



# Kaal Tackles Eczema

**Written by**

Annette Garlett,  
Dr Bernadette Ricciardo,  
Delys Walton, Joanne Hill,  
Kristy Jetta & Sally Smith

ILLUSTRATED BY TYROWN WAIGANA



**For all the moorditj koolangkar**

Ngalak kaadadj Wardandi wer Wadjak noongar moorta wer  
baalabiny boodja-k wer nidja bibool kwadjat warn.

Ngalak kaadadj baalabiny Birdiya koorra-koora wer yeyi. Ngalak  
kaadadj baalabiny yako warn ngaalang koolangkar moorditj.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which  
this book was created, the Wardandi and Whadjuk people of the  
Noongar nation. We pay our respects to their Elders past and  
present and honour their continued guidance and wisdom in our  
work to improve the health and development of all children.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples  
as the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters throughout  
Australia and recognise their continuing culture, connection to  
the land, waters, and community.



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Kaya, I'm Kaal! A proud Noongar **nop**,  
and this is my **moort** – mum, dad, nan and pop.



My sister is Maali and my brother is Kwila,  
last but not least is my **deadly** dog Djilba.



*I love fishing and swimming with my cousins big and small...*



*...but playing footy is the best of all.*

Me and my  
**koorda**  
kick, mark,  
and play...



I dream of  
winning  
on Grand  
Final Day.



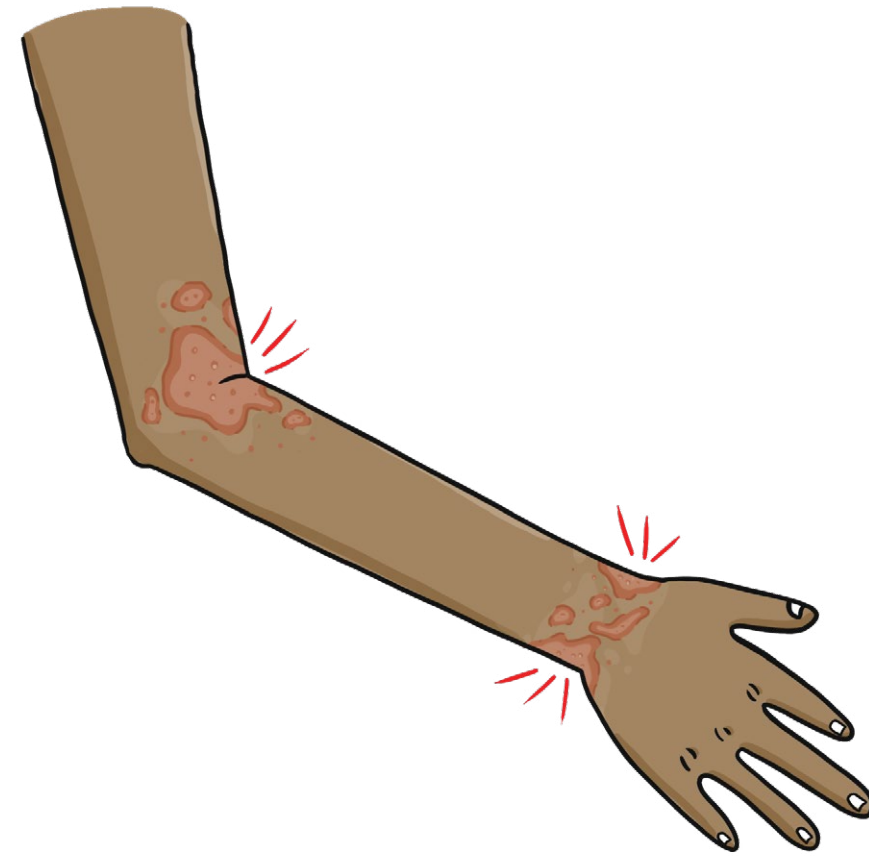
But I didn't dream last night – I was itchy and sore,  
tossing and turning, I didn't even snore.

Maali said, "You kept the whole family awake!"  
I think Djilba is the only one who had a good break.



At school I see my **djoora** is red and bumpy.

I worry and wonder,  
what could this be?

