2012

What Works Matters

What Works Matters Report

Successful partnership strategies for the child protection system

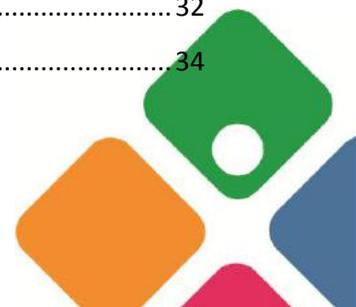**PeakCare Queensland Reconciliation Action Plan 2011**

Contents

Acknowledgements

List of Sponsors

- **PeakCare Queensland**

PeakCare Queensland was established in 1999 having evolved out of the Child and Family Welfare Association of Queensland (CAFWAQ) and previously the Board of Governing Authorities for residential care. This change represented much more than a name change. It reflected a significant shift in the roles and responsibilities of PeakCare in line with developments in understanding and knowledge about the protection and care of children and young people, and the broader range of services required to meet those needs.

- **Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak**

QATSICPP Limited provides leadership in advocacy, lobbying and representation for its members, develop policies and strategies to resource and strengthen the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled child protection agencies and to promote and advocate the rights, safety and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families through effective partnerships and strategic collaborations.

- **Combined Voices campaign**

Combined Voices campaign is a movement in Queensland demanding better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The group includes ■ Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Human Services Coalition (QATSIHSC) ■ Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS) ■ Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Ltd (QATSICPP) ■ PeakCare Queensland ■ CREATE Foundation ■ Uniting Care Centre for Social Justice ■ The Queensland Alliance ■ CentaCare Cairns ■ Save the Children ■ Foster Care Queensland ■ Kummara Association Inc ■ Central Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care Agency ■ Kahwun Wooga ATSI Corporation for Community Development ■ RAATSICC

- **Reconciliation Australia**

Reconciliation Australia is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that was established in 2000 by the former Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. As the peak national organisation, it builds and promotes reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians for the wellbeing of the nation.

- **School of Human Services and Social Work, Griffith University**

As Griffith Enterprise, the School undertakes projects that seek to make a difference for the community, in advancing improved awareness and understanding, in informing and facilitating improvements in government policies and practices, and in promoting well being and returning social dividends to society.

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Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AICCAs	Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
CAARS	The Common Approach to Assessment Referral and Support
CAFWAQ	Child and Family Welfare Association of Queensland
CMC	Crime and Misconduct Commissions
FRC	Family Relationship Centre
GEGAC	Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
PCQ	PeakCare Queensland
QAIHC	Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council
QATSICPP	Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak
QATSIHSC	Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Human Services Coalition
QCOSS	Queensland Council of Social Services
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan
RATSICC	Cape York/Gulf Remote Area Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Child Care Advisory Association
RE	Recognised Entity
SAAP	Support Assistance and Accommodation Program
SNAICC	Secretariat of the National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Inc.
TBS	The Benevolent Society
VACCA	Victorian Aboriginal Childcare Agency Co-operative Ltd
USA	United States of America

Intent of the study

PeakCare Queensland is the peak body in Queensland for non-government organisations providing child protection therapeutic services. In partnership with the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP) through the research PeakCare Queensland will promote the Secretariat of the National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) Principles formally endorsed by the Queensland government. Through these Principles, PeakCare Queensland will ensure that Indigenous children are supported and safe in strong, thriving families and communities to reduce the over-representation of Indigenous children in child protection systems. Moreover the Principles state that for those Indigenous children in child protection systems, culturally appropriate care and support is provided to enhance their wellbeing. It was clear in 2010 that such a project could be accountable to the growing movement for reconciliation and to Reconciliation Australia, a national framework that could support sustainability and produce a stronger piece of work with the PeakCare Queensland RAP registered in January 2011 (Reconciliation Australia, 2009)(See Appendix 3).

Originally in 2009 PeakCare Queensland proposed that over the following two years a study be undertaken on successful strategies used by partnerships of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream organisations in the child protection system. However, by 2011 the scope expanded to include other sectors such as arts and culture, housing and social enterprise and to develop two position papers – one on the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the Queensland child protection system and another on partnership. These will be published to further support the advocacy role that QATSICPP and PeakCare Queensland undertake together through the Combined Voices campaign.

