# Mookai Mag.

July 2025

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MOOKAI HQ 15-17 VALDA CLOSE EDMONTON QLD 4869

MOOKAI FAMILY HEALTH 105 BALACLAVA ROAD EARLVILLE QLD 4870

OFFICE - (07) 4081 7500 RECEPTION@MOOKAIROSIE.ORG.AU

COVER IMAGE: MUM NIKAELA AND BUB CASSIUS, FROM AURUKUN, PICTURED WITH CULTURAL BIRTH WORKER JANA.

MOOKAI ROSIE BI-BAYAN ACKNOWLEDGES THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF THE LAND ON WHICH WE WORK AND PAY OUR RESPECTS TO THE ELDERS PAST, PAST, PRESENT AND EMERGING, THE HOLDERS OF OUR CULTURE, MEMORIES AND TRADITIONS.













ISO 9001:2015

Quality Certified Organisation

# MOOKAI MAG.

July 2025

MOOKAI ROSIE BI-BAYAN

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Welcome to the first edition of Mookai Mag for 2025!

We're thrilled to bring back our beloved Mookai Mag publication, with the goal of reconnecting with the Mookai community and keeping you updated on the wonderful work we do.

Mookai continues to expand its programs in response to the diverse and complex health needs of our people. In this edition, we're proud to showcase our initiatives and highlight some of our recent achievements. We're also excited to share the magazine online, making it accessible to everyone!

Most importantly, we're honoured to share more about our incredible clients. Your health journeys are at the heart of everything we do—they're the reason we exist. Sharing your stories is a privilege, and we look forward to celebrating Until the next edition... them with you.

Theresa!

Over the past few months, we've had many clients come and stay with us. Here are a few of our Mookai family faces.

# OUR FAMILIES



March: Mum Josephine and bub Lennel, from Babu Island, with Health Worker Virginia.



April: Mum Nikaela and bub Cassius, from Aurukun, with Cultural Birth Worker Jana.



June: Mum Tonia and bub Lazarus, from Aurukun.



June: Mum Roxanna and bub Ozias (held by bub's Aunty Merle), from Aurukun.



June: Bub Zakiyeus at birth and visiting again now aged 1! Pictured with Mum Myrama (left), Aunt Latisha (right) and Grandmother Bettina, from Aurukun.

#### **MARCH**

CEO Theresa Simpson was selected to present on Mookai programs at the 2025 QATSICPP Member's Conference. The conference showcased the skill and expertise of the Sectors in Queensland, highlighting programs which work to keep children in families.

#### **APRIL**

accreditation, demonstrating its commitment to quality and safety within its practice. MFH received this important recognition from Australian General Practice Accreditation Limited (AGPAL), the leading not-for-profit provider of general practice accreditation services within Australia. This achievement reflects the ongoing efforts of the team to ensure the best possible health care and patient experience for our clients.

> **Proudly AGPAL** Accredited Our commitment to

your safety and care

### MAY

The Journey to Motherhood project, led by Jedess Hudson, was unveiled at Cairns Hospital. The mural has a special connection to Mookai, with Jedess's grandmother and aunt (Nanna Esme and Aunty Rosie) being Mookai founders. The mural highlights the story of Mookai's Chalali / Doula program which continues today with our evolving Maternal Health Program including Cultural Birth Workers!



#### **JUNE**

Mookai Rosie was awarded the Innovation Excellence Award for our Cultural Birth Workers program at this year's Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC) Awards. Proudly sponsored by Deloitte Australia, the award was accepted by Haylene Grogan, granddaughter of Mookai founder Clarrie Grogan.

"For nearly 40 years, Mookai Rosie has supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women forced to birth off Country. In 2024, their maternal care program reached new heights and is now being recognised nationally as a gold standard model. From antenatal education to postnatal checks, Mookai Rosie is showing what excellence looks like when women lead and culture guides."

QAIHC



#### **JUNE**

Mookai accommodation recertified under ISO 9001, Quality Management System. This certification works to ensure best practice in customer satisfaction, risk management, efficiency, compliance, and drives towards continuous improvement. ISO accreditation is considered the gold standard for business management.











On Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> May we celebrated one year since the official opening of Mookai Family Health.

'The clinic', as it is commonly referred to, has grown leaps and bounds in the past year. Clinic Team Leader Shirley Ramos has been there every step of the way, and took the time to reflect on what has been a big year!

How is the clinic able to support our clients' health journeys?

At Mookai Family Health, we support our clients by providing culturally safe, accessible, and continuous care. As our clients travel from remote Cape and Torres Strait communities, we focus on making sure as many health needs as possible are addressed while they're away from home — from initial consults and care coordination, to linking them back with their local health providers. We try to take every opportunity for them to access services they might not have in their communities. It's not just their physical health, but supporting their

emotional and spiritual wellbeing. We walk alongside them through each step of their health journey, also supporting visiting family members if needed.

#### In there a particular service that has been utilised most by our clients?

The most utilised service continues to be GP consultations, including chronic disease management and women's health. Many clients also rely on our support with hospital follow-up appointments, referrals, and health assessments such as 715s.

## Do you know about our signature print?

Our signature print, located in the waiting area, was produced by the teams Indigenous Design Labs and Ingeous studios, leaders in Indigenous graphic design and digital creative productions.

Representing rebirth and rejuvenation, the featured sandsticks overlay the iconic Mookai florals, bringing our clinic space to life.

We're proud to promote a 100% Indigenous designed and produced product - and they're local!



These services give clients the foundation for ongoing, preventative care.

#### What's the one thing you want residents of the Cape and Torres region to know about the clinic?

I want them to know that Mookai Family Health is here to support their complete health journey — not just while they're in Cairns, but also back to community. We understand the challenges of travelling for care. For some of our clients it's their first time coming to Cairns and it can be very overwhelming. Most clients are also away from family. We provide a transport service that will pick/drop them off from their accommodation to and from the clinic, and if they need to see other providers and need support in transport, we always try to help if we can.

Our aim is to make their time away from home easier, less stressful, more comfortable, and more coordinated.

#### What is the relationship between the clinic and broader health community?

We work closely with hospitals, specialists, and community health services across the Cape and Torres region. Our role is to bridge the gap between remote communities and tertiary services in Cairns, ensuring our clients don't fall through the cracks. By collaborating with the broader health community, we strengthen continuity of care for every client that we see. 10

## What clinic achievement are you most proud of so far?

I'm most proud that our clinic successfully passed accreditation. It reflects all the hard work our team has put into strengthening our systems, improving processes, and delivering safe, high-quality care. Alongside this, I'm proud of the trust we've built with clients and the broader health community — seeing people return to us because they feel supported is just as meaningful as the formal recognition.

## How have you grown in your role as Team Leader?

As the clinic has grown, I've also grown in my leadership role. I've developed stronger skills in compliance, accreditation, and risk management, while also learning how to better support and guide our staff. Working towards my Diploma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Management has also been valuable. This has strengthened my ability to lead with cultural understanding, while ensuring our clinic continues to deliver safe, high-quality care.

#### What does the clinic's future look like?

I'm confident the future is bright! We are working towards expanding services, strengthening our partnerships, and continuing to build systems that support our clients' long-term health. Our goal is to be a trusted, leading service for families from the Cape and Torres, ensuring they always have a safe, reliable place to access care when they need it most.

Want to book an appointment?
Call or email!
4081 7554
clinicalservices@mookairosie.org.au





# Mookai goes on tour!







Mookai has always been proud to support commuities of the Cape, NPA and Torres Strait regions, and for us to best do that, we need to visit!

Throughout May and June, our staff met with communities and key stakeholders on Thursday Island, at Kowanyama, Pormpuraaw, Cooktown, and Wujal Wujal.

The trip was an opportunity to build on existing stakeholder relationships (and develop new ones), and increase awareness of Mookai services, so community members know what is available whilst in Cairns.

Visiting your communities helps inform our services, seeing firsthand what you need and want. We understand the communities we serve are unique, diverse, and complex. We strive to tailor our services accordingly, supporting you in your health journeys the best we can.

