



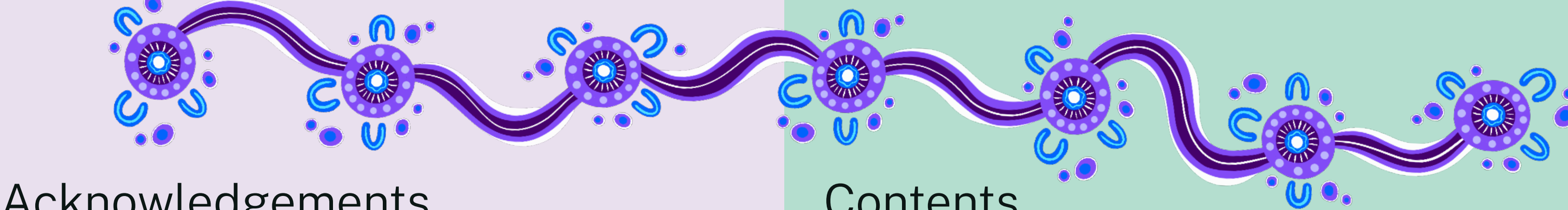
HEALTH
EDUCATION
& TRAINING

Beginning Well

A professional development resource for staff working
across Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Services and
Building Strong Foundations teams.

June 2026

DOC26/3526



Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of Country

Health Education and Training Institute acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of NSW.

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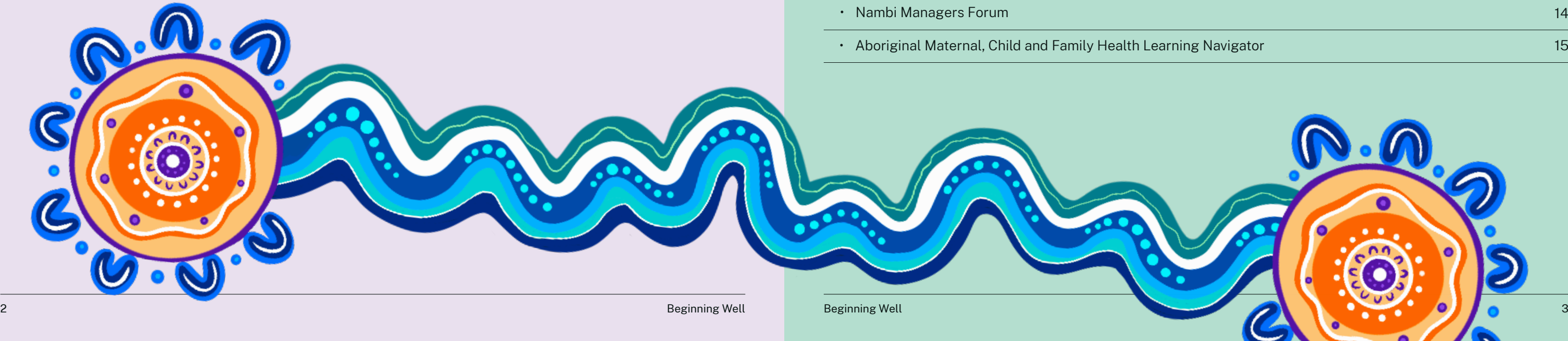
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Introduction

Purpose

This professional development resource has been designed by the Health Education and Training Institute (HETI) to support staff working in Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Services (AMIHS) and Building Strong Foundations (BSF) programs.

Working in AMIHS and BSF requires specialised knowledge, skills and cultural capability. This resource provides an overview of the AMIHS and BSF service models, learning and development opportunities, and the support available through HETI's Training Support Unit (TSU) to assist staff in delivering culturally safe, strengths-based care for Aboriginal children, families and communities.

This resource is intended to support staff as they commence and continue their professional journey within AMIHS and BSF, promoting capability development, connected practice and positive outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities.



Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Service (AMIHS)

The Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Service (AMIHS) is a strengths-based model of care designed to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal women, babies and families. Funded by NSW Health, AMIHS has been operating at more than 40 sites across NSW for over two decades.

