

# Preface

The concept of empowerment is highly relevant for promoting the health of Aboriginal Australians, yet there is little research evidence on what the term actually means or involves. This book presents a study of empowerment through a qualitative grounded theory analysis of the stories of people who participated in Family Wellbeing, an empowerment programme developed by Aboriginal Australians. It represents one of the few attempts to systematically understand the nature and benefits of empowerment from the point of view of a particular group. The findings take the form of a theoretical model that incorporates key, closely interconnected elements of empowerment: beliefs and attitudes, skills and knowledge, agency, and outcomes and their interaction with the broader social environment. This model resonates strongly with Aboriginal understandings of social and emotional well-being and provides a practical framework for action. The implications of the findings for the broader international sustainability agenda are highlighted.

A central message of this book is that empowerment starts with the efforts made by individuals, families, organisations and communities to improve their condition. It is critical that we find opportunities to engage with these strengths and mobilise public policy in support. Family Wellbeing provides one such way.

This book has eight chapters. The first two chapters provide background information. [Chapter 1](#) explains the Family Wellbeing programme while [Chap. 2](#) describes the research methodology. [Chapter 3](#) provides an overview of the theoretical model of empowerment. The following four chapters, [Chaps. 4–7](#), are organised around each of the elements of the model and their central messages, with supporting data. These chapters also include case stories, which provide detailed insights into the transformational power of empowerment processes such as those prompted by Family Wellbeing. To respect privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used in place of people's names. [Chapter 8](#) provides the concluding remarks.

The term Aboriginal is used to refer to the traditional custodians of the mainland of Australia. An Aboriginal person is defined by the Australian Government based on the descent, self-identification and community recognition. Although there are two Indigenous peoples of Australia, this study refers to an Aboriginal (rather than Torres Strait Islander) developed and delivered programme; hence, the focus is on Aboriginal people.

## **Keywords**

Health, Empowerment, Aboriginal Australia, Family wellbeing, Grounded theory, Social and emotional wellbeing, Sustainability

Promoting Aboriginal Health

The Family Wellbeing Empowerment Approach

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