While each community is special, a highlight for the team was attending the acknowledgment of National Sorry Day Opening Ceremony and Welcome to Country by Ganthi Kuppusamy, CEO of Pormpur Paanthu Aboriginal Corporation and Meredith Arkwookerum, Chair of Board, Pormpuraaw. Thank you for including us in your event.

We're excited to visit more communities soon!. If you see us around, be sure to give a wave!

INRODUCING DEBRA

# MEEROUR

This year, with the support of Cairns and Hinterland Health and Hospital Service, Mookai has introduced the position of Community Liaison Officer (CLO)!

This position has been introduced across local ACCHOs to help ensure First Nations patients can successfully coordinate their health journeys across services.

This is critical for our clients from Cape and Torres communities, trying to navigate complex health conditions with new services, in a new town, and often without the support of their families who are unable to join.

#### What can our CLO do for you?

Mookai Rosie's CLO works with you whilst you're in Cairns, to ensure you have access to respectful, culturally appropriate care. Our CLO will support you as an outpatient, to help bridge the gap between hospital systems and community services.

We can help you manage and coordinate your health care journey with services such as:

- Attending specialist appointments
- Referrals to other community and health services
- Transport coordination
- Follow-up care after hospital discharge
- Medication assistance and understanding your prescriptions
- Communication between hospital staff and your regular doctor



Contact us today to learn more about our CLO or get support



Domestic and family violence in Queensland has soared by more than 200 per cent over the past decade — despite the state being nine years into a 10-year strategy to curb it.

# TAKE POSITIVE ACTION TODAY TO BUILD A SAFER CHEENISIANIE

QUEENSLAND

A SAFER QUEENSLAND CAN START WITH YOU

Each May, Queensland marks Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Prevention Month. This annual initiative aims:

- raise awareness of domestic and family violence, including new legislation on coercive control
- highlight the support services available
- send a clear message that violence in our communities will not be tolerated

To honor the month, local First Nations organisations Mookai Rosie Bi-Bayan, Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service (QIFVLS) and Cape York/Gulf RAATSICC Adv. Assoc. Inc (RAATSICC) co-hosted a free family event.

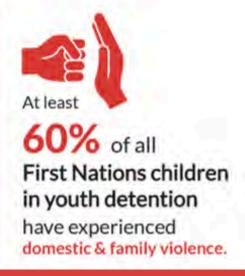


The event also provided the opportunity to share about Queensland's new legislation on coercive control including reporting pathways for victim/survivors.

Coercive control is when someone uses a pattern of abusive behaviours over time that hurt, humiliate, isolate, frighten, or threaten another person in order to control or dominate them.

From 26 May 2025, coercive control is a criminal offence in Queensland.







"We have a responsibility as a community, and as men, to ensure that this kind of thing doesn't happen in our society... When I attend rallies, marches, events like today, I find myself significantly outnumbered women to men, so there needs to be more male voices in this space."

**MP Matt Smith** 



The event also supported the QIFVLS 'NO2DV' campaign, including presentations from NO2DV Ambassadors.

"Too many of our families, our mobs, have been hurt by domestic violence and sexual assault," QIFVLS and NO2DV ambassador Andrew Adidi said.

"It's caused pain that runs deep, through generations, but it doesn't have to be our story moving forward. Change starts with us, with our strength, with our culture, with how we look after each other."

If you think you, or someone you know, may be experiencing abuse, please reach out and talk to someone you trust.

#### Support is available, when you're ready...

DVConnect Womensline (24/7): 1800 811 811

DVConnect Mensline (24/7): 1800 600 636

MensLine Australia (24/7): 1300 789 978

Sexual Assault Helpline (7.30am-11.30pm, 7 days): 1800 010 120

Kids Helpline (24/7): 1800 551 800

Lifeline (24/7): 13 11 14

You can also yarn with our Mookai Rosie Social and Emotional Wellbeing team.



## **HEALTH ALERT**

### **MELIOIDOSIS**



## You may have heard people tripping over the word 'Melioidosis' lately...

Why? Because cases of the bacterial infection Melioidosis have increased 400% in Cairns and 600% in Townsville compared to last year.

