



Child Safety Planning and Partnerships Network

A joint initiative between the Department of Child Safety, government and community stakeholders

December 2006

This newsletter provides an update on the progress of the Child Protection Statewide Partnership Taskforce. For more details visit www.childsafety.qld.gov.au



Update from December Taskforce Meeting

The 23rd meeting of the Taskforce was held on 4 December 2006 with a particular focus on Indigenous issues.

Blue Card Process

Jermaine Isua and Nikki Wright of the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian provided an overview of the Commission's project to improve access to Commission by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Blue Card Process was particularly highlighted. Powerpoint presentations provided:

- Purpose of the Strategy
- Background Information
- Project Scope
- Project Objective
- Project Focus Areas.

The Strategy is currently in the Consultation phase which includes:

- Internal mapping of services and programs to identify access issues
- Establishment of an external Project Advisory Committee made up of key Indigenous child protection partners and service providers.
- Engagement with a wider Partnership Network to further inform the strategy (Elders Workshop)

Jermaine and Nikki provided some information about the issues and complexities regarding the Blue Card process and the strategies being undertaken by the Commission to assist Indigenous Communities through the process. The Blue Card process is currently being reviewed.

The Commission will keep the Taskforce informed of the progress and outcomes of the review.

Placement Models for Indigenous Children

Departmental data was provided in relation to placement models currently being provided by the department for Indigenous children. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Partnership also added additional perspectives.

Foster and kinship care account for 83%. Specialist foster care, residential care and supported independent living are the other models of care funded. Places funded for foster and kinship care reflect 24% of funds are allocated for Indigenous children. Some funds have gone to non-Indigenous placements for Indigenous specific places; other funds have been reserved. Non-Indigenous funding is transitional and must be transferred to Indigenous organisations within 12-36 months. Complex to extreme cases are difficult to fund explicitly for Indigenous children. It was reported that 29% of children in residential care are Indigenous. This figure is higher than it should be due to there not being enough foster care places. A buddy system between mainstream and Indigenous organisations was suggested with a trial buddying system across the state, which would be evaluated to determine where it was successful and why. Capacity in the sector around residential care is critical but, a Kinship care system needs to be built first.

Availability of Indigenous organisations to take on residential care is an issue. Data shows there are a low number of carers, but sometimes this is a matter of recording inaccurately. Data is currently being unpacked and will be examined to determine barriers. It is difficult for kinship carers to be alone in keeping a child safe when members of the child's family are still in the community. Support from other services for Kinship carers is needed. A broader service delivery system must be identified. Sibling groups are still being separated in some instances, but there is an attempt to keep them together, especially with a younger cohort of siblings. Data is not available currently. ICMS will provide data. Indigenous sibling groups are not being split up at a greater rate than non-Indigenous. Need to look at models for sibling groups. Specialised foster care needs to be more clearly defined. There is a need to examine what is available in mainstream services and how it can be built on to provide similar services to Indigenous children.



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Intensive Family Support

Karyn Walsh, Family Inclusion Network, provided a paper, Intensive Family Support In Context, which provided the following information:

Families associated with the child protection system live within a socio-economic context that is characterized by poverty, inadequate affordable housing, very limited formal education, unemployment, intergenerational experiences of loss, grief and trauma, drug and alcohol addictions, impact of mental illness or disability of a family member, social isolation, discrimination and disconnection from culture. Indigenous families have continued to experience socio economic disadvantage and have not been beneficiaries of the prosperity of Australia. Colonization and the imposition of western values and process have been the cause of much pain for indigenous communities and families.

Biological Parents require access to an appropriate mix of social, health; employment and family orientated services which assist them provide a safe and nurturing environment with their children. This mix needs to reflect an approach which is integrated with neighbourhood approaches which provide the ongoing engagement with families through the developmental stages of childhood.

Family Support Services need to be grounded in the local community involving community members so as to build up trust and engagement with families. Intensive Family Support needs to exist within a balanced family support system which includes universal services, neighbourhood services, targeted services to specific populations including culturally managed and delivered services.

Non indigenous services need to compliment an indigenous network of services and engage with indigenous consultants when supporting indigenous families. Culturally specific services and mainstream services need to work complimentary to each other within each community developing a network of services which reflect local family needs.

