Student & research projects at Ngala 2019

Student Projects and Postgraduate Research Opportunities at Ngala for 2019

Research Unit

Email: research.mail@ngala.com.au

Website: https://www.ngala.com.au/about-us/how-we-work/research/

Please note that the list of projects provided, including their scope and project length, are a guide only. NOTE: Many of these projects will require HREC approval.

Ngala's research focus areas

Perinatal anxiety and depression

Early years development

Parent-child relationships

Parent skill development

Families in community context

Workforce development

Historical perspectives

Culturally sensitive parenting

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Welcome to Ngala

In WA, the name Ngala is synonymous with parenting and children's development and was established in 1890, with 128 years of service to the community. Ngala has a passion for supporting families with children 0-18 years through the journey of parenting and is widely respected for its knowledge and evidence-informed services, as well as community engagement work.

Over the past decade, research and evaluation have been major areas of development within Ngala. In 2007 the decision to forge formal links and articulate an interdisciplinary research framework to promote a research culture amongst the organisation was made. Following this decision, a two-year action learning project was undertaken with the involvement of researchers, managers and practitioners across a number of disciplines. This project focused on the development of a research framework to guide future planning within the organisation.

Ngala's Research Framework emphasises the importance of knowledge seeking and sharing amongst practitioners, implementing continuous action learning cycles, and building stronger and more coherent connections between current research and service delivery. Ngala's research policy is "to support an agenda for work in parenting and early childhood that is responsive to the needs of the community and fits with Ngala's purpose in serving the community by providing evidence-based services".

Enclosed is a list of prospective research projects that might be of interest to students in their final year placements, honours and postgrad students. Projects may be relevant to students from a variety of backgrounds, with topics ranging from evaluation of data and reflective practice, to early childhood projects, community development and fatherhood.

Ngala has a strong commitment to WA students and encourages any questions, comments, request or ideas to our research team at: research.mail@ngala.com.au

We look forward to hearing from you.

E Bennett.

Dr Elaine Bennett, Director Research, Ngala

Are you a student wishing to increase your skills in research and evaluation and can work within a team that supports tasks contributing to larger projects?

We can support and mentor you so you can gain more experience.

Volunteers are welcome to apply to
research.mail@ngala.com.au

Become a volunteer Research Assistant at Ngala

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Contents

Research focus area 1: Perinatal anxiety and depression

There are currently no projects identified in this research focus area, however, any student wishing to undertake a postgraduate project with a focus on perinatal anxiety and depression is encouraged to contact the Research Unit to discuss.

Research focus area 2: Early years development

Project 1: What is the impact of antenatal sessions for prospective fathers?

Service Area:	Research Unit
Estimated length of project:	120 hrs
Most suitable study course:	Honours year/master's student for health or social sciences

Scope of project: In becoming a father, men undergo a major life change with new responsibilities and roles. While the birth can be a time for celebration and joy there will be many challenges for fathers in supporting the mother and taking up their relationship with the new infant. Unfortunately, preparation for parenting classes and groups, as well as online information tends to concentrate on mothers and overlook the needs of fathers.

This could be a mixed method study which could access fathers through Ngala's involvement in undertaking antenatal sessions for fathers through maternity antenatal services. Past evaluations have shown that the immediate feedback from fathers has been that the information was helpful. It is not known what the impact is on the father's experience of birth and early parenting and how the new father was assisted with the information given during the one-off session that was made available. A number of small projects could be linked with antenatal sessions and follow up of the father to see what support was required in the transition from pregnancy and post birth.

Ethics approval required:	Yes
Skills required:	Knowledge of qualitative and quantitative research methods, literature reviews and interviewing.

Research focus area 3: Parent/child relationships

Project 2: Formative Evaluation of a Father-Infant Relationship Support Group

Service Area:	Research Unit
Estimated length of project:	2 – 3 years
Most suitable study course:	Master's or PhD

Scope of project: Evidence suggests that fathers are becoming more involved in early parenting and their involvement is influential for positive developmental outcomes for children. However, there are limited resources and services available to support father-infant relationships. Also, the means of supporting fathers with infants is not well understood by many service providers and there is limited evidence of what works to help fathers build stronger bonds with their child. Therefore, this research project proposes to ask fathers with infants about their needs and preferences for support, and to consider the adaptation of a mother-infant support group to meet the needs of fathers and their infants. Possible target groups include Aboriginal fathers, fathers involved with Department of Communities or Department of Corrective Services, separated fathers, Fly-In-Fly-Out fathers, fathers of children with a disability, and fathers who have partners with a disability or mental health difficulties.

Co-Supervisor: Dawson Cooke (Ngala)

Other possible Co-Supervisors or Associate Supervisors: Garth Kendall, Sharyn Burns, Elaine Bennett, Sharon Cooke.