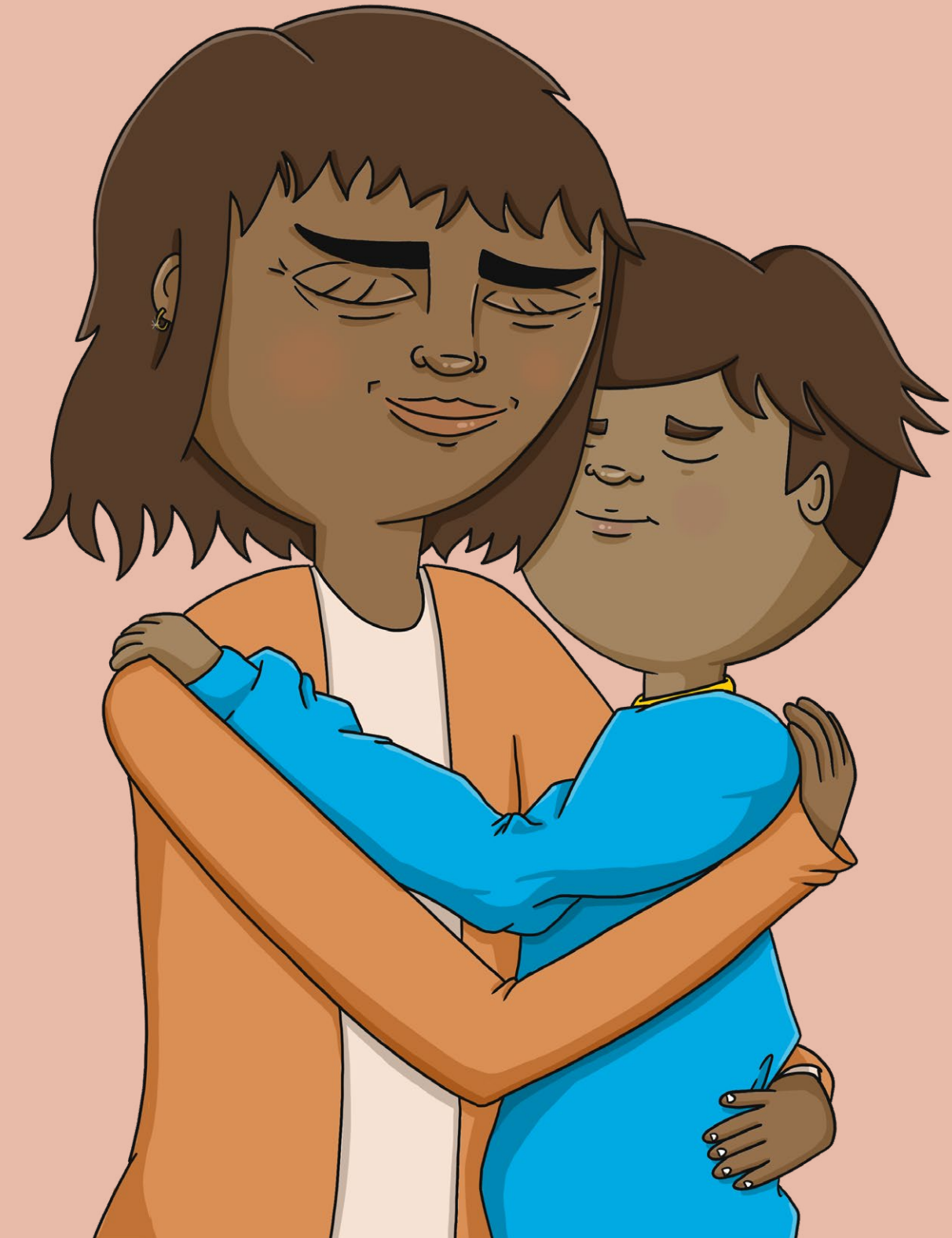


Is this from my itching  
and scratching in bed?

I don't show my **djoora**,  
I hide it instead.

When Mum picks me up I'm itchy and sad,  
I show her my skin and it looks really bad.

She gives me a hug and we have a yarn,  
she's seen this before on my Aunty Charm.





It's eczema, she thinks –  
and that makes me nervous.

We need to book in at the  
Aboriginal Medical Service.

What about my footy?  
I have training today!  
Does this mean I'll be  
too sick to play?



We're seeing the doctor, her name's Dr Bright.  
She says my rash is eczema, my clever mum was right!



"Eczema's an itchy rash that starts when you're young.  
It gets better as you grow, but it's really not fun.

Your skin's like a **woonda** and eczema makes it crack.  
But with special treatment, your **moorditj** skin will come back."

"To keep your eczema away do these five things every day..."



### 1. (Kenya)

If something makes you itch, it's time to make a switch.

### 2. (Koodjal)

Staying cool is best, when playing footy or at rest.



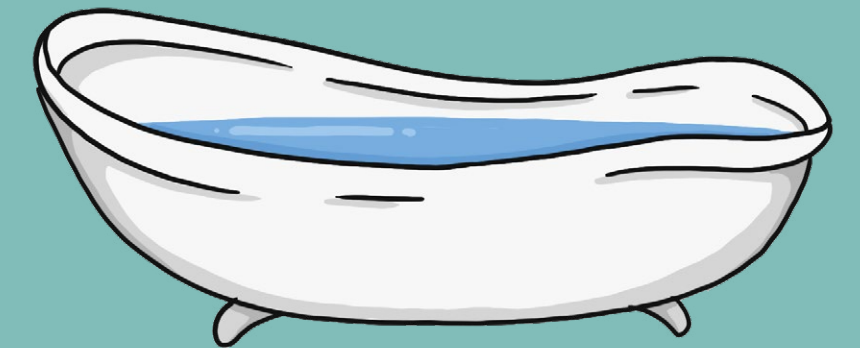
### 3. (Dambart)

Goodbye clothes that feel prickly, hello cotton – you're less tickly.



### 4. (Koodjal-koodjal)

No more baths with bubbles or shampoo, water and a splash of bath oil will do.



