

**Our children have a right to be  
cared for with love and raised to be  
strong and proud in their Culture**



**FIRST  
1000  
DAYS  
AUSTRALIA**

**Eastern Metropolitan Region  
First 1000 Days Australia Strategy 2018-22**

4<sup>th</sup> September 2018

Dear Eastern Metropolitan Region Regional Implementation Group,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to read the Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR) Strategy and Action Plan. On behalf of the First 1000 Days Australia, we extend our congratulations to the Regional Implementation Group on the development of the Strategy and Action Plan and endorse the use of the First 1000 Days Australia logo on your documents signalling our support in the implementation and evaluation of the Eastern Metropolitan First 1000 Days Strategy, which you have so clearly stated will work with the strengths of our families. This endorsement is on the terms that:

- All members of the Consortium sign off on the Strategy, and all logos are included.
- The consultation process informing these documents is written up, and individuals in photos or who have produced the artwork in the Strategy document have given consent for their images to be used.
- All funds and in-kind supports are appropriately acknowledged in the Plan.
- A map of the implementation site is included in the Strategy.
- The authors of the documents are named, and
- This letter of endorsement is released with the document.

Congratulations once again and we look forward to continuing to support the implementation of your Strategy and Action Plan. Our next steps will be to work on the development of an agreement to articulate the relationships between the University and the Regional Implementation Group. Thank you for the chance to review your Plans and we look forward to working with you in future!

Kind regards,



Professor Kerry Arabena  
Executive Director, First 1000 Days Australia

## Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that our work in First 1000 Days Australia is happening on the lands and waterways of Bunjil's country where the Traditional Custodians are the Wurundjeri people, and offer our respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging.



[www.first1000daysaustralia.org.au](http://www.first1000daysaustralia.org.au)

Use of the term Aboriginal is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people. Aboriginal people are advised that this document may contain images of deceased people.



Professor Kerry Arabena  
Executive Director, First 1000 Days Australia



Mr Paul Ronalds  
Chief Executive Officer, Save the Children Australia



# About the Strategy

First 1000 Days Australia is an Indigenous-led model that emphasises the positive strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and advocates for their right to raise their children in a well supported, culturally informed environment.

*First 1000 Days Australia provides a fresh approach to shift the prevailing social determinants that impact on the health and wellbeing of our local community, particularly our children.*

This Strategy has been developed to guide the work of community and organisations in the Eastern Metropolitan Region who have committed to a new way of approaching Aboriginal health and wellbeing, and giving our babies the best start in life, by utilising First 1000 Days Australia. Implementation of the strategy is supported by annual action plans.

This strategy acknowledges all the work that has gone before, particularly the efforts and sacrifice of community leaders who have dedicated themselves to achieving equity and justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It directly aligns with the strategic directions and principles outlined in Korin Korin Balit Djak 2017–2027 and Balit Murrup 2017–2027. It also recognises the work of the Closing the Gap initiative, both its achievements and its limitations. First 1000 Days Australia provides a fresh approach to shift the prevailing social determinants that impact on the health and wellbeing of our local community, particularly our children. There is a clear need to find a new way of doing things that acknowledges the inherent strengths, resilience and capacities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – a way of doing things that is led by, and respects, Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.

First 1000 Days Australia, developed by the University of Melbourne's Indigenous Health Equity Unit, in collaboration with key stakeholders from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, community health groups, other research institutions and government partners, takes a cultural view.

*'It is family oriented and acknowledges that our babies are the future Elders and wisdom holders of the community. For culture to thrive and to be passed down through the generations, we need healthy Elders. That starts with our new families.'*

To have a real impact on reducing the rates of chronic mental, social and physical illnesses, we need to create conditions where community are safe, loved, respected and free to be strong and proud in their culture.

*For present culture to thrive we must look after our current Elders and bring new ones into a world where they are safe, healthy and culturally strong.*

# First 1000 Days Australia

The health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia, as well as other Indigenous child populations, cannot be addressed without also taking a broader, holistic and cultural perspective.

