ac.care Communities for Children Murraylands

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Final Report: Beyond Kayaking.
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Research dissemination and publication

This report, program and research has been accepted as a presentation at Child Aware Approaches Conference to be held in Brisbane from 15 -16 May 2017. Building connections for Dads: research into Dad focused parenting programs - what works. This national conference showcases effective programs that promote Child Aware Approaches to service delivery and improve the lives of children.
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Introduction

The evaluation of the programs provided by the Communities for Children initiative (CfC) is presented here. This report is divided into five sections. The first section presents the background information on the CfC initiative including an outline of the demographic and epidemiological outcomes for children in the area of focus for this evaluation. Additionally, the introduction outlines some of the theoretical basis for the models of care and the therapeutic models of care that are common in all the programs provided. Subsequent sections provide the therapeutic models of care specific to the particular program provided by the organisation or service. The report also provides a conclusion for each program and a final conclusion for the evaluation research project as a whole.

Background

There are known linkages between child maltreatment and levels of economic and social stress that are generally prevalent in areas of relative disadvantage (Access Economics Pty
Limited 2008, Maggi, Irwin et al. 2010, AIHW 2012). Accordingly, Communities for Children (CfC) was established in 2004 following a decision by the then Australian Government to establish the ‘Stronger Families and Communities Strategy’ (2004–08). Communities for Children was one of four streams of the Strategy, with the aim of addressing the risk factors for child abuse and neglect before they escalate, and to help parents of children at risk to provide a safe, happy and healthy life for their children and thus circumvent the deleterious health, education and welfare outcomes for children at risk.

Underpinned by the social determinants of health (Maggi, Irwin et al. 2010), the CfC strategy’s key feature sought to engage parents and caregivers in activities that enhanced their children’s development and learning. The CfC program providers have developed activities such as home visiting, early learning and literacy programs, early development of social and communication skills, parenting and family support programs, and child nutrition programs (Allen 2011, AIHW 2012, Australia 2014). CfC is a community based Initiative aimed to provide integrated services for families, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged families, to improve child wellbeing and development, safety and family functioning.

ac.care Murray Bridge is the Facilitating Partner of CfC and, as such, acts as a broker in engaging the community in the delivery of children’s and parent’s programs aimed at enhancing community outcomes (Muir, Katz et al. 2010). The CfC initiative aimed to improve the coordination of services for children 0-12 years and their families in order to minimise the impact of area-based disadvantage (Muir, Katz et al. 2010). Further, the initiative aimed to build community capacity to provide appropriate, targeted and enhanced services delivery and improve the community context for children (Muir, Katz et al. 2010). The whole community approach to improving child development incorporated the needs of the community (Muir, Katz et al. 2010). This report presents the findings from the evaluation of the ac.care Communities for Children Murraylands Beyond Kayaking program.

The ac.care Communities for Children Murraylands Beyond Kayaking program is delivered at various sites and towns near Murray Bridge South Australia. The Beyond Kayaking program provides an integrated service delivery approach supporting parents to improve their relationships with their children. The program also aids parents in accessing other programs through individual support and links with referral agencies and the broader community service
sector. The Beyond Kayaking program delivers preventative early interventions based on evidenced based theories and the targeted relationships frameworks.

**Theoretical Basis for Program Models**

**Targeted relationship based programs**

Early human development impacts on health, learning, and behaviour throughout life (Mustard 2010). Programs targeting parents of children at risk aim to decrease the impact of the negative characteristics of some of the Social Determinants of Health (SDH) (Solar and Irwin 2010) and address the children’s potential level of complex vulnerabilities that accumulate to produce poorer adult health outcomes (Mackintosh, White et al. 2006, Noble-Carr 2007, DoCS 2009, Keys 2009, Dockery, Grath et al. 2010, Gibson and Johnstone 2010, Lynam, Loock et al. 2010, Solar and Irwin 2010, Marcynyszyn, Maher et al. 2011, Nelson and Mann 2011, Kilmer, Cook et al. 2012, McCartney 2012, McCoy-Roth, Mackintosh et al. 2012, Zlotnick, Tam et al. 2012, Coren, Hossain et al. 2013, Embleton, Mwangi et al. 2013, Roos, Mota et al. 2013, Kuehn 2014). Of note, the use of parenting programs has been effective in decreasing emotional and behavioural problems in children (Wyatt Kaminski, Valle et al. 2008). This includes children with behavioural conduct disorder, oppositional behaviour, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, and anxiety disorders (Wyatt Kaminski, Valle et al. 2008, DoCS 2009). In addition, there is evidence that investing economically in early childhood programming for children in disadvantaged circumstances has sustained benefits for the community and from a human resources perspective (Belfield, Nores et al. 2006, Mustard 2006, Noble, Norman et al. 2006, DoCS 2009, Moffitt, Arseneault et al. 2010, Bartik 2011, Reynolds, Temple et al. 2011, Richter and Naicker 2013). Early Child Development (ECD) research has established that infants and children, who participate in well-conceived ECD programs tend to be more successful learners in primary, secondary and tertiary education, are more competent socially and emotionally, and show higher verbal and intellectual development during early childhood than children not enrolled in high quality programs (Mustard 2006, DoCS 2009, Dockery, Grath et al. 2010, Mustard 2010, Reynolds, Temple et al. 2011). Ensuring healthy child development, therefore, is an investment in a country's future workforce and capacity to thrive economically and as a society (Reynolds, Temple et al. 2011). Figure 1 below illustrates the interconnections between health, welfare, and the community.
Supporting children and parents through community based programs is soundly theoretically based as figure 1 is based on the bio-ecological theory of development (Sawyer, Gialamas et al. 2014). The Communities for Children Murraylands program offered through ac.care Beyond Kayaking and delivered by the Community Partner Centacare provides Early Childhood Care and Development and Parenting programs, to target the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members in society, with the goal of reducing risk factors and improving family functioning and wellbeing.
The impact of children’s environment on their development

The health of children is determined within the context of the environments in which they are born, grow, live, play, and learn (Krieger 2001, Marmot and Wilkinson 2006, Brandt and Gardner 2008, Solar and Irwin 2010). A range of determinants have been identified that shape the health of children and families. These education, housing, employment, health access, income, gender and social processes, such as social support and social exclusion are coined the Social Determinants of Health (SDH) (Krieger 2001, Marmot and Wilkinson 2006, Brandt and Gardner 2008, Solar and Irwin 2010). As such the SDH are the aspects of people’s lives in which they are born, grow, live, work, and age (Maggi, Irwin et al. 2010). This definition incorporates a variety of factors that impact on children and influence their adult health status. The SDH represents a broad array of characteristics that are not biological or genetic but result from the social, physical, and community environments (Maggi, Irwin et al. 2010).

The social determinants of health (SDH) are recognised as measures of individual and structural characteristics that can be addressed to assist families and communities to move away from vulnerability (Wilkinson and Pickett 2005, Wilkinson and Pickett 2009, Maggi, Irwin et al. 2010, Solar and Irwin 2010, Shonkoff and Garner 2011, Sinclair 2014). The concepts that define the SDH enable research into the structural and intermediary influences on health outcomes. Significantly, these concepts provide a means of understanding differences in health outcomes for different population groups (Hetzel, Page et al. 2004, Wilkinson and Pickett 2005, Wilkinson and Pickett 2009, Solar and Irwin 2010, Shonkoff and Garner 2011, Sinclair 2014).

Additionally, the Social Determinants of Health (SDH) provides a framework for exploring health inequities against services that provide supported, wrap around, models of care and intervention, which deliver individual support across a broad range of determinants of health through links with community health, education and welfare services. The development of models of care that address health inequities have been shown to deliver significant improvements (25%) in children’s development, behaviour, education, and health outcomes using community based relationship partnerships in the delivery of targeted parenting programs (Lynam, Loock et al. 2010). As the programs provided by CfC promote the community based delivery ethos then using the SDH measurements could also highlight the impact of these programs on the community.
Communities for Children Murraylands Programs

Our clients: ac.care,

Program Evaluated: Beyond Kayaking

The Communities for Children Facilitating Partner programs are funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services and aimed at delivering strong outcomes for Australian families with a focus on early intervention and prevention to provide programs for children aged 0-12 years and their families (AIHW 2012, Stewart 2014). Research shows that children living in poverty are exposed to higher levels of stress and this interferes with their ability to learn and meet developmental milestones (Margolin and Gordis 2004, Suor, Sturge-Apple et al. 2015). Furthermore, the differences in cognitive ability are evident at aged four (Margolin and Gordis 2004, Suor, Sturge-Apple et al. 2015). The Murraylands Rural Region of South Australia has been recognised as an area where children experience high rates of developmental vulnerability (Australian Early Development Census 2015). There are five measures that outline domains of vulnerability for Australian children in the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC). The five domains are: physical health and wellbeing; social competency; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills (school based), and, communication skills and general knowledge (Australian Early Development Census 2015). In Australia 6.8% of all children aged 0-12 years are assessed as being developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains (Australian Early Development Census 2015). In the Murraylands Rural Region of South Australia, in 2009, 43.5% of children are assessed as developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains and a further 34.8% assessed as developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains (Australian Early Development Census 2015). Of significance, is the decrease in the percentage of children assessed as vulnerable during the time the Communities for Children (CfC) programs have been implemented. In 2015, for example, 16.7% of children in the Murraylands Rural Region of South Australia were assessed as developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains. This has decreased significantly by -26.8% (Australian Early Development Census 2015). Furthermore, the percentage of children assessed as developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains in 2009 was 34.87%, and in 2015 this had decreased significantly to 11.1% a change of -23.7% (Australian Early Development Census 2015). While the Murraylands Rural Region of South Australia is still behind the Australian average of 6.8% (Australian Early Development Census
2015) however, initiatives such as the CfC programs aim to address children’s vulnerability. The graph (5) below from the AEDC website indicates the improving results for children in Murraylands Rural Region of South Australia. The figure below outlines the emerging trends from the AECD website for the Murraylands region as of June 2016.

5: Emerging trends in child development in this community

As data is available from three points in time, we can start to consider emerging trends. Figure 2 shows change in the percentages of developmentally vulnerable children in this community from 2009 to 2015.

The following pages show emerging trends for each AECD domain in more detail.

The graphed data in Figure 2 is repeated in Table 7, below.

Figure 2 – Emerging trends in developmental vulnerability for this community, showing change in percentage (2009 to 2015).

The figure above shows an improvement in the AECD outcomes across all developmental domains. The levels of vulnerability across the AECD domains are decreasing in this area. The period of these improvements coincides with the development and implementation of the communities for children programs in the region. The improvements are of note especially considering the economic decline in this area over the same time period.

Significance of the program and this research

Programs targeting parents of children who are at risk aim to decrease the impact of the SDH and address the children’s potential level of complex vulnerabilities that accumulate to produce poorer adult health outcomes (Keys 2009, Gibson and Johnstone 2010, Muir, Katz et al. 2010, Solar and Irwin 2010, Department for Education 2011, Nelson and Mann 2011, Kilmer, Cook et al. 2012, McCartney 2012, McCoy-Roth, Mackintosh et al. 2012). Importantly, research shows that the use of parenting programs has effectively decreased emotional and behavioural problems in children (Wyatt Kaminski, Valle et al. 2008, Sandler, Schoenfelder
et al. 2011). This includes children with behavioural conduct disorder, oppositional behaviour, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, and anxiety disorders (Wyatt Kaminski, Valle et al. 2008, Sandler, Schoenfelder et al. 2011). In addition, there is evidence that investing economically in early childhood programming for children in disadvantaged circumstances has sustained benefits for the community and from a human resources perspective (Access Economics Pty Limited 2008, Wyatt Kaminski, Valle et al. 2008, Sandler, Schoenfelder et al. 2011).

