

**TASKFORCE PRESENTATION - TOWARDS A CULTURAL RESPECTFUL
CHILD PROTECTION FRAMEWORK
23 OCTOBER 2006
PRESENTATION NOTES**

Slide 1 - Towards a cultural respectful child protection framework

Slide 2 - Beyond Cultural Competency

While the Department and the NGO sector's focus on cultural competency at an agency or service delivery level this presentation will focus on the broader concept of a Cultural Respect Framework.

What is Cultural Respect and how is it different from a Cultural Competency?

Slide 3 - Key features of a Cultural Respect Framework

Key features of a Cultural Respect Framework, acknowledges the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, their families and communities; the historical and political background to the disadvantage experience by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and supports the continued advancement of independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services.

A culturally respectful framework provides an overarching statement of principles that informs the development and implementation of policies and strategies including the development of all the key concepts (such as cultural awareness, cultural competency and cultural safety) with the goal of improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.

Slide 4 - Features of Cultural Competency

Operationally defined, cultural competency is about genuinely demonstrating through the *integration and transformation of knowledge* about individuals and groups of people into specific *standards, policies, practices*, and attitudes to increase the quality of services. It is about good practice, *improved performance and accountability* of mainstream services that receive funding to provide services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Cultural Competency is not about aboriginalising mainstream services nor should it be promoted or supported as the answer to addressing the lack of access to independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies and services. This approach would only result in further marginalising the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by taking away their right to take charge of the welfare of our children. It is well accepted that these agencies are best placed to provide services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander children, families and communities and the key role play in addressing overrepresentation.

From the Partnership perspective the concept of Cultural Competency was not to look solely at cross cultural skills and abilities of service providers in responding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander but also to address issues around access, equity, accountability and probity in relation to the allocation of funding to the NGO non-indigenous mainstream services who apply and provide services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.

Slide 5 - Example of an existing model

One example, of a Cultural Respect framework in the Health Sector is *The National Cultural Respect Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health*.

The Framework acknowledges that to have a real impact on outcomes, there is a need for “a concerted effort across a number of dimensions to systemically lift the cultural competency of mainstream health services”.

The goal of the Cultural Respect is to uphold the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to maintain protect and develop their own cultural and achieve equitable health outcomes.

It is link to a number of major reports and national strategies including: RCIADIC, Bringing Them Home, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy, 1998; Ways Forward

Slide 6 - The Differences

The concept of Cultural Competency is to improve the cross cultural knowledge, skills and abilities of service providers in responding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. While the principle of cultural competency is applicable to all agencies and in all situations, cultural competency is aimed at a local operational and service delivery level.

Whereas, a Cultural Respectful framework sets out the overarching principles that guides and informs the development of planning, policy, strategies and implementation of programs and service delivery.

Cultural Respect as defined by the Australian Health Minister’s Advisory Council (AHMAC), “is the Recognition, protection and continued advancement of the inherent rights, cultures and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples”.

It is not until all parts of the system acknowledge and understand the need to adopt a broader approach to addressing the systemic issues (including the historical and political background to the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

communities and how this links to child protection) can we move forward to ensuring the best outcomes are achieved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The concept of a Cultural Framework could be a good starting point.

Slide 7 - Where to from here?

Currently, there are no National or State policy objectives or practice framework to lower the rate of overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the system. Cultural Competency is not the answer. It is therefore, critical that the Taskforce supports the *development of a specific Strategic Framework and policies (that supports the concepts of Culturally Respectful system)* for improving and achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families and reduce the over-representation.

It is also important for both the Government and mainstream agencies, to work alongside and actively support the indigenous child protection and family support sector. The Partnership acknowledges the contribution of mainstream agencies to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. However, the Partnership would strongly suggest that mainstream agencies should not set out to provide programs and services for Indigenous children and families but rather aim to support these services and acknowledge the critical role the independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies play by actively supporting them to build their capacity to provide culturally appropriate responses and services to indigenous children and families.