Outbreaks of the disease are often observed during the wet season (December – May) or flooding. However, erratic weather patterns including aboveaverage rainfall has led to increased incidence of the disease.

The mysterious and unprecedented outbreak has devastating Queensland families – here's what you need to know.

## **WHAT?**

Melioidosis bacteria lurks in soil and muddy water, stirred up by flooding rains and inhaled, ingested, or entered into the bloodstream through cuts and scratches.

The disease commonly presents as chronic skin ulcers, sepsis, and/or serious lung infections like pneumonia. If left untreated, or diagnosed too late, it can be fatal.

Many animals are also susceptible to melioidosis.

It is typically found in tropical and subtropical climates including Australasian and South East Asian regions, resisting temperature extremes and thriving in the heat and humidity. Having said this, regions where the disease is being documented is diversifying as a result of globally changing weather patterns.

The disease is very rare in urban areas, therefore predominantly affecting vulnerable rural populations.

James Cook University is currently undertaking a five-year study to learn more about the disease towards increasing public awareness and tailored public health messaging for prevention.

## WHO?

In areas where it's more commonly found, melioidosis usually affects adults 40 years+ with certain underlying conditions. This includes diabetes, alcohol consumption, and chronic kidney and lung disease. Given the geographic location and risk factors, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are disproportionately affected by melioidosis.

People with jobs or hobbies where they are in contact with soil and surface water (like gardening, landscaping or farming), in areas where melioidosis is found, are also at risk.

## WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Symptoms of melioidosis depend on how you got infected and whether you have underlying conditions. You might have symptoms of infection in your lungs, skin, blood or many places at once.

Symptoms generally appear 2-4 weeks after exposure (incubation period).

## HOW DO I KNOW IF IT'S MELIOIDOSIS?

Melioidosis can be challenging to diagnose as it can affect almost any organ and can mimic many other diseases i.e. sepsis, pneumonia. Therefore, it can be underdiagnosed or misdiagnosed because of its variable manifestations, in addition to limited awareness of the disease. This can prove fatal as urgent medical care is often required.

## If in doubt, refer to your local health team.

Your healthcare provider should ask you about your symptoms, perform a physical exam and request a range of diagnostic samples (including blood cultures). They may also ask you about your work, hobbies or travel history.



In 2025, over 230 people in Queensland have been diagnosed with melioidosis, including over 30 deaths.

- 74% of cases were aged 50 years+
- 62% were male
- 36% were First Nations people
- 94% were in people most vulnerable to melioidosis infection (underlying conditions)
- 98% were admitted to hospital



# Protect your bub from RSV



In 2024 and 2025 there have been increased cases of RSV across
Oueensland.

RSV (RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS) IS A HIGHLY INFECTIOUS AND HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS VIRUS.

ALL PEOPLE CAN BE INFECTED BY RSV - BUT - BUBS AND INFANTS ARE MOST AT RISK.

IT IS ONE OF THE MOST COMMON CAUSES OF HOSPITALISATION IN BUBS AND INFANTS WITH ALMOST ALL CHILDREN EXPERIENCING AT LEAST ONE RSV INFECTION WITHIN THE FIRST 2 YEARS OF LIFE.

FOR ADULTS, IT MIGHT FEEL LIKE A CHEST COLD THEY CAN SHAKE IN A WEEK OR SO. SYMPTOMS INCLUDE RUNNY NOSE, COUGH, WHEEZING, HIGH TEMPERATURE, AND LOSS OF APPETITE.

BUT FOR LITLE LUNGS, THESE SYMPTOMS CAN BE LIFE THREATENING AND CAN QUICKLY LEAD TO SERIOUS COMPLICATIONS INCLUDING DIFFICULTY BREATHING, HOSPITAL STAYS, AND IN THE WORST CASES, LOSS OF LIFE.

RSV IMMUNISATION DURING PREGNANCY IS FREE AND IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO PROTECT BUB FROM RSV.