Represented Partners: Curtin University, The Fathering Project, Ngala, Playgroup WA, FamilyWorks, Mother-Baby Nurture.

Aim: Create a means of supporting father-infant relationships – which depending on results may be informed by the existing model of Mother-Baby Nurture (MBN).
www.motherbabynurture.com

Objectives

- To identify community attitudes and interest in supporting fathers-infant relationships
- To explore new fathers' wants, needs and preferred formats of support for relationship with their infant
- To improve the parenting confidence of fathers with infants
- To improve the parental reflective functioning (mentalising) of fathers in respect to themselves and their infants
- To reduce the depression, anxiety and stress of fathers with infants

Method (stages 1-2 would be suitable for a master's project, or complete projects as a PhD)

1. Conduct a survey to identify attitudes and interest regarding a relationship support group for fathers and babies, and/or other sources of support. This survey could include past MBN partners and MBN referral sources.
2. Run focus group(s) with fathers of infants to explore their wants, needs and preferred formats of support for their relationship with their infant.
3. As indicated by results of the survey and focus group, modify the MBN model (or alternative strategies) to be suitable for fathers and infants.
4. Trial this new model with fathers and infants.
5. Evaluate how well this program meets the intended objectives.

Ethics approval required: Yes

Skills required: Qualitative and quantitative research methods, literature reviews, survey development.

Research focus area 4: Parent skill development

Project 3: Sleep issues & solutions for families with children with ASD and ADHD and other related issues.

Service Area: Research Unit

Estimated length of project: To be determined

Most suitable study course: Postgraduate project

Scope of project: Families are looking for sleeping and settling solutions for babies and children with neurological dysfunction. There is a large cohort of families with children with ASD and ADHD and other related issues who have 0-10 year olds with ongoing sleep issues. They often try the traditional solutions (they say they "failed" Ngala) and are desperately seeking solutions. It is anticipated a literature review is required and a needs analysis with parents that would develop the evidence for the next phase of developing specific strategies for parents and professionals in this area of work.

Ethics approval required: Yes for honours or postgraduate project

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Skills required: Qualitative and quantitative research methods, literature reviews, survey development.

Research focus area 5: Families in community context

Project 4: Evaluation/Research of Ngala's Facebook page

Service Area: Research Unit/Marketing

Estimated length of project: Negotiable

Most suitable study course: Honours year/master's student for health or social sciences/information technology

Scope of project: Facebook provides an opportunity for a research and evaluation project, considering a range of parenting questions via a survey from the users of Ngala's Facebook page. For example:

- to ask questions in relation to breastfeeding and parental expectations.
- to target fathers and check if parenting information is father inclusive and relevant for fathers.
- to focus on how parents manage their young children 0-4 years with iPads/tablets/screen time.

Ethics approval required: Yes if this project is to be published

Skills required: Knowledge of social media, setting up surveys, intermediate knowledge of Microsoft Office (Word and Excel).

Project 5: Community Outreach

Service Area: Swan Alliance

Estimated length of project: To be determined

Most suitable study course: Undergraduate or postgraduate project

Scope of project: This study could offer students the opportunity to explore the benefits of providing strengths based family–centred approach. Research indicates that to be an effective practitioner in engaging with families workers need to demonstrate a combination of empathy, respect, genuineness and optimism. This study could explore the key factors for an effective program and make recommendations for improvement in the delivery of the project.

The Community Outreach Program is designed to be short term with families entering and exiting within 6 months. Family and child inclusive practices are incorporated into everyday support with families. Parents are visited at home or at a place nominated by them. Parents are supported to build confidence in their parenting capacity and build on their strengths.

Currently families are assessed on intake with a specific plan put in place around the current challenges the families are facing and are referred on to other agencies that can provide support. Pre and post evaluation forms are completed with families who are visited at their homes or community location.

Ethics approval required: Yes for postgraduate project

Skills required: Qualitative research methods, literature reviews, survey development.

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Project 6: Evaluation/Research of Ngala's Parenting Line data

Service Area: Family Services

Estimated length of project: 120 hours (negotiable)

Most suitable study course: Undergraduate or practicum placement

Scope of project: Ngala has 25 years of Helpline data ready for a student. There are a range of questions that could be asked of the data, including demographics for each caller in WA and helpline call issues related management and referral data. In Dec 2016 Ngala has expanded the Parenting Line to parents of children 0-18 years.

Ngala runs the service from 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week. A student is required to help with the analysis of various sources of data. Examples for analysis:

- What are the emerging issues for parents of school-aged children and adolescents?
- Assess whether the current primary presenting issues 0-6 years are different and/or more complex that past primary presenting issues;
- Assess if there is a correlation between birth rate per geographical area and number of HL calls from that area. To determine if families with new babies are using the service;
- Assess the impact of new community services or conversely closure of services on HL calls within geographical areas.

