

## PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf>) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

### ARTICLE DETAILS

<b>TITLE (PROVISIONAL)</b>	Our Journey, Our Story: A study protocol for the evaluation of a co-design framework to improve services for Aboriginal youth mental health and well being
<b>AUTHORS</b>	Wright, Michael; Brown, Alex; Dudgeon, Patricia; McPhee, Rob; Coffin, Juli; Pearson, Glenn; Lin, Ashleigh; Newnham, Elizabeth; King Baguley, Kiarnae; Webb, Michelle; Sibosado, Amanda; Crisp, Nikayla; Flavell, Helen

### VERSION 1 – REVIEW

<b>REVIEWER</b>	Debra Rickwood University of Canberra and headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation  I am employed by headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation on a part-time basis, and headspace centres are involved in this research
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	14-Sep-2020

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	<p>This is a valuable protocol paper that will make an important contribution in an area where there is little peer-reviewed literature. The paper is reporting the protocol for a large, Australian-government funded 5-year research project to develop more appropriate youth mental health services for young Aboriginal Australians using a Aboriginal appropriate, co-design methodology. As such, it is an important protocol to publish, however, it requires additional information before it can make this important contribution.</p> <p>The main gaps are the lack of information about the methodology and how this will address the aims. There are four research questions, stated as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How does the Steady Walking and Talking framework establish trust so that services and community can work together in each region?</li><li>2. How do the key attributes of a culturally secure health service that meets the needs of young Aboriginal people differ across Aboriginal cultural groups?</li><li>3. How do the key criteria of a culturally secure youth mental health service evaluation differ across Aboriginal cultural groups?</li><li>4. Has the framework resulted in more young Aboriginal people accessing these mental health services and with greater levels of satisfaction with the partner services?</li></ol> <p>However, it is unclear how the methodology will address these aims. For aim 1, how will it be evident that trust is established or not? It is not clear what part of the methodology will address this. Aims 2 and 3 relate to determining whether key attributes for</p>
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	<p>culturally secure health and mental health services, respectively, vary across Aboriginal groups – how are health and mental health services differentially determined? What are the Aboriginal cultural groups? How many are there? The services all seem to be headspace services, which are primarily mental health services, so how will general health services be differentiated? The only aim that seems to be able to be directly measured by the methodology is aim 4, which will use the headspace data collection to determine whether more Aboriginal young people access mental health services and whether they have increased levels of satisfaction (I am not sure what the partner services are for headspace centres, however). Nowhere is it evident how many sites will be studied, or how many different Aboriginal groups this entails; this information is essential and particularly important for aims 3 and 4.</p> <p>In the information for reviewers, it states that publishing protocols makes available more information than is currently required by trial registries and increases transparency, making it easier for others (editors, reviewers and readers) to see and understand any deviations from the protocol that occur during the conduct of the study. Currently, this paper provides insufficient information to enable this. While this study takes a co-design and action research approach, which means that the research may change over time, there still needs to be information on the proposed number of sites, the characteristics of the sites selected, and how the methods are going to address the aims.</p> <p>A little more information on the Indigenous methods would be helpful to inform other researchers and readers of these unique methods. For example, more description of “in depth community yarning” interviews and focus groups would be helpful. It is not clear how these methods differ from traditional interview and focus group research methods.</p> <p>It is entirely unclear why a cost effectiveness analysis is required and how this relates to any of the research questions.</p> <p>It would be helpful if some sense of the timeline for the research could be provided. The funding is from mid-2019 to mid-2024, so an outline of the proposed stages and timeline for different research components is needed.</p> <p>The paper is well written, and there are only a few typographical errors, however, the formatting of the references needs to be checked, and a weblink needs to be provided for reference 20, which is grey literature that is quite heavily relied upon.</p>
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<b>REVIEWER</b>	Josie Povey Menzies School of Health Research
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	01-Nov-2020