RSV IMMUNISATION IS RECOMMENDED FOR ALL PREGNANT WOMEN BETWEEN 28-36 WEEKS' GESTATION.

THE VACCINE WORKS BY PASSING PROTECTIVE ANTIBODIES TO THE BABY THROUGH THE PLACENTA. THIS HELPS THEM STAY SAFE FOR UP TO 6 MONTHS.

NEWBORNS ARE RECOMMENDED TO RECEIVE RSV IMMUNISATION IF:

- MUM DID NOT RECEIVE THE RSV VACCINE DURING PREGNANCY, OR
- THEY WERE BORN LESS THAN 14 DAYS AFTER MUM WAS VACCINATED FOR RSV, OR
- . THEY HAVE COMPLEX MEDICAL CONDITIONS

RSV IMMUNISATION IS ALSO RECOMMENDED FOR INFANTS AGED 8 MONTHS TO 2 YEARS WHO HAVE COMPLEX MEDICAL CONDITIONS, AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE AGED 60 YEARS AND OVER.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT RSV AND/OR OTHER IMMUNISATIONS, YARN WITH YOUR LOCAL HEALTH TEAM. YOU CAN ALSO CALL THE TEAM AT MOOKAI FAMILY HEALTH!

### Prevention:











# BELLY CASTING

# Maternal Health Program

As part of our Maternal Health Program, women can participate in belly casting, led by our Cultural Birth Workers!

Belly casting involves covering the pregnant belly in cling wrap, and then using bandages and plaster to make a cast. It is a unique and memorable way to capture the mystery, magic and miracle of their pregnancy.

But it's more than just a fun activity.

Belly casting can be meaningful in a number of ways...



#### Relaxing

A time for mum to relax and enjoy some time for herself.

#### Connecting

It gives the woman an opportunity to connect with her baby, and/or also include other children, the partner, and family in the process (if present).

#### **Sharing**

An opportunity to share and bond with her Cultural Birth Worker, ask questions, discuss any concerns etc. Developing this relationship is essential to a positive birth experience.

Once it is dry the mums-to-be can paint or decorate the sculpture as another way of bonding with their partners and children. Some choose to have the sculpture painted by artists / Elders from the community.



Top right: Mum Nikaela with her children Sana, Amos and Delphina, from Aurukun.

Middle left: Mum Naydia with her daughter Thea, from Pormpuraaw,

# **FOR** MOTHERS

One of the many challenges our ladies face birthing in Cairns, is being disconnected from culture and country.

In recognition of this, Mookai Rosie has increased engagement with Punna Creative, a Cairns based business led by Lia Pa'apa'a.

With the support of her team, Lia has carefully curated a series of workshops referred to as 'For Mothers', focusing on arts and cultural practices supporting families during the first 1000 days. During these workshops, artists work with families to explore ancestral practices to relearn, reinvigorate and reimagine parenting for the modern parent, inclusive to cultural and creative identities.

### What kinds of workshops do we do?

Recent workshops have included hand stitching patterns and cutouts onto onesies, jewelry making, and weaving.

We are thankful for the opportunities provided by the Punna team to connect to culture and share stories through craft and textiles.









# Storing and using expressed breastmilk

Maternal Health Program

# Expressing breastmilk

Expressing breastmilk can be useful if your breasts are engorged, if you're separated from your baby, or you want breastmilk for later use.

Expressed breastmilk then needs to be safely stored. It's best to refrigerate or freeze breastmilk immediately after expressing.

Don't forget to wash your hands and clean all breast pump parts and storage containers used to collect and store breastmilk. You don't need to clean sterile expressed breastmilk bags.

# What do I use to store my milk?

Storage containers for expressed breastmilk should be suitable to freeze (if needed), be food grade, and BPA-free. They may include:

- baby-feeding bottles
- plastic or glass containers with tightfitting lids
- breastmilk bags / zip-lock bags

It's important to write the date and time of expressing on the storage container or bag before you refrigerate or freeze the breastmilk.