The internationally recognised '1,000 Days' movement was established to improve maternal and infant nutrition from a child's conception through to their second birthday. With a focus on reducing malnutrition – now well recognised as causing irreversible damage to a child's neurological, immune and physical development – and maternal anaemia during the first 1000 days, the movement combines evidence-based medical care and social support to address the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The First 1000 Days Australia model, while recognising the implications of nutrition, has a broader focus that recognises the fundamental importance of culture as a primary protective factor for babies from pre-conception. It also acknowledges the crucial and significant role of men in raising healthy, happy children who can fulfil their future roles as community Elders. The model's major foundational premise is that:

*'Family remains the primary and preferred site for developing and protecting culture and identity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.'*

First 1000 Days Australia is guided by the Charter of Rights for Children yet to Be Conceived, and the Our Men, Our Shields: Messages of belonging and hope position statement, both of which reflect the model's:

1. A multigenerational approach, focusing on infants, young people, mothers and fathers, carers and grandparents;
2. An intentional engagement of fathers and young men during their transition to becoming fathers;
3. Holistic family-focused interventions for the life-course that address areas of:

## These three approaches focus on:

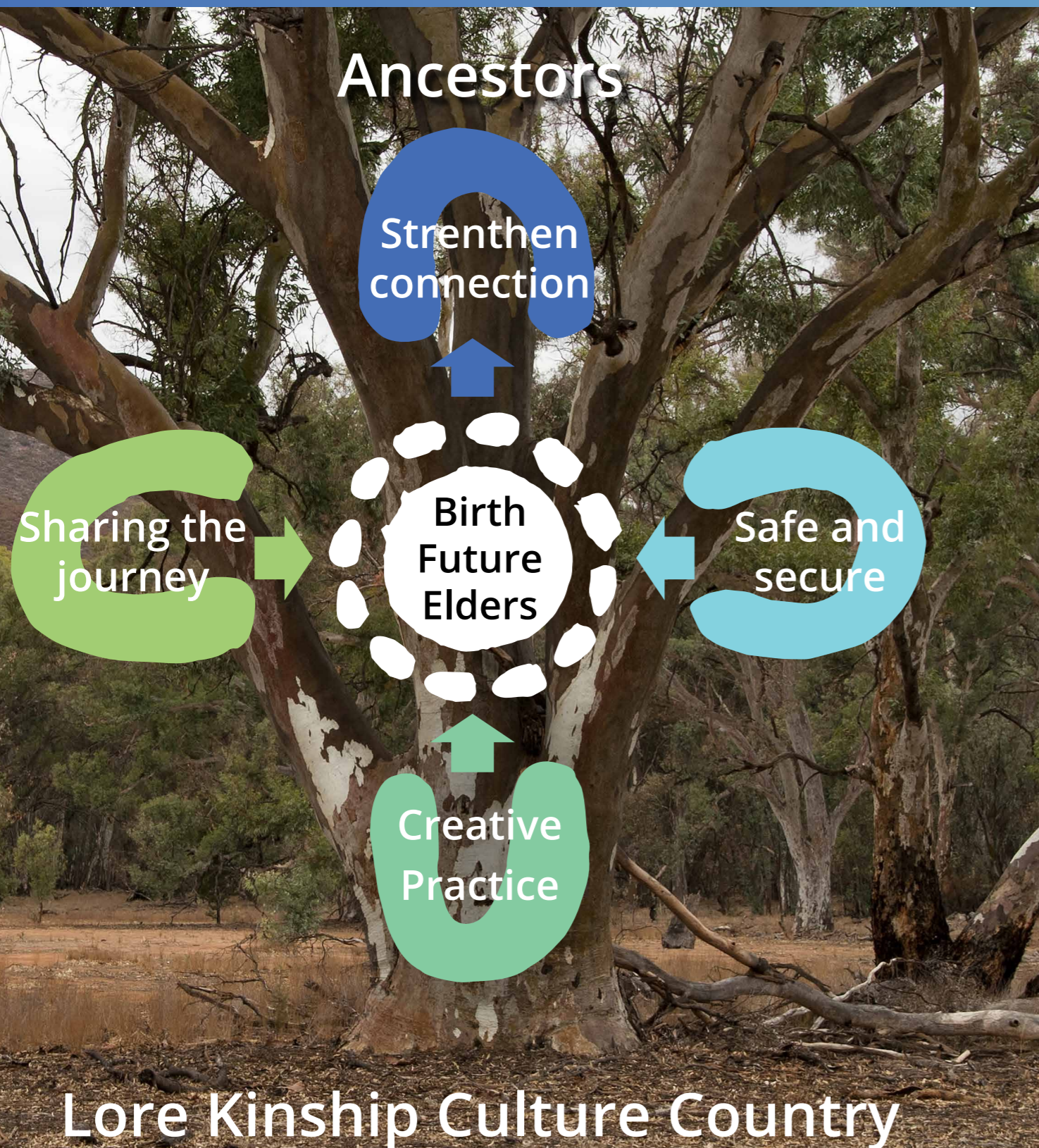
- (a) **Family environment:** encouraging the use of strengths-based approaches in raising resilient children; having access to effective information and support for families to enhance relationships between children and parents; and addressing family violence, using a whole-of-family healing approach.
- (b) **Antenatal and early years engagement:** including pre-conception and family planning; nutritional programs; awareness of developmental milestones; counselling; early learning and education; and family strengthening programs.
- (c) **Access to culturally appropriate services:** service use and provision focusing on capacity building with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, families and the workforce during the first 1000 days.