AMIHS works in partnership with Aboriginal communities to deliver woman-centred care that is respectful, equitable and culturally safe. Through a strengths-based approach, the service supports Aboriginal women, babies and families throughout the perinatal period and contributes to improved health and wellbeing outcomes.

AMIHS service delivery

AMIHS provides antenatal and postnatal care from pregnancy to eight weeks postpartum in culturally safe and accessible settings, including community health centres, homes, hospitals and other community-based locations. Care is delivered through a collaborative model involving Aboriginal Health Practitioners and Aboriginal Health Workers working in partnership with midwives, ensuring women and families receive coordinated support throughout the perinatal period. Where additional needs are identified, referrals are made to relevant health, social and psychosocial services.

The service supports community wellbeing through health promotion activities and partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) and other health service providers. These partnerships strengthen continuity of care and coordinated service delivery. Families are supported to transition to ongoing child and family health services, including Building Strong Foundations (BSF) and other early childhood health programs, helping maintain continuity of support beyond the postnatal period.

For further information, refer to the [AMIHS Service Delivery Model](#).

Building Strong Foundations (BSF)

Building Strong Foundations (BSF) is a child and family health service for Aboriginal children from birth to school-entry age and their families. The program focuses on early childhood development, health promotion, prevention and early intervention to support the health and wellbeing of children, families and communities.

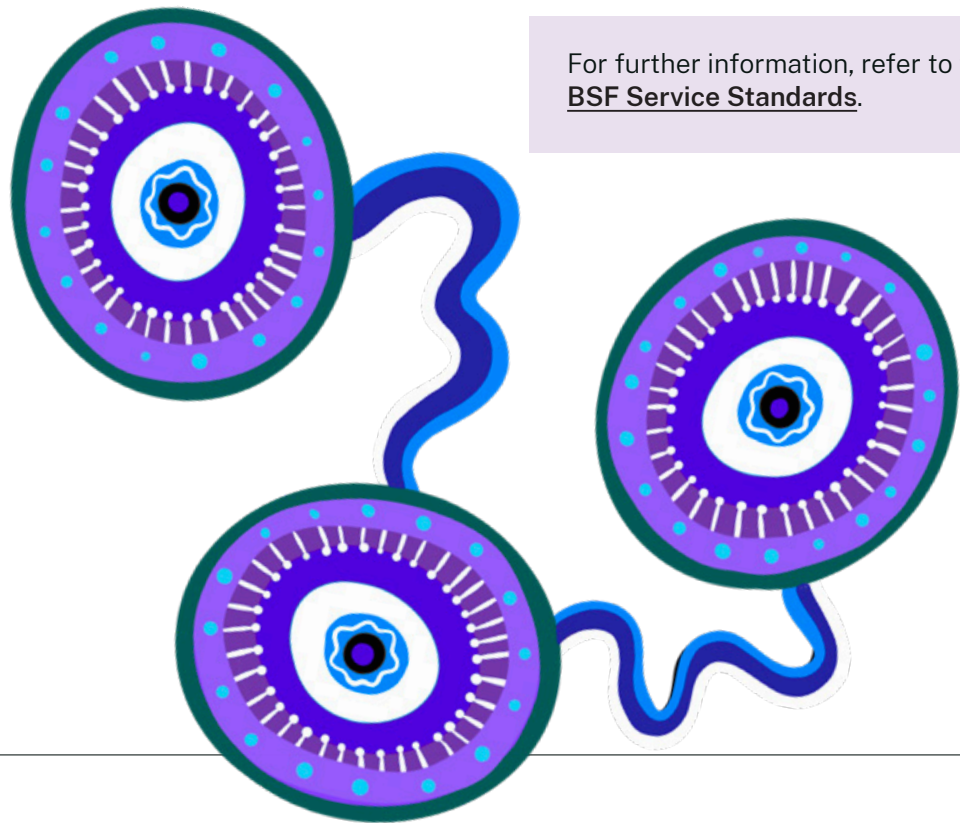
BSF services are delivered by Aboriginal Health Practitioners and Aboriginal Health Workers working in partnership with Child and Family Health Nurses, with support from allied health professionals in some locations. Services are provided in community health centres, homes and other culturally safe settings.