# How long can I store my milk?

- In the fridge (5°c or lower) for up to 72 hours – at the back of the fridge where it's coldest
- In the freezer compartment (-15°c or lower) inside a fridge for 2 weeks
- In the freezer section (–18°c or lower) of a fridge with a separate door for 3 months

If you want to add freshly expressed breastmilk to some that is already chilled or frozen, you need to first cool it in the fridge.

Freeze milk flat for easier defrosting.

# Warming breastmilk that has been in the fridge

- Choose your oldest sample from the fridge first and check the date
- If the milk is older than 3 days, throw it out
- Stand the milk in a container of hot (not boiling) water until the milk reaches body heat
- Test how warm the milk is by dropping a little onto your wrist, it is just right if it feels warm



## Warming breastmilk that has been frozen

- Choose your oldest sample from the freezer first and check the date
- Get a bowl of warm water and move the bottle or bag of frozen milk around in the bowl until it becomes liquid
- OR, hold the frozen milk under cold running water and slowly make the water warmer until the frozen milk becomes liquid
- To thaw milk slowly, you can take it out the freezer and put it into the fridge and leave it overnight



### Important:

- Never leave frozen milk out of the fridge to defrost
- Never heat breastmilk in the microwave
- Never put milk that has been thawed back into the freezer
- Any warmed or thawed milk that bubba does not drink must be thrown

away

23

# We've partnered with First 5 first 5 forever Forever

Mookai Rosie is proud to partner with First 5 Forever, supporting child development and our playgroup program.

To kick us off, First 5 Forever gifted us with a First 5 Forever library with 100 preloved books to share, a "My People" talking story book for our playgroup area, a story walk to follow the story of "My People", and 100 book bags.

# What is First 5 Forever?

First 5 Forever is a family literacy program aimed at supporting early literacy and language development for children aged 0-5 years.

The initiative connects families with literacy resources and encourages activities such as **talking**, **reading**, **singing**, and **playing** to build a strong foundation for children's future development.

It focuses on creating stronger language and literacy environments before children start kindergarten and school.

# Why are the first 5 years so important?

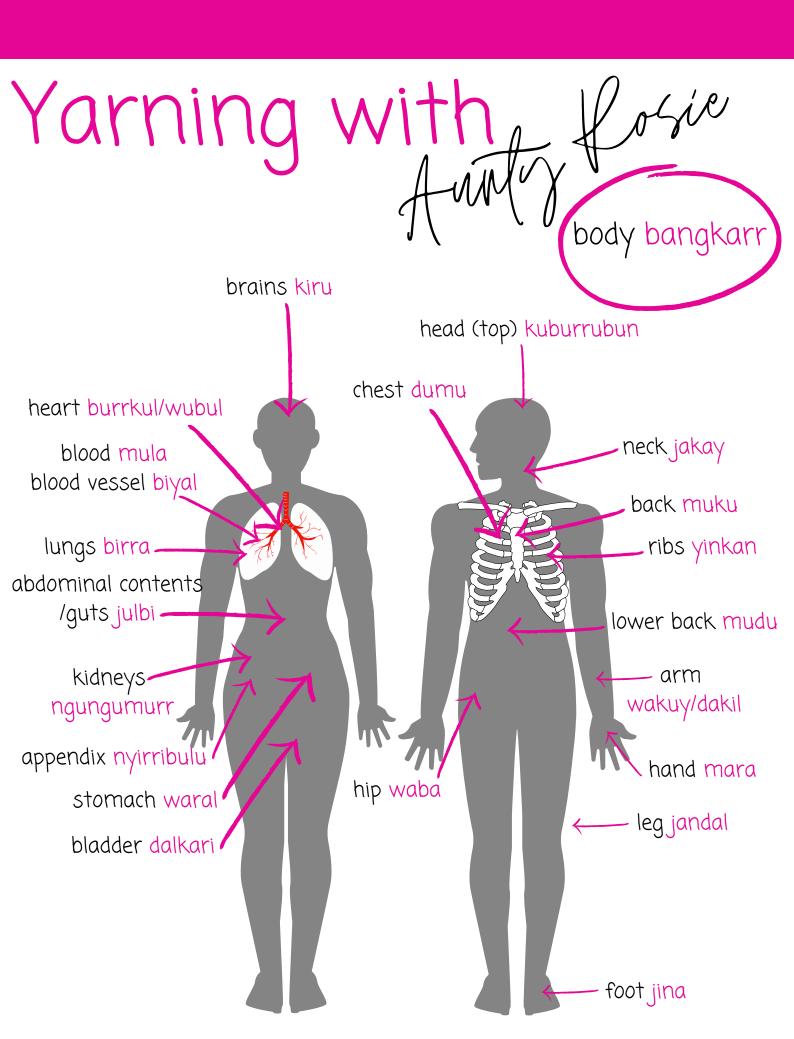
Children are born ready to learn and some of the best learning comes from nurturing relationships.