Ethics approval required: No

Skills required: Data analysis, good use of Word and Excel.

Research focus area 6: Workforce development

Project 7: Practice Guide

Service Area: Quality and Risk

Estimated length of project: 100 – 120 hours

Most suitable study course: Student practicum

Scope of project: Recently the Curriculum Guide has been developed into an e-guide for practice staff that includes hyperlinks to all Ngala web articles, practice resources and resources to refer parents for additional helpful information. However, the Curriculum (Practice) Guide for 0-6 years was developed over two years ago and the 7-18 years curriculum, over 12 months ago and they are now due for review. Ngala's Practice Governance Plan (2016-2019) outcomes include:

1. Ngala is recognised for its high standards and commitment to continuous improvement;

2. Ngala is reliable and consistent in its service delivery and approaches;

3. Practice provided by staff is based on best available evidence; and

4. Practice provided by staff is culturally appropriate.

Before the e-guide is released to staff, practice information needs to be completed and references hyperlinked are based on current best practice and evidence-based research (post June 2016) for both practice and parent resources.

Ethics approval required: No

Skills required: Good use of Word, Excel and ability to navigate the internet.

Project 8: LGBTQI families

Service Area:	Research Unit
Estimated length of project:	To be determined
Most suitable study course:	Honours or postgraduate project

Scope of project: Access and inclusion for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) families to early parenting services is crucial. A study undertaken six years ago analysed the attitudes, knowledge and beliefs of Ngala staff around working with LGBTQI families[1]. The results demonstrated that work is needed to promote acceptance of diversity and the inclusion of LGBTQI families in planning, developing, evaluating and accessing early parenting services.

Since this time Ngala has developed an Access and Inclusion Framework and policy and undertaken staff development opportunities. It is timely to reconsider a further audit or survey to reassess for any change or further areas of staff development required.

Ethics approval required:	Yes (if publication of results), No for Ngala purposes.
Skills required:	Knowledge of survey development, data analysis, literature reviews.

Project 9: Assist with the development of a workforce development framework that is relevant, respectful and culturally appropriate.

Service Area:	Human Resources
Estimated length of project:	To be determined
Most suitable study course:	3rd year or post-graduate student for communication, health or social sciences

Scope of project: Ngala is embarking on their third Reconciliation Action Plan with the goal to offer services that are accessible and appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with young children who seek support to grow their children in healthy ways. Fundamental to the provision of services that are recognised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as being relevant, appropriate and respectful of their cultural needs is that services are delivered by staff that are culturally secure. This project will research the literature regarding development of cultural competencies for staff working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and develop a workforce development framework that informs the Ngala workforce development program.

Ethics approval required:	No
Skills required:	Good use of Word, Excel and ability to navigate the internet.

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1. [1] Bennett E, Berry K, Emeto TI, Burmeister OK, Young J, Shields L. Attitudes to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents seeking health care for their children in two early parenting services in Australia. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, SEPT 2016, doi:10.1111/jocn.13595.

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Project 10: How has a peer mentor/clinical supervisor education pathway supported the nursing workforce at Ngala ?

Service Area: Research Unit

Estimated length of project: To be determined

Most suitable study course: Master of Nursing by coursework/thesis

Scope of project: Ngala has developed a Nursing Practice Support & Development (NPSD) Framework to provide an education pathway for nurses at Ngala. The NPSD Framework facilitates workplace learning and professional development. In addition, a Practice Support Person (PSP) or mentor is assigned to each new staff member for six months and then a peer clinical supervisor to assess and support the nursing competency standards process.

Ngala is seeking a higher degree student to evaluate the effectiveness of the NPSD Framework and support for the nursing workforce at Ngala. This evaluation research project is suitable for a qualitative or mixed methods design and may fulfil the requirements of a master's degree by research.

Ethics approval required: Yes

Skills required: Qualitative and quantitative research methods, literature reviews, survey development.

Project 11: What has changed for Ngala practice since the introduction of reflective practice supervision?

Service Area: Research Unit

Estimated length of project: To be determined

Most suitable study course: Honours or Postgraduate studies in community psychology, health or social sciences, early childhood education. Suitable for student practicum.

Scope of project: Currently Ngala offers reflective practice supervision for practice staff. Regular data is being collected on the implementation. Assistance with evaluation and/or research will be valuable to enable us to measure the impact both on staff and clients. For example: how is the model operationalised and what are the system/individual barriers?

Ethics approval required: Yes

Skills required: Qualitative and quantitative research methods, data analysis.

Project 12: Embedding a culture of evaluation

Service Area: Research Unit

Estimated length of project: To be determined

Most suitable study course: 3rd year or postgraduate student for communication, health or social sciences. Suitable for practicum placement.