This RAP project as the first in the series documents exemplars of good practice along with working models of effective collaboration between Indigenous agencies and communities with main stream services. These partnerships give effective benefits to Indigenous children, families or communities. It was important that these exemplars be discussed broadly and locally to encourage dialogue with main stream service providers, A&TSI providers and communities about the issues that they face concerning delivering effective services to Indigenous clients. It was necessary that such a study would give more impetus to the National Child Protection Framework, supporting outcome 5:

"Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities."

The report arises from actions identified by the SNAICC aligned with the Closing the Gap initiative of the Commonwealth government. The SNAICC has promoted its *Service Development, Cultural Respect and Service Access Policy* to its members. This had been endorsed by its National Executive in July 2008 (dated August 2008). In October 2009 PeakCare Queensland Board endorsed this policy but also suggested that further dialogue was needed to implement the guiding principles for children's wellbeing and protection within Indigenous communities.

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From October 2009, PeakCare Queensland and QATSICPP participated in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Safety Taskforce providing advice to the Department of Communities. The *Together keeping our children safe and well: Our comprehensive plan for promoting the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and reducing their overrepresentation within Queensland's child protection system* established an action plan 2010 – 2012 and an agreement between the government and non-government sector to work in partnership.

In taking direction from the Board, the research would use a robust process of dialogue (as distinct from consultation) which gives voice to all parts of the child protection and other sectors and captures the complexity of the issues (Darlington et al, 2008). Moyle (2006) says that relationships with Indigenous people take time and dialogue. Relationships should be based on understanding, respect and the suspension of assumptions ensuring that the relationships are culturally sensitive and provide guidance for both members in the relationship building process. To this end, PeakCare Queensland has worked within a Reconciliation Australia RAP framework and as part of that the Combined Voices campaign group (particularly the Indigenous members) to advise the RAP. PeakCare Queensland would report progress on the project to part of a range of actions registered with Reconciliation Australia. During 2010 progress of the activities associated with the report was provided to the RAP Advisory Group, a subcommittee of the Board and consequently redirection of the project activities resulted with emphasis on bringing international research and advocacy into the RAP. Further collaborative work has been suggested for the RAP 2 to sustain accountability and the What Work Matters activities.

How to use the report

This report, the first in the series on partnership and over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the child protection system, consists of a full report with five appendices: an Issues Paper, five case studies, the PeakCare Queensland RAP 2010-2011, RAP Partnership Tools and the PeakCare Queensland position paper 2012. This section consolidates material in first three appendices.

Practitioners in non-Indigenous organisations and agencies from a range of sectors may use this report for ideas that can be embedded in their own RAP should they intend to take this journey. Reconciliation Australia will support an organisation to achieve a RAP. Even if organisations do not wish to register their RAP they may use the report to model similar activities that work towards the Reconciliation Australia vision.

Policy makers, service providers and others may find the report useful to give greater effect to a future realignment of the service delivery system, funding policies and planning for greater investment in the Indigenous part of the child protection system. This would give more impetus to the National Child Protection Framework, supporting Outcome 5 which is "Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities."

The report takes as its launching point the broad policy context where partnerships are resourced and supported in the realisation that partnership work is time-consuming and complex within the Indigenous part of the child protection system. It discusses models that policy makers in Queensland could consider.

The report concentrates on the way established partnerships have been initiated and sustained around the needs of Indigenous children and young people, their families and their communities. It looks in depth at the establishment stage and the tools and resources used by the partners to identify common ground and activity that may require any of the three levels of engagement: co-ordination, co-operation or collaboration (Keast, 2009).

Readers might like to look at the report of initial activities across the exemplars to identify in which phase their current arrangements lie and what has to occur to reach the next level in the journey of good practice should some issues remain "wicked" or intransigent. It is always experimental and experiential. No one network and partnership is like the other. However, it is possible that some Indigenous partnerships have not had the opportunity to see possibilities which this report now presents and drawing out common themes may be useful for their future network activities.

How not to use this report

Caution should be taken when adapting ideas contained in this report. There are thousands of Indigenous communities and governance structures which influence outcomes. Ideas and processes that observe local cultures and history will create trusted relationships between Indigenous and mainstream organisations. Each partnership can then focus on improving the way children and young people are supported because the local

Indigenous community will have a greater sense of ownership (SNAICC, 2010: 5 and 82-103).

