

CASE STUDY



Nra:gi Ya:yun (healthy foods): Co-designing a Diabetes remission Initiative on Ngarrindjeri Country

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The research and its impact

Diabetes is a chronic health condition affecting about 1 in 20 Australians.¹ The prevalence of Type 2 Diabetes (T2D) is three times higher in Aboriginal communities. This has led to a mortality rate five times higher than non-Indigenous Australians.¹

Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in research is essential for addressing health inequities. It also ensures culturally appropriate research, centering on community priorities. Currently there are limited health programs in Australia aimed at T2D remission and many do not meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Answering a call from Ngarrindjeri Elders and leaders for a community-designed program based on cultural determinants of health, the Nra:gi Ya:yun was initiated. The project aimed to address inequities due to diabetes in the community.

Supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing under the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF), the project brought Aboriginal Elders and senior community representatives together with Aboriginal and non-Indigenous clinicians, researchers, and other

health professionals. Together, they co-designed a targeted T2D remission program for Aboriginal people on Ngarrindjeri country.

The Indigenous research method of yarning was used to explore the lived experiences of Aboriginal people with T2D living on Ngarrindjeri country. This allowed the team to understand the enablers and barriers to diabetes care.

Centering Indigenous knowledge, the program then used strength-based approaches and Knowledge interface methodology to combine Aboriginal dietary knowledge with recent scientific evidence on the effects of ketogenic diets on diabetes remission.

To ensure community ownership and control into the future, the project also focused on capacity building for local Aboriginal people living on Ngarrindjeri country – providing training and upskilling on using technology, along with implementing the identification, education, and monitoring approaches.

The results of this project will be published soon.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024) *Diabetes: Australian facts*, AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 23 May 2025.

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic health condition where there is too much glucose in the blood. Glucose is a type of sugar that our bodies use for energy.

So our bodies can use glucose, the hormone insulin acts like a key to 'unlock' our cells. This allows glucose to enter the cell and be used for energy.

When a person has diabetes, their body is either unable to make, make enough of, or effectively use insulin. Over time, high glucose levels in our blood can lead to damaged vessels and nerves. This results in health complications including heart, kidney, foot and eye damage.

Yayan for the Mi:wi

Committed to community-led research translation, the team commissioned artwork from Ngarrindjeri Artist, Talia Scriven, to communicate the key messages of their research into a culturally meaningful way. Read more about the story of this artwork by visiting the Flinders University [community engagement website](#).



Yayan for the Mi:wi (Talia Scriven)