Intensive family support needs to be guided by an ecologically oriented, competence centred perspective. This perspective emphasizes aspects such as

- Improving the interaction of people and their environments;
- Promoting family empowerment – building on their strengths;
- Engaging in advocacy so as to access resources, opportunities and entitlements

that will enhance social conditions and structures to enhance family functioning;

- Work with parents as partners in the helping process;
- Provide practical assistance to meet needs;
- Cultural appropriateness - an attitude which welcomes the involvement, as appropriate, of any and all members of the child's family;
- Human diversity should be respected; and
- Cultural practices need to be learnt and understood by practitioners.

The Taskforce identified that a sense of continuum around family support is required as well as the need to define where intensive family support aligns with the tertiary end of child protection.

Intentional Capacity Building

Mark Francis, Child Safety Director, Department of Communities provided information in relation to the strategies and emerging directions in Indigenous Community Capacity Building. The intention of the program is to collaborate with the MCMC communities to support and build capability among emergent and aspirant community leaders and acknowledge and support the relationship between corporate and cultural governance.

Strengthening Non-government organisations (SNGOs) and Strengthening Indigenous Non Government Organisations (SINGOs) projects are delivering a suite of tools to assist organisations to deliver services well. The work of SINGOs around capacity building is still developing. It is recognised that service delivery organisations in the context of broader capacity building system are not necessarily what it is about for an urban community. The current set of proposals are targeted to MCMC communities, which is the priority at this stage. SINGOs is statewide although they began in remote Indigenous communities. The statewide approach is to achieve systemic change and outcomes. Palm Island. A super NGO is to fulfil management functions and delivery of human services. A strategy is being considered to determine applicability for other communities in the future. Welfare Reform: Under Noel Pearson's directions four communities in Queensland have voluntarily agreed to participate in a welfare reform trial. Community development work is being undertaken to develop strategies to refocus social norms in the best interest of children and families.



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Small Group Discussions

The Taskforce was divided into three small groups to discuss each of the three topic areas:

Intentional Capacity Building:

- Twinning development of mainstream and Indigenous services
- Sponsorship for Indigenous services
- Mentoring programs
- Exchange programs (staff)
- Educational bursaries
- Issue of small pool of workers and government has greater financial resources which creates a disparity between government and non-government
- Issues around having time to build on these ideas

Placement Models for Indigenous children

- Kinship care main focus
- Capacity limitations – 55% of Indigenous population under 17, 70% under 30
- Possible solution – reception centre, receiptal services
- Issue about placements made in crisis not revisited
- Possible solution – Focussed Family Reunification Worker
- Other options – Boarding schools, semi independent residentials
- Work on mapping the community to identify carers in advance
- More support, lateral thinking, ie priority housing
- Policy ThinkTank forum will be a vehicle for taking forward major issues

Intensive Family Support:

- Proposed joint meeting between partnership and CSDN re employment, housing, training, drug and alcohol services, domestic violence
- Investment into addressing poverty leads to child safety
- CEO Committee could be engaged,
- Proposed action around linking with CSDN

The Taskforce agreed that material from the Intensive Family Support discussion will provide the basis for the next Taskforce Agenda on Prevention and Early Intervention.

Information Sharing

An update was provided by Ian Muil on the Multicultural Foster Carer Project:

\$50,000 was provided as part of the general foster care recruitment strategy to work with African, Samoan and Vietnamese communities.

Issues:

- Some protocols and procedures not inclusive of CALD families
- Lack of funding for accessing interpreters and limited access to translated printed material
- Limited inclusive practice
- Personalised flexible approach is required

Recommendation:

- Sufficient resources be provided for recruitment and training of foster carers from CALD backgrounds and the ability to engage with a community before a crisis, so there is understanding of who could help.
- The establishment of family councils was suggested.
- It was recommended that there be strong links with DOC in the early intervention phase, development of a practice model, a multicultural child safety resource unit in the department

Next Taskforce Meeting

The next taskforce meeting will be held on 12 February 2007 with a focus on Prevention and Early Intervention. This will be the first of two Taskforce meetings focussing on Prevention and Early Intervention. The Taskforce agreed that representatives from the Department of Communities, QCOSS, QAIHC and FIN will meet with the Principal Planning and Partnerships Officers to shape the agenda for the Taskforce Meeting.