Participating organisations

The following organisations gave their approval to be acknowledged. They were involved in the research contributing case study material and participating in workshops where ideas were tested:

ACT for Kids
The Benevolent Society
bric housing company
Combined Voices campaign
Griffith University Research Enterprise
Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak
Queensland State Library
Silver Lining Foundation

Abstract

Since 2008, the Secretariat of the National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) has promoted the *Service Development, Cultural Respect and Service Access Policy* to its members. It believes that "All Non-Indigenous services in out-of-home care sector seeking to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children should commit to the medium term (2-3 year) transfer of service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies; and in the interim to developing strong relationships with their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community working within a framework of respect, collaboration and negotiated partnership (2008:5) Also in that year the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) commissioned a report on best practice in organisational change anticipating that by advancing preventative strategies existing services may have to stand back and others come forward in the new paradigm or inverted pyramid. This report recommended that the next steps entailed further research for "the appropriateness of the proposed systems change in relation to Indigenous children and families (Allen Consulting Group, 2008: xv). An outcome of this report, *The Common Approach to Assessment Referral and Support* (CAARS) also indicated that the proposed tool be 'live' tested in at least three sites across Australia (CAARS, Commonwealth, Department of Families Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2010: 64).

In late 2009, PeakCare Queensland endorsed this policy as a way to frame meaningful dialogue (as distinct from consultation) with its members and other agencies in Queensland during 2010 and 2011- midway and the end of the medium timeframe outlined in the SNAICC policy. This coincided with a conversation begun almost a decade ago within PEAKCARE QUEENSLAND and latterly within the Combined Voices campaign. There is broad concern now at the high proportion of Indigenous children and young people within the child protection system in Queensland; despite best efforts racial disparity appears intractable. Dialogue has already begun around improving the quality of care through the control of placements being expressly in the hands of Indigenous communities. The report outlines six possible policy context models to progress existing efforts in organisational capacity building in Indigenous services (Frizzell et al, 2006; Higgins et al, 2007; Millar et al, 2007; The Australian Collaboration and Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2007; Walker, 2007; De Guio et al, 2009; SNAICC, 2010). The What Works Matters report, the first in a series including position papers, focuses on the policy context as well as the collaborations themselves. It records the considerable effort and time from the perspective of the organisations partnering; the way each selects appropriate tasks aligned to their organisational intents meanwhile supporting networks which impact on the Indigenous part of the child protection, culture and arts, employment services and housing.
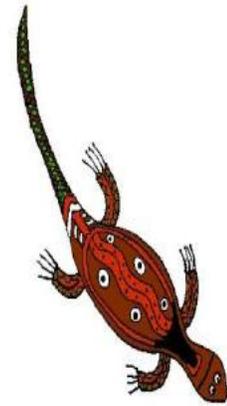
Key messages

- The United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the *Charter on Rights of the Child* can provide an international framework for Indigenous partnerships should these treaties be ratified through legislation in Queensland.

- *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020*, National Child Protection Standards, the Common Approach to Assessment, Referral and Support and the National Compact between the Australian Government and the Third Sector can address the care and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people if programmed resources follow. Preventive strategies may reduce demand on tertiary child protection services if Indigenous partnerships are supported.

- Reconciliation Australia provides a community-based accountability framework for partnership work instigated by non-Indigenous services in the absence of strong legislation in Australia and a treaty with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people protected by the Crown as in New Zealand.

- The *Queensland Compact: Towards a fairer Queensland* and the Child Safety Services *Together Keeping Our Children Safe and Well – Our comprehensive plan for promoting the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and reducing their over-representation within Queensland's child protection system* and *Blueprint for implementation strategy: Reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland's child protection system (for government)* are timely responses to inter-departmental partnerships and with further work, the potential for enabling future Indigenous partnerships.

- Current Queensland *Purchasing & Procurement Policy* prevents partnerships between government and external entities and the *Queensland Government framework for investment in human services* (2007) suggested it will rarely be appropriate to form a partnership with an external entity. Cross- agency, cross- government partnerships are to be trialled.

- With limited legislative and programmatic enablers in Queensland, establishing and sustaining successful indigenous partnerships depends on ten aspects that need to align for long term engagement. These are: the driver that pushes the partnership, the reason, the intent, the partners involved, the people within the partnering organisation, the attaining of achievements, the quality of the relationships and the management of risks, real or perceived, the structure of the partnership, the leadership styles of the major protagonists and the resources available to the partners.

- Self- assessment tools and partnership health checks alert potential partners to the pitfalls and gain a preparedness that accounts for the vagaries of external and internal pressures on the partnership work.

