

Chair's foreword

Another year has passed by and once again *Footprints in Time* families have generously opened their doors to the study's fieldwork team to share aspects of their lives and those of their children to the benefit of all Indigenous Australian families. It is a testimony to the commitment both of the participating families and the *Footprints in Time* fieldwork team that the number of interviews in Wave 5 has remained high.

This project would be impossible to conduct and complete without the support of Indigenous families and communities. Children have to be nurtured and looked after, but this does not occur in a vacuum: it has to be examined in the context of family and community. If we wish to ensure Indigenous children are not, for example, disadvantaged when it comes to education, that education must not only provide them with the means to become productive members of society, it must also encourage and reinforce their knowledge, strength of connection and appreciation of their cultural heritage.

This report demonstrates that despite many parents having low levels of education relative to the Australian population as a whole, education is something Indigenous parents value and demand for their children. And they are taking steps to achieve this: parents support and assist their children through a wide range of educational activities, and absences from school are in the main due to illness. The study also shows that teachers and schools are also working to assist Indigenous children make the most of their educational opportunities.

The strength of families is also a recurrent theme in the data. We all understand how important family is in any society and it is no different in Indigenous society. However, we need to appreciate in Indigenous society the extended family has an added role for children in strengthening and reinforcing cultural and kinship links that are ever present in their day to day lives. *Footprints in Time* is providing empirical evidence that cultural, personal and social resilience is an important protective factor for children, especially in times of adversity.

In reading a report like this it is easy to forget that the numbers equate to real people. It is my fervent hope the quotes and stories from the children, parents, teachers and the fieldwork team included in this report help readers relate successes and adversity discussed in this report to real people.



Professor Mick Dodson AM

Chair

Steering Committee