BSF service delivery

BSF works in partnership with Aboriginal families and communities to support children's health, wellbeing and development. Through health promotion, developmental assessments and family-centred care, the program helps families access the information, resources and support they need to make informed decisions about their children's health and development.

The service supports the early identification of emerging health, developmental and social concerns and facilitates access to appropriate services and supports when required. Working collaboratively with Aboriginal communities and local service providers, BSF contributes to community-led initiatives that strengthen connection, culture and wellbeing and support positive outcomes for children and families.

For further information, refer to the [BSF Service Standards](#).



Training Support Unit (TSU)

The Training Support Unit (TSU) provides education, training and professional development support for staff working in AMIHS, BSF and partner services. Through culturally responsive learning opportunities, the TSU strengthens capability by building the knowledge, skills and confidence required to work effectively with Aboriginal children, families and communities.

The TSU delivers practical, evidence-informed learning opportunities that strengthen culturally safe practice and build the knowledge, skills and confidence of staff across AMIHS and BSF services.

Culture is embedded throughout all aspects of the TSU's work. Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing inform the design, delivery and evaluation of education and training, helping ensure learning is culturally safe, meaningful and responsive to the needs of staff and services.

The work of the TSU is guided by cultural respect, partnership and shared expertise. This approach brings together cultural knowledge and clinical practice to support the knowledge, skills and confidence of staff, contributing to positive outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities.

The TSU is committed to contemporary education that reflects current evidence and responds to the needs of staff and services. Learning opportunities are flexible, accessible and designed to support staff at all stages of their professional journey.





Training Support Unit Website

The TSU website provides access to learning and development opportunities, resources and information to support staff working in AMIHS and BSF programs.

The website can be accessed through the HETI website under the Rural and Remote Allied Health portfolio, or directly via: [Training Support Unit for AMIHS and BSF Program Workers | HETI](#)

The website is regularly updated and includes information about learning opportunities, events, resources and educational initiatives designed to support staff working with Aboriginal children, families and communities.

Staff are encouraged to update their contact details via the website to receive information about upcoming learning opportunities and events.

For further information, contact TSUadmin@health.nsw.gov.au.



Education and Training

Education and Training for AMIHS and BSF staff

Working within AMIHS and BSF requires specialised knowledge and skills. The learning opportunities outlined in this section support professional development and growth across all stages of practice.

New staff are encouraged to complete the Strengthening Foundations pathway as an introduction to AMIHS and BSF service delivery and practice. Additional learning opportunities are available to support ongoing development and lifelong learning.

Strengthening Foundations Program

The Strengthening Foundations (SF) Program is an introductory professional development program for staff working in AMIHS and BSF services. The program supports the transition into practice by providing foundational learning on the AMIHS and BSF service models, culturally safe practice, and working with Aboriginal children, families and communities.

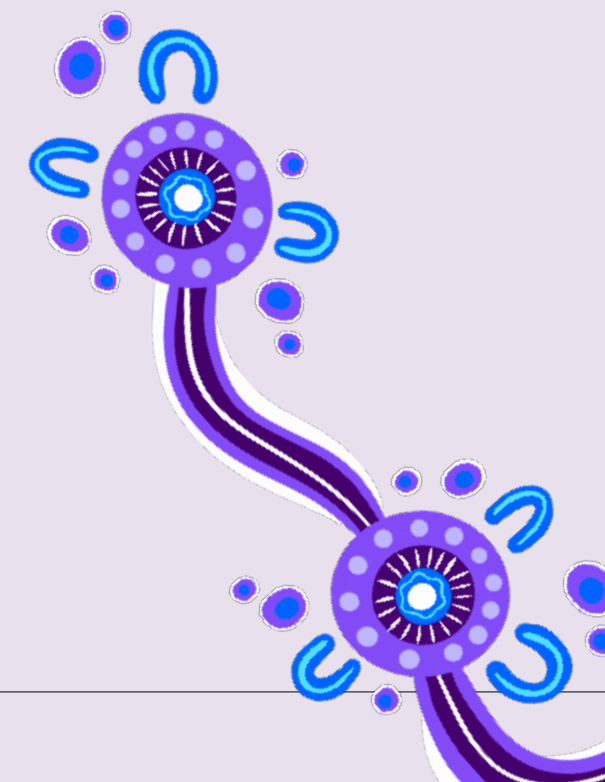
The program consists of two components: online learning modules and a facilitated workshop. Together, these learning experiences support participants to build knowledge, develop practical skills and foster professional connections across AMIHS and BSF services.