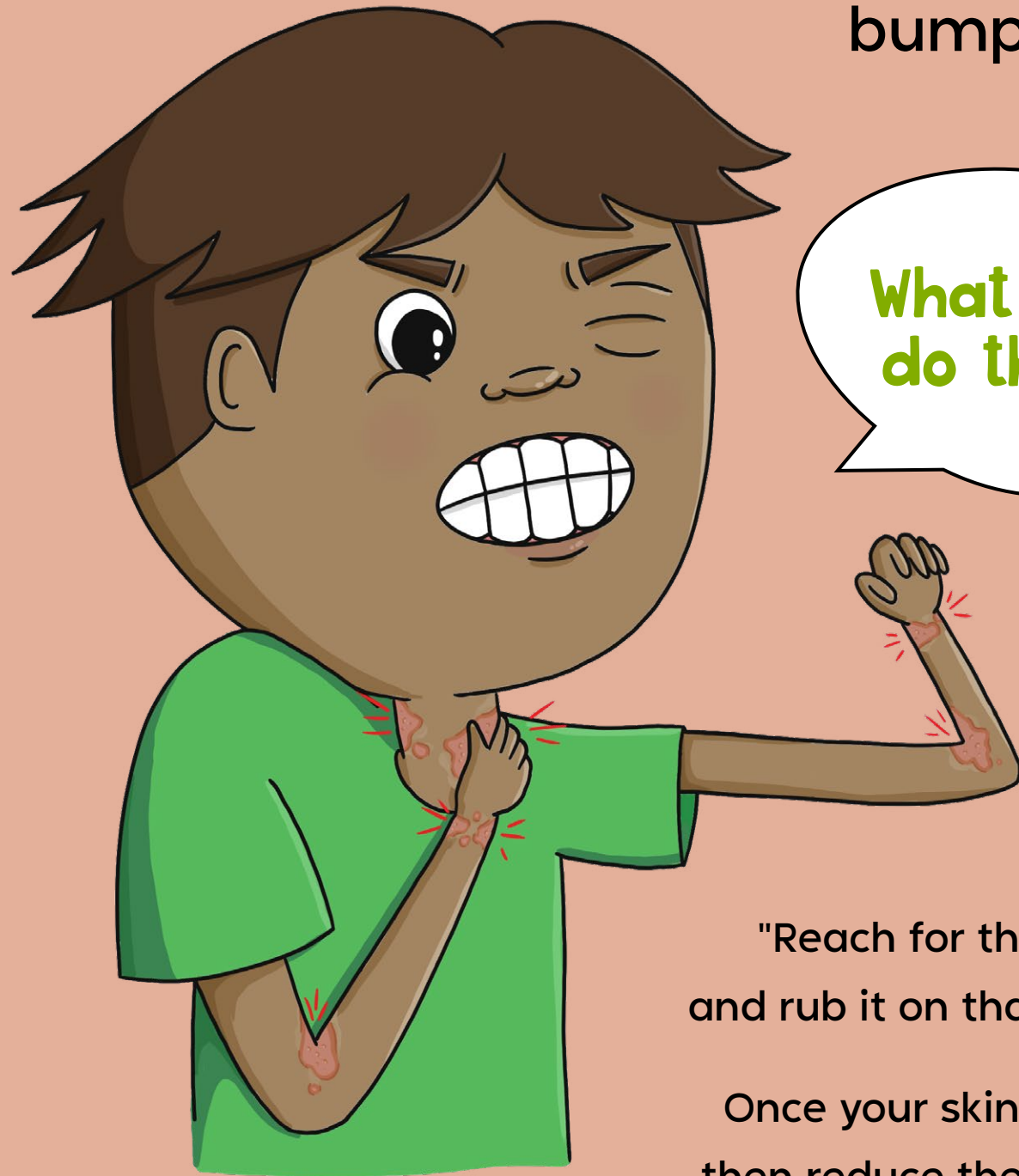
### 5. (Maar)

Moisturise your whole body each day, this will help keep the dry skin away.



"...and sometimes you'll do all this without a hitch or glitch,

but your eczema might still **flare** with a bumpy rash and itch."

