

Ngala Kadidjiny: An Elder Approved Commitment to Involving Aboriginal Community throughout Research on Homelessness

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Abstract : Those experiencing homelessness are regularly excluded from the development of policies and services that impact their lives. This is particularly true for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing homelessness in Australia, who tend to have differing needs, cultural obligations, and views of what equates to a 'home' and 'homelessness' than non-Aboriginal Australians. Aboriginal people are the traditional owners of Australia yet have had to survive within colonial housing customs, housing and homelessness policies, and markets that often conflict with their culture. Recognising this, in 2022, we commenced community-led research into the needs of Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness in Perth. Historically, research has often been done on Aboriginal people rather than with them. As such, a Participatory Action Research methodology was chosen, which recognises that those being researched are the experts of their circumstances rather than the research team, and facilitates their driving of the research, its questions, and how their community can directly benefit. A Community Ownership Group (COG) was formed to guide this process and negotiate the best ways that the Aboriginal community can be fairly and adequately involved. The COG approved a process developed by an Aboriginal Elder called Ngala Kadidjiny (Knowledge Vault), which outlines who and when various groups should be consulted throughout the research to ensure adequate involvement of the Aboriginal community at all stages. The process includes many markers of research integrity, including ensuring a Community Ownership Group is formed with diversity and recruiting its members through votes taking place within Elders groups across the metropolitan area. The process also demands that the community have the chance to review research findings before any findings are published. Additionally, the process asks that draft reports and findings are delivered to the broader community and Community Ownership Groups before being finalised, published, and shared officially with stakeholders and the government. This paper details how Ngala Kadidjiny's process impacted the research, how it was explained and agreed upon by the Aboriginal community, the benefits and challenges of such a process, and its implications for other community-led research for and with Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness.

Keywords : Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Aboriginal elders, homelessness, community-led research, community consultation

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