



Centre for Excellence  
in Child and Family Welfare Inc.

# Good Practice in Child & Family Welfare Services for Aboriginal Children, Young People and Families

Karen Scobell,

Manager, Sector Development &  
Social Policy

Centre for Excellence in Child and  
Family Welfare, Melbourne





# Key issues

- How to improve quality practice in child and family welfare services for Aboriginal families and children.
- What is a “culturally competent” organisation?
- Mainstream organisations must be high quality, culturally respectful and sensitive when working with Aboriginal families and children.
- ACCOs should be supported to provide high quality, culturally respectful services to their communities.





# The Six Case Studies

- **Anglicare's** Family Support Innovations Project.
- **Berry Street Victoria's** TAKE TWO program.
- **Eastern Access Community Health's** (EACH) Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP).
- **Kildonan Child and Family Services'** implementation of the Families and School Together (FAST) Program.
- **Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative's** (GEGAC) Koori Kare.
- **MacKillop Family Services'** journey through organisational change.





# Anglicare's Family Support Innovations Project

- Anglicare (Yarra Ranges) partnering with Indigenous Health Team (Yarra Valley Community Health Service)
- Engage with, and win the trust of, vulnerable Aboriginal families in Yarra Ranges;
- Foster the partnerships to support and progress this work; and
- Achieve the successful results.





# Innovations Project: Outcomes

- At various levels:
  - ✓ family and Community,
  - ✓ the member organisations, and
  - ✓ partnership development



Improved dialogue and understanding  
between Anglicare and the Indigenous Health Team  
in all areas of care services for  
Aboriginal children, youth and families.





# Berry Street

- Berry Street's journey towards providing culturally appropriate and effective services to Aboriginal children and young people
- TAKE TWO: Therapeutic service to support children with complex emotional and behavioural issues resulting from severe abuse or neglect
- Systemic change at organisational and program levels to ensure services and programs are culturally sensitive and meet the needs of Aboriginal children and young people
- Aboriginal Senior Clinician role



# Berry Street: outcomes



- Aboriginal Senior Clinician role:
  - ✓ highlighting and advocating around areas for improvement,
  - ✓ assisting Berry Street to address systemic problems and move towards being a culturally sensitive and competent organisation,
  - ✓ advocating for good practice service delivery to Aboriginal clients,
  - ✓ the education and capacity building of non-Aboriginal clinicians.

Policies, procedures, systems and tools developed to support culturally sensitive practice.

Cultural awareness training to break down attitudes and assist staff and carers to improve practice.





# Aboriginal FAST Program

- Families and Schools Together (FAST) program:  
8-week, early intervention and prevention program-
  - ✓ strengthen family functioning,
  - ✓ prevent a child's school failure,
  - ✓ prevent substance abuse by the child and family members, and
  - ✓ reduce parental and child stress in daily life situations.
- Partnership between Kildonan, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), Thornbury Primary School.





# FAST Program: outcomes

- Improved levels of engagement between families involved in FAST and the school.
- Strong supportive connections developed between families participating in FAST.
- Aboriginal workers involved in delivering FAST have gained in confidence.

Three diverse partners pooled their expertise  
for a common goal:  
commitment to working towards positive outcomes  
for Aboriginal children at risk of school failure



# Koori Kare Program - Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-op

- Aboriginal specific foster care program in Gippsland region.
- Out-of-home care for up to 14 Aboriginal children experiencing crisis or emergency; or for a short, medium or long term placement.
- Carers recruited through word of mouth, based on Koori Kare's reputation.
- GEGAC's knowledge of local community - children placed with appropriate family members, or with trained and accredited carers skilled to provide culturally appropriate care and meet the needs of Aboriginal children.





## Koori Kare: Outcomes

- All Koori Kare children have a Cultural Plan; who they are safe to be connected with; local cultural activities to be included in.
- Carers are not left alone: Koori Kare provides practical advice and ongoing support.



Caring for Aboriginal children has unique elements: support strategies should be in place to support Aboriginal children and their carers, so they can maintain and strengthen links to Aboriginal children's family, Community and culture while in out-of-home care.





# Key Themes: what works well

**Organisational commitment and leadership** in moving towards culturally appropriate services and better outcomes for Aboriginal children, young people and families.

Community service organisations **develop respectful partnerships** with ACCOs and/or the local Aboriginal Community.

Culturally appropriate and sensitive services require **new and different models of care** and changes in practice.

## **Culturally competent organisations:**



- \*are staffed by trained staff including Aboriginal workers with a sound understanding of Aboriginal culture, traditions, child rearing practices;
- \*demonstrate culturally sensitive policies, procedures, practices and systems;
- \*put into practice regular review mechanisms and continuous improvement strategies.



# On-going Advocacy...

Significant support needed for the sector to:

- achieve cultural competence including gaining assistance with change management
- increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture, in particular different concepts of parenting and child rearing;
- improve data collection at both an organisational and program level, and to promote this need with DHS;
- implement programs that are effective for Aboriginal children, young people and families (e.g. TAKE TWO, Koori Kare, FAST).

Invest in significant program of on-going training for both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal services sector to:

- build organisational competence and
- strengthen workforce capacity at all levels (management, staff, volunteers).





# Some Resources...

- *Good Practice in Child & Family Welfare Services for Aboriginal Children, Young People and Families (C for E Monograph, 2007)*
- *Strengthening the recruitment and retention of foster carers in Victoria: Report of key findings. (C for E Monograph, 2007)*
- *Strengthening the recruitment and retention of carers for Victoria's Aboriginal Children. (C for E Monograph, 2008)*
- *Promising Practice in Out-of-Home Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Carers, Children and Young People (AIFS and SNAICC, 2007)*
- Joint DHS-sector work on Cultural Support Plan policy





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# We need to remember...

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families  
have a right to expect that all Government funded agencies  
will work with them and their children  
in a culturally respectful manner**

**Keeping Indigenous children connected  
with their culture, community  
and family is an essential priority  
in the development of an Aboriginal  
child's identity and sense of  
wellbeing**