1) F1000DA Charter of rights <http://www.first1000daysaustralia.org.au/charter-rights-children-yet-be-conceived> Accessed August 2018

2) F1000DA Our men, our shields <http://www.first1000daysaustralia.org.au/our-men-our-shields> Accessed August 2018 <https://www2.aifs.gov.au/cfca/knowledgecircle/discussions/children-and-young-people/australian-model-first-1000-days> accessed January 2018

# Our priorities

Working together, led by community, this strategy and all the work that follows seeks to:  
*Birth future Elders into strong, healthy families*



To do this we have decided on four priorities.

Strengthen connection to culture, country and spirit

Community representatives and organisations will respond to community aspirations by supporting initiatives and activities that strengthen connection to culture, country and spirit

Support safe, secure and healthy families

Embed the Rights of children yet to be conceived by nurturing a whole-of-community approach to birthing future Elders that will ensure children can be born into safe, secure and healthy families





### Inspire creative practice and system reorientation

Regional Implementation Group members and supportive organisations will be involved in activities that contribute to the evidence base and strengthen understanding of how this new approach translates to improved outcomes for families and community

### Share the journey through healing

Create ongoing awakening to the richness of Aboriginal culture and walk the pathway of healing together



A core group of representatives has been working on behalf of our regional community to develop this Strategy and listen to their aspirations.

### Regional Implementation Group Members

Elders	Yarra Ranges Council
Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association	Inspiro Community Health
Aboriginal Housing Victoria	Eastern Health
Eastern Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency	Carrington Health
Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service	Eastern Primary Health Network
Department of Education and Training	Centrelink
Eastern RAJAC	EACH



# Our vision

Our children have a right to be cared for with love and raised to be strong and proud in their culture.

Every child is a gift to their family and their community, and is a future Elder of their community. Our children deserve to be raised by carers who love them, who are proud of them and who can give them the best start in life. We aspire to create circumstances in which more of our future Elders can be born and raised in strong families where culture is thriving.