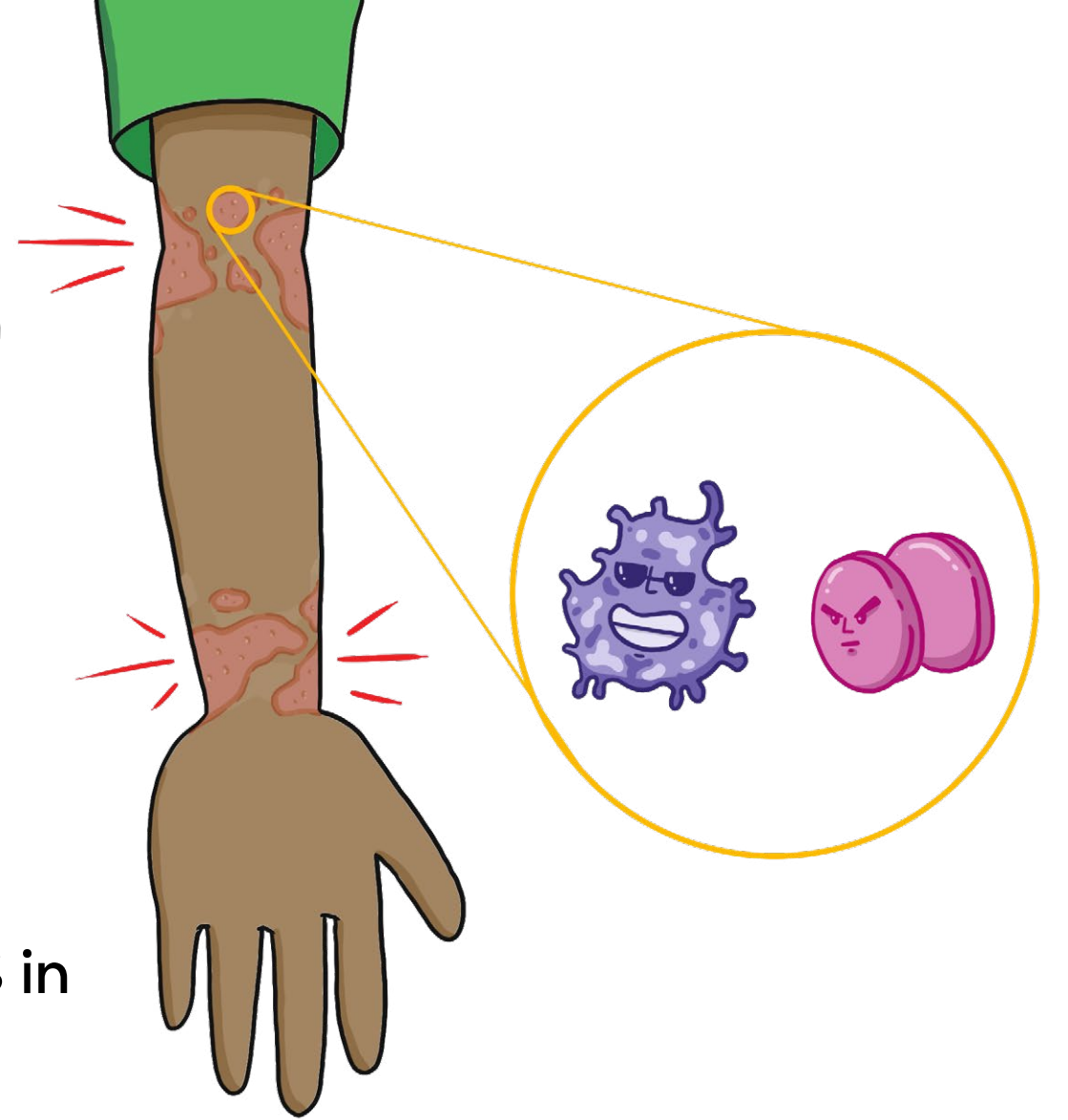


What do I do then?

"Reach for the ointment from Dr Bright, and rub it on that eczema morning and night.

Once your skin feels smooth and itch-free, then reduce the ointment – nice and slowly."

What if my skin's not getting better?



"If it's not healing like you know it should, check in with the AMS in your neighbourhood.



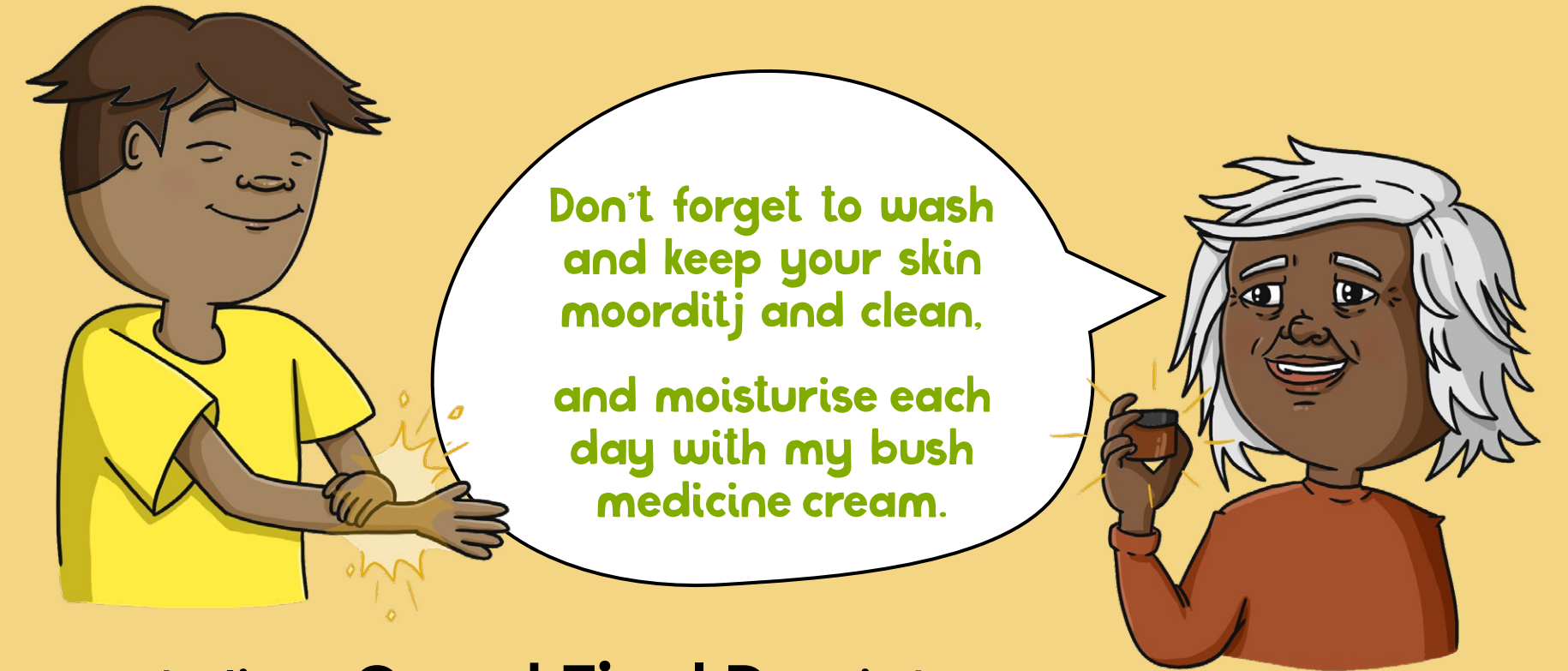
Because sometimes the cracked **woonda** lets tiny germs in, and this will need treatment with another medicine."