Executive summary

Over the past two years focus for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities has been to implement a plan to transition services over the medium term (2 – 3 years) from mainstream organisations to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies and in the interim to develop strong relationships with their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and main stream organisations working within a framework of respect, collaboration and negotiated partnership (SNAICC, 2008c:5)

But how well is the child protection sector already addressing the issues and supporting success in this transition phase? How well do funders conceive the time-consuming and complex work of partnership work in addition and fundamental to service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?

Within the context of a Reconciliation Action Plan, this report, the first in a series including policy position papers, uses a case study approach. In addition it outlines six possible policy contexts for building capacity. It concentrates on a deliberate partnership process that seeks to improve services to Indigenous communities. The context of the collaborations is important and outlined. The cases are drawn from the child protection and other sectors.

The main activities of the partners have been identified. It was clear that the partners developed a project to attract government funding which could not have been possible for either organisation working on its own. The driver for their involvement in all cases from the child protection sector was the commitment to the child placement principle and for other sectors meeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families' complex needs in terms of housing, culture and employment. The rationale for partnerships was to become more aware of what is appropriate to the local culture. Beyond service provision, the demands of sustainable capacity building produced more intense relationships; relationship building, staff recruitment and workforce development, governance structure and leadership all contributed to addressing the challenges and the big issues which the partners faced.

The keys to success were reported by the partners as being respectful of the time that good consultation requires, good governance to establish the vision so ensuring that staff were recruited for their knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and could advise colleagues on particular community processes to effect the best care or outcomes. The biggest challenges for partnerships include the short funding cycles that ignore the long time for trust to develop across the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies and mainstream organisations. Fear of not being able to provide a service to vulnerable communities is an unhealthy driver in the child protection sector, a sector characterised by competitive tendering and large organisations having strategic advantage. The report also outlines what partners identified as the lessons for their next partnership experience. The complexity for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies is

that they manage many short term partnerships because main stream organisations agree to form partnerships as a requirement of their contracts with government. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies have in their defence become very circumspect about the intensions behind approaches and take time to have proof of an authentic engagement by these potential partners with their communities.

The conclusion that the report comes to is that the partnership that government has with the sector has a pervasive effect on forcing relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and mainstream organisations often not funding and not recognising the additional work required to give life to the partnership. Sectors such as housing, arts and culture have partially resolved issues improving government relations from which others within the community sector may adapt. PEAKCARE QUEENSLAND supports The Compact development in Queensland since 2008 and the establishment of Not-For-Profits Commission at the Commonwealth level in the future as infrastructure long overdue. It also regards the *Blueprint for Implementation strategy: Reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland's child protection system* launched in late 2010 and to be augmented by the non-government sector as an important additional plank to foster mutual understanding of the challenges. Funded, accountable partnership work augmented by this infrastructure has the potential to refocus and reframe service delivery should substantial re-engineering of resources away from the tertiary system and to Indigenous communities occur.

Chapter 1   Project overview and background

Chapter One provides an overview of the research processes for initiating and sustaining partnerships across Indigenous and main stream organisations.

Introduction and research question

Conceived as an element of the PeakCare Queensland Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP2011), the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reconciliation Project entitled **What Works Matters** examines the experiences of networks and partnerships involved in working together to transition control of child placement to Indigenous families and communities. For some time, there has been general concern that mainstream organisations were funded to provide services for Indigenous communities without sufficient capability or capacity to address the complexity involved. Over time transition arrangements had been discussed but not formalised. Before the research was underway, the Queensland government announced that funds to Indigenous organisations would be offered by tender and the selection based on merit. The Minister also undertook a consultation process with QATSICPP to advise current recognised entities (REs)[1] that their number would be reduced to eleven from thirty-two. This political context impacted on the research around partnerships while the focus of the sector was on these structural issues and relationships with government and extended the data-gathering phase into 2011.
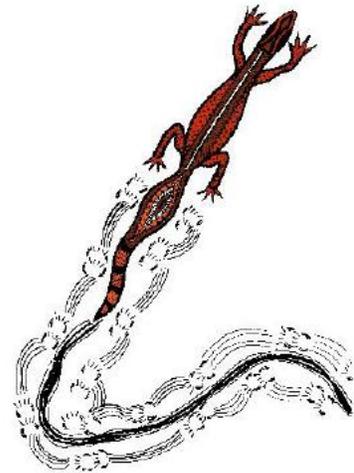
Structure of this report