# Our aims

First 1000 Days Australia aims to identify the aspirations of families, and cultivate and share the power of our cultural knowledge, our resilience and our capacity for innovation. We will work with future and current parents, their families and communities in our region to ensure they:

- have the opportunities, tools and access to what they need to raise families
- are empowered to take control of their own destinies
- know they have a choice to travel their own journey, capturing and sharing their own story
- have a stronger relationship with their children, family and community

# Our values

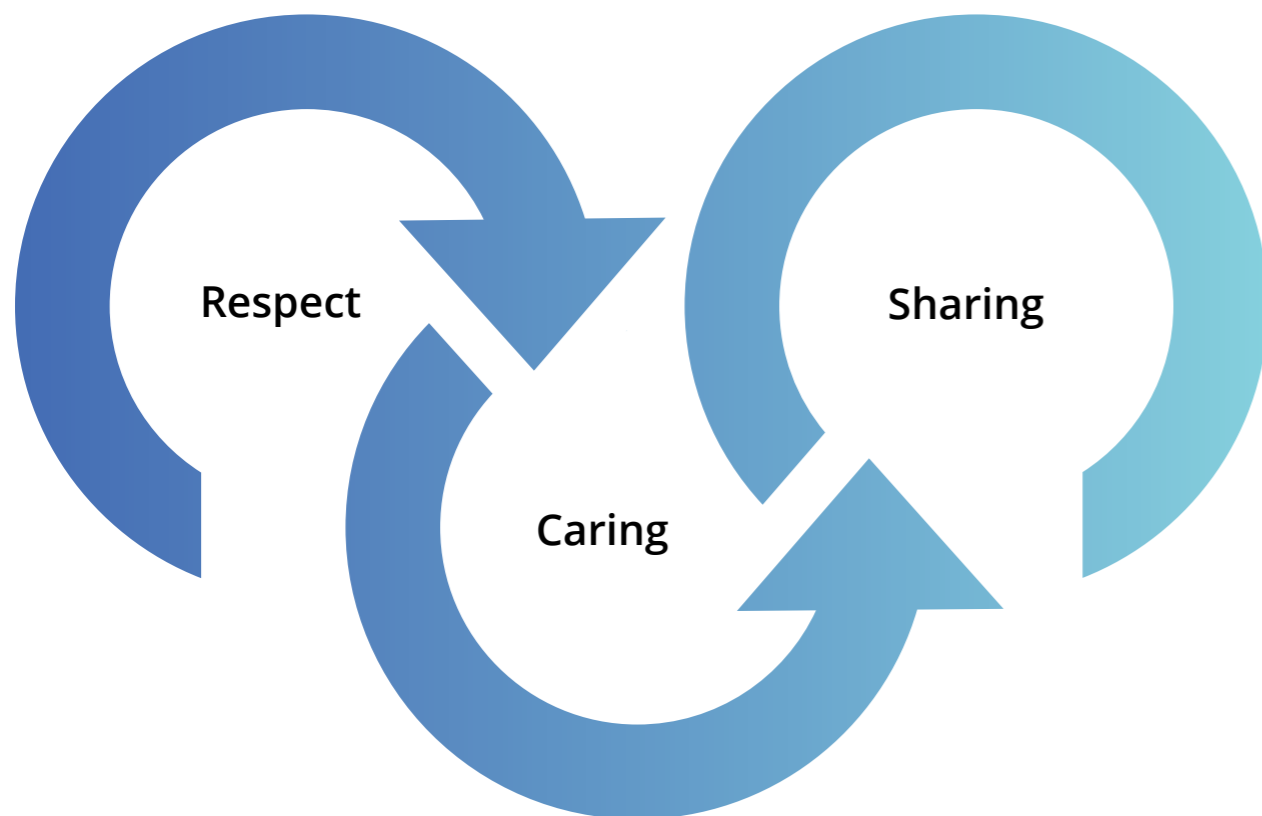
All First 1000 Days Australia activities need to invest in culture as the protective factor for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, carers and children. These activities are underpinned by an Indigenous understanding of the world and our place in it, as stored in songlines, ritual, ceremonies and patterns of thought and behaviours.

We acknowledge and respect the diversity of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the range of cultural traditions and beliefs that provide guidance on creating pristine pregnancies, when to parent, how to nurture and what to teach a child, and who can best contribute to the rearing of the child.

We acknowledge the importance of everyone's role in raising children including Elders, Aunties, Uncles, Mothers, Fathers, Brothers, Sisters, Cousins, Friends.

