



The EASI Project: Developing principles and prototypes of effective psychological and social Evaluation, Assessment, and Screening Instruments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

Why this research is needed: Effectively assessing, treating, and managing social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) issues amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians is an urgent problem. While there have been some advances in this area, there are also alternative and polarising views regarding the most appropriate ways of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, and individual youth and adults in the area of SEWB.

Fundamental to the effective and appropriate treatment and management of SEWB problems is an initial meaningful evaluation, assessment, or screening of the problem and the context within which the problem is situated. There is long-standing debate around the utility of clinical assessment and the need for mainstream assessment tools to be validated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people prior to deriving any interpretations from the assessment. More appropriate than adapting mainstream measures would be measures that are developed directly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander beliefs, values, and knowledge systems. In particular, measures that are developed from SEWB principles may be more effective, meaningful, and engaging than measures adapted from mainstream categories such as depression and anxiety.

What this research will do: The overarching purpose of this project is to develop a framework and begin the construction of tools for clinicians working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The study will include a systematic review to develop a comprehensive, current, and accurate overview of what is available nationally and internationally with regard to the clinical assessment of the psychological and social functioning of persons of different cultures. Key evidence-based principles of effective practice when assessing the psychological and social functioning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians will be identified in consultation with an expert panel, and a preliminary prototype of an appropriate assessment instrument will be generated.

How this research will be used: The results of this research will be used to influence policy design within University settings for training psychologists and mental health practitioners. The principles for effective practice will be distributed to University psychology, social work, and other relevant departments to include in the curricula of their courses. Appropriate accreditation authorities such as the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) will also be provided with a copy of the principles. The creation of the knowledge garnered by this project can be applied directly towards addressing clinical problems and the way in which SEWB services are provided.

Lead partner: Centre for Remote Health
Collaborating partners: Central Australian Aboriginal Congress
Key contact: Mikaela Cibich
Email: mikaela.cibich@flinders.edu.au
Phone: 08 8201 3401