This report is divided in four chapters and an Executive Summary. Chapter One provides an overview of the research processes for initiating and sustaining partnerships across Indigenous and main stream organisations. Chapter Two reviews the literature and makes a conclusion in regard to the direction the case studies should take. It draws on the published successful approaches to networks between A&TSI and non-Indigenous organisations in Australia and overseas and the need for further work. Chapter Three outlines the findings of the case studies, focus groups and a state-wide forum held as a Combined Voices session within the QCOSS Conference. Chapter Four is a conclusion with suggestions as to how to establish and maintain a range of activities within partnerships between A&TSI and non-Indigenous services. The report contains appendices which provide deeper analysis.

Methodology and its limitations

The *Work That Matters* project itself was a partnership project between PeakCare Queensland and QATSICPP. QATSICPP promote a set of principles (Hardy et al, 2003) that could apply to the research partnership between PeakCare Queensland and QATSICPP itself:

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1 REs are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations with specific authority to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families throughout their journey in the statutory child protection system; the investigation and assessment, decisions about the case plan for a child and placement of a child in out-of-home care.

Principle 1 – recognise and accept need for partnership
Principle 2 – develop clarity and realism of purpose
Principle 3 - ensure commitment and ownership
Principle 4 - develop and maintain trust
Principle 5 – create clear and robust partnership arrangements
Principle 6 – monitor, measure and learn

To undertake this ambitious project reflected concern by the peak bodies to the over-representation of Indigenous children and young people at every point in the decision-making process in the child protection system. Both peak bodies believe partnership collaboration is needed for "wicked"[2] or intransigent problems requiring a *collaborative* approach for finding solutions (Australia, Public Service Commission, 2007; Keast, 2010). The close relationship PeakCare Queensland enjoyed with QATSICPP resulted from a searching within the Combined Voices campaign to analyse assumptions within the child protection system and do things differently. The partnership was further consolidated around the *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies by the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies* (AIATSIS, 1999). For the field work both an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Non-Indigenous researchers undertook the interviews and facilitated the regional discussion forums. The research drew on the considerable body of knowledge around action research as a methodology suited to continuous evaluation and reflection in an environment of high volatility such as Indigenous child protection system in Queensland. The researchers and peak bodies implemented the cycle of "plan, act, observe, reflect and plan" (SNAICC, 2010) where it takes time to establish the relationships and identify the key research questions. It is said that the pitfalls in relation to time are:

- Not enough time spent planning
- Far too long spent doing field work generating excessive material to analyse
- Inadequate time left for analysis and writing up
- No time planned for getting the findings out there and taking action (SNAICC, 2010: 136)

While time was spent in planning the research, sustaining the project was found in the strength of the process was in using a research methodology which accounted for paradigm shifts during the time frame. Welfare and children's service policy is characterized by continuous change and review. During the planning phase funded organisations involved in the sector changed. Programs substantially altered. The research addressed this through altering the original brief and at the outset created a contingency of about one year at the outset. The research did not fall into the trap of doing too much field work. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations signalled early on that while they were interested, they could not be involved. The research design took account of this and moved to a facilitated forum of Indigenous organisations from the regions in Brisbane which accommodated the state of emergency as it unfolded in early 2011.

Using a methodology that embedded research analysis for reframing also prompted an analysis of the policy and program context impacting on organisations. This opened the scope to the strategic partnership in policy development at State and Commonwealth levels and the impacts of competition

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[2] It must be noted from the outset that within current Indigenous parlance "wicked" means anything BUT intransigence – it means "great" and fantastic.

policy on partnership structure. Current Commonwealth activity in terms of the Productivity Commission consultations, the discussion in regard to the establishment of the Commonwealth Commissioner for Children and Young People in 2010 and the changes to legislation in Queensland may well impact on partnership activity.

The process for the research was:

- Seek out and document exemplars of good practice and working models of effective collaboration between Indigenous communities and agencies and main stream services that give effective benefits to Indigenous children, families or communities. This will include a literature review of the main issues involved in the project
- Work with the QATSICPP to document exemplars of good practice and working models in Indigenous agencies where they have meaningful collaboration with mainstream agencies that give effective benefits to Indigenous children, families or communities.
- Dialogue with main stream service providers, Indigenous providers and communities about the issues that they face concerning delivering effective services to Indigenous clients.