The CfC programs offered through ac.care Communities for Children Murraylands provides early intervention and prevention programs, targets the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members in society, with the goal of reducing risk factors and improving family functioning and wellbeing. This report details research that aimed to explore the relationship between CfC programs delivered in Murraylands Rural Region of South Australia and the social determinants of health for the children and families who have used the service. This type of analysis and research provides the bridge between policy objectives and the practice applications of policy. This research provided the next keystone step in examining the broader impact of individually tailored programs. The research presented here provides validation of the Beyond Kayaking program and supporting documentation for its wider application.

Aim and objectives
The research evaluated the relationship based programs that were delivered to at risk children in Murraylands Rural Region of South Australia (2011-2016).

Aim
To explore the relationship between CfC programs delivered in Murraylands Rural Region of South Australia between 2015 to 2016 and changes in parenting/carer behaviours in the children and families who have used the service.

Objectives
1. To identify the vulnerabilities that impact on the children and families using the service.
2. To explore the relationship between participating in the Beyond Kayaking program and changes in parental/carer relationships with their children and the boarder community.
3. To develop a set of recommendations that would enhance the programs’ capacity to improve the intended outcomes for this population group.

These objectives represent the first step in determining the extent to which the CfC programs impact on the children’s broader social outcomes. The provision of a comprehensive program logic (Appendix A) and the manual for the program ensures the program is available for wider dissemination, application and use in other settings (Appendix B).

**Approach to research**

This mixed methods research project was undertaken in two stages. The first stage involved:

1. The literature review explores the theoretical and evidence bases for the programs provided.

Stage two included:

1. A combination of interviews and focus groups with providers, staff, and parents.
2. Thematic analysis to provide an in-depth understanding of the impact of these programs on several health, welfare and social outcomes.

The predominant research methodology used in this evaluation is qualitative. Using this qualitative methods approach (Patton 2002, Parry and Willis 2013) that includes multiple sources and key informants ensures that this evaluation will be more robust. The inclusion of qualitative data is important as it bridges the current gap in evidence provided by quantitative data.

**Qualitative Methodology**

The qualitative component of the study was undertaken within a broad framework of critical social theory. This enabled the researchers to consider multiple positions, such as gender, race and poverty as they affect the SDH outcomes of children and families. Importantly, it situates the research as inquiry to inform change.

The subjective nature of qualitative enquiry has a number of relatively stable criticisms. The qualitative researcher selectively collects and analyses data that is not representative (Bogdan and Taylor 1975). Generalisations are consequently not appropriate. Qualitative
enquiry is only appropriate as a research design where an in-depth understanding is required of a group of people who have been purposefully selected (Patton 1990). Here the data selected specifically explores the outcomes of the Murraylands Rural Region of South Australia programs on the fathers, mothers, carers, and children.

While quantitative data provides a broad understanding of some influences on family circumstance, such as attendance, qualitative data, stories and narratives provide a personal perspective on life and family circumstances. Both sources of information are useful and highlight the influences on how children and families cope with adverse life circumstances and make decisions (Bogdan and Taylor 1975, Parry and Willis 2013).

The qualitative data provided in the interviews represent how the participants see themselves within a social structure and their capacity for empowerment and self-determination (Parry 2010).

Social and power implications of narrative analysis
Researchers have found the use of narrative analysis important in discovering the underlying socio-political impacts on population groups (Kohler Riessman 1993; Lieblich et al. 1998; Czarniawska 2004; Daiute & Lightfoot 2004). As Kohler Riessman (1993) notes:

_The use of narrative analysis is important as all narratives are socially constructed and laced with social discourse and power relations (Kohler Riessman 1993 p. 65)._ 

As such qualitative research using narratives provides a useful insight into the social and power relations that influence the participant's decisions. This allows for the inclusion of the family story within the SDH and demographic data that explains the impact of the Beyond Kayaking program on the care of their children and the interfamily relationships. Thus the inclusion of narratives that allow families to express how the program impacts on their lives and their families. Qualitative research and narrative analysis is the broad term used to describe a research act that aims to obtain from the participants detailed accounts of their lived experience through their stories. In practice, many such projects have focused their attentions on vulnerable or marginalised groups, thus containing an emancipatory emphasis, but the method can be used with any group of people (Davies 2007; Duffy 2008).
Data Management and Analysis
All copies of transcripts and any other pertinent qualitative and quantitative data sets are kept in a locked cabinet at Flinders University for seven years and then destroyed to comply with A.F.I. legislation.

Qualitative data management and analysis were completed in two separate but related steps in a procedure recommended by Patton (Patton 1990). The recordings were transcribed verbatim and pseudonyms assigned as the initial step to managing and analysing the data.

Qualitative data was analysed manually. Transcripts were disseminated into their component parts with reference to the original question categories. Respondent selections were separated and colour coded in a procedure outlined by Cavana et al (2001). Care was taken at this point as all data taken at the first instance as relevant and useful. There was a need to carefully identify statements that were made by the participants on issues that were not core to the focus of study, yet remained important, and those statements that were more clearly relevant.

The data was then inductively analysed. Patton (1980, p.306) describes inductive analysis as patterns, themes and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis. Themes that emerged from the data were analysed in terms of the constant comparative method as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967). This method requires that themes be examined as they emerge directly from the raw data and compared to each other to ensure they are not different aspects of a previously designated theme (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Cavana, Delahaye et al. 2001).

Additionally, the thematic data was deductively analysed using an iterative process to connect the Beyond Kayaking program results to the theoretical basis and themes arising from the interviews and focus groups (Grant & Booth 2009). Critiquing the qualitative results against the literature review improves the robustness and validity of the research findings and here ensures the program under evaluation is soundly theoretically based.
Marshall and Rossman (1999) note that an alternate understanding will always exist and the job of the researcher is to argue and reason why the explanation associated with the data is a better explanation than the alternate understanding. Patton (1990) warns that researchers are always at risk of being accused of imposing an understanding that reflects the researcher’s world better than the world being studied. The search for alternate understandings was considered and one method that could be used was to counter this accusation.

**Selection of participants**
The use of multiple sources of information and informants enhances the validity and robustness of the findings (Parry and Willis 2013). Therefore, selecting the participants in the qualitative phase consisted of an evaluation of their provision or use of the programs which then resulted in their inclusion due to their key informant status. This process constituted a critical snowballing approach to participant recruitment. Furthermore, the managers and staff employed in the programs provided important theoretical knowledge and background on program development and implementation.

**Exclusion and inclusion criteria**
The use of multiple sources of information and informants enhances the validity and robustness of the research results. The family participants selected for interview were recruited using a critical snowballing method (Hansen 2006). Critical snowballing uses key professionals to provide information on possible suitable participants for research (Hansen 2006). The method of sampling was also important to enhance rigour and whilst random sampling is preferred it is not appropriate for qualitative studies (Hansen 2006). In an effort to maintain confidentiality and enhance the inclusiveness of the study the participants were selected by the staff of the Beyond Kayaking program. This constitutes a form of, critical appraisal, chain, or snowballing sampling, where by key informants, in this case the staff, suggest families to be involved in the research (Hansen 2006). The participants then self-select to be involved in the research. The extensive list of potential participants was provided by the staff. This ensured that the researcher had no prior knowledge of the participants or their family situations, and additionally, ensured the staff did not know which participants had agreed to participate, providing anonymity and confidentially. Those parents using the
Beyond Kayaking program were then identified by the staff and then approached via a letter for recruitment into the study.

Qualitative research and narrative inquiry uses the narratives that emerge from interviews and examines the material within the context of how the data and participants are situated in the social world. Meanings are derived through the deconstruction and reconstruction of the narratives defining structural elements (Duffy 2008).

**Interview questions**

Questions asked were open ended and simple in structure to elicit the participant’s in-depth responses and to obtain responses unconnected with the researcher’s experience or bias. The interview and focus groups covered several characteristics highlighted by the quantitative evaluation:

- The type of program;
- The usefulness of the program;
- The impact of the program[s] on other aspects of the participants lives (e.g. the SDH);
- Implications for changes;
- Impact on health (mental and physical);

The above considerations were used as a guide for the design of the questions. The initial data collection took place in the Murraylands region of rural South Australia.

**Community engagement strategies**

A research reference group was established from the various agencies delivering the CfC programs. This enabled the collaborative involvement of the service providers into the research process ensuring the final recommendations are usable. The research reference group verified the variables definitions for stage one and assist in the development of the qualitative questions for stage two interviews.

The researchers analysed the interview responses from staff, and parents. The analysis was presented to the reference group for consideration and comment. The results of the first two phases informed the development of a set of recommendations for future service delivery of
interventions of children at risk and their families. As well as provide a framework for future service evaluations and data collection. These could be used to ensure the effectiveness and viability of the CfC programs using an evidenced based perspective.

This report is divided into five sections with each section reporting on one aspect of the research evaluation. The first section details the background of the Murraylands area (above). The second section reports on the program outline and the third section reports on the literature review on the program target population and the preventative interventions used. The fourth section describes the evaluation and results of the Beyond Kayaking program facilitated by ac.care Murray Bridge and delivered by the Community Partner Centacare. The fifth section provides a discussion linking the results and the literature providing the evidence for the program’s success.
Section two:

The Communities for Children Murraylands

Beyond Kayaking Program facilitated by ac.care

Introduction

This section reports on research with the Communities for Children Murraylands Beyond Kayaking program facilitated by ac.care and funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. The research explored the relationship between Communities for Children (CfC) programs delivered in Murraylands Rural Region of South Australia and some of the Social Determinants of Health (SDH) for the children and families who have used the service (Lynam, Loock et al. 2010, Solar and Irwin 2010). Communities for Children (CfC) provide prevention and early intervention approaches to improve outcomes for children (0-12 years old) and families who are considered to be at risk. These programs are sound from a theoretical perspective. The Beyond Kayaking program incorporates fundamental theoretical aspects of improved parental care, such as Targeted Relationship Building, Attachment Theory, Bringing Up Great Kids, Hey Dad, Tuning In To Kids, along with Trauma Informed Principles for interventions while addressing the broader constructs of the Social
Determinants of Health (SDH), such as education, access to services and aspects of service delivery (Lynam, Loock et al. 2010). Further, the Social Determinants of Health (SDH) frameworks provide a means of exploring the impact of social phenomena, for example limited income, health access, community capacity and family support, on individual aspects, such as health and wellbeing outcomes. The type of analysis and research undertaken for this evaluation provides the bridge between policy objectives and the practice applications of policy on SDH outcomes (Stewart 2014).

The CfC Murraylands Beyond Kayaking program commenced in 2011 and on average provides services to over 230 children aged 4-12 years, 62 fathers, and 25 social isolated families each year (Table 3.1 in results section). The activities are provided free of charge, and include food and equipment use which encourages the participation of families experiencing disadvantage and social isolation. The extent, to which the Beyond Kayaking program meets the aims of increasing father’s, mother’s or carers involvement with their children is explored by this research project, along with asking participants to describe any changes in, children’s developmental improvements, reducing social isolation, and providing positive community outcomes.

