

# Medical costs another burden for burn victims from the bush

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Living away from community and country, Aboriginal families of children with severe burns also face critical financial stress to cover the associated costs of health care and treatment, a new study shows.

A recent study by Flinders researchers Dr. Courtney Ryder and Associate Professor Tamara Mackean found feelings of crisis were common in Aboriginal families with children suffering [severe burns](#), with one family reporting skipping meals and others selling assets to reduce costs while in hospital.

The [economic hardship](#) was found to be worse in families who live in rural areas—some households traveling more than five hours for treatment, creating undue financial strain.

Participants included families from SA, NSW and QLD who are already part of the larger-Australia-wide Coolamon study on burns injuries in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Their children had sustained severe burns that required at least one night in hospital and follow up care.

So far, the Coolamon study has explored the [health](#) inequity of burns incidents and severity in Aboriginal children, with hospitalization rates found to be [2-3 times greater than other Australian children](#).

This research conducted by Flinders University in conjunction with The George Institute for Global Health and UNSW School of Population Health also found Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children spent five times longer in hospital.

Dr. Courtney Ryder, from Flinders University's College of Medicine and Public Health, says out-of-pocket health expenditure are costs not covered by Medicare or [health insurance](#), and could include

gap payments, pharmaceutical costs, and travel costs such as transport, car parking, food, and accommodation.

She says results were "astounding" with some families reaching credit card limits, not paying other bills or even selling assets to get by.

"Even though we have Medicare, there are always additional out-of-pocket expenses for health care, and I don't think it's understood the depth or breadth of cost for those Aboriginal families who have a child with an acute burns injury," Dr. Ryder says.

Provided by Flinders University

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