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	<p>So exciting to see a well resourced genuine co-design project which has great potential to implement findings. A very important and well considered study from a respected and culturally grounded research team. Methods and methodology are appropriate to context and all ethical considerations have been covered. Great literature section and dissemination plan. Some general comments for the authors consideration:</p> <p>1) The project has a long timeframe, which is totally appropriate given the ambitious and meaningful work which will be undertaken.</p>
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	<p>This can be a challenge when conducting co-design with young people, who are at a time in their life when many changes occur (e.g. study or work considerations/moving away for uni or school and relationship or role changes). The protocol outlines a very thorough relationship building phase which is vital in co-design, wondering if and how young people who join the group will be supported to build these relationship if they joined the group at a later stage?</p> <p>2) Similarly with workforce turnover in headspace staff, especially in regional/remote centres. How will this be accommodated for throughout the project? What potential impacts could this have on outcomes?</p> <p>3) 'Aboriginal co-researchers will be properly compensated for their expertise and time throughout the research project' is such an important point, consider if it could be highlighted in methods section also.</p> <p>All the very best, I look forward to seeing outcomes of this important work.</p>
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### VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer 1	Additional information required:		We thank and acknowledge both reviewers for the time taken to provide feedback.
1.	<p>The main gaps are the lack of information about the methodology and how this will address the aims. There are four research questions, stated as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does the Steady Walking and Talking framework establish trust so that services and community can work together in each region?</li> <li>2. How do the key attributes of a culturally secure health service that meets the needs of young Aboriginal people differ across Aboriginal cultural groups?</li> <li>3. How do the key criteria of a culturally secure youth mental health service evaluation differ across Aboriginal cultural groups?</li> <li>4. Has the framework resulted in more young</li> </ol>	<p>The section 'Methods and Planned Analyses' now incorporates additional information to explain how the four research aims are addressed by the project phases. See pages 15, 16, and 17.</p> <p>Additionally, aim one has been slightly reworded to link to the seven steps in the Steady Walking and Talking framework. This, we believe, contributes to strengthening the information on Indigenous methodologies in the paper.</p>	

	<p>Aboriginal people accessing these mental health services and with greater levels of satisfaction with the partner services?</p> <p>However, it is unclear how the methodology will address these aims. For aim 1, how will it be evident that trust is established or not? It is not clear what part of the methodology will address this. Aims 2 and 3 relate to determining whether key attributes for culturally secure health and mental health services, respectively, vary across Aboriginal groups – how are health and mental health services differentially determined?</p>		
2.	<p>What are the Aboriginal cultural groups? How many are there?</p>	<p>The paper has been amended to reflect the number of cultural groups currently working with the research team (Wadjuk Nyoongar, Wadjuk Yuat/Balladong and Yawuru). Due to the Indigenous methodologies and related ethical considerations (e.g. self-determination and decolonising processes) the involvement of additional clans cannot be confirmed at this time. However, as the project gains momentum and word spreads of the work we anticipate that further regional sites will be engaged as part of the research translation and impact.</p> <p>A figure has been created (Figure 3) which provides a map of Western Australia to indicate the location of the</p>	

		current groups involved in the research.	
3.	The services all seem to be headspace services, which are primarily mental health services, so how will general health services be differentiated?	The project is only working with headspace services. The wording has been amended to make that clear within the paper.	
4.	The only aim that seems to be able to be directly measured by the methodology is aim 4, which will use the headspace data collection to determine whether more Aboriginal young people access mental health services and whether they have increased levels of satisfaction (I am not sure what the partner services are for headspace centres, however).	As described above in point 4, each research aim is referenced across the project phases to indicate which phase answers which research aim under 'Methods and Planned Analyses' (pages 15, 16 and 17).	
5.	Nowhere is it evident how many sites will be studied, or how many different Aboriginal groups this entails; this information is essential and particularly important for aims 3 and 4.	<p>More information on the planned sites and language groups/clans is provided. We have also indicated that although further sites will be engaged with as part of the research translation, the local communities will determine whether the research is relevant and to be undertaken.</p> <p>This links to the overall research methodology and methods, which reflects Aboriginal ways of working and relevant ethical codes (e.g. the Aboriginal Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies revised code of ethics, 2020).</p>	
	While this study takes a co-design and action research approach, which means that the research may change over time, there still needs to	As described above (points 5 and 8) the paper now includes information on the number of sites (4) and information on how the	