I'm feeling **winyarn**,  
I missed footy today,  
but Dad says the eczema  
will soon go away.

If I try not to scratch and  
use ointment like they say,  
I'll be joining my **koorda**  
on Grand Final Day.

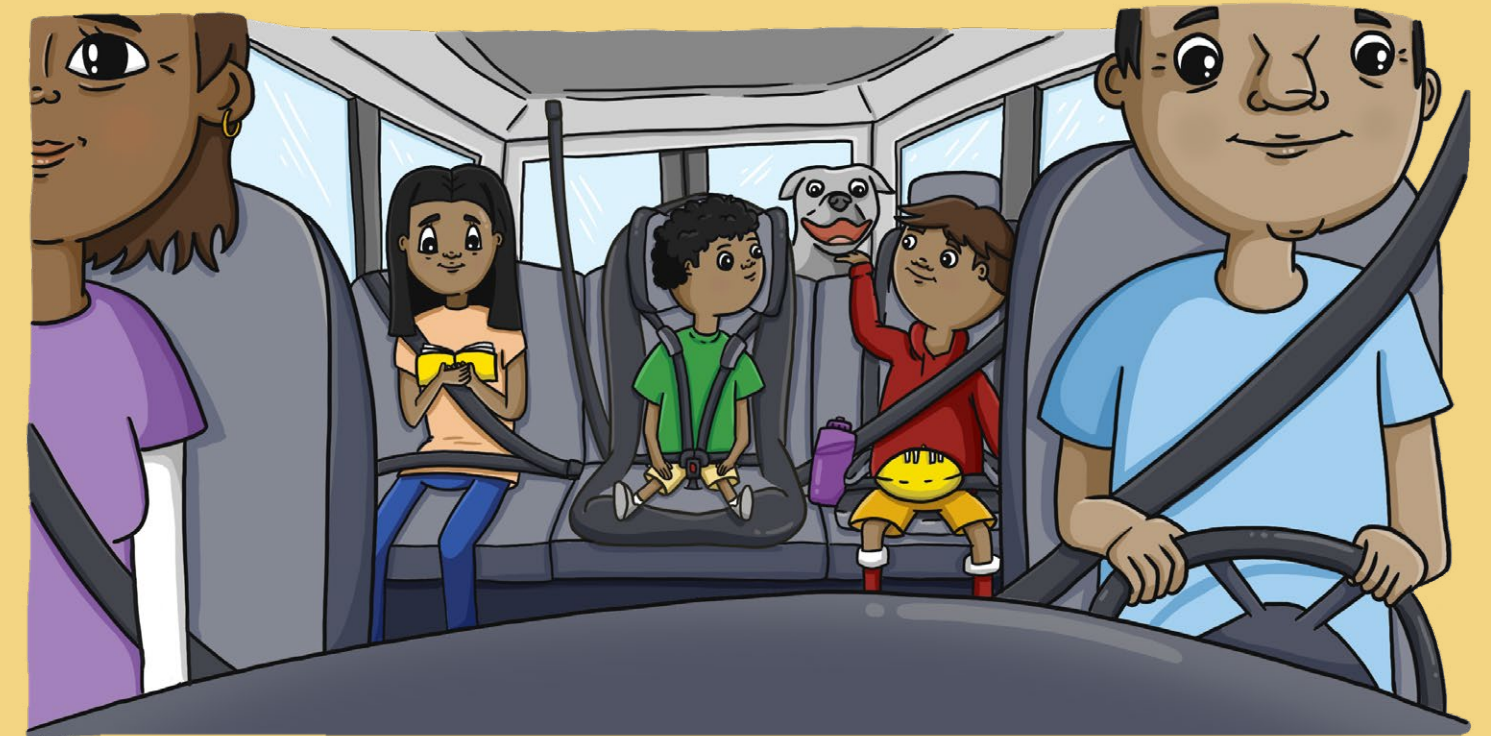


Everyone was right, the eczema has gone!  
I slept so good, I don't even yawn.