Part 1: E-Learning modules (30 mins-1.5 hours)

The first component consists of four eLearning modules available through My Health Learning (My Health Learning | HETI). Completion of the modules within the first month is recommended, as they provide the foundational knowledge required for practice within AMIHS and BSF services.

The modules introduce key concepts relevant to working with Aboriginal children, families and communities and support understanding of the AMIHS and BSF service models. They also provide an introduction to culturally safe, strengths-based and family-centred practice. Completion of the eLearning modules is recommended prior to attending the Strengthening Foundations workshop, as the content establishes a foundation for participation in workshop discussions and activities.



Part 2: Workshop (one day)

The Strengthening Foundations Workshop is delivered twice each year and is available in both virtual and face-to-face formats to support accessibility across NSW. The workshop builds on the knowledge gained through the eLearning modules and provides opportunities for reflection, discussion and shared learning.

The workshop brings together AMIHS and BSF staff from across the state to explore practice-based scenarios, share experiences and strengthen understanding of culturally safe and strengths-based approaches to care. Participants are encouraged to reflect on their role within AMIHS and BSF and consider how learning can be applied within their local service and community context.

The facilitated workshop aims to:

- Foster supportive, responsive and professional networks
- Recognise the importance of Aboriginal cultural connection and deep listening in shaping personal and professional identity
- Apply strengths-based approaches to cross-cultural and multidisciplinary care in AMIHS and BSF settings
- Develop culturally informed strategies for health promotion and service planning.

For information about upcoming workshop dates and registration details, contact the TSU at TSUadmin@health.nsw.gov.au.



Jumbunna Sessions

Throughout the year, the TSU hosts a series of **Jumbunna Webinars** on topics relevant to AMIHS and BSF services. These sessions feature culturally focused subject matter experts designed to support service delivery and professional development. All webinars are recorded and available on the TSU website for future access.

The **Jumbunna Podcast** series shares knowledge, experiences, and culturally informed perspectives from Indigenous speakers on topics relevant to AMIHS and BSF services. Created to enhance professional learning and service delivery, episodes are available for download and can be listened to while travelling to appointments, offering flexible learning wherever you are.

Connections Forum and Workshops

The **Connections Forums** focus on inter-professional and inter-disciplinary engagement, bringing together multidisciplinary teams who work alongside Aboriginal mothers, families, and communities. These open-access sessions support all health professionals in strengthening their knowledge and capacity to contribute to culturally safe, strengths-based care that promotes positive health outcomes.

The **Connections Workshops**, tailored for AMIHS and BSF workers, provide practical, strengths-based learning that builds on participants' existing knowledge, skills and experience. With a focus on supporting Aboriginal families and communities, these workshops offer tools, strategies and culturally responsive approaches that strengthen workers' capacity to make a meaningful and lasting impact in their roles and in the lives of the people they support.



