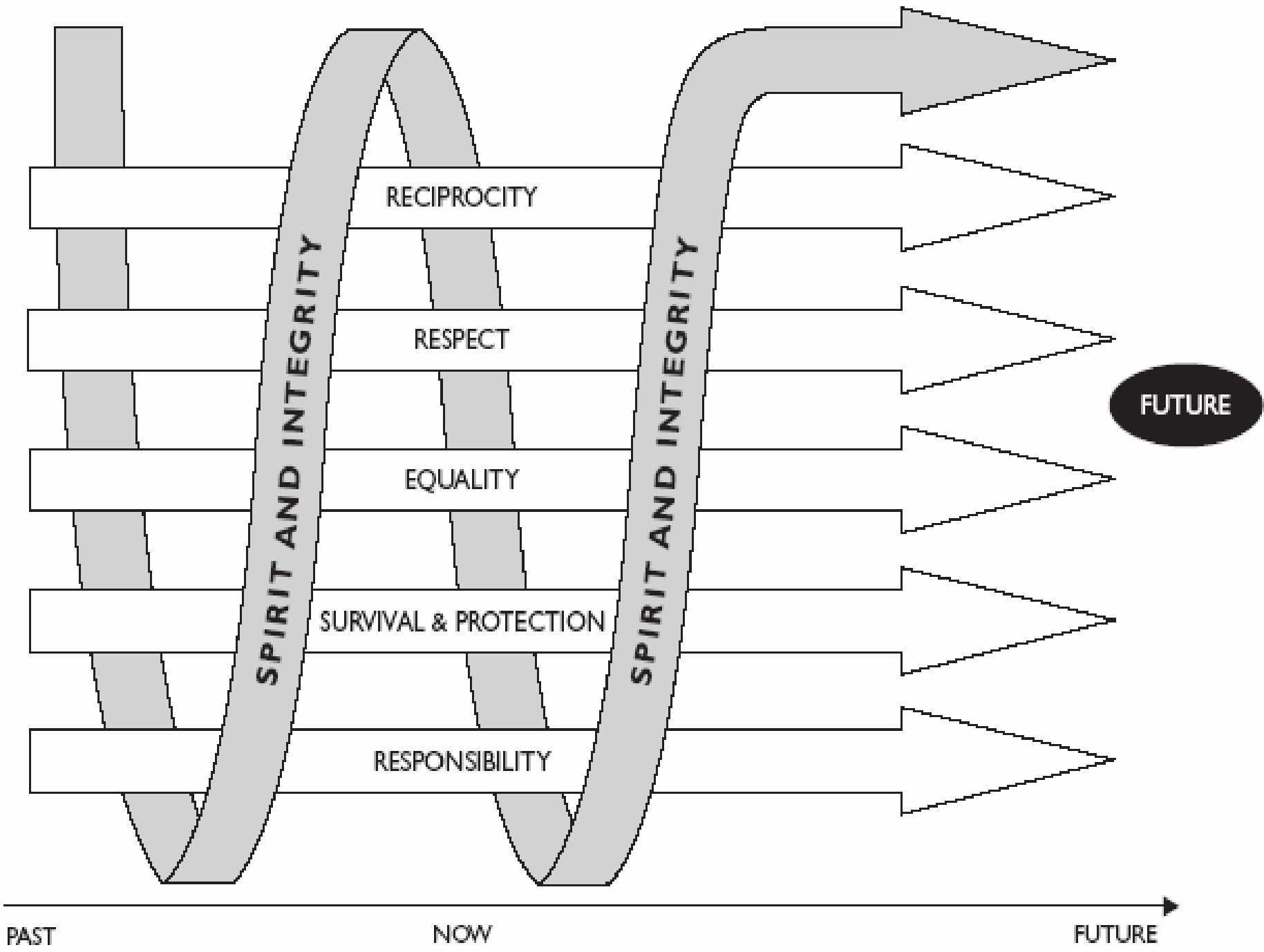
How people see the world is generally informed by their own experiences, values, norms and learning. From the earliest periods of colonisation, ill-formed perceptions and assumptions about the values and ways of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and social organisation have emerged from the comparison of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander world to the spiritual, social, political and economic perspectives of European colonisers.



# Coverage of the Guidelines

The *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* is the authoritative statement on research involving humans. This means that for health research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples both the *National Statement* and the *Values and Ethics* guidelines apply.





**SPIRIT AND INTEGRITY**

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RECIPROCITY

RESPECT

EQUALITY

SURVIVAL & PROTECTION

RESPONSIBILITY

**FUTURE**

PAST

NOW

FUTURE

# Reciprocity – research context

In the research context, reciprocity implies inclusion and means recognising partners' contributions, and ensuring that research outcomes include equitable benefits of value to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or individuals.

Reciprocity requires the researcher to demonstrate a return (or benefit) to the community that is valued by the community and which contributes to cohesion and survival.



# Respect – research context

Respectful research relationships acknowledge and affirm the right of people to have different values, norms and aspirations. Those involved in research processes should not be blind to difference.

Also essential to a respectful research relationship is the recognition of the contribution of others and the consequences of research.



# Equality – research context

Equality as a value may sometimes be taken to mean sameness. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples hold strong beliefs that sameness is not equality. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have sought the elimination of ‘difference blindness’ so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures can be appreciated and respected.



# Responsibility – research context

- Doing no harm

There is a clear responsibility for researchers to do no harm to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals or communities and also to those things that they value.


- Accountability

Researchers and participating communities need to establish processes to ensure researchers' accountability to individuals, families and communities, particularly in relation to the cultural and social dimensions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life.

# KEEPING RESEARCH ON TRACK

A Guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander Peoples about health research  
processes





# Keeping research on track

**A guide for  
Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait  
Islander peoples  
about health  
research ethics**



Australian Government  
Department of Health and Human Services

# Aim

To ensure research undertaken in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities:

- Respects our shared values,
- Is relevant to our priorities, needs and aspirations, and
- Develops long term ethical relationships with researchers, institutions and sponsors.



# Keeping Research on Track

- The best way to keep research on track is for researchers and participants to work together to develop long term partnerships based on trust and shared values.
- It is important to negotiate with researchers right from the start about the who, what, why and how questions for the research project.



# The 8 steps of the research journey

- Building relationships
- Conceptualisation
- Development and approval
- Data collection and management
- Analysis
- Report writing
- Dissemination
- Learning from our experience



# Integrating guidelines with the development of ethical relationships

- Is it possible to reconcile the interests of research and researchers with the values, expectations and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?