We aim to highlight the crucial role of men in the sacred duty of bringing into the world future Elders who can carry the light and beauty of culture into the next generation.

In the Eastern Metropolitan Region our local cultural values emphasise Respect, Caring and Sharing. When asked what local Aboriginal culture is, local Elder Aunty Dot Peters replied, 'Aboriginal culture is Respect, Caring and Sharing'.



## The interconnected values of Respect, Caring and Sharing are defined as:

**Respect** - An appreciation that leads to positive interactions even if there is not always agreement. Respect occurs when people feel heard, acknowledged and are a part of decision making when possible. Respect honours individual and community rights while requiring personal and community responsibility, in an ongoing and reaffirming cycle. It also includes respect for oneself, other individuals and the wider community, as well as upholding cultural protocols.

**Caring** - A genuine interest that seeks to achieve positive outcomes, possibly with no expected return. Caring is the result of understanding, compassion and being able to empathise with others without judging them. It includes care for oneself, other individuals and the wider community.

**Sharing** - A willingness to gift items of value, such as resources, knowledge and time, to enable good things to happen to individuals or the wider community. Sharing is maximised in an environment of trust and reciprocity, and adopts a contemporary cultural definition of sharing by including non-Indigenous friends as participants in appropriate group activities.

To help us understand the practical use of these values, we can situate these words in different positions to think through the importance of each one and their relationship to each other. Let's use Respect first.

**Respect, Caring and Sharing** - If you say you respect me and my mob, my family, my group, you will show it by Caring for me/us and Sharing what is yours with me/us. Now let's swap ends and put Sharing first.

**Sharing, Caring & Respect** - If you share what is yours with me/us, it shows you care and you will earn my/our respect. In this instance, you can see that the words Sharing and Respect pivot around the word Caring.

**Caring, Sharing & Respect** - If you care about me, you will Share what is yours with me/us, thereby showing me and my mob, my family and my community Respect. In doing so you earn the Respect of my mob, my family and my community and on the cycle goes.

The three values can, according to Aunty Doseena Fergie, be seen as existing in a symbiotic relationship, with each one interdependent on the other in a never-ending, reaffirming cycle. However, without the presence of 'Caring' the whole concept collapses.



# The Charter of Rights for Children Yet to Be Conceived

The First 1000 Days Australia Council appreciates that parenting is a skill learned from being parented and is specific to the demands of a particular way of life. The Council also understands there are families who experience social and health inequities.



However, every child can rightfully expect to be born into families who:

1. Choose to become parents at a time when they are resourced and supported to provide optimum care for the child who will be born to them.
2. Seek appropriate preventative and early intervention medical and cultural supports prior to, during and after the First 1000 Days.
3. Can nourish them in the mother's womb with good quality nutrition, free from alcohol, smoke and the experience of violence.
4. Have loving expectations of them, are hopeful about their future and help them to achieve their life aspirations in powerful and tender ways.
5. Participate in their education from birth to ensure that personal aspirations are nurtured and aligned with our people's cultural values, responsibilities and entrepreneurial spirit.
6. Provide an appropriately stimulating environment, age-appropriate games, and the ability to grow with siblings and family members who themselves are capable of experienced and knowledgeable caring and parenting.
7. Know who they are, where they come from, who they are connected to, who loves them, who advocates for them, who listens to them, and who is responsible for them – culturally, morally, physically, spiritually and emotionally.
8. Are part of a healthy, vibrant society shaped by strong kinship relationships and a resilient culture, in which all members thrive, flourish and enjoy the same opportunities as other Australians – without being made the same.
9. Have healed and broken free from trans-generational trauma, and are able to transform harmful experiences into a positive future for their children and grandchildren.
10. Have the capacity to celebrate their children and offer them ceremonies, rituals, language, songs, stories and environments that strengthen their resilience, encourage their growth and support their choice of identity.