	be information on the proposed number of sites, the characteristics of the sites selected, and how the methods are going to address the aims.	methods address the research aims.	
6.	A little more information on the Indigenous methods would be helpful to inform other researchers and readers of these unique methods. For example, more description of “in depth community yarning” interviews and focus groups would be helpful. It is not clear how these methods differ from traditional interview and focus group research methods.	<p>Further information on the Steady Walking Talking framework (p.8) has been included which provides background to how the Indigenous methodologies inform the study.</p> <p>The following has been added to ‘Study design’ p 10:</p> <p>“As Tuhiwai Smith has argued, Indigenous research methodologies involve ‘talking up to’ Western research practices that are ‘embedded in a global system of imperialism and power.’ [20 p. xi] In this study, therefore, the application of Indigenous research methodologies involves legitimising holistic Indigenous knowledge systems, reciprocity and relationship between researcher and participants as a natural part of research, collectivity and obligation as a way of knowing, and valorising Indigenous methods such as storytelling. [26] Participatory action research has been adopted as it aligns with collective consultative cultural practices and emphasises mutual respect and co-learning; individual and</p>	The word limit for the paper means it is not possible to provide an expansive overview of Indigenous research methodologies or yarning, however, the additional information and references are designed to allow readers to do further self-directed reading.

		<p>community building; systems change; and a balance between research and action. [25, 27]</p> <p>Further explanation of Indigenous methodologies has also been interwoven through the 'Patient and public involvement' section p. 11</p> <p>See page 17 for a description of the in depth community yarning interviews; additional information has been added: "Yarning is culturally informed method of qualitative data collection using semi-structured neutral, open-ended questions that adhere to Aboriginal protocols including the use of stories to develop a relationship between interviewer and interviewee." [31]</p> <p>We have also included further information on Indigenous research methodologies in the section 'Patient and public involvement' as Indigenous research methodologies align with cultural protocols including collective decision-making. Therefore, ensuring ongoing community self-determination in the research project is an ongoing focus.</p>	
7.	It is entirely unclear why a cost effectiveness analysis is required and how this relates	This section has been removed.	

	to any of the research questions.		
8.	It would be helpful if some sense of the timeline for the research could be provided. The funding is from mid-2019 to mid-2024, so an outline of the proposed stages and timeline for different research components is needed.	A timeline of the research activities has been included (Figure 2) has been included under 'Study Design' (page 10).	
9.	The paper is well written, and there are only a few typographical errors, however, the formatting of the references needs to be checked, and a weblink needs to be provided for reference 20, which is grey literature that is quite heavily relied upon.	The references have been checked for formatting consistency to the journal style including the web link for reference 20 (which is now reference 19).	
Reviewer 2 10.	The project has a long timeframe, which is totally appropriate given the ambitious and meaningful work which will be undertaken. This can be a challenge when conducting co-design with young people, who are at a time in their life when many changes occur (e.g. study or work considerations/moving away for uni or school and relationship or role changes). The protocol outlines a very thorough relationship building phase which is vital in co-design, wondering if and how young people who join the group will be supported to build these relationship if they joined the group at a later stage?	The following rationale/process has been added to p. 16:  "Young co-researchers also have the potential to move on, however, the process of working together—including the role of the Elders and research team in holding the young people—creates a safe environment for young people new to the project to build relationships."	
11.	Similarly with workforce turnover in headspace staff, especially in regional/remote centres. How will this be accommodated for throughout the project? What	The following has been added to page 16 in the section titled 'Preparation for Working Together and Co-Design Workshops':	



	potential impacts could this have on outcomes?	<p>“Staff turnover is a potential challenge to sustaining relationships. However, the period of relationship building and co-design workshops that occurs at each site over approximately two and a half years is ample time to manage staff transitioning in and out of the service. Similarly, the intention is to embed increased knowledge of Aboriginal ways of working into the organisation to sustain relationships and support service change.”</p>	
12.	<p>‘Aboriginal co-researchers will be properly compensated for their expertise and time throughout the research project’ is such an important point, consider if it could be highlighted in methods section also.</p>	<p>This has now been included in the Methods section.</p>	<p>To manage the word limit and respond to Reviewer 2’s comments we have removed reference to co-researcher payments from Ethics and Dissemination</p>