



Save the Children

# Bridging the Gap in Doomadgee

A GSK Australia-Save the  
Children Partnership

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The Indigenous child mortality rate in Australia is twice the rate for non-Indigenous children. (Closing the Gap Report 2020, National Indigenous Australians Agency)

To help bridge this gap, GSK Australia and Save the Children have partnered to assist remote Aboriginal community Doomadgee in Queensland. Home to the Ganggalidda and Waanyi peoples, Doomadgee is 630kms from Mt Isa and 1035 kms west of Cairns, so access to healthcare is severely limited.

The shared aim of the partnership is to build and strengthen relationships between health services and the local community, leading families to access health care earlier and more often.

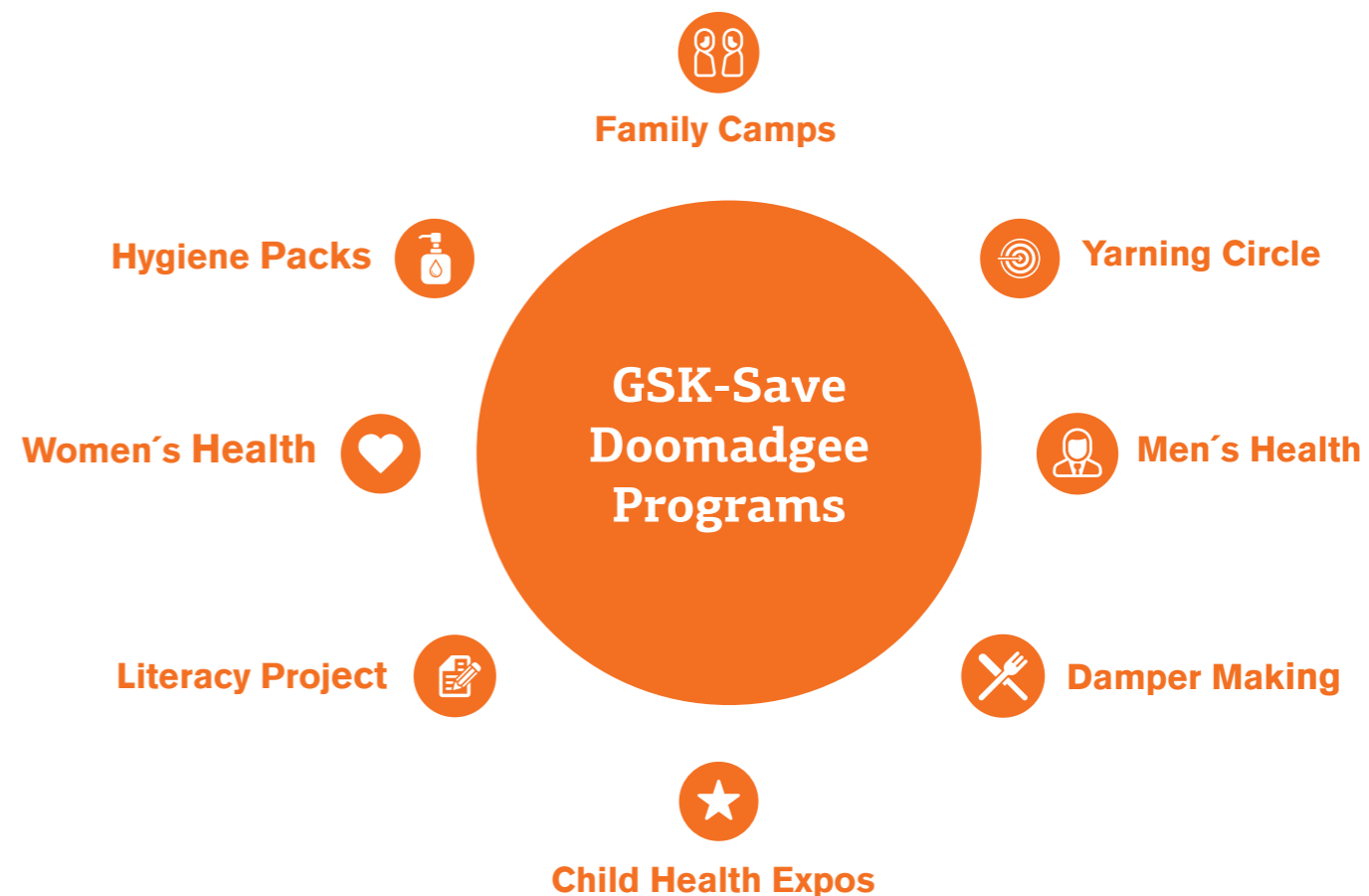
“We want to become more than a business”, said Christi Kelsey, Vice President & General Manager, GSK Australia. “We can’t be doing good business in Australia unless we are connected to all communities and particularly to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We feel we have a very strong contribution to make with our medicines and vaccines and we are motivated to do more. In Doomadgee, we are seeing that the programs do make a difference.”

**“We can’t be doing good business in Australia unless we are connected to all communities and particularly to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.”** Christi Kelsey, VP & General Manager, GSK Australia

**The focus of the partnership is on delivering programs, developed with the community to:**

1. Build and strengthen relationships between health services and community.
2. Increase the number of children who have health checks.
3. Give adult community members the opportunity to access literacy programs and build on their own skills to assist children.
4. Build the confidence of young people who are leaving community to attend boarding schools or school-related activities.