Because of the dynamic nature of action research within an Indigenous context the program was open to change. The research was directed by an advisory group consisting of representatives of QATSICPP and PeakCare Queensland. Both peak organisations developed the process for selecting the Indigenous consultant and the protocols and ethics for conducting the research. Case studies were outlined to preserve anonymity and organisations who wished to be identified in a general way have been acknowledged. Interviewees were able to opt out of the process at anytime and review the section pertinent to their evidence within the report. Participants at the Brisbane forum were selected to give a representation wherever possible to regions across Queensland, size of organization, partner conscientiousness and length of partnerships.

This research used a qualitative stakeholder engagement approach. It was important that protocols developed by the advisory groups were adhered to so that Indigenous participants invited participation by the researchers. The research was supported by a critical friend of the study selected by the partnerships for the expertise in research methodologies appropriate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child protection.

A variety of methods was used to collect data to help understand and gauge commitment for transition arrangements between mainstream and Indigenous agencies in the future, including:

- Conducting a literature review
- Developing an ethics framework based on an Information Sheet and Consent Form
- Creating of a survey schedule for interviews with participating organisations
- Conducting one-on-one interviews with organisations' managers
- Facilitating a forum of regional Indigenous organisations
- Discussions with members of the Combined Voices campaign
- Registering the research as part of the 2010 RAP with Reconciliation Australia to underpin the findings and recommendations as accountable in the 2011 RAP.

The limitation of the methodology of using a similar interview schedule was partially addressed by encouraging scenario setting so that Indigenous interviewees could yarn while their ideas were allocated to sections of the interview schedule. All interviewers maintained research diaries for further conversations between them and their critical friend of the study. This gave the researchers additional insights into the way people understand and experience partnership work and also how they research it. Combining this with a forum of regional Indigenous organisations challenged and extended the researchers' views. The lack of engagement was addressed by reorganizing the link to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contacts who could overcome cultural reticence to be involved.

In particular, the research was interested in the continuum of the *cooperation, coordination* and *collaboration* phases to unpack the issues chosen for partnership. What could be tested through using the classification system? It was important to judge whether partners' limited their expectation initially for a longer term goal; whether they were testing aspects of the relationship for greater integration over time. So in the beginning each organisation may choose to only co-operate risking no resources or control testing whether there may be future possibilities for a more intensive relationship that collaboration demands. The issues selected for collaboration as opposed to the less risky possibilities of coordination and cooperation were thus of particular interest and justified the selection of longer partnerships (greater than two years) to capture the developmental phases.

After a while it became apparent that for some agencies collaboration and the 3 Cs framework (Keast, 2009) was not as familiar as the community development approach which Queensland government agencies outside Department of Communities use in their interactions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These interactions were also embraced by the research. Action research principles made it possible to test the viability of the research on the longer term partnerships. A few months into the project and it became clear that the child protection sector particularly makes shorter term relationships more prevalent and just as worthy of research as the longer term. For this reason, the clear message from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partner was that investigation of what works for a shorter term may provide more exemplars from child protection. In addition to this learning from action research was that we needed to look at other sectors and expand our framework to a community development approach that used a different perspective and language to describe the way they worked as well as frameworks from Canada which clearly informs some partnerships in Queensland.[3]

Resources available to the research were limited by the nature of relationship PeakCare Queensland and QATSICPP had with each other, their own partnership journey and the organisations and personnel on each site. Not all organisations involved were members of PeakCare Queensland. Examples were drawn from organisations that were self-funded, funded by Child Safety Services and Housing and

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[3] Toronto First Duty (TFD) was established in 2001 as a partnership of the City of Toronto, the Toronto District School Board and community agencies supported by the Atkinson Charitable Foundation. The project is supported by resource development and a robust research agenda.
"The goal of TFD is to develop a universally accessible system that promotes the healthy development of children from conception through primary school, while facilitating parents' work or study and offering support to their parenting role. It informs public policy by implementing the central recommendation of the Early Years Study *for a 'first-tier program for early child development … The system should consist of community-based centres operating at the local level within a provincial framework.'*

Homelessness Services, by the State Library of Queensland, and Cultural Museums. Mostly managers of the organisations were interviewed and in some cases key informants were identified and interviewed. In this way numbers of views were accommodated. Diverse cultures also impacted on how research was conducted and the embedded concepts which are highlighted in any Indigenous partnership arrangement can be cast against the QATSICPP frame which outlines the points of tension:

European-based Culture	Indigenous Cultures
'Linear, goal-posted' approach The dominant white culture tends to focus on: • the 'content' of its decisions • delineating goal-posted pre-determined end points • performing tasks designed to reach these end-points in a planned, • linear manner, and • judging the success or otherwise of its undertakings on the basis of whether or not the pre-determined goals have been achieved.	**Emphasis on 'the journey'** Indigenous cultures tend to focus on: • the 'process' of arriving at decisions • remaining open to the discovery of answers as the process runs its course • exploring views and options as they emerge without being restricted by imposed time-frames or expectations, and • holding no pre-conceptions about solutions against which success may be judged.
'Secular' approach The dominant white culture tends to: • separate religious and spiritual beliefs of its population from the 'secular' management and administration of its government, laws and family life, and • view its association with the land as a personal possession with, in the most part, no religious or spiritual significance attached to it.	**'Spiritual' approach** Indigenous cultures tend to: • integrate spiritual beliefs as a basis for the management and administration of their leadership, traditions, customs, laws and family life, and • maintain an historical, spiritual connection of nations and language groups with the land, as opposed to being based on notions of personal ownership.
Individualism' The dominant white culture tends to focus on: • individual ownership of possessions and rights to personal wealth and civil freedoms • an assignment of clearly delineated roles of, for example, 'victim' or 'offender', with individuals held chiefly responsible for their misdemeanors • perceiving the actions of individuals as the cause of 'problems' with individuals therefore being judged and made the subject of decisions about their 'punishment', and	**'Collective approach'** Indigenous cultures tend to emphasise: • collective possession and access to resources • collective civil obligations • decision-making by collectives of people led by Elders and community leaders in accordance with their broad responsibilities for spiritual, community and family life, and • collective dialogue and responsibility for what may have contributed to a 'problem' as well as its solutions, whilst holding individuals accountable

European-based Culture	Indigenous Cultures
• the assignment of secular authority to designated individuals in making these decisions.	for their respective contributions.
'Nuclear family-based' child-rearing practices The dominant white culture tends to focus on: • the raising of children being ideally undertaken within a nuclear family-based setting, and • the responsibilities for all aspects of children's upbringing, wherever possible, being held by their parents.	**Family and community-based child-rearing practices** Indigenous cultures tend to emphasise: • the broader role held by a child's community in addition to their extended family in raising children, • the responsibilities that may be taken up by both 'blood-relatives' as well as others who may be assigned roles (such as 'Auntie') to supplement and assist parents, in accordance with specific customs and protocols that exist within and across families, language groups and nations.
'Reactivity' to events and confined responses The dominant white culture tends to focus on: • taking actions in reaction to events as and when they occur confining their responses to dealing with the immediate issues or concerns, with limited referencing to either the past or long-term • future implications of the decisions made, and • in relation to child protection services specifically, designing systems that are weighted towards tertiary-end responses triggered by reported events or instances of child abuse or neglect having occurred and the remedial actions necessary to remove immediate threats to a child's safety.	**Contextualised responses to events as symptoms of need** Indigenous cultures tend to emphasise: • a need to understand and interpret events from a broader historical and social perspective • 'whole-of-life' considerations when determining responses to single events and the long-term implications of these responses on families and communities in addition to the individuals who are directly involved, and • in relation to child protection services specifically, a preference for responses that are needs-driven (as opposed to event-driven) where instances of abuse or neglect are contextualised as symptomatic of social disadvantage and need.

Source: QATSICPP (2008: 6-7)

The Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS, 2007) produced *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies* which the project has utilized to guide its methodology (Appendix 4). Queensland has also provided resources to support consultation (Queensland, nd; Queensland, 1999).

To account for the two world views each case study outlines these as they contribute to the success of the partnerships by discussing and addressing their differences. It is quite possible that the perception of success lies within a totally different paradigm within an Indigenous context (Bessaraba, 2010).

Literature review

An extensive literature review was conducted to identify knowledge relating to the research questions and gaps that this report would attempt to fill. In addition to understanding the current policy context, the review canvassed domestic and international literature. One focus was on what policy contexts fostered partnerships and what governments in Australia and Queensland in particular might put in place to provide the most conducive climate for partnerships. A second focus was on the organisational aspects. What could we learn from partners conscientiously working to address quality care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities? It has to be said that there is a real need for research in this area and to document how policy can provide environments conducive to building trust relationships necessary for partnership. We especially need this when instrumental partnerships are featured in performance indicators in current Queensland government contracts in the child protection sector.