# Our Men, Our Shields

We have been excited to see the development of the First 1000 Days Australia set of principles that acknowledges the responsibilities, roles and pivotal importance of men as teachers, protectors, nurturers, involved and compassionate carers, lore and knowledge holders, ancestors for future generations and everyday providers.

We fully endorse these principles and will express them in our regional activities, which will:

*Let men know they are loved, they are worthy, they are valued, and they are supported to have the highest standard of relationship with themselves and each other, and with their families and communities.*

# Governance

## Development process

This Strategy has been developed to guide the work of the Eastern Metropolitan Region First 1000 Days Australia Regional Implementation Group, and to share what we are doing with others.

It was developed through engagement with key community and organisational representatives who are members of the Regional Implementation Group. Further iterations resulted from reflections and input from a First 1000 Days Australia Short Course held in May 2018 and two Regional Sponsors meetings in March and May 2018. The Strategic Plan is supported by an Action Plan, which identifies focus areas for our work in 2018–2019. Subsequent plans will be developed annually.

The Regional Implementation Group, Regional Implementation Manager, and the First 1000 Days Australia Executive Director have a shared responsibility for the successful implementation of this Strategy.

Sponsors

RIG

Networks

Elders  
Guidance &  
Ratification

Strategy & Action Plan

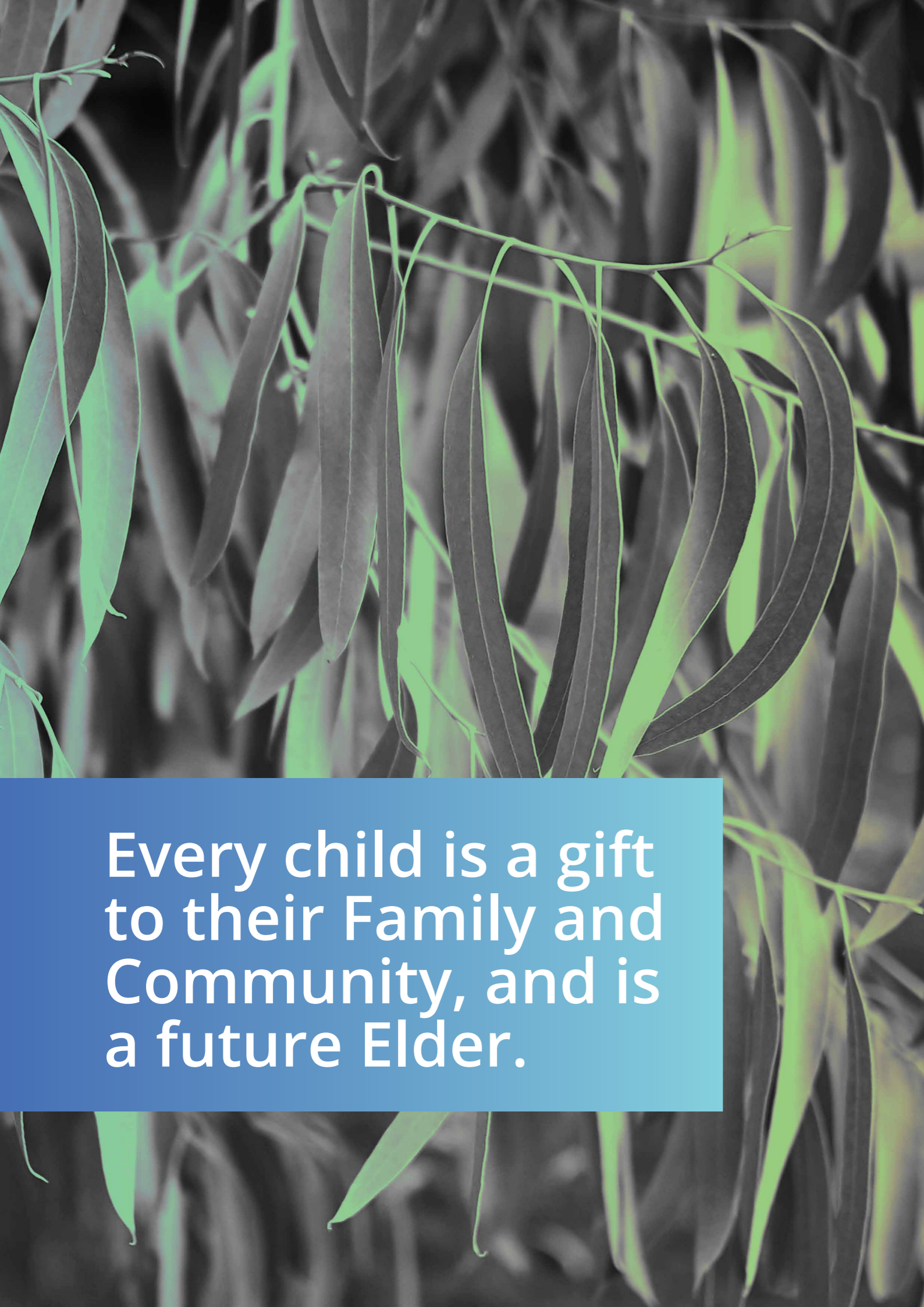
Our governance model for the Regional Implementation Group places Elders in the central role of providing cultural guidance and direction. They are at the heart of our model, with decisions made by the group ratified by our Elders.