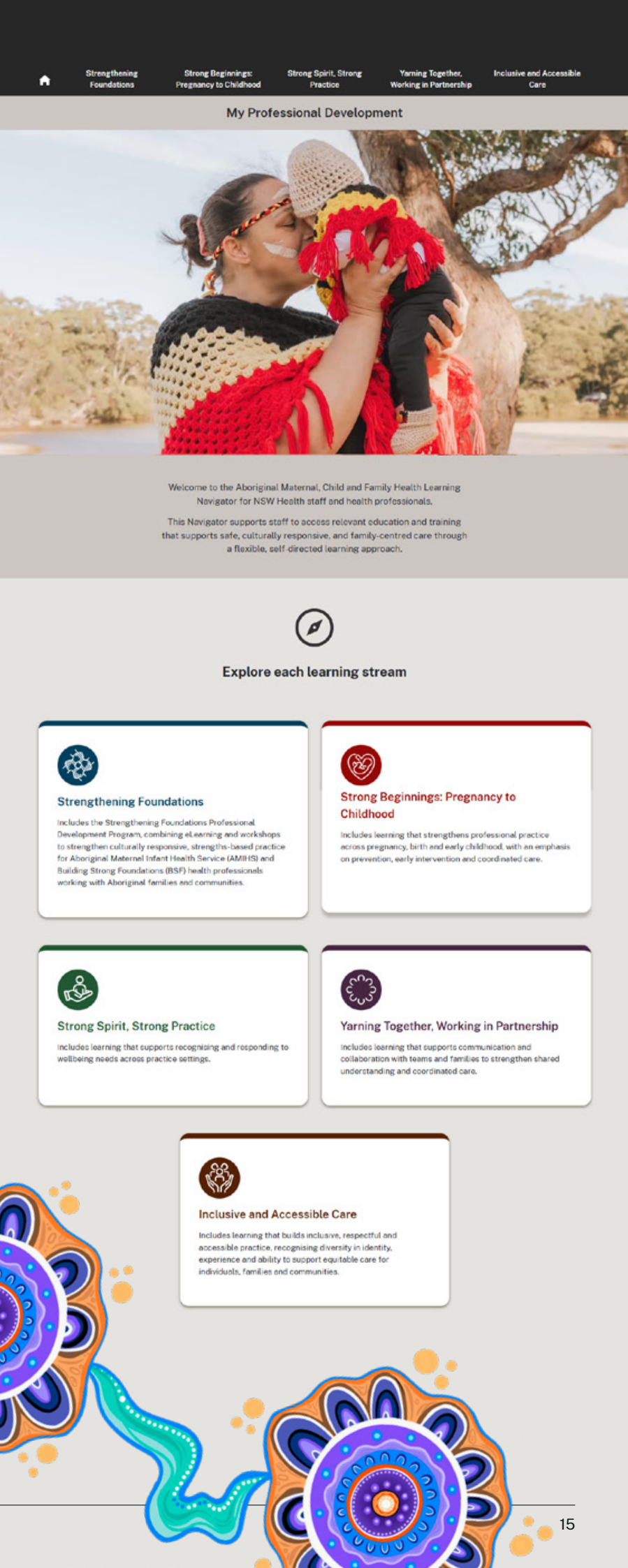


Aboriginal Maternal, Child and Family Health Learning Navigator

The Aboriginal Maternal, Child and Family Health Learning Navigator provides a central point of access to learning, resources and education relevant to maternal, child and family health practice.

The navigator brings together learning opportunities, professional development resources and reference materials to support the development of knowledge, skills and confidence across AMIHS, BSF and related services. Resources are organised to support self-directed learning and can be accessed at any stage of a staff member's professional journey.

The navigator can be accessed through My Health Learning (Course Code: 663042234).