**Economic rationale / Social return on investment**

The CfC Murraylands Beyond Kayaking program provides intensive and comprehensive support for fathers who feel disengaged with their children and/or having parenting issues. The combination of the supportive care of the fathers, mothers or carers and an intensive activity program is vitally important in providing a successful intervention to mitigate the profound negative impacts of child abuse and neglect on children (Taylor, Moore et al. 2009). In Australia, Access Economics et al (2009) estimate that in 2007, between 177,000 to 666,000 children under the age of 18 were abused or neglect and this costs between $10.7 billion and $30.1 billion to the community (Taylor, Moore et al. 2009). The ongoing costs of child abuse and neglect for Australia could be as high as $38.7 billion. Of note engaged and effective fathers help prevent child abuse and neglect (Zanoni, Warburton et al. 2013). For every $1 spent in Australia on early intervention programs for preventing child abuse and neglect there is a $15 saving (Taylor, Moore et al. 2009, Allen 2011, Deloitte Access Economics and PANDA 2012). Research has shown that programs that directly address the
inclusion of fathers as positive roles models improves the outcomes for children (Scourfield, Tolman et al. 2012, Bowen, Duncan et al. 2013, Bowen, Baetz et al. 2014). The use of early detection, prevention and intervention programs for fathers, mothers, and carers in caring for children has the potential to save public expenditure. Additionally, to provide one-to-one therapeutic interventions for the numbers of clients currently using the service would require 4 FTE staff. The use of group work here is cost effective and appropriate as parents who have previously participated in the kayaking program return, under the guide of the family worker, to provide support and mentoring for the newest families.

The CfC Murraylands Beyond Kayaking program evaluation used a concurrent mixed methods research project design to explore the use of directed preventative interventions, such as Targeted Relationship Building, Attachment Theory, Hey Dad (Indigenous fathering), Bringing Up Great Kids (attachment and mindfulness parenting), and Trauma Informed Interventions, along with support and relationship based programs that aim to improve parent/carer relationships and practise within the family. Stage one involved the analyses of the literature. This stage provides an understanding of the theoretical foundation of the Beyond Kayaking program. Qualitative data included interviews with providers (managers and staff) and interviews/focus groups with parents. Data were analysed thematically to provide in-depth understandings of the impact of these programs on the families. These two stages together will provide a broader and deeper understanding of whether the Communities for Children (CfC) program improved health, education and social outcomes for children and families.

Facilitator Qualifications

Lead Clinician: The current lead clinician has Diploma in Counselling, Diploma in Community Services and Management and Diploma of Training and Assessment Qualifications in Family Therapy along with qualifications in:

- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy,
- Trauma Informed Principles of Intervention, and
- Counselling.

Additional training in the following areas has been completed:

- Attachment Theory, and
- Bringing up Great Kids,
The family support worker also has well-established and maintained referral pathways and community links. This has provided ongoing community support for the program and the purchase of equipment that includes:

- Kayaks, paddles etc.
- Floatation equipment
- First aid equipment
- Safety vests
- Eskies and food safety equipment
- Kayak transport equipment

Additionally, the use of this equipment involved in the activities provided has necessitated the training of staff in first aid procedures and resuscitation techniques.
Section three:

Literature Review

Initially, this innovative, preventive, intervention program has actively sought to involve fathers, and support men in their aspirations as effective and responsible parents and partners. The program has expanded to include fathers, mothers, and carers, of children aged 4-12 years who are marginalised, vulnerable, and disadvantaged. As an activity based program it delivers the theoretical content through activities and team building exercises that involve parents/carers and children. This ensures that those with limited literacy skills, or other marginalised or disadvantaged groups, such as CALD and ATSI can participate easily, without stigma or exclusion. Supporting fathers, mothers and carers in their aspirations to be effective and responsible in caring for children is paramount in improving children health and wellbeing. The Beyond Kayaking program provides an innovative opportunity for disadvantaged fathers, mothers and carers to change their parenting style to encompass evidence based view of child development in order to address the child/ren’s developmental needs.
Men’s roles as fathers are changing in a social and familial context (Government of Western Australia 2009). This has important implications for their roles as fathers, care givers, partners and for children and children’s development (Scourfield et al 2016, Government of Western Australia 2009). There is a growing acceptance and understanding of the importance of men’s roles as nurturing, care giving and emotionally supportive people in the lives of women and children in Australian society (Government of Western Australia 2009). The literature review findings discussed in this section recognises the broadening role of fathers from economic contributions, to include their expanding societal roles as parents, carers and partners. The research reviewed highlights the benefits for mothers, children and society of fathers’ participation in parenting. Additionally, the changing roles of fathers is influenced by various cultures which actively encourage fathers as care givers. The multicultural aspects of fatherhood have also influenced modern multicultural Australia.

Theoretical Basis for the Program Model

Literature review

Engaging Fathers in Protecting Children

The impact of fathers on cognitive development

Research has found that the inclusion of fathers in caring for children positively impacts on children's cognitive development (Wells, Mitra et al. 2016). Providing advanced linguistic development (Government of Western Australia 2007, Wells, Mitra et al. 2016). Furthermore, fathers encourage exploration of the environment through processes explained by modern attachment theory (Zanoni, Warburton et al. 2013). This supported exploration behaviour expands the children's abilities to safely engage with the physical environment and expand their cognitive abilities (Zanoni, Warburton et al. 2013). Father's participation in quality play with children is positively associated with improved cognitive development (Zanoni, Warburton et al. 2013). Moreover, fathers’ modelling of caring roles affirms children and mothers, promotes children's abilities to form positive social relations, socioemotional adjustment, and improves children's impulse control (Zanoni, Warburton et al. 2013). Proactive child and father relationships improves children's locus of control and thus decreases impetuous behaviour (Government of Western Australia 2007). Additionally, fathers fulfil the role of encouraging exploration which in turn improves linguistic development and expression (Zanoni, Warburton et al. 2013).

The impact of fathers on children's mental health outcomes

Gordon et al (2012) found that the positive involvement of fathers had profound implications for children’s and adolescent’s mental health outcomes. The lack of constructive paternal involvement included subsequent child/adolescent substance abuse, mood disorders, and depression (Gordon et al 2012). Of note was the emphasis by researchers on positive fatherhood and paternal involvement (Gordon et al 2012). Domestic violence and negative paternal involvement was noted for the deleterious impact of father involvement in family and children’s/adolescent’s mental and physical health outcomes (Gordon et al 2012). Additionally, the impact of positive father involvement also provided constructive logical, behavioural and social outcomes for mothers, infants, and children (Zanoni, Warburton et al. 2013, Gordon et al 2012). Research has found that 5 year olds reporting secure paternal attachment are more independent, socially competent and confident with peers, less anxious and withdrawn, and cope better with school related stress (Wells et al 2016, Government of Western Australia 2009, Scourfield 2014).
The benefits for men as fathers
Research highlights that men who act as responsible fathers improve their own psychological and emotional wellbeing (Government of Western Australia 2007). Responsible fathering provides opportunities for fathers to expand their relationship with their children, and improve the child’s and fathers’ self-esteem (Government of Western Australia 2007). Fathers also benefit by promoting the nurturant and safe functioning of their families by being in a nurturing and safe environment (Government of Western Australia 2007). Thus facilitating the role of responsible fathers as care givers and parents enhances the fathers sense of self and personal functioning. Importantly fathers who show they care in numerous ways, and treat the mothers of their children with respect and equality, provide positive physical and mental health outcomes for the whole family regardless of the parental relationship status (Scourfield 2014). Caring interactions between fathers and children, especially boys, creates positive intergenerational transmissions of care role models (Scourfield 2014, Wells et al 2016). These role models of caring interactions are powerful contributors to transforming engendered violence, gender relations and ending inequality (Wells et al 2016). Thus opening the future possibilities of wider caring roles for both genders (Wells et al 2016). Thus, by expanding men’s supportive, love, mentoring and safety roles can be accomplished by paternal parenting aids, and helps in promoting men’s aspirations for parenting and partnering in familial relationships (Government of Western Australia 2009).

Engaging fathers in parenting programs
Engaging with fathers is determined by barriers and facilitators which include: personal characteristics, family dynamics, service providers, structure of the intervention program, the community and organisational policy (Scourfield 2014). Behaviours, such as violence, substance abuse, addiction, and other antisocial conduct can make fathers defensive and unlikely to engage or warrant active engagement practices by workers (Scourfield 2014). Targeted fathering programs offer the promise of improving fathering engagement and child health and welfare outcomes (Scourfield 2014). Zanoni et al (2013) and others highlights the difficulties in engaging men in fathering and parenting programs (Gordon et al 2012). Research suggests that programs need to specifically address the needs of fathers in order to actively engage fathers in their fathering roles (Zanoni et al 2013, Gordon et al 2012). Furthermore, children benefit from receiving care from a variety of caring and supportive adults who meet the child’s needs (Scourfield 2014). Children are advantaged by positive
father involvement as it enhances the child’s ability to empathise (Government of Western Australia 2009, Scourfield et al 2016). Moreover, children developing and growing up in areas of disadvantage and poverty are greatly enhanced physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially, by positive father relationships (Government of Western Australia 2009).

The ac.care CfC Murraylands Beyond Kayaking program is one such program. Proactive, father inclusive, and community based strategies are required to promote the enrolment of fathers in parenting programs (Gordon et al 2013). These may include strategies, such as changes to organisational policy, timing of activities, and father involvement in the structure and delivery of activities. The ac.care CfC Murraylands Beyond Kayaking program reflectively and responsively engages with these aspects of program delivery and this is acknowledged in the results section of this report. Additionally, the kayaking program has responded to community needs to involve mothers, grandparents and carers of children ages 4-12years. Furthermore, Beyond Kayaking promotes and models interactions between fathers, mothers, care givers and children based on a strengths based model of interactions thus emphasising a range of skills gained by men and seen as enabling positive paternal and maternal care.

**Targeted relationship based programs**

The Beyond Kayaking program although initially father focused has expanded due to community demand to incorporate parents and care givers of children. The program aims to broaden the adults views of children and childhood to encompass child development, different relationship based parenting styles and respond to children in a relational manner instead of disciplinary manner. The ac.care CfC Murraylands Beyond Kayaking preventative interventions are also based on the targeted relationship based approaches to parenting and family support. As per the discussion in the introduction section of this report, targeted relationship programs recognise the importance of early child development, the social determinants of health and accumulative harm of childhood adversity (Mackintosh, White et al. 2006, Noble-Carr 2007, DoCS 2009, Keys 2009, Dockery, Grath et al. 2010, Gibson and Johnstone 2010, Lynam, Loock et al. 2010, Solar and Irwin 2010, Marcynyszyn, Maher et al. 2011, Nelson and Mann 2011, Kilmer, Cook et al. 2012, McCartney 2012, McCoy-Roth, Mackintosh et al. 2012, Zlotnick, Tam et al. 2012, Coren, Hossain et al. 2013, Embleton, Mwangi et al. 2013, Roos, Mota et al. 2013, Kuehn 2014). Targeted relationship based programs have been effective in decreasing emotional and behavioural problems in children.
Several behavioural disorders can be addressed using targeted relationship based programs and these include: behavioural conduct disorder, oppositional behaviour, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, and anxiety disorders (Wyatt Kaminski, Valle et al. 2008, DoCS 2009).

**Therapeutic Models of Care**

**ac.care CfC Murraylands Beyond Kayaking preventative interventions**

The Murraylands Rural Region has been recognised as an area where a larger percentage of children can experience high rates of developmental vulnerability (Australian Early Development Census 2015). The ac.care CfC Murraylands Beyond Kayaking preventative interventions specifically targets prevention and early intervention for children that are at risk of becoming vulnerable. Referrals to the ac.care CfC Murraylands Beyond Kayaking preventative interventions are from Centrelink, local General Practitioners, Mental Health Services, other service providers, local schools and Kindergartens and Child and Family Health Nurses. Fathers can also self-refer.

This program is delivered by a speciality father focused family therapist and child development specialists. This unique early preventative intervention program provides an evidenced based targeted program addressing and preventing the impact of family dysfunction on families and children (Bergink, Kooistra et al. 2011, Ji, Long et al. 2011, Bowen, Duncan et al. 2013, Bowen, Baetz et al. 2014). The ac.care Communities for Children Murraylands Beyond Kayaking delivers a four-part intervention program which consists of:

1. Part 1: ‘Relationship building skills’ program
   a. Increased understanding and knowledge on child development
2. Part 2: ‘Effective parenting’ skills program
3. Part 3: ‘Staying connected’ program,
   a. Occurs during the parent’s attendance in part 1 and 2 of the program. It also involves instruction for parents on developmental activities and play.
4. Part 4: child and parents receive Home assessment, connected to Health and Wellbeing services, and follow up sessions.
Each of the components incorporate activities based on validated methods of engagement, group therapy and recovery that have developed over time in consultations with the families receiving the Beyond Kayaking program. These strategies promote maternal and paternal infant attachment and support the reduction of family dysfunction. Importantly, the program is free at point of use and includes inter-sectoral and inter-professional delivery. It actively seeks liaison between health, education, and social support services delivered by the family support worker, with inputs from mental health and child development experts on the inter-professional collaborative methods of delivery and referrals that are important to the outcomes of the intervention. This ensures the program provides a cost effective service model. It brings together long standing effective pre-established pathways of care, networks, and sponsored community supports in an evidence-based practice model of care to address the specific needs of families dealing with disadvantage, poverty and social isolation.

In keeping with evaluative research methods this section of the research project sought to elicit both the quantitative and qualitative perspectives of the broad range of stakeholders engaging with the Beyond Kayaking program. The stakeholders included: program managers, mothers, CfC Committee and community staff. This report discusses the findings of this evaluation.

**Bringing Up Great Kids**

The CfC Murraylands Beyond Kayaking program uses the Bringing Up Great Kids (BUGK) parenting program as a basis for evidence informed activities (Australian Childhood Foundation 2011, Hunter and Meredith 2014). The BUGK draws on the evidence about the importance of attachment and the use of mindfulness parenting (Australian Childhood Foundation 2011). The BUGK program contains a manual and research evidence informed reports to be used by practitioners working with traumatised parents and children (Australian Childhood Foundation 2011, Hunter and Meredith 2014). The program uses a neurobiological informed child development framework and reflective, nurturing and mindfulness parenting (Australian Childhood Foundation 2011, Hunter and Meredith 2014). This provides parents with the information and skills needed to change parent attitudes and behaviours (Australian Childhood Foundation 2011, Hunter and Meredith 2014). The BUGK programs has been found to be effective in increasing family interconnection and emotional articulation, parental
confidence, thus reducing family conflict (Australian Childhood Foundation 2011, Hunter and Meredith 2014). The BUGK program has been proven effective for parents of children with Autism Spectrum disorders, trauma histories, behavioural issues, and parents with mental health issues, substance misuse, and parents with children who have been removed from their care (Australian Childhood Foundation 2011, Hunter and Meredith 2014). Along with an effectiveness for dealing with parents from ‘at risk’ groups, such as Indigenous parents, teens parents, and Refugee and immigrant parents (Australian Childhood Foundation 2011, Hunter and Meredith 2014).

Previous research into abuse and neglect has found that exposure to childhood adversity has lifelong consequences (Australian Childhood Foundation 2011, Broadley, Goddard et al. 2014). The BUGK programs address the impacts of abuse and neglect for the parents and children (Australian Childhood Foundation 2011, Broadley, Goddard et al. 2014). Additionally, the BUGK program collects quality data that supports the effectiveness of the program in addressing the complex issues that place children at risk (Australian Childhood Foundation 2011, Broadley, Goddard et al. 2014).

**Hey Dad**

Hey Dad is a specific Indigenous parenting program designed to ensure cultural appropriateness of interventions and parenting skills for Indigenous parents (Bowes and Grace 2014). The Hey Dad program addresses the complexity of issues faced by Indigenous fathers in parenting their children (Bowes and Grace 2014). Indigenous families are often at higher risk of child removal and increased risk of involvement with the child protection system (Bowes and Grace 2014, Broadley, Goddard et al. 2014).

The Hey Dad program uses specific techniques for engaging with dads (Department of Families 2009, Bowes and Grace 2014, Broadley, Goddard et al. 2014). Strategies used by the Hey Dad program for engaging with dads include direct contact, community groups, word of mouth, male families workers, and engaging with family gatekeepers (Department of Families 2009). The Hey Dad program interventions focus on dads who have experienced hardship and adversity including poverty, discrimination, war, torture, and fathers of children.
with disabilities (Department of Families 2009). Programs such as Hey Dad encourage men to re-evaluate their own upbringing and interpersonal relationships to work towards improving their father/child and partner interactions (Department of Families 2009).

**Tuning In To Kids**

The Beyond Kayaking staffs deliver activities for parents, care givers, and children based on the theoretical underpinning of the ‘Tuning in to Kids’ program. The Tuning In To Kids intervention is an international program developed in Australia to address emotional competence, emotional socialisation, and emotional regulation in children and adults (Havighurst, Wilson et al. 2009). The original Tuning In To Kids program evaluation using randomized control trials indicated that children’s behavior had significantly improved due to the parental emotional coaching, mentoring, and attunement (Havighurst, Wilson et al. 2009). Early childhood is an important developmental period for the intersection between children’s emotional processing, language, and cognitive augmentation (Havighurst, Wilson et al. 2009). The evidence-based internationally researched and delivered program provides key skills to infants and children in periods of developmental and social transition, namely, prior to school thereby enhancing the preventive intervention (Havighurst, Wilson et al. 2009). The program prevents some of the child behavioural problems associated with poor emotional regulation (Havighurst, Wilson et al. 2009). The Tuning In To Kids program provides activities that are structured around the emotional, social, physical and cognitive engagement with children which is also seen as imperative for normal development and ‘school readiness’ (Schaub 2015). The term ‘school readiness’ here also refers to High School readiness.

It should be noted that staff engaged in providing the program offered by CfC Murraylands Beyond Kayaking have received training in each of the theoretical areas. The staff have also received the practical application of the theories into activities for children and parents. The structure of the programs provided, are updated annually to ensure compliance with the latest research in the areas of Attachment Theory, Hey Dad, Bringing Up Great Kids and Tuning In To Kids. Further, the worker receives ongoing training in the theoretical and practical components of their work.
Therapeutic Models of Care

Models of service delivery (applying the theories)

The Beyond Kayaking program uses several models of service delivery. All families attending the program can assess the variety of other programs designed to enhance children’s early and adolescent development through advanced community links and referral networks.

Aim of the Beyond Kayaking program

The main aim and goal of the program is to use evidenced-based theories as outlined above that develop early learning strategies in children, support and identify the assistance that is needed for the family to be supportive, connected and build a stronger community. This aim is explicitly expressed and achieved in the following statements/activities:

- Family support
- Connection to local crèches and preschool
- Connections to Dads Group
- Connections to Antenatal Dads
- Support from other services
- Relationship skills
  - Dealing with stressful situations
  - Self-worth
- Effective parenting
  - My parenting
- Men meeting for coffee
- Learning from other dads

These activities improve parenting self-efficacy, and are based on the theories outlined above and as such provide significant changes and improvements in parenting and carer capacity, children’s behaviour and community engagement and participation. This provides services that are holistic and meet the needs of the program participants (Program Logic Appendix A)

The programs are based on sound theoretical premises, for example, targeted relationship based programs, attachment theory, Hey Dad (Indigenous fathering), Bringing Up Great Kids (attachment and mindfulness parenting techniques), and Tuning In To Kids. Targeted
relationship based programs are described in the introduction. Attachment theory is discussed in the literature review above.

**Research methods for the evaluation of the Beyond Kayaking Program**

Stage one of the evaluation of the Beyond Kayaking program consisted of a literature review of the theories and service delivery models used in order to determine the evidence base for these aspects of the intervention programs involved. Stage Two included interviews with providers (managers and staff) and parents. The collected qualitative data was analysed thematically to provide in-depth understandings of the impact of these programs on the families. These two stages together will provide a broader and deeper understanding of whether the CfC Murraylands initiatives provided by the Beyond Kayaking program facilitated by ac.care improved the health, education and social outcomes for children and families. This actively assists children and their parents/carers to regulate their own feelings through the modelling of positive, nurturing and caring relationships with fathers, mothers and carers.

**Research process**

The research processes have remained consistent for all the qualitative data collection throughout this research project. The initial research processes, such as inclusion and exclusion criteria, data analysis, participant inclusion etc. have been outlined in the introduction. The Beyond Kayaking program is also provided by professional staff with a background in interpersonal relationships, child learning, child development, and parenting programs. The professional knowledge and support ingrained in the programs ensures the interventions within the programs are theoretically sound. The theoretical base and application processes embedded within the program provides a robust practice consistent with the theoretical underpinnings. The information provided by the key informants adds to the validity and robustness of the program delivered.
Section four:

Results

Findings

General information
The Beyond Kayaking program has engaged with the Murraylands community for a number of years. This is reiterated by the increasing numbers of participants attending the program. The acceptance and valuable impact of the Beyond Kayaking program is also evident in the response from all participants in the thematic section of this report. However, due to limited space only the major themes are reported here. Table 4.1 below provides an overview of the attendance levels for the Beyond Kayaking program.
As Table 4.1 above outlines in the first year of the program a total of 90 parents and children attended the Beyond Kayaking program. In 2012 a total 78 parents and their children attended the Beyond Kayaking program. In 2013 the program was extended due to demand to include; local primary school parent/teacher/child activities, and a total of 257 parents and their children attended the Beyond Kayaking program. In 2014 the weekly semester program and the extended Beyond Kayaking program provided child/adult relationship building for a total of 318 people. Further, in 2015 a total of 477 people participated in the Beyond Kayaking program. The program has assisted more than 1220 participants from 4 years of age and upward. Additionally, the program has helped to build relationships in more than 116 socially isolated families. The program is well utilised and addresses an area of need within the
community. It connects parents to parenting through activities that promote team building and communication that are based in their local rural community.

Table 4.2 below illustrates the types of participants involved in each stage and step of data collection. The table 4.2 also highlights the method of data collection required for each participant type. The basis for recruitment outlines the role of the participants and implies their level of involvement in the Beyond Kayaking program. Additionally, table 4.2 provides an explanation for the type of data collected and the level of involvement of the participants. The Beyond Kayaking program has developed a reputation (see themes section) for assisting parents in developing and maintaining a positive and productive relationship with their children through activity. Of note is the response of fathers to encourage other fathers to attend the program to improve their relationships with their children and their spouse (themes section). The methods used in the data collection inform the analysis used in the evaluation. Table 4.2 illustrates the types of participants involved in each stage and step of data collection. The table also highlights the method of data collection required for each participant type. The basis for recruitment outlines the role of the participants and implies their level of involvement in the Beyond Kayaking program.

### Table 4.2: The type of participants and method of data collection used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Type</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Basis for Recruitment</th>
<th>Component of Research Involved In (e.g. survey, interview, focus group, observations)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providers (managers and staff)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Responsible for delivery of the CfC programs</td>
<td>Focus group interview. Staff also provided observational information (on behavioural changes in families and children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Participated in the Beyond Kayaking program</td>
<td>Observation and responses from program files</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Participated in the Beyond Kayaking program</td>
<td>Face-to-face, or phone interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Beyond Kayaking program staffs were interviewed as per table 4.2 above. The theoretical links discussed during the interviews included Attachment Theory, and targeted relationship theories are explained in previous sections of this report. The information collected outlines
the intensive support provided by the Beyond Kayaking program assisting families and their children to deal with social and cultural issues. The Beyond Kayaking program uses proactive, complete, targeted and inclusive community based program delivery. The results of this research illustrate the importance of this program. The delivery model of 1 FTE staff member is cost effective as the number of staff required to provide services in a one-to-one therapeutic relationship would be 4 FTE. Additionally, as the delivery is activity based it provides a team building response from parents that may not be deliverable in a one-to-one setting.

It has been established above that the use of multiple sources of information and informants enhances the validity and robustness of the findings (Parry and Willis 2013). The key informants in the Beyond Kayaking program were the managers of the programs who provided the theoretical knowledge and background for the program development and implementation.

Qualitative Results

Further, while the method of data collection varied as the managers and staff participated in face-to-face interviews and the parents participated in a focus group, and in face-to-face interviews. However, the fundamental premise of questions regarding the Beyond Kayaking program remained the same. The themes arising from the interviews and focus group are summarised below.

Themes

There were nine main themes found within the data. As there were a high number of members in the focus group and a small number of interviews, there was some data saturation in certain areas. Interestingly, there did not appear to be much difference in comments between the program staff and managers, and the parents around the effectiveness of these programs in delivering support that addressed aspects of the SDH and changed the participants and their children’s lives for the better.
Themes

There were a number of main themes found within the data. The interviews and focus group data provided data saturation for all the themes provided below. The themes discussed below represent the main themes. Again there were no differences between the comments made by managers, staff, and parents or caregivers. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity participants as designated P1, staff and managers S1 etc.

**Theme 1: Well supported programs building families**

The views presented in this theme have been derived from all participants. That is the staff, managers, parent’s/caregivers and children’s views are acknowledged here. In many instances, there were positive comments about the comprehensive nature of the individual support, parenting support and supportive links provided by the Beyond Kayaking program through the parenting advice and changes, supportive modelling techniques, and referrals to other community providers. All the participant acknowledged their difficulties with parenting and providing appropriate and supportive care to their children prior to commencing the Beyond Kayaking program. Further, all participants provided positive comments claiming that the Beyond Kayaking program had driven changes in their lives that would not have been achievable without the program. Examples included being able to ‘attend to’ and ‘attach to’ their children in developmentally meaningful ways which did not happen prior to the parent attending the program. The quotations below reflect the staff, managers and parent’s/caregivers responses to participating in the Beyond Kayaking program:

*The kayaking program is great … you learn together … we don’t know and the kids don’t know what to do… you have to work together to problem solve. You need to talk to one another and help each other … it has helped me so much as a bloke connect to my kids. Understand my kids, know about kids. It’s a fantastic program (P3).*

*You are interdependently connected to each other through this craft (kayak) and there is also instability in a physical sense so you have to work together. It helps you build your relationships with your kids. My kids talk to me and I help them now (P5).*

*Great learning something new together … your kids see how you learn new things…how hard that is… it gives them [children] the confidence to try new things. It reminds us [parents] how hard it is to learn sometimes. It helps let them know you’re*
not perfect and don’t know everything. You also learn what your kids can do so you
don’t over expect, you know. I was hard on my kids before, really a bit of a bastard. I’m
much better now. I see how they talk to me now and I help them more. Our whole
family is better (P6).

We learn to listen to and respect women and girls and appreciate what they do. It’s
hard my father never listened to my mum. I realise that now. The program has taught
me to respect my daughters and listen to them. We get on much better now… they tell
me how much they love me (father emotional here) (P8).

One of the other dads is really great with his daughters, how he listens to them… talks
to them. This has changed me and how I think about my daughter and my wife. I’m
more respectful… and building relationships… homes better now too (P11).

CHILD COMMENT: I have just had the best day of my life.

The comments illustrated above reiterated the importance of the program in improving family
functioning and the care of children. The fathers openly discussed their improved respect of
women and children which led to a better home life for all family members. All the fathers and
staff spoke of the improvement in child and father interactions (comments above) which, as
explained below, has led to improved school attendance, improved understanding of the
importance of country in Aboriginal culture and the improved understanding of children seeds
and development. This has also enhanced the dad’s feelings of self-worth and their belief in
their ability to parent appropriately. The Beyond Kayaking program delivery model reflects the
holistic and wrap around nature of the individualised service delivery model which while
delivered in a group also provides one-on-one tie between the Fathers Worker and the dads.
The parents and children attending the various activities are provided with support that is
evidenced based through the use of theoretically sound program models while being
individually focused so that nuances of people’s lives and the care of their children can be
incorporated into the program delivery.

The intensive support provided by the ac.care Communities for Children Murraylands Beyond
Kayaking assists families and their children to deal with the impacts of social isolation,
poverty, disadvantage, and belonging to CALD and ATSI groups as discussed below. The program uses proactive, complete, targeted and inclusive community based program delivery. The results of this research illustrate the importance of this program.

Most of the parents discussed their isolation from other families and services and the Beyond Kayaking program had provided a means for them to connect to others with issues of parenting capacity and supportive staff, other families with children and their community. This enhanced the support the parents and children received. The therapeutic interventions were constructed to alleviate the impacts of issues described above, such as isolation. The use of the activities is specially designed to improve interpersonal relationship and empathy for others along with increasing respect for women and children, and enhance parental attachment. The Beyond Kayaking program also provides knowledge on children’s developmental milestones such as fine and gross motor skills. The staff and other more experienced parents modelled exemplary parenting and attachment behaviours and provided one on one support for parents having difficulties with parenting skills. Further, the interaction in the kayaking group allowed the parents to explore their difficulties, anxieties and concerns around parenting and other social interactions thus improving social connections. These aspects of the program and theoretical foundations are often addressed through the use of analogises and the stories provided by Aboriginal culture as discussed below.

Theme 2: Connecting to local Aboriginal culture

The views presented in this theme originate from all participants. Thereby, acknowledging the views of the managers, staff and parents. The participants had found the Beyond Kayaking program provided information and knowledge about the river and surrounding areas from geological and cultural perspectives. Ergo, acknowledging the importance of Aboriginal culture and their connections to the land and waters of the Murraylands area. This provides the participants with an appreciation of the importance of Aboriginal culture and its connections to the environment, spirituality and family. The Aboriginal culture and connection to country provides stories and analogies that explore connections, family, relationships and living in harmony together. Additionally, the program acknowledges the difficulties Aboriginal people face in parenting through previous government policy, such as ‘The Stolen Generation’ and racism. This encourages the participants to empathise and support others whose life
experience may be vastly different from their own. The comments below reflect the positive changes to the understanding of culture and others life experiences:

*I didn’t realise before but for the Aboriginal people in our community there’s a lot of trauma and grief* (P1).

*There is a lot of trauma and intergenerational grief for the Aboriginal populations… the impact of The Stolen Generation and Aboriginal families in the Child Protection System… the program helps Aboriginal families to connect with the river, connect with culture and connect with family in deeply respectful ways. It also helps the non-Aboriginal parents to understand the importance of respect and empathy for others* (S1).

*The kayaking helps my child to connect with his culture and be proud to be Aboriginal. He won an award at school … he wasn’t attending he was an at risk students but the program changed all that. He never would have felt so proud before… he is more confident and he couldn’t do that without the kayaking program* (P12).

*The Murray River is very important in Aboriginal culture so the kayaking and connecting to the river and the environment is central to building community, interpersonal relationships and trust…it’s much deeper than the impact of the physical activity…the things we discuss…you won’t get that in the office…the men especially won’t open up* (S2).

*Aboriginal families or fathers it’s very hard to see them in the office. They feel uncomfortable…I suggest the kayaking and they turn up…it feels more natural, comfortable to be by the river…they open up straight away, they respond, it’s a combination of mindfulness as well as heritage and culture…it helps them de-stress, reconnect to country* (S2).

*Kayaking is great; my son has made big improvements. He got an Aboriginal shirt for attending school every day for a term. He’s gone from being a high risk student (running away from school) to an outstanding student. It’s connected him to culture and country it really works* (P15).

In this instance, the managers, staff and the parents have highlighted not only the improvement in capacity of the parents to engage meaningfully in ways with the activity but the program has improved their understanding of the local community, environment and the
pivotal role the river plays in cultural and spiritual beliefs of the local Aboriginal people. The program has further improved the parent’s capacity to empathise with other adults and their children. All of the participants also acknowledged that the program has also enhanced the Aboriginal participants sense of pride for their culture and connection to the land and each other. This improved sense of self has had far reaching consequences, such as improved school attendance, improved employment opportunities, enhanced literacy skills along with improved family functioning. Another aspect of the program is its use of mindfulness parenting which focuses the parents on the here and now, along with proven benefits in reducing stress.

**Theme 3: Mindfulness parenting, and stress reduction for parents**

The views presented in this theme have been derived from the professionals delivering the program and the parents participating in the program. Mindfulness concentrates the minds of the parents on the present and on the care of their children. Thus the children benefit by the ‘presence’ of the adult in the here and now. Additionally, the method of therapeutic intervention allows the parents/caregivers to receive support from one another in a purposeful and constructive manner. These aspects are illustrated in the quotation below:

*There is mindfulness in the kayaking, in the breathing, paddling together, parent and child, at the same rate...reducing anxiety, stress, and relaxing and calming the mind...it helps concentration in families who are quite dysfunctional...it helps them learn new skills...hone their parenting skills...learn to emphasise with their child (S1).*

*The families attending the programs on the water...have time on the water to deal with stress, trauma, financial hardship, interpersonal relationships...it's an escape...positive escape on the water but also gives them space to think about it and deal with what they have to deal with it all (S2).*

*The kayaking is more than being on the river...it's about the environment, it's about building relationships with your kids, building parenting and relationships. It's that time just here, together with your kids, just here, you have to concentrate on you and your kids and what you are doing. It's very personal...that's why the program works so well...it's why the benefits of the program last (P4).*
All the participates reiterated the comments provided above. The participants stated that the ‘mindfulness’ of the program calmed them and helped them become aware of their anxiety, stress and needs, along with the needs of their children for calm parenting, and consistency in parenting. These comments capture that for all these families who were dealing with stress, depression, and anxiety the program provides the opportunity to participate in a novel physical activity and an interpersonal relationship building program in a physical, psychological and social space that promotes mindfulness and the opportunity to be calm and reflect on their life circumstance. This is coupled with the instruction, knowledge and skills that enhance positive interpersonal relationships and respect. As outlined above the integration of the activities with the stories of the river are used as a metaphor for life and dealing with difficult situations.

Theme 4: Using kayaking and the river as a metaphor for life

The views presented in this theme derive from the professionals delivering the Beyond Kayaking program. The use of sound theories in the programs development is evident in the positive measurable outcomes (discussed in a later theme). The focus of the four key stone activities and interventions based on the Hey Dad, Bringing Up Great Kids, Mindfulness Parenting, CBT, and Attachment theory as outlined in the comments above are also expressed in the comments below:

*If it’s too windy we can’t go out on the river…we talk about the difficulties in life…how we can’t act immediately at times… how sometimes it’s better to stand back and look at life rather than jumping in and reacting…using practices from better parenting, attachment theory, better family environments, CBT accepting what is mindfulness etc. to help* (S1).

*These dads don’t feel good about being dads…they feel isolated and disconnected…we talk about the river flowing through the landscape connecting things…the calmness of the river here. The kayaking stops the yelling, all the anger. The dads learn new ways to be dads* (S2).

All the staff and managers interviewed outlined the uniqueness of this program in linking several evidenced based theories and parenting program to connecting disadvantaged and disenfranchised fathers with their children and parenting. The importance of fathers being
positively connected to their children and their parenting has been outlined in the literature review section. Programs that directly service fathers in this comprehensive manner are paramount in decreasing risk for vulnerable children and improving outcomes in children lives. The themes above outline the main objective of the program which is to improve the positive impact of men on families. This is achieved by the use of qualified staff across all areas of service delivery. For example, the Fathers Worker is professionally trained to use the aspects of the program being delivered to ensure the use of the Beyond Kayaking theory based program remains sound. There is also a consistency of staff used to provide the programs and this assists with consistent delivery and in building trust with this vulnerable group of fathers, mothers, carers and children. This program has continued very positive standing and support in the local communities which enhances its impact and connection with vulnerable families. The program is renown locally for improving a vast array of outcomes for vulnerable families. All participants stated that the program had long term impacts that developed initially through improved parenting and emotional support and went on to include longer term improved family relationships, workplace relationships and connectedness to community.

Theme 5: Modelling parenting and increasing emotional support

The use of standardised evidence based theories provides a sound base for the modelling of positive paternal behaviours and influences. The tools used in the attachment theory, mindfulness and CBT have been proven to improve emotional support and the ability of the parents to 'attend' to children's needs. The managers, staff and parent's positive comments claimed that the Beyond Kayaking program had precipitated the change in the participant's mental health and improved their relationship and bonding with their wives, partners and children. This is highlighted in the quotation below:

The parents in the kayaking learn to support each other… value each other and being connected to community (S2).

I see the other dads supporting each other and supporting me…its great we can talk about things we wouldn't normally talk about…I see how they speak to their kids and their kids listen so I do it with my child and he listens now too…it works. Its helped me at work, I listen there more too. I am happier all round (P10).
One dad said to another single young dad (24 years) “I don’t know how you do it. You’re incredible. All you have gone through and manage all by yourself”. The young dad started to cry and said that he had never had anyone appreciate or value him looking after and bringing up his kids before…it was so moving to watch these blokes supporting one another (P2 & S2).

We go to kayaking as dads and we can emphasise with each other you know what the other dads are going through with their kids and wives and stuff. It has helped me I feel more positive, more supported and I know I’m more supportive of others too (P15).

The dads can empathise with each other and with their children…it [kayaking] enhances self-worth and bonding...before they come these dads don’t value themselves as fathers...they don’t feel good about being a dad...especially the single dads...they feel isolated and disconnected. At kayaking they get support and are valued by the other fathers, parents and children. Kayaking helps all of that (S2).

In the theme above and in theme 1 the participants highlighted the importance of the modelling of appropriate and productive forms of relating to children. In many instances the parents spoke of profound changes and improvements in their ability to function as a parent, father and spouse. The mothers and fathers recognised the importance of the program in changing their interpersonal relationships of the fathers with their children and families. The fathers identified the role the program had played in improving their attachment and relationship with their children and partners.

Theme 6: Soft entry
The staff members and the Beyond Kayaking program participants who were interviewed for the ac.care Communities for Children Murraylands evaluation highlighted the importance of ‘soft entry’. The programs provided are described as ‘soft entry’ programs that enable support to be given to families who do not traditionally attend services to improve parenting and building skills programs. This is captured in the quotation below:
I tell the dads and mums having problems come along and try the kayaking…it's a way of getting them connected to other services as well. If the program was anything else but 'soft entry' we would get the hard to reach families (S2).

A lot of the clients come to the kayaking program have a history of trauma...they are less likely to get help...kayaking lets them hear about other services they can use...gives them confidence to use other services...helps them connect to other families as well (S1).

We use the kayaking as a way of connecting clients with other services ...providing those wrap around services. So the family support worker would provide case management, therapeutic support but also offer referrals to other agencies (S2).

I went kayaking and then heard about other things I could do with the kids...other help that was available for me in the community...it has helped me connect and the kids too...we are much happier as a family now (P9).

It's a great program who ever needs to go can just come along with their kids. You just ring up and let them know. I have told other men to go along (S3).

The programs use a range of referral pathways to other professionals to provide interdisciplinary, and holistic, family interventions. These types of ‘soft entry’ initiatives are important as it connects the programs with the isolated families and prepares the family and child for integrations into the health, education and social systems.

Theme 7: Early intervention in Mental Health

The Beyond Kayaking program provides timely preventative interventions for parents and children struggling with Mental Health issues. For the high risk families in the program using the theoretically based interventions from areas such as, trauma, strengths based, and attachment activities are theoretically sound. Further the models of intervention used are also based on the rights of the child and this is captured in the quotation below:

We take children and parents who are at risk or early stages of mental health problems and the kayaking really helps them...the mindfulness...calming...supports them and
can help to stop it getting worse...gives them skills on how to calm themselves and calm their mind (S2).

My husband was not coping with us or our kids. It’s very hard for him with working and everything to get time to connect with the children. He went to kayaking and he is so much nicer to live with now. He is less stressed and calmer...he doesn’t over react (P10).

Our son (13 year) was having problems cracking the shits...back chat all the time...temper tantrums ...running away...being expelled from school all the time. He’s so much better, more loving, kind...we couldn’t get through before but now he is calmer. Kayaking gave him strategies to deal with school and home. Kayaking is really, really good (P9).

We work through a lot of sensitive issues on the river. Issues such as domestic violence...some children have been traumatised or abused sexually/physically...work with mum and dad to help support their children to through it...how to talk to the children, how to deal with it and what is happening to their child...work through de-stressing the child...we deliver therapeutic interventions to get their [parent and child] needs met (S2).

All the participants talked about the prevalence of mental health issues in the rural communities. These quotes above illustrate the importance of informed therapeutic practices being delivered to an isolated and disadvantaged population group in a manner that is therapeutic and appropriate. Such interventions delivered in an office may not be as effective for a variety of reasons. Some of which may include; cultural appropriateness, power relations between service providers and disadvantage clientele, physical environment of an office and social mores impacting on men’s ability to feel comfortable and disclose. The uniqueness of the program delivered in the natural environment may be instrumental in providing the participants with an environment conducive to talking about sensitive issues and behaviours. The staff are trained to deal with children and adults experiencing Mental Health issues and will also refer clients and their children to some appropriate clinicians.
Theme 8: Child development and communication
The program provides parents and caregivers with age appropriate information about child development and this aids the adults to provide the appropriate levels of support, communication and enhancement of the child’s development. In ways that improves family relations. As captured by the quotations below:

We have four kids ...it’s hard to know what to do with them...kayaking is great I learnt how to talk to my kids at their level...also with your partner. What’s ok to say. I understand now more about how children develop and what is ok...how kids work...also how to talk to other dads...there is not much around for dads to help them understand their children and wives (P8).

You get to meet other families, other dads...kids meet other kids...you learn how to talk to your kids...their [children’s] point of view...helps me to understand how to talk to them [children]... how they think. My eldest was being bullied at school I didn’t know now we talk about it...we talk more it’s great, kayaking has given me that (P6).

It helped me with my daughter...understand her...spend time with her...out of the house...time to talk to her, at her level...time to bond to her so our relationship is much better now she listens and I listen to her (P10).

The program connects you to your children...you understand how they grow...its flexible and fits in with work. I talk to other dads there and that wouldn’t happen without this program. They understand how I feel; it’s difficult to get this knowledge on children and the help from talking with other dads. Kayaking helps that (P16).

The quotations above highlight the use of developmental information to improve interpersonal child/parent relationships. It connects the parents with information about child development that is delivered in a manner that promotes parental uptake and implementation.

Summary
The themes discussed above occurred frequently throughout the transcripts analysed. The staff and parents were unanimous in their support of the program, the uniqueness of the program and its ability to meet the needs of the children and improve interpersonal
relationships. Many fathers spoke of wanting to be a ‘better father’ than their fathers and to connect with the children and partners. The program targets a difficult to reach population group in a manner that facilitates learning and engagement with the materials provided. This provides an internal validity for the themes, and research robustness, for the research design and processes used. The program provides high quality interventions and the necessary referrals; supports, professional practices, and modelling that reduce the risk for children in high risk families. The importance of these interventions cannot be over stated for the children and families involved.
Section five:

Discussions and conclusions

Communities for Children is a vitally significant program. It is significant because it values the central role of community in promoting and protecting the wellbeing of children and families. The Communities for Children Initiative reflects the commitment of a national government, to provide substantial support to local communities to shape their own strategies to support their families. Communities for Children Facilitating Partners, the Australian government and the local Community Partners work in collaboration to provide early intervention and prevention activities and programs designed to bring about positive outcomes for children aged 0 to 12 years and their families.

The Communities for Children Facilitating Partner Model is a federally funded initiative using, early intervention and prevention strategies, and community inclusive philosophies and
program delivery frameworks, to deliver strategically placed programs and activities that enhance family and community functioning. To achieve this, the Facilitating Partners work collaboratively and directly with communities in partnership to identify community and family needs, develop appropriate and targeted programs, while working with community based services to aid the delivery of the programs developed. The Murraylands ac.care provides nationally recognised and consistent exemplary support that aids in providing evidence based programs in a coordinated and collaborative manner. The programs, such as Beyond Kayaking provided by ac.care as the CFC FP, aim to improve outcomes for children and families in an area of high recognised levels of child vulnerability.