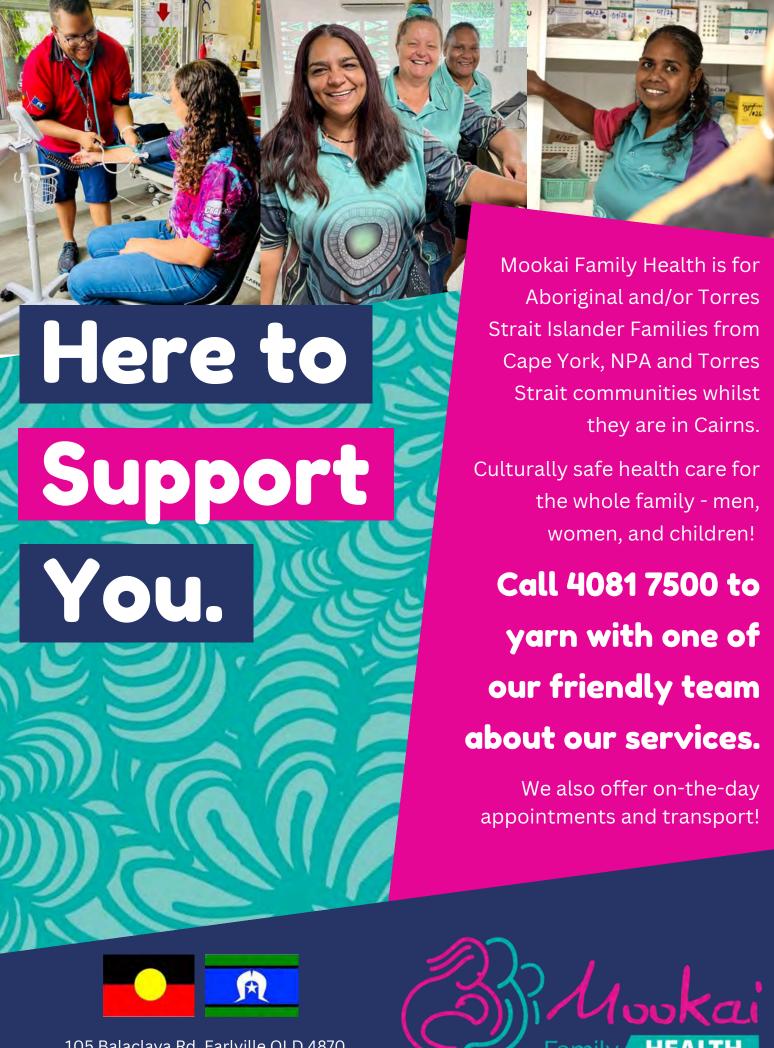
During the first few years after birth, more than 1 million new synapses (connections between neurons) form every second. Early experiences affect the nature and quality of the brain's developing architecture.

Shared activities at home and out and about in the early years are important in the development of language skills later on, and research highlights the significant role that parents play in helping their babies build a strong foundation for future learning.

You can download FREE books via the website, listen on SoundCloud, or watch animated stories via YouTube. You can also access books and resources at Mookai!!!

First 5 Forever is an initiative of the Queensland Government, coordinated by State Library of Queensland and delivered in partnership with local government.





105 Balaclava Rd, Earlville QLD 4870 www.mookairosie.org.au