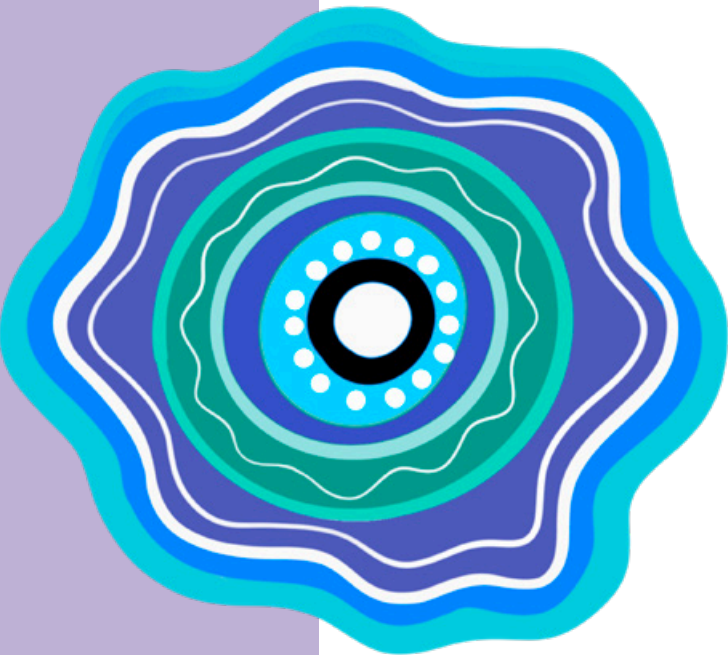


Nambi Managers Forum

The Nambi Managers Forum provides a dedicated learning and development opportunity for managers working within AMIHS and BSF services. The forum supports managers to strengthen leadership capability, share experiences and explore approaches to supporting staff, services and communities across diverse contexts.

Through discussion, reflection and shared learning, participants can explore contemporary leadership practices, capability-building approaches and issues relevant to AMIHS and BSF service delivery.

The forum also provides opportunities for managers to connect with colleagues from across NSW, exchange ideas and share experiences that support culturally responsive leadership and management practice.





This work shares the story of the Training Support Unit (TSU) which aims to provide high quality and culturally safe education and training to workers in Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Services (AMIHS) and Building Strong Foundations for Aboriginal Children, Families, and Communities (BSF) Services.

The centre meeting place symbol represents our communities and families. In the very centre are our sacred babies, children and our spirit children -who hold and carry with them songlines of our ancestors and culture, passed down by generations.

Surrounding this meeting place includes elements of Country and our ancestors. Country holds healing and is our medicine, and is also a direct link to our ancestors and old people. Our ancestors continue to live on in the waters, sky and land and we find strength in knowing they are always guiding. Connecting with Country is important to our way of life and can heal physically, spiritually and mentally.

The connected meeting place symbols surrounding represent our diverse communities across Country. It represents our immensely rich connections and kinship relationships we hold. We are all interconnected and our culture, family and kinship, birthing traditions, songlines and languages is important for our physical, spiritual and emotional wellbeing.

The connected meeting place symbols leading to the centre represent health workers working collaboratively, respectfully listening, learning, sharing knowledge and building strong healthy foundations for our Aboriginal children, families and communities. This is supported by the understanding of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing and activities such as the Jumbunna Webcast series, Strengthening Foundations program, Nambi Managers and Connections Forums.

The flowing lines throughout represent water and our rivers that connect us all, providing replenishment and cleansing to our lives. Water is of the utmost importance culturally, spiritually and physically for our communities. Thousands of years of memories, wisdom and traditions are held in or near water places and it sustains and heals us in every way.



This work shares the story of Jumbunna, an interactive webcast series on topics of interest and relevance which support in Aboriginal maternal child and family health.

The large meeting place symbol in the centre represent our Elders, Uncles, Aunties and communities. In the very centre are our women, spirit children, babies and children. For thousands of years and generations, babies are born on Country, with the guidance and support of women as part of ceremonial and sacred practices of Women's Business.

Surrounding, are flowing lines and patterns of Country, which symbolise our waterways, songlines and paperbark. For many of our communities, paperbark has long been used and is a much loved, respected and important resource. The bark and our waterways are used for sacred Women's Business and childbirth. Ceremonies connected to birthing have been passed down thousands of generations and is one of the oldest cultural ceremonies in the world.

Leading off the centre meeting place are our communities and health staff who take part in respectful listening, learning and sharing of knowledge, working together to achieve health outcomes and support for our women, fathers, families and most importantly our sacred babies and children. The journey or travel lines connecting to the meeting place symbol represent these learning journeys. The flowing line continues on, symbolising the learning and work that continues.



This work shares the story of the Strengthening Foundations Program. A professional development program that supports the practice of health professionals working with Aboriginal families and communities.

The meeting place symbols throughout represent health workers respectfully facilitating in, sharing and developing the skills and knowledge they need in order to be effective in their practice with Aboriginal children and families. In the centre are our Aboriginal mothers, fathers, babies and children. Surrounding are our Elders, Uncles and Aunties is who guide and support our communities, ensuring our mothers are safe, supported and empowered. Birthing and our babies and children has been a collective responsibility of community for generations, with Elders, grandmothers and Aunties playing significant roles.

The flowing lines throughout represent our riverways and songlines. Our ancestors walked this Country for Millenia. They walked our songlines and storylines all across our sacred country. This, along with our waterways, connects us all and guides us on our journey.



This work shares the story of Nambi Managers Forum. The Forum was named Nambi (Worimi Aboriginal Language) translating to 'a clever place or learning place'. Permission was gained from a Worimi Traditional Landowner for this auspicious learning occasion for Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Services (AMIHS)/Building Strong Foundations for Aboriginal Children, Families and Communities Program (BSF) Managers, ensuring that: Aboriginal cultural protocols were respected and abided by.

The meeting place symbols across the artwork represent Aboriginal collective learning practices that build respectful relationships, preserves and passes on old and newly-formed cultural knowledge. They symbolise the importance of a culturally safe place that reflects our communities identity, culture, family, birthing and knowledge systems.

The journey or travel lines connecting to the meeting place symbols represent the learning journeys, where reciprocal learning takes place. Where all learners pass on new knowledge on to other people as the power of the knowledge is to be shared.

The surrounding patterns above and below represent Country and our waterways. The scattering of meeting place symbols throughout represent our families and communities who hold knowledge and practices that have been passed on through generations since before time. Our dreamings, songlines, lore, languages, birthing and medicine knowledge have been passed down for thousands of years -the oldest education system in the world.





This work shares the story of the Connections Forum and Workshops, which are designed with an inter-professional and inter-disciplinary focus, to support health staff who work with Aboriginal mothers, fathers, families and communities.

The large meeting place symbol represents our communities. In the centre are our spirit children, children and babies who are surrounded by our Elders, families and communities.

The outer meeting place and 'u' shaped symbols surrounding, are health staff, respectfully listening, learning and sharing knowledge to support in providing positive health outcomes for all our families and communities. This is facilitated in a culturally safe way, where our cultural ways of knowing, being and doing are respected, honoured and celebrated.