Partnership selection

Partnerships were selected based on the advice from a range of groups. Firstly, the PEAKCARE QUEENSLAND Board as well as the Combined Voices campaign was invited to identify partnerships improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Secondly, the RPPOs, a group of network facilitators and co-ordinators across regional Queensland funded by Department of Communities - Child Safety Services were asked to make suggestions from their regions. Thirdly, expert practitioners in the field working across mainstream and Indigenous communities were asked to provide suggestions.

Data gathering

Data gathering reflected the fluid environment within which the research was undertaken. Initially the child protection sector partnerships were identified on the basis that two years would provide information of a journey which had seen the participants moving across a continuum of relationship building and together seeking out opportunities together after an approach from a mainstream organisation.

It was apparent after a few months that two years as a threshold engagement period was not reflective of the short term opportunistic activity in the sector, nor in other sectors such as youth and family support. It also became apparent that often a partnership from a mainstream organisation was not perceived as that from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective.

To capture the reality of partnership, the project sought information of short term projects where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations had approached non-Indigenous organisations. At the same time we sought advice from our research partner, QATSICPP on the current environment to form research strategies that acknowledged the pressure on resources to be involved in the project. From July 2010, interviews were held with key

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informants from organisations that had long term involvement and some success as partners. Interviews and meetings were held facilitated by the researchers observing research protocols with Indigenous communities (AIATSIS, 2007). Feedback was incorporated in such decisions that shortened the partnership period and the role of the initiator of the partnership. When the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researcher found the contact difficult, advice was sought from the Combined Voices campaign chaired by QATSICPP and a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers became involved. At this point also Combined Voices campaign suggested that as time had elapsed the concept of partnership has been impacted by contracts insisting on instrumental partnerships. Government departments had begun suggesting that they worked with non-government organisations in partnership and clearly the term itself was problematic. QATSICPP facilitated a discussion forum with its members to unpack where the sector was with the term partnership and how we might reclaim it or create another which reflected a genuine effort and not a superficial exercise.

An interview schedule was used as a basis of the interviews. However, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interviews were conducted using "yarning up", a technique more suitable to Indigenous mores and culture. Two of these interviews were recorded and observed by a final year social work student as part of her program at PeakCare Queensland. In undertaking this piece of work a small body of literature was sourced because other researchers have become interested in these interview processes.

Additional to the outward focus on the context for good partnerships, PeakCare Queensland commissioned an Issues Paper be developed from the literature posing questions around contexts that made successful partnerships possible. This Paper was circulated to PeakCare Queensland staff and consultants as pre-reading for a workshop facilitated by the practicum student and attended by her peers also working at PeakCare Queensland. The discussion traversed the key ideas for relevance to the Queensland context and PeakCare Queensland capabilities. The Paper was made available on the PeakCare Queensland website as a tool that other organisations might use for professional development and encourage shared understandings o f what internationally is being done to foster and nourish partnerships.

Other tools were also developed. To support partnerships which proposed to become collaborations over time, the project adapted Fact Sheets commissioned by the Australian Research Alliance for Youth and Children. These tools were posted on the PeakCare Queensland website and promoted to assist leaders and organisations consider their readiness to partner and to evaluate their partnerships as they progressed.

Chapter 2   Literature review

Chapter Two reviews the literature and makes a conclusion in regard to the direction the case studies should take. It draws on the few published successful approaches to networks between A&TSI and non-Indigenous organisations in Australia and overseas and the need for further work.

Introduction

A review of the literature provides a number of models for successful partnerships. Common themes have emerged which can if pursued and adapted secure a better quality of care within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander part of the child protection system in Queensland. This report is but the latest in a series initiated by the PeakCare Queensland in the past year (O'Connell, 2009 and Coffey, 2010). Like the others this puts partnerships and their impacts under the spotlight. It adds to the previous work with a focus on partnerships of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream organisations. A partnership between PeakCare Queensland and its Indigenous counterpart, the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP) together designed the project across significantly different cultural worlds (QATSICPP, 2008). Both PeakCare Queensland and QATSICPP are funded to support partnerships and encourage collaboration within the non-government sector and with government.

Thus networks and their complexities formed much of the research focus given their ubiