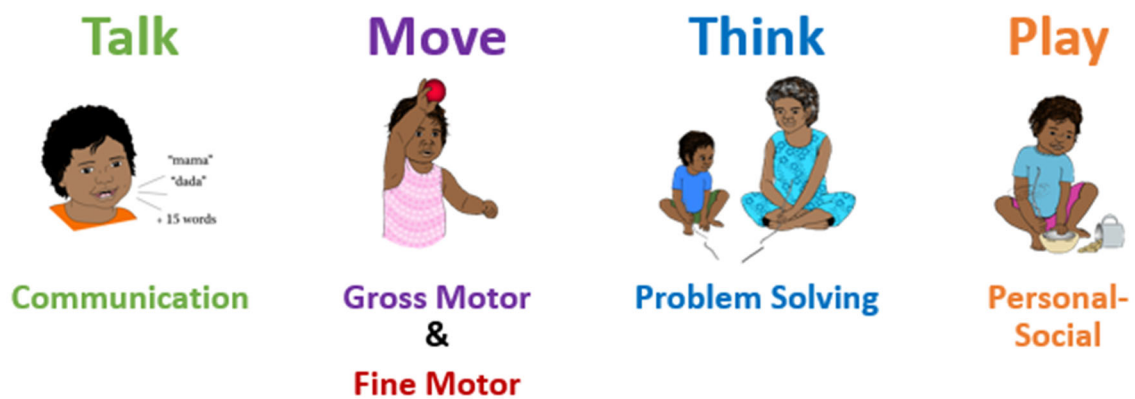


## Are efforts to support early childhood development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children making a difference?

Currently, most *developmental outcome measures* are developed in western countries and not valid in the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context. Also, they need specialised staff and are expensive to use, so are not commonly used in Australian health and education services. This lack of culturally appropriate developmental outcome measures means that services, researchers and policymakers working in early child development, have limited understanding of what works to make a difference for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This is a gap the ASQ-STEPS can fill.

The ASQ-STEPS for Measuring Aboriginal Child Development (ASQ-STEPS) was created through the cultural adaptation of a mainstream tool from the United States. It is an extension of the **ASQ-TRAK developmental screening tool**. The ASQ-STEPS measures a child's ability in five developmental areas: communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving and personal-social skills. It tells us how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:



This information can be used to:

- ✓ measure a child's developmental progress over time
- ✓ assess a child's readiness for school
- ✓ evaluate the effectiveness of early intervention programs.

## Ensuring accuracy of the ASQ-STEPS

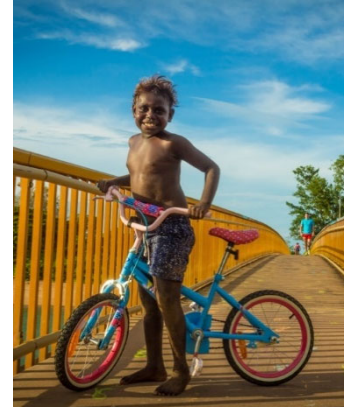
The ASQ-STEPS has been pretested and a prototype acceptable to staff and families is now being validated. This research will reveal if the ASQ-STEPS:

- ✓ accurately measures child development
- ✓ is reliable
- ✓ can be consistently administered
- ✓ is acceptable to caregivers, families and practitioners.

**The result will be the first culturally appropriate, validated developmental measure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children that is readily accessible by services.**

## Improving outcomes

Action now is necessary to close the gap in health and wellbeing inequalities. The ASQ-STEPS will build evidence about what makes a difference for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. By strengthening our understanding of which early childhood programs are effective for improving developmental outcomes, the ASQ-STEPS will enable us to choose programs and interventions beneficial for children's health, development and wellbeing, and avoid unnecessary spending on programs that are ineffective. Ultimately this will contribute to improved school readiness, educational outcomes and wellbeing across the life course.



## Partner with us!



We are seeking partners to join the validation project and support the roll-out. This is a chance for service providers interested in children's health and wellbeing to shape the tool and make sure it is suitable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Contact the ASQ-STEPS team to find out more: [ASQ-STEPS@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:ASQ-STEPS@unimelb.edu.au)

## Our team



**A/Prof Anita D'Aprano**  
ASQ-STEPS Lead Researcher



**Isabel Brookes**  
ASQ-STEPS Project Coordinator

We work in collaboration with local practitioners and community experts to ensure a culturally appropriate implementation approach at each research site.

## Thank you

We would like to acknowledge Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, Nunkuwarnin Yunti, the Northern Territory Department of Education and the South Australian Department for Education as our partners in research. We are grateful to the Northern Territory Department of Education, the Medical Research Future Fund and the National Indigenous Australians Agency for their funding support.