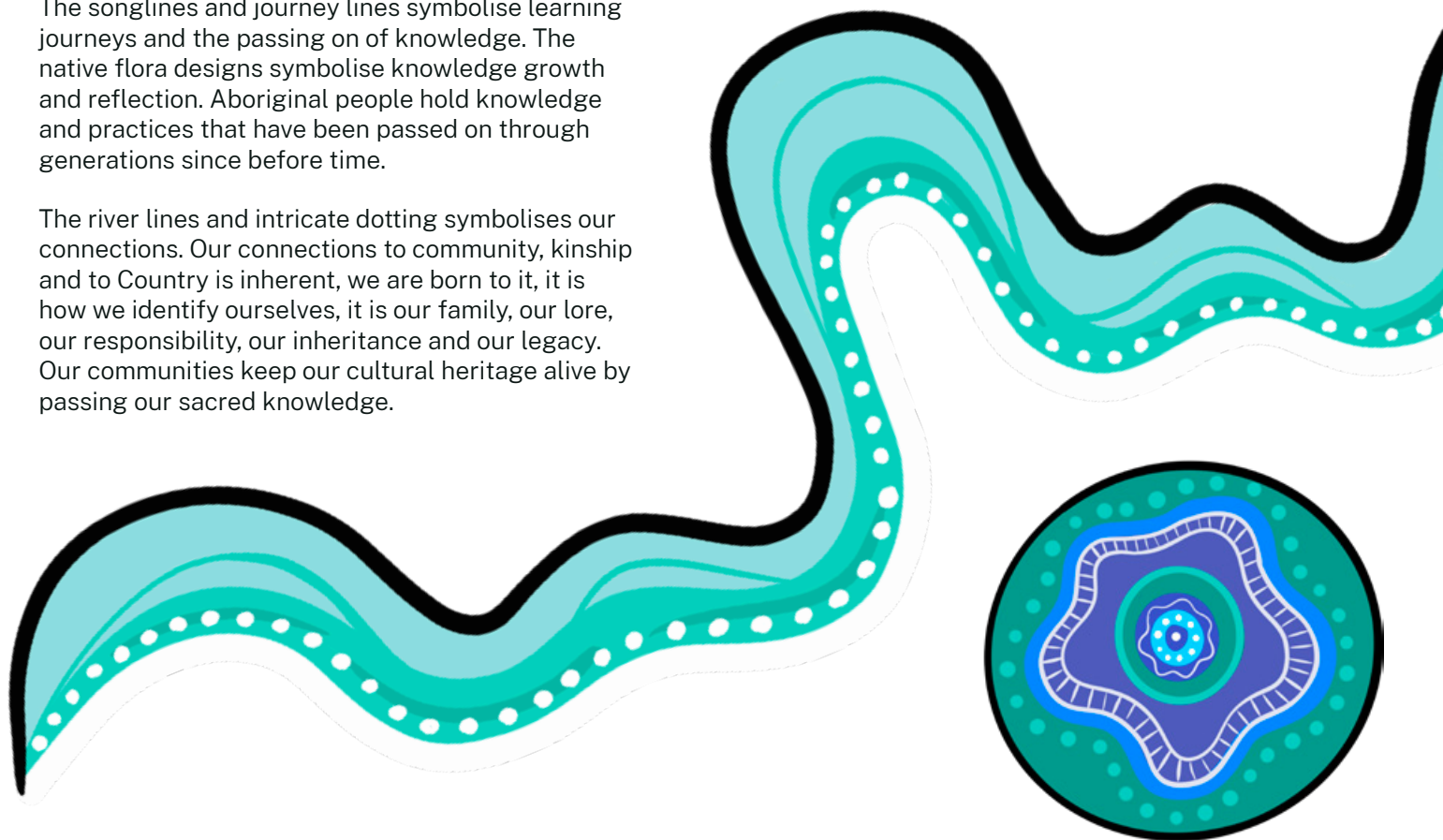
The songlines and journey lines symbolise learning journeys and the passing on of knowledge. The native flora designs symbolise knowledge growth and reflection. Aboriginal people hold knowledge and practices that have been passed on through generations since before time.

The river lines and intricate dotting symbolises our connections. Our connections to community, kinship and to Country is inherent, we are born to it, it is how we identify ourselves, it is our family, our lore, our responsibility, our inheritance and our legacy. Our communities keep our cultural heritage alive by passing our sacred knowledge.

Holly Sanders is a proud Bundjalung woman from the North Coast of NSW, Australia. She currently lives and works as a teacher and artist on Yuin and Dharawal Countries. Through her art she aims to share her stories, culture and Country in a contemporary way.

She always looks to Country - the land, sky and the waters - and uses these images, stories and memories to paint. The patterns of Country at different times of the day and year influence heavily in her art.

Holly honors the continuing connection Bundjalung, Yuin and Dharawal people have to the land and acknowledges the stories, traditions and living cultures of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the oldest and longest continuing culture on the planet.



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The NSW Ministry for Health acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands across NSW. We acknowledge that we live and work on Aboriginal lands. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal people.

Further copies of this document can be downloaded from the NSW Health webpage www.health.nsw.gov.au and www.heti.nsw.gov.au

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