Don't forget to wash  
and keep your skin  
moorditj and clean,  
and moisturise each  
day with my bush  
medicine cream.

I can't believe **Grand Final Day** is here...

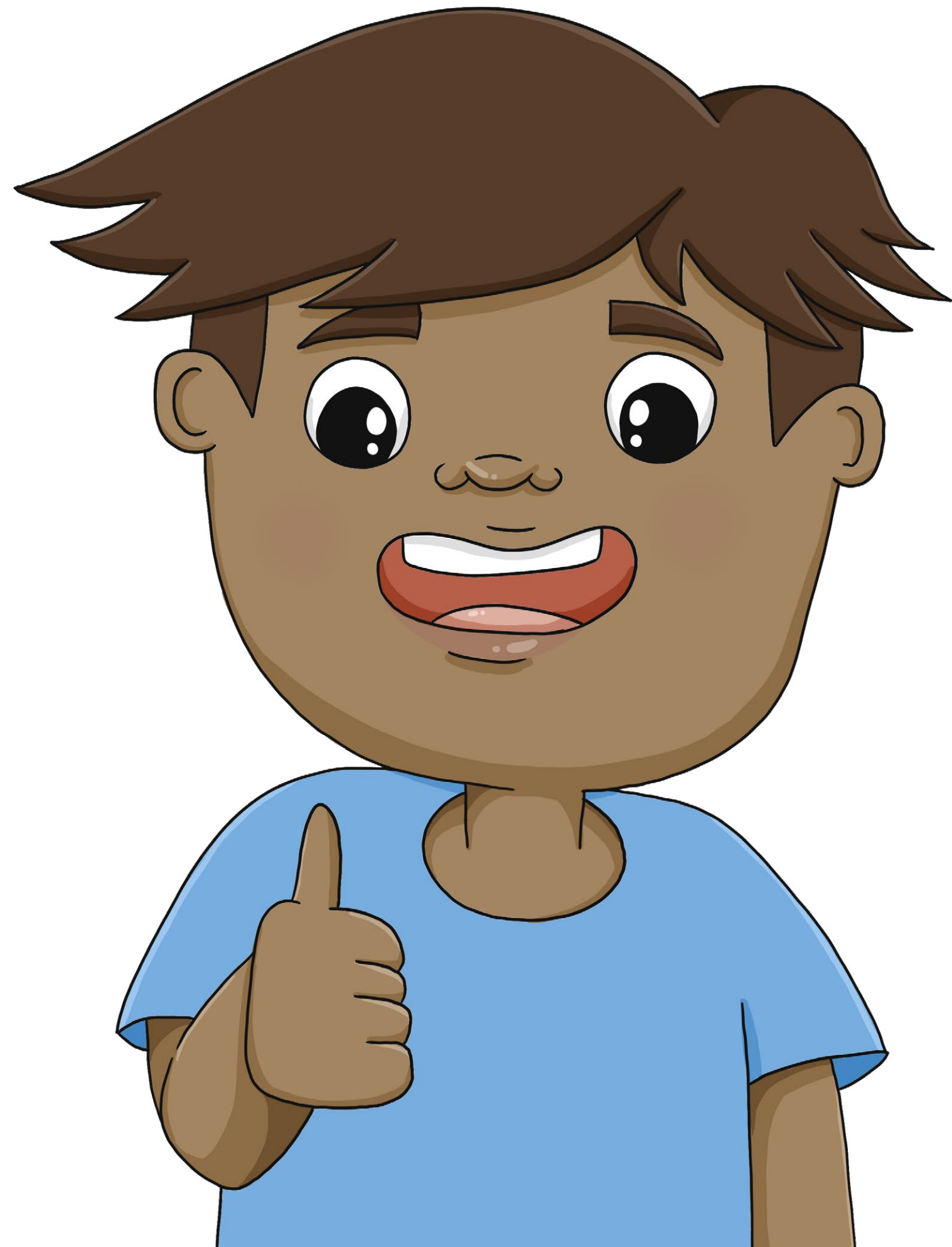


I'm going to play my best and hear **everyone cheer!**



I'm feeling so good, with my **koorda** and coach,  
we played so **moorditj** and although it was close...  
we won the game – I kicked the winning goal!  
I also tackled my eczema and now it's under control!





# Noongar Language

Noongar is the Aboriginal Australian language from the Noongar nation of the South-West corner of Western Australia.