The Beyond Kayaking program provides child development knowledge, such as the importance of play for children’s learning. Developmental knowledge assists the parents in providing a home environment that aids child learning and safe development. Neurobiological and brain development information is also given to the parents. This can aid in the understanding of children’s behaviour and needs. The use of the activities is specially designed to:

- improve interpersonal relationship and empathy for others
- increase the levels of respect for women and children
- increase positive child/adult interactions
- increase the building of positive interpersonal relationships
- increase the adult’s knowledge of child development
- improve and increase the provision of age appropriate activities
- address some aspects of obesity through increased physical activities
- improve a sense of self worth
- improve perceptions of the roles of men in families
- enhance attachment
- provide purposeful and well-constructed activities that meet the children’s developmental milestones such as fine and gross motor skills.
- model exemplary parenting and attachment behaviours
- provided one on one support for parents having difficulties with parenting skills.

The aims and goals of the Beyond Kayaking are consistent with the CFC FP funding and sustainable outcomes for children objectives. All the aims and goals of the Beyond Kayaking
program have been achieved according to the data and research outcomes provided in the previous sections. The participants outlined the positive changes that had occurred as a direct result of attending the Beyond Kayaking program. Additionally, the Beyond Kayaking program has had unexpected broader positive effects reported by the parents and staff, such as improving literacy through the increased sense of self-worth and connections to other services. This has had a flow on effect into improving employability and workplace relationships.

Discussions

Indisputably, the connection of responsible fathers to their families is a major benefit. The expansion of the program to include all parents and caregivers willing to participate has improved the program and its connections with the community. The Beyond Kayaking program has effectively diminished the negative outcomes for fathers, mothers, children and families by improving respectful interpersonal interactions between family members. All of the managers, staff and parents have discussed the Beyond Kayaking program with a great deal of positivity. Particularly when questioned on the notion that the mothers and fathers attending the program activities now had a set of strategies which assisted them in supporting their children’s development, education and health. All the participants explained the strategies in detail and they stated how these strategies had improved outcomes for themselves and their families.

Overall the parents and children had become calmer and the incidence of behavioural problems and anxiousness in the children had decreased as the fathers and mothers progressed through the program. The intensive support provided in the kayaking program assisted by the supportive learning environments and activities based on the interpersonal relationships, child development, and mindfulness skills that enhance language development, motor and cognitive skills through play, balancing and team building. Additionally, the managers and staff modelled appropriate child engagement behaviours and strategies for the mothers and fathers to use at home. Furthermore, the staff provided one-on-one sessions for parents who appeared to be distressed or struggling thereby circumventing future parenting problems and providing a strengths based approach to parental skill development.
There was a great deal of discussion on the need for the program to continue by the fathers attending the program, given the uniqueness of the program and its outstanding involvement of disadvantaged families. This outcome is also maintained by the literature. Furthermore, the research has outlined that only evidence based therapeutic prevention and intervention programs improve the levels of family functioning that are equivalent to this program outcome.

Moreover, the success of the Beyond Kayaking is the whole community approach to family problems and issues. This is evident by the connection to Aboriginal culture and respect of women in the addressing of trauma and mental health problems. The use of theoretically based preventions and interventions along with the structured educational and developmentally based activities provides the broader family supports needed to address complex mental health problems such as trauma, domestic violence and sexual abuse. The use of one type of program or a program lacking in the number of elements used in this program would arguably be unsuccessful.

The changes evident in the parenting behaviour support the use of theoretical bases for the program interventions and program models used. These models and therapeutic intervention practices are well researched, and established as best practice. The establishment of quantitative measures will enhance the evidence for the positive outcomes delivered by these programs and provides the required measurable outcomes for the parents and children.

The use of Attachment Theory, Hey Dad, Bringing Up Great Kids, and Tuning In To Kids, ensures that the changes in parents and children are consistent and standardised due to the use of validated and reliable intervention techniques and practices. Additionally, the Hey Dad and Bringing Up Great Kids are culturally appropriate for Indigenous and CALD dads. The use of staff trained to deliver consistent intervention is central to the success of the program.

Furthermore, given the vulnerability of the target populations attending, the stability of the staff has also enhanced the use of this program. Vulnerable populations can present as difficult to engage, however, the staff have successfully gained the support of the community and the target participants.
Conclusion

There were a number of main themes found within the data. The interviews and focus group data provided some data saturation. The success of the theoretically substantiated and evidence based programs has been enhanced by the delivery of staff well connected with the target population.

The use of theoretical and therapeutic based protocols is paramount to the success of the Beyond Kayaking program. The development of the program since 2011 has included the responsiveness of the professional staff required to change the program to meet the needs of parents in disadvantaged families. The attitudes and responsiveness of the managers and staff promote an atmosphere of acceptance and support thereby promoting attendance of this vulnerable population and ensuring the myriad of positive experiences provided through the Beyond Kayaking sessions.

Social Determinants of Health

The broader Communities for Children programs provide some improvements for some aspects of the SDH for example: Mental Illness, low income, low parental educational attainment, and the impacts of these on children are addressed via the programs evaluated here. Furthermore, the programs used target children development including the: importance of children’s emotional competence, and their physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and educational development. By addressing these aspects of children’s lives early on the programs can go some way to prevent the deleterious impact of accumulative harm as the children grow.

The importance of children’s emotional competence, cognitive, language and psychological development is assisted by positive evidenced-based parenting, playgroup, and crèche programs. Children’s success in school is also based on children’s social adjustment. The Beyond Kayaking program provides interventions that are successful and evidence-based in aiding children’s social, emotional, physical, psychological and educational development. Also the ac.care Communities for Children Murraylands programs of which Beyond Kayaking is the one assessed here, build parental capacity to parent, parental confidence, and decrease parental Mental Health issues and parental isolation. These findings are supported
by the literature, previous research and this research evaluation project. Additionally, the program outcomes are consistent with the goals and objectives of the CfC FP federal government initiative.

The results of this research illustrates the importance of the programs in engaging with parents and changing the behaviour of parents, and children, that results in, a reduction in the level of risk for the children attending the programs. The information from the in-depth interviews, observation data, and focus groups supported the evidence that there had been sustained change in how the parents respond to their children and an increased capacity in the parent’s ability to meet their children’s needs.

The methods used to collect the data have informed and enhanced the use of different types of analysis. This process has further validated the results and provided evidence that is substantiated and corroborated from many sources. The similarities in the themes were consistent across all types of data collection. This is testament to the use of theoretically based, and evidence based interventions, and methods of working with at risk families and children. Additionally, the use of multiple informants and key stakeholders has provided a circular process that ensures triangulation and robustness of all data collection and the research process.

Working with communities is complex, sophisticated, dynamic, multifaceted, unpredictable and sometimes ambiguous. It is based on principles of participation, collective action and power sharing. In South Australia, each Communities for Children program site is distinctive as it shares the journeys of the families within the different communities. South Australia is unique in the Australian Communities for Children program because the South Australian sites have now collaborated to share their learning’s and to develop strategies to engage in policy advocacy so that the inspirational outcomes, reached through inspirational processes, can be scaled up and can reach out to more Australian families and children.

Major learning’s have been in the areas of service system collaboration, working from a ‘bottom-up’, whole of community approach, sustainable processes and outcomes, building child-friendly communities, engaging in child and family inclusive practice, valuing fatherhood and strengthening an integrated service delivery system. The Communities for Children
Facilitating Partner Model is a powerful contribution to the partnerships that achieve inspirational outcomes. This research project seeks to ensure that the responsibility to share programs that support and enhance families and communities are shared widely. This will help to enable the Communities for Children initiative to reach its full potential.

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Appendix A Program Logic: Beyond Kayaking

**CfC - ac care Kayaking - Program Logic**

**Goal 1**
Improved child well-being and development through effective fathers, and parenting

**Goal 2**
Improve father and child relationship and effective parenting skills

**Goal 3**
Connecting families with community supports and mental health services, evidenced by referrals from Centrelink, mental health services, GPs, CHN

**Long term outcomes**
- Improved child/father interaction and relationship
- Increased employment for parents reducing impact of relationship issues
- Improved parent/child health though increased attachment/child development knowledge
- Communication skills for parents of young and adolescent children
- Parents connected to services and community

**Medium term outcomes**
- Using theory/research - Improvements in child development, child parent interaction/relationship through play, activities and language skills
- Dealing with child trauma
- Improved mental health and work participation
- Implementation of strategies to deal with own and child health

**Short term outcomes**
- Increased motor skills and coordination
- Improve quality of outside play
- Modelling of adult child interactions
- Modelling safe play activities
- Supporting self and children during times of stress
- Information and education on child development/needs
- Increased confidence with child/father interaction and the role of fatherhood
- Increasing family participation, resulting in, increased child protection factors
- Preparing for times of stress with partner and child
- Increased confidence with relationships

**Outputs**
- 3 hours per session
- 9 sessions per term
- 4 times per year
- approx. 11 per session
- Activities on the river, improved: exercise, inter-agency knowledge, children’s needs, men’s health

**Strategies**
- Using theory—CBT, Attachment theory
- Uses Trauma informed principles for interventions
- Circle of Security etc. information and education on child development
- Uses/applies research into the importance of fathers
- Child Develop—language, skills, knowledge, through collaborative activities
- Interagency linking to other services - interagency, interprofessional care

**Target Group**
All fathers and vulnerable families, in the Murrayslands rural area with parenting and relationship issues. Parents of children attending CAHFNs, Parenting support programs, Antenatal Dads, Parenting programs and other CIC programs.

**Inputs**
Funding from CfC strategy, Qualified Men’s worker, child development worker, and Family therapist + Collaboration with Community, referrals from the community based services, local community health clinics, and General Practitioners.
Appendix B Program Manual:

Program Manual
For
Beyond Kayaking
June 2016

This manual is a guide to the operations of Beyond Kayaking with parents / carers and their children. The program provides opportunity for parents to learn new social and emotional skills in working with their children. Discussions with parents/carers about parenting will follow some of the information from the Foundational Principles listed theories and programs.

Kayaking Session

- Program facilitated by a male Father’s Worker to successfully engage men.

Aims of the program

- Learn the skill of emotion coaching to improve relationships.
- Introduce a greater understanding of child development.
- Improve communication and positive influences on relationships.
- Learn appropriate responses to child’s needs.
- Provide a safe environment for learning and positive nurturing.
- Increase knowledge on how to have better family relationships.
- Encouragement of appropriate support and bonding with the child.
- Reflection on parents own child hood experiences and needs and how to support their own child’s needs with self-reflection.
• Role modelling appropriate behaviour from the kayaking instructor (worker) to parent/carer and child.
• Group peer support and social buffering.
• Build confidence in managing difficult circumstances and managing risk in the environment.
• Appreciation of the mindful relationship to self, others and environment.
• No cost activity relieving the financial burden of participating in a supported specialised activity.
• Support decision making skills between parent /carer and child.
• Encourage a physically healthy lifestyle.
• Explore choice and consequence while kayaking protected waters.
• Learn skills around risk management.
• Increase motor skills and coordination.

**Foundational Principles**

• Evidence Based Programs information incorporated in session discussions
• Child centred practise
• Attachment Theory
• Child Development
• Bringing up Great Kids
• Tuning In To Kids
• Positive Parenting Program
Founding Principles

Child-Centered Practice

The core components of a child-centered approach can be identified as being:

- It keeps the child central at all times
- Features specific to childhood must form the foundation for approaches
- The effectiveness of interventions must be in the terms of the outcomes for the child
- The same room must be used each time to promote a sense of belonging
- Persons working with the child must be comfortable to play and be skilled and knowledgeable about establishing report and communication with the child at their level, both physically and verbally
- Interventions are tailored to the child’s individual developmental needs
- And the goal of therapy must be the continued growth and development needed for the child to develop adaptive functioning skills.

(Mudaly and Goddard 2006)

Attachment Theory and the importance of relationships

The most important aspect of Attachment Theory is that an infant needs to develop a relationship with at least one primary caregiver for the child’s successful social and emotional development, and in particular for learning how to effectively regulate their feelings and emotions. Fathers or any other individuals, are equally likely to become principal attachment figures if they provide most of the child care and related social interaction. In the presence of a sensitive and responsive caregiver, the infant will use the caregiver as a "safe base" from which to explore.

John Bowlby (1958) "the Nature of the Child’s Tie to his Mother".

Harry Harlow (1958) "the Nature of Love".

Trauma-Informed Principles

Parents and carers may benefit from understanding that traumatised children are likely to find it difficult to utilise reasoning and logic to modify their behaviour or reactions. These children are also unlikely to learn from consequences, particularly when they are in heightened arousal states. It is possible to support parents and carers to avoid the frustration associated with the failure of traditional parenting approaches by increasing their knowledge of trauma. If they understand that trauma acts to scramble cortical functioning and reduce children’s capacity to be guided by rule based frames of behaviour, they will be less likely to rely on such parenting methods. In addition, children’s recovery from trauma will be enhanced through interactions with parents and carers which promote physical activity that stimulates lower order parts of the brain responsible for movement, play and balance. (ACF 2013. www.childhood.org.au) June 30, 2016
Australian Childhood Foundation (2013) information highlights Key Trauma Intervention principles to be:

- Safety - to offer a ‘felt’ sense of safety to the child
- Relational
- Flexible, predictable, consistent and repetitive
- Child focused
- Trauma informed
- Recognise sequential development
- Purposeful
- Child able to meaningfully participate
- Focused towards attentional focus
- To work toward mediating physiological arousal levels

**Attachment....**

- Secure early attachment is the secure base from which the child explores and learns about their world.

- Secure early attachment is an important foundation for healthy social and emotional development.

- Early attachment experiences may strongly impact the child's future relationships.

**What is Attachment?**

- Attachment is the enduring emotional connection, or the pattern of the relationship, between a child and parent/care giver.

- Attachment is not present at birth but develops intensely during the first 3 years of life.

- Loss or threat of loss of the attachment figure causes anxiety and distress.
Attachment Impacts on a Child's Development of:

- Trust
- Ability to form relationships
- Exploring skills
- Self-regulation
- Identity formation
- Moral framework
- Core belief system
- Defense against stress and trauma
- Physical health and growth

**Circle of Security**

Parent Attending to the Child's Needs

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Program detail</th>
<th>Equipment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-15 min</td>
<td>Welcome Introductions, confidentiality understandings, registration, safety briefing, operational instruction followed by launching.</td>
<td>PFD, kayak, paddle, seating set up. Check for Hat, Sunscreen, Water, hard sole shoes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 min</td>
<td>Settling in to the paddle and adjusting any difficulties with the group and individuals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Setting a course and instruction on the implementation of the plan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-30 min</td>
<td>Communicate with individual parent/carers and child and role model Emotion Coaching principles. Engage in a group game/activity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-30 min</td>
<td>Points of discussion: What was your Dad like as a parent? What sort of Dad do you want to be? What is ‘Attachment’? Becoming an engaged Dad. Work and family life balance. Relationship builders with your Sons or Daughters.</td>
<td>Book references: Love languages Raising Boys Raising Girls Raising real people Parenting courses evidence based ones recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-30 min</td>
<td>Clarify parent’s circumstances and any decision making strategies. Plan for further engagement in future kayaking activity. Provide information on other programs, opportunities, referrals. Networking and interaction time encouraged</td>
<td>Handouts on child and family services in the community Optional shared snack for attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20 min</td>
<td>Return equipment and pack away kayaks</td>
<td>Parent/carer, child helpers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C Recommendations for Research

The following recommendations are offered for related research in the field of Communities for Children and social research processes. Bearing in mind that since the commencement of this research project some of these recommendations have been put into place by ac.care Murryalands.

1. Given the reflective nature of program provision of Beyond Kayaking, a series of longitudinal studies, such as pre and post adult and child questionnaires, would document the changes occurring with program through participation and thereby increase the potential that decisions regarding the composition of the program would be appropriate, responsive to client need, relatively current and reflect the contemporary evidence base.
2. Collect pre and post questionnaires mindful of the literacy, cultural, and developmental needs of the participants.
3. Continue to develop course content that is reflective of the literacy, cultural, and developmental needs of the participants in order to construct future related course content from a research base.

Recommendations for Practitioners
The following recommendations are offered for practitioners in the field of Communities for Children.
1. It is recommended that CfC FP continue to work closely with community service providers and course developers, to evaluate and updating the existing programs to provide a curricular and reflective process for evaluating existing programs.

Recommendations for Improving this Study
The following recommendations are offered as possible ways to improve this study.
1. E-mail and phone calls may not yet be a pervasive enough medium to effectively use for contacting respondents. Until such time as that changes, it is recommended that other methods be explored to facilitate engagement with this hard to reach population group.
2. Although it is costly, it may be more efficient to determine the respondent pool by contacting potential participants during a kayaking event. This would entail the researcher meeting with program participants directly to reassure participants and alleviate any potential concerns regarding the research.
### Appendix D Future Data collection tools

**for scoring scales please see reverse of this form**

#### PRE ACTIVITY SCORING

**(to be completed at session)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Activity attended:</th>
<th>Is this client registered?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client(s) Name:</th>
<th>Name of Person completing this form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### CLIENT CIRCUMSTANCE SCORING

**(please select a minimum of 1 circumstance)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Health</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By attending this activity/session I hope to become more active</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Health &amp; Well Being</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By attending this activity I hope to gain confidence and knowledge to help with my own wellbeing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal &amp; Family Safety</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By attending this activity/session I hope to become more confident about accessing community services to get help with family issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age-appropriate Development</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By attending this activity/session I hope to have a better understanding of activities that help my child learn and develop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Participation and Networks</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By attending this activity/session I hope to improve my independence, participation, wellbeing and connection to Community</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Functioning</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By attending this activity/session I hope to feel more confident as a parent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### CLIENT GOAL SCORING

**(please select a minimum of 1 goal)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changed knowledge &amp; access to information</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By attending this activity/program I hope to feel more included in my community and able to get support when needed</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changed Skills</th>
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<tr>
<th>Changed Behaviours</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By attending this activity/program I hope to interact more positively with my child/ren</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changed Confidence to make own decisions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By attending this activity/program I hope to improve my confidence to make my own decisions and take actions on issues that impact on my independence, participation and wellbeing.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Changed engagement with relevant support services
By attending this activity/program I hope to gain knowledge that helps find services that can help my child/family if needed in the future

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Is there anything in particular you are hoping we will cover or hoping to learn/ gain more knowledge on

---

CLIENT SCORING & OUTCOME

Client Circumstance scoring scale

Rating 1 - Is used to report that the client’s current circumstances are having a significant negative impact on their independence, participation and wellbeing—for example, a significant negative impact of poor family functioning on the family’s wellbeing; or a significant negative impact of a lack of safe housing on an individual’s independence.

Rating 2 - Is used to report that the client’s current circumstances are having a moderate negative impact on their independence, participation and wellbeing—for example, a moderate negative impact of physical health issues on their independence; or a moderate negative impact of family safety on the family’s wellbeing.

Rating 3 - Is used to report that the client’s current circumstances are in a ‘middle ground’ between the significant/moderate negative impacts (indicated by Ratings 1 and 2) and the adequate circumstances over the short and medium term (indicated by Ratings 4 and 5)—for example progress towards improving a client’s community participation without having reached a point where the client’s current circumstances are adequate over the short or medium term.

Rating 4 - Is used to report that the client’s current circumstances are adequate over the short term to support their independence, participation and wellbeing—for example, adequate access to money to meet basic needs in the short-term; adequate family functioning to support the family’s wellbeing in the short-term.

Rating 5 - Is used to report that the client’s current circumstances are adequate and stable over the medium term to support their independence, participation and wellbeing—for example, adequate and stable money management to support an individual’s independence; adequate and stable family functioning to support the family’s wellbeing.

Client Goal scoring scale

Rating 1 - This is used to report that the client has made no progress in achieving their individual goals within the selected goal domain.

Rating 2 - This is used to report that the client has made limited progress in achieving their individual goals within the selected goal domain but there is emerging engagement in addressing the issues they sought assistance with.

Rating 3 - This is used to report that the client has made limited progress in achieving their individual goals within the selected goal domain but there is strong engagement in addressing the issues they sought assistance with.

Rating 4 - This is used to report that the client has made moderate progress in achieving their individual goals within the selected goal domain.

Rating 5 - This is used to report that the client has fully achieved their individual’s goals within the selected outcomes domain.
**POST ACTIVITY SCORING**

Date: [ ] / [ ] / [ ]

Activity Name: [ ]

Is this client registered? Yes [ ] No [ ]

Client(s) Name/ID: [ ]

Client Contact Number [ ]

**CLIENT CIRCUMSTANCE SCORING**

(please select a minimum of 1 circumstance)

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**CLIENT GOAL SCORING**

(please select a minimum of 1 goal)

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**CLIENT SATISFACTION SCORING**

1 disagrees, 2 tends to disagree, 3 neither agrees or disagrees, 4 tends to agree, 5 agrees

The service listened to me and understood my issues? [1 2 3 4 5]
CLIENT SCORING & OUTCOME

Client Circumstance scoring scale

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Pre questionnaire children

Beyond Kayaking Pre Activity Scoring

Name ______________________________________________

1 disagree, 2 tend to disagree, 3 neither agree nor disagree, 4 tend to agree, 5 agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I want out of Beyond Kayaking</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By attending Beyond Kayaking I want to meet new friends in my community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By attending Beyond Kayaking I hope to gain confidence, knowledge and learn new skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By attending Beyond Kayaking I want to have fun in a safe place.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If there is anything in particular you would like to learn or do during Kayaking please write it in the box below
POST questionnaire Children

Beyond Kayaking Activity

Scoring

| Name________________________________________________|

1 disagree, 2 tend to disagree, 3 neither agree nor disagree, 4 tend to agree, 5 agree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As a result of attending Beyond Kayaking</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By attending Beyond Kayaking I made new friends in my community</td>
<td>🙁</td>
<td>😞</td>
<td>😞</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By attending Beyond Kayaking I have gained confidence, knowledge and learnt new skills.</td>
<td>😞</td>
<td>😞</td>
<td>😞</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By attending Beyond Kayaking I had fun in a safe place.</td>
<td>😞</td>
<td>😞</td>
<td>😞</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😊</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Let us know what you think of Beyond Kayaking

Example: what your favourite activities / or your least favourite activities were.
Group Program: __________________________
Date: __________________________ Location: __________________________
Facilitator(s): __________________________
Attendee Name(s): __________________________

(number of people – from attendance sheet) __________________________

Client circumstance focus for this session (indicated with circle on above wheel):

Client goal focus for this session (tick the appropriate box below):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidences</td>
<td>Connections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emerging themes from today's session (indicated with a triangle on above wheel):

Notes on emerging themes: ______________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Notes on changes observed: ______________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________