Housing & school attendance in the Northern Territory

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Early Pathways to School Learning
Lessons from the NT data linkage study

Organisational partners:
Menzies CCDE, NT Departments of Health, Education & Territory Families, and AMSANT

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Steering Committee:
King A & Bowden S (Chairs), Schmidt D, Warburton L, Moore L, Guthridge S, Griffiths K, Walter M, Bodkin-Andrews

Community Advisory Group:
Smith J (Chair), McCarthy L, Byrnes T, Griffiths K, Brown J & Edwards J.
NHMRC Partnership Study Aims

• To make better use of existing NT data sources by building capacity in data linkage to enable population-level longitudinal research and evaluation studies

• Develop a program of research to inform policy and service delivery to maximise improvements in NT children’s developmental health, education and longer-term life outcomes

• Analyse de-identified, linked administrative data on over 80,000 children living in the NT and born between 1994-2015

• Ensure the study addresses issues of concern to Aboriginal people, and that its design, analysis and reporting are inclusive of Aboriginal perspectives and minimise the potential for cultural bias
Life-course pathways in school learning

- Human Capability
- Early life health, social and economic circumstances
- AEDC Developmental readiness for school learning
- YR3 NAPLAN Literacy & numeracy
- The period of maximum brain growth and development of skills
- Current practice
- Opportunity
### Child & Youth Development research -
Linked unit-record data repository (Extract 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age coverage</th>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Years of data capture coverage</th>
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1. The NT Data Linkage Study
2. Methodology
3. Early life health and development
4. Early life factors associated with childhood development
5. School attendance
6. Preschool participation, school attendance and academic achievement
7. Modelling key drivers of school education outcomes
8. Summary and conclusions
Predictors of school attendance analysis
Attendance by year level and region
Weekly attendance over the school year, years 1 to 3
Estimates of effect of selected factors on Year 1 school attendance for non-Aboriginal children, 2005-2014

Estimates of effect of selected factors on Year 1 school attendance for Aboriginal students

Legend
*Adjusted (Red)
*Unadjusted (Grey)

R² = 0.3393

* < p = 0.05

Contribution of variable groups to variation in school attendance by relative remoteness

a) Aboriginal

Legend
- School/Community characteristics
- Student mobility
- Attended preschool
- Parent/carer characteristics
- ESL (English as 2nd language)
- Child specific characteristics
Limitations

- The study is limited by the available information, there are likely to be other factors such as the
  - quality, retention and engagement of teachers,
  - the place of the school within the community, and.
  - there are also well recognised influences including the ongoing impact of colonisation and disempowerment.

- The measures for housing is based on community level information. We currently do not have individual-level housing data. It is likely that the impact that is described in this study is an underestimate of the full impact of inadequate and overcrowded housing.
How can housing affect attendance

There may be a range of reasons, including

- high rates of infections diseases with high load of respiratory diseases, but in particular middle ear disease and the associated hearing loss
- the direct consequence of overcrowding on general disruption of the house: uncertain sleeping arrangements for a child and related pressures including food security.
General conclusions

• The general findings demonstrate just how much children’s development and school learning is underpinned by social determinants — particularly in early life and throughout childhood

• Increasing school attendance of children in early years, sets a pattern for school learning and longer-term trajectories of school attendance and achievement

• The studies clarify why policy efforts to improve school attendance and achievement must have a greater focus on reducing the disproportionate levels of disadvantage affecting Aboriginal children’s early development and learning – especially housing overcrowding

• The overall findings support a collaborative interagency planning and substantial new funding to improve the lives of Territory children and their families