

Maternal Health Series

First Nations Maternal Health



The ANU Gender Institute and Maternal Health Matters Inc. invite you to join us online for the fourth in our seminar series that will explore the impact of maternity care on women's wellbeing and the transition to parenting.

The health and wellbeing of mothers is critically connected to the best outcomes for infants and children and provides the basis for a healthy society.

Time *6.00 to 7.30 pm*
Date *Thursday 20 March 2025*
Registration *ASAP not to miss out [HERE](#)*

Australia faces a challenge in achieving high quality maternity care in a safe, respectful environment so that women and birthing people emerge healthy and well. Standard models of maternity care are not specifically designed to meet the needs of First Nations women and families. Within Australia, links have been made between positive First Nations health outcomes in the presence of cultural safety and in the absence of racism. All First Nations women and birthing people benefit from culturally safe and anti-racist care, and from care in their community, wherever their community may be located.

Contact Us

Maternal Health Matters Inc.

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Themes presenters will speak to

First Nations maternal health in Australia faces significant challenges. First Nations women are three times more likely to die in childbirth than non-First Nations women, and their babies are almost twice as likely to die in their first year of life. Despite numerous government recommendations urgently calling for strategies to improve the health outcomes of First Nations mothers and babies, as well as a national 'Close the Gap' strategy aimed at reducing neonatal and child mortality, to date there has been little improvement. The National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030, prioritizes maternal, sexual, and reproductive health for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women.

Society needs to provide maternity services that do no harm and honours the woman's human right to respect, autonomy, dignity and the attainment of the highest level of health. This session will explore options to improve outcomes for First Nations women and their babies and to give the best start in life by implementing an integrated, holistic and culturally appropriate model of care.

Presenters

Helen McLachlan is Professor of Midwifery at La Trobe University in Melbourne. She is a national and international leader in maternal and infant health research. She is passionate about the impact of continuity of midwifery care. In partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and three Victorian health services, she led a large research translation project 'Baggarrook Yurrongi' which successfully implemented culturally safe continuity of care for women to over seven hundred women having a First Nations baby, which helped to 'close the gap' in health outcomes. She has received multiple awards for research impact and engagement including a 2019 Victorian Healthcare Award for 'Improving Aboriginal Health'.

Kelsey Youngblutt is a proud Bwngcolman woman with roots deeply embedded in the rich cultural heritage of the Kulkalgal nation of Zenadth Kes. Originally hailing from the beautiful Palm Island in North Queensland, Kelsey has spent the last seven years in Naarm (Melbourne), instilling a harmonious blend of cultural pride and urban vibrancy in the upbringing of her daughters.

Karel Williams is a First Nations woman with family connections to the palawa and Western Arrernte Nations. Based on Nggunawal Country in Canberra, Karel is a midwife a Director of the Rhodanthe Lipsett Indigenous Midwifery Trust and a strong advocate for Birthing on Country Models of Care, culturally safe care, and for growing the First Nations midwifery workforce. Karel has published on the topic of racism as a determinant of health and is currently undertaking Doctoral studies at the University of Canberra researching the use of restorative approaches in First Nations maternity care. Karel was the inaugural recipient of the University of Canberra's *Tom Calma Medal* and in 2019 she received a *Distinguished Alumni Award for Excellence in Health*.



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