Regional Sponsors provide strategic and authorising support for the participation of local services that are working alongside the community in the establishment and rollout of First 1000 Days Australia in our region.

Several of our community members and workers from community organisations who have received training in the First 1000 Days Australia model have been given an opportunity to become Champions. Local Champions in the making are now offering leadership to the region by sharing information and encouraging the uptake and implementation of a First 1000 Days model in their community.

A Regional Implementation Group offers secretariat support to the Strategy, along with structural support and an environment for collaborative decision making. Due to the size of our region, it is proposed that two working groups are established – one focusing on the Outer East and the other on the Inner East.

Communication and links to key bodies that represent and work on behalf of the local community are seen as important elements for the effective implementation of the Strategy. They are also seen as excellent mechanisms for aligning with, and building on, the work of other key strategies and a broad range of early childhood and family focused networks.



## We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following RIG members who have developed this strategy

- Judy Smith Local Elder, Oral Health Promotion Worker HICSA
- Jenine Thompson Local Elder
- Brad Letman Local Elder
- Prof. Kerry Arabena Director, Indigenous Health Equity Unit, The University of Melbourne; and Executive Director, First 1000 Days Australia Regional Implementation Manager, First 1000 Days Australia
- Alana Marsh Engagement worker, HICSA
- Nikki Madgwick Senior Health Promotion Officer, Inspiro Community Health
- Barbara Dobson Indigenous Development Officer, Yarra Ranges Council
- Garry Detez Best Start Community Facilitator Yarra Ranges Council
- Wendy Blakis Early Years and Partnerships Coordinator, Yarra Ranges Council
- Anne Monichon Executive Officer Community Partnerships, Yarra Ranges Council
- Isha Scott Indigenous Trainee, Yarra Ranges Council
- Waularna Hume Aboriginal Health Liaison Officer Eastern Health
- Jo Voce Aboriginal Health Team Eastern Health
- Jenny Gladwin Aboriginal Health Team Eastern Health
- Nadine Blazely Senior Health Promotion Officer, HH & CH, Eastern Health
- Josette O'Donnell Counsellor HH & CH, Eastern Health
- Aladdin Jones Executive Officer, Aboriginal Housing Victoria
- Glenn Pellegrin Baby Makes Three Facilitator, Carrington Health
- Bron Foster Eastern VACCA
- Michelle Atwell Eastern VACCA
- Miranda Madgwick Centrelink Human Services
- Jill West Eastern Metropolitan Primary Health Network
- Graham Custance EACH
- Vanessa Murdoch EACH
- Sam Nolan Eastern RAJAC



Every child is a gift to their Family and Community, and is a future Elder.

## The following organisations have committed to this strategy:



Design by Sonsie Studios



This document has been authored by  
the Regional Implementaion Group (RIG)