Scope of project: Ngala is seeking to embed a culture of evaluation organisation-wide that is owned and valued by staff working in a diversity of programs and services. The evaluation framework includes a strong emphasis on Results Based Accountability – "Is anyone better off?" The intent of the evaluation framework is to enable a culture of evaluation across the continuum of service delivery from tendering to implementation. Due to the complexity and

diversity of service and program delivery within Ngala a coordinated and systematic approach to evaluation activities needs to be developed.

The aim of the project will be to:

- Assist current team in the draft development and consultation process;
- Promote the evaluation framework to all staff;
- Identify processes and a central collection point for the coordinated, systematic and ongoing collection of qualitative and quantitative data (who, what, where, when); and
- Develop a plan for coordinating evaluation activities.

Ethics approval required: No

Skills required: Qualitative and quantitative research methods, data analysis.

Project 13: Data collation and analysis to support strategic and service planning

Service Area: Research Unit

Estimated length of project: To be determined

Most suitable study course: To be determined

Scope of project: A lot of data is collected by other agencies and organisations that could support Ngala's strategic and service planning. In order to be usable and relevant, it requires collation and a way to readily extract and analyse data for specific areas. This includes demographic data and other measures such as socioeconomic (SEIFA) and developmental (AEDC, NAPLAN).

This project could include:

- Mapping to overlay the AEDC boundaries as provided on the AEDC website;
- Collation of data from AEDC, NAPLAN, ABS, LGAs, workforce surveys, birthrates from Department of Health;
- Identifying trends or patterns in areas where Ngala has a presence; and
- Identifying areas of potential need and/or growth where Ngala does not have a presence.

Ethics approval required: No

Skills required: Good use of Word and Excel, knowledge and skills in conducting literature reviews.

Project 14: Service delivery via virtual technology (telehealth) methods

Service Area: Research Unit/Family Services

Estimated length of project: To be determined

Most suitable study course: To be determined

Scope of project: To explore the qualities needed for early parenting practitioners, and need for support, in the change from traditional face-to-face methods of service delivery to using virtual technology in the delivery of services to rural families.

This project will investigate the requirements for planning, implementation and evaluation of efficient, effective service delivery via virtual and technology based methods.

Ethics approval required: Yes if findings are to be disseminated to the broader early parenting sector.

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Skills required: Skills and knowledge of qualitative and quantitative research methods, data analysis and literature reviews.

Research focus area 7: Historical Perspectives

There are currently no projects identified in this research focus area, however, any student wishing to undertake a postgraduate project with a focus on historical practices with a nursing and early parenting focus is encouraged to contact the Research Unit to discuss.

Research focus area 8: Culturally sensitive parenting

Project 15: Evaluation tools for CALD and Aboriginal families

Service Area: Research Unit

Estimated length of project: 120 hours (negotiable)

Most suitable study course: A unit of professional practice either senior undergrad or postgrad.

Scope of project: The Research Unit provides services across Ngala service areas regarding evidence based practice. A student is required to assist staff in the Research Unit identify validated/successful evaluation tools and methodology used for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and Aboriginal families and communities. The student will be required to conduct a national and international literature search and identify validated/successful evaluation methodologies and tools used and present the finding in a report.

Ethics approval required: No

Skills required: Skills and knowledge of literature reviews, knowledge of culturally safe practices in a work environment

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Project 16: Can the Ngala Parenting Line support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents ?

Service Area: Family Services

Estimated length of project: To be determined

Most suitable study course: Aboriginal studies, health or social sciences, early childhood education.

Student: Honours year, part of a master's degree or PhD. Preferably an Aboriginal student (in keeping with 50D guidelines).

Scope of project: The Parenting Line is Ngala's main contact point for parents with babies and young children who seek to discuss their parenting concerns often the first point of contact for parents. Statistics are currently collected on the number of calls, the postcodes of callers and the key concerns and issues raised by callers. Ngala does not currently collect information on the ethnicity or cultural background of parents who use the Parenting Line, so is unable to evaluate the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents who use the service, or if the service is an appropriate support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

There is very limited evaluated evidence of the efficacy of Helplines for Aboriginal people generally, and specifically if such a service would be used or be considered useful by Aboriginal parents. Furthermore, if such a service were to be offered how this could be offered in a culturally secure way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. The objective of the project will be to establish recommendations following consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families about:

- where they currently seek parenting information from and what influences those choices;
- whether or not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents would find a Helpline service useful, under what circumstances they would most likely use the service and the barriers to them using the service;
- What a culturally secure Helpline service would look like for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families; and
- If Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents do not find Helpline services useful, are there alternative "phone-based" services they would find more useful?

Ethics approval required: Yes

Skills required: Skills and knowledge of literature reviews, knowledge of culturally safe practices in a work environment, skills in interviewing and yarning.

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