As part of GSK’s Reconciliation Action Plan efforts which began in 2012, both partners are ensuring that the programs delivered in Doomadgee are culturally appropriate and accepted by the community. “By empowering Elders with the support necessary to address issues in their communities, we can make a positive step in helping close the gap in health disparities and transferring sacred spiritual knowledge,” XX @ Save the Children.



## Family Camps



The Family Camps focus on providing a safe space for families to reconnect as a family unit, share stories and build support networks. Of the family camp program, local Elder, Desley Watt said, “With the support from the camp, it was identified that one of my grandchildren needed to see a speech pathologist, the other needed their hearing checked. After the referrals

to Gidgee Healing the primary health care provider in Doomadgee they are so much happier and are attending school every day. **Life is much easier when grandchildren are happy to go to school and making progress every day.** I learnt about some finance business that has also taken a lot of stress away.”

## Ready for School Camps



Ready for School Camps give families a better understanding of their children's health needs and the importance of attending school. Anna Marshall, a community mother said, “As a family we attended two Connected Beginnings Get set for School Camps. **The children and I enjoyed the camps, it brought everyone who attended the camps together. It gave**

**people a better understanding of their children's health needs and the importance of attending school.** Save the Children also delivered hygiene talks with the kids and provided them with hygiene packs. The boarding children also received hygiene packs, which encouraged them to stay clean and healthy and look after their body.”



“Life is much easier when grandchildren are happy to go to school and making progress every day.”

Local Elder, Desley Watt

## Hygiene Packs



The Hygiene Packs contain all the essentials including shampoo, conditioner, toothbrush, and toothpaste. When a group of young girls in year four took their new hygiene packs to the shower, their teacher had to ask them to get out. They told the teacher that they wanted to keep using the hair products as they had not had their own before.

During the programs, community members meet healthcare workers and physicians from the closest cities to increase their confidence when they need to go to

hospital. When a 6-month-old baby got sick and had to be transferred to Mt Isa Hospital, his mother became stressed and worried but **when she saw the pediatrician who she met on camp, she immediately felt more relaxed and comfortable.** The rest of the family also benefited from having met the doctor on camp. Dad who was home with the other children knew his baby and wife were being looked after and Grandmother could talk to the doctor to get an update. The baby recovered and mother and baby returned home.

## Babies Welcome to Country



Without a hospital to safely deliver babies, expectant mothers are sent to other cities for the birth of their babies. When the Royal Flying Doctor Service brings mothers and babies home, a ceremony takes place so the babies are acknowledged as belonging to Doomadgee. **This is important for family history and belonging.**

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## Yarning Circles and Damper Making



As food security is a constant concern and has been particularly heightened during Covid-19, community members are passing down knowledge on traditional methods for collecting ingredients to make food through the yarning circles and damper making programs. This enables them to make damper and johnny cakes to feed their families.

## Literacy Project



Community members are passing down traditional knowledge through a literacy project that will produce 16 books translated into local languages and English.

**Of the programs supported by GSK and Save in Doomadgee, Anna Marshall Mother and Community Member said, "It has given us something to look forward to, and educated where to go if we need support and guidance regarding our children's health and family wellbeing."**



## Staff Programs



GSK's efforts to bridge the gap doesn't stop in Doomadgee. Since the first Reconciliation Action Plan was established in 2012, they have involved employees in closing the gap initiatives. "The more we can talk about reconciliation, the more we demonstrate our connectivity to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the more we can achieve together. Our

employees are really motivated and engaged to learn more and to do more when it comes to reconciliation and they expect GSK to be leading by example. This partnership in Doomadgee has been a great way of connecting with community and demonstrating our commitment to reconciliation." David Pullar, Director, GSK Australia.

## Working Together



"GSK welcomes other businesses in Australia to start the conversation and support communities like Doomadgee. The Australian community must work together to address the inequalities that exist between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous people.

"We sincerely acknowledge Reconciliation Australia for setting a clear framework and direction to work towards reconciliation through the pillars of relationships, respect and opportunities. Equality of access to

healthcare intervention and management is the heart and soul of our business and we want to ensure that every person, no matter what their socio-economic position can benefit from world-leading healthcare.

**"GSK-Save would like to thank all the dedicated team members and health care professionals who have brought the programs to life and achieved great community engagement despite the challenges of COVID."** Christi Kelsey, VP and General Manager, GSK Australia.

## About GSK

GSK is a science-led global healthcare company with a special purpose: to help people do more, feel better and live longer. In Australia, we offer a broad portfolio of innovative and established medicines, particularly in respiratory disease and HIV. Our asthma medicines, for example, have been helping Australians to breathe easier for over 50 years. Our vaccines have been

at the heart of the Australian National Immunisation Program from the time it began, helping to protect infants and children from multiple serious diseases. Beyond childhood, our vaccines help to protect Australians throughout life, whether at home or travelling overseas.

For more information visit [www.gsk.com/au](http://www.gsk.com/au)

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Artwork by Ngarrindjeri artist, Jordan Lovegrove, of Dreamtime Creative.

This booklet may contain photos of people who have passed away.

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GSK would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land in which we live and pay our respects to Elders both past and present. We value and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and acknowledge the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to the education of all children and people in this country that we live in and share together – Australia.