Below is a glossary of Noongar words used in this book:

Noongar Word	Pronunciation	English Word
Djoora	Joora	Arm
Koolangkar	Cool-ung-gar	Children
Koorda	Coor-du	Friend
Marp	Maa-p	Skin
Moorditj	Mor-di-ch	Good / Solid / Strong
Moort	Mor-t	Family
Nop	Norp	Boy
Winyarn	Win-yarn	Sad
Woola	Woo-la	Celebrate
Woonda	Woon-da	Shield
Keny	Ken	One
Koodjal	K-oo-jool	Two
Dambart	Dum-bart	Three
Koodjal-koodjal	K-oo-jool K-oo-jool	Four
Maar	Mar	Five
Maar Keny	Mar Ken	Six

Characters in this book have been named in Noongar, their meanings are as follows:

**Kaal**  
Fire

**Maali**  
Swan

**Kwila**  
Shark

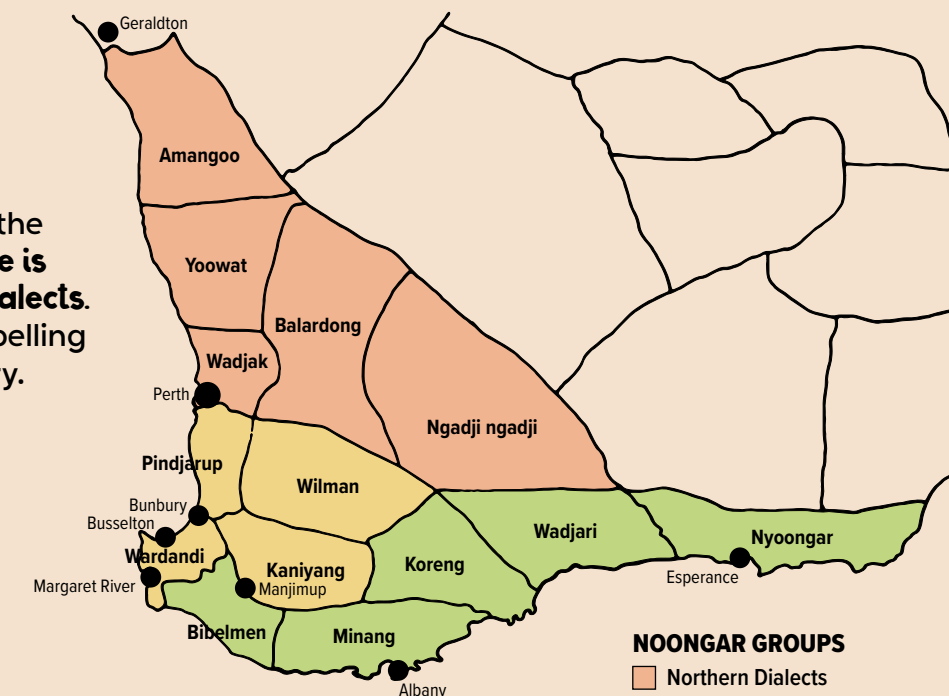
**Djilba**  
One of the six Noongar Seasons (Aug-Sep)



Special thank you to Charmaine Councillor at **Wardandi Miya-K Kaadadjiny Aboriginal Corporation** for the review and contribution to ensure the accuracy of the use of the Noongar language.

[wmkac.com.au](http://wmkac.com.au)

We acknowledge the **Noongar language is made up of many dialects.** Pronunciation and spelling of words can vary.



MAP SOURCE: [noongarboodjar.com.au/noongar-dialects](http://noongarboodjar.com.au/noongar-dialects)

**NOONGAR GROUPS**  
 Northern Dialects  
 South Western Dialects  
 South Eastern Dialects

## About Eczema

### Pronounced ec-zee-ma

Eczema, also known as atopic dermatitis, is a common skin condition in children that usually starts in the first few months of life. It causes a red, rough, and itchy rash. Eczema is not contagious. Children with eczema (and their family members) are more likely to have other allergic conditions like asthma or hay fever. Eczema impacts on sleep, school performance and quality of life. While it cannot be cured it can be managed well, and for most children eczema will improve as they get older.

### How to look after skin with Eczema

- ✓ Avoid triggers for eczema such as soaps, shampoos, shower gels and bubble baths, prickly or rough clothing (including wool), overheating, overdressing, sweat, friction, emotional stress and cigarette smoke.
- ✓ Bath or shower once each day, using warm (not hot) water and keep it short (5-10 minutes). Bath oil can be added to the bath, and a soap-free wash can be used if needed on dirty skin and for hair washing.

- ✓ After bathing/showering, pat-dry the skin and immediately apply moisturiser over the whole body and face, while the skin is still slightly damp. Use a moisturiser that is thick, like a cream or an ointment.
- ✓ For eczema flares (itchy, red, bumpy), topical corticosteroids ("steroids") are most commonly used. There are many different types (ointments, creams, lotions) that come in different strengths – your doctor will advise what is best. Generally, steroids are applied to the eczema twice daily until the skin is **perfect** (smooth and itch-free), then gradually reduced to the minimum amount that keeps the skin this way.
- ✓ Try not to scratch as this makes eczema worse. Keep the nails trimmed short, try distraction techniques and use your recommended treatment. Scratching also causes breaks in the skin, creating an opening for infection. The most common infection is from bacteria, which should be suspected if the skin develops honey-coloured crusts or appears raw and weepy. Often infected eczema can be painful and antibiotics are needed for these types of flares.

Here are **6 simple steps** to help keep bacteria away from **moorditj skin**:

- 1**  
keny  
  
Wash your hands with soap and water
- 2**  
koodjal  
  
Keep your fingernails short and clean
- 3**  
dambart  
  
Shower or bath everyday
- 4**  
koodjal-koodjal  
  
Dirty clothes should be put in the wash
- 5**  
maar  
  
Try not to share brushes, hats, hair ties, beanies, hoodies or towels
- 6**  
maar keny  
  
Always let a grown up know if your skin is sore

If you have any concerns, speak with your doctor.

## The Koolungar Moorditj Healthy Skin Project

This book has been developed by Telethon Kids Institute as part of the Koolungar Moorditj Healthy Skin project, a collaboration with Debarl Yerrigan Health Service and the South West Aboriginal Medical Service.

This project is the first ever co-designed research-service Australian study to describe skin health in urban-living Aboriginal children.



To read more about the project including investigators and collaborators, or to find more healthy skin resources:

Email [kmhs@telethonkids.org.au](mailto:kmhs@telethonkids.org.au) or visit [telethonkids.org.au/KMHS](https://telethonkids.org.au/KMHS)



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WESFARMERS  
CENTRE OF VACCINES  
& INFECTIOUS DISEASES

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY  
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Western Australian  
Future Health Research  
& Innovation Fund

The Koolungar Moorditj Healthy Skin project is generously supported by the WCVID, Telethon, and Western Australian Future Health Research & Innovation Fund.

## Authors



**Annette Garlett** is a Wilman and Wardandi woman from Noongar country. Annette grew up in Pingelly, Burekup, Waterloo and Bunbury. Annette has connections to Collard, Hill, Abraham, Bennell, Hume, Parfitt, and Winmar/Hare. She is passionate about helping the community to understand and gain information about caring for their health and wellbeing, with particular interest in childhood illnesses. Annette works on cultural heritage projects and other community committees.



**Dr Bernadette Ricciardo** is a Wadjella (non-Aboriginal) Australian of Italian and Irish ancestry. Born in Mt Barker on Menang boodjar (land) and raised in Perth on Whadjuk boodjar, she is a mother of four. Bernadette is a practicing dermatologist with over 10 years' experience in the field and is passionate about healthy skin for all koolungar.



**Delys Walton** is a Wilman Noongar from the Michael and Thorne family, born in Williams and grew up on Wandering Mission. Delys is a retired education assistant and Noongar language teacher. Passionate about art and language, she is on the local school board, Aboriginal language corporation board, and advisory to the Koolungar Moorditj Healthy Skin project.



**Joanne Hill** is a proud Noongar and Ngadju woman from the Thorne, Michael, Hume, Hart, Dimer, Wilson, Rogers and Boxer families, with connections throughout the Southern area of Western Australia and South Australia. Joanne has over 25 years' experience working with the South West Indigenous and wider community, delivering successful economic and social outcomes for her community. She is a mother of three and is passionate about children's health and healthy lifestyles.



**Kristy Jetta** is a proud Wardandi woman, born and raised in the Southwest city of Bunbury. Kristy is from the Jetta, Wallam, and Humpries moort (families), connecting throughout Noongar boodjar. Kristy's passion is working and building strong koolangka within her community through education, sport, and language. She has many experiences in different careers, but is most passionate about making our next generation healthy and proud.



**Sally Smith** (also known as Thelma Smith) was born on Whadjuk boodjar and has connections to Parfitt, Hansen, Wallam and Smith families. Sally is a mother of six and carer for extended family members, which she loves. She is passionate about working towards solutions to issues affecting Aboriginal families. She joined the advisory group to ensure local knowledge was embedded within research that is giving back and helping others in the community.

## Major Contributors

Ainslie Poore  
Prof Asha Bowen  
Charmaine Councillor  
Dr Ingrid Amgarth-Duff  
Jacinta Walton  
Melba Wallam



## Illustrator

**Tyrown Waigana** is a multi-disciplinary artist and designer. He is connected to peoples of Southwest Western Australia and Saibai Islanders in the Torres Strait through his Wardandi Nyoongar and Ait Koedal heritage. His creative practice encompasses painting, illustration, sculpture, graphic design and animation. Tyrown's work spans different sectors of the creative industry from contemporary Indigenous styled graphics for corporate industries to picture books and large-scale public artwork. [crawlinccrocodile.com](http://crawlinccrocodile.com)

Graphic Design by Kelli Savietto

Kelli is proudly of Nyikina and Yawuru heritage from the Kimberley of Western Australia.  
[kellisavietto.com.au](http://kellisavietto.com.au)

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Moorditj Marp  
1  
Healthy Skin Books

Kaal is a proud  
Noongar boy, he  
loves playing football,  
but this season Kaal is  
about to tackle a new and  
unexpected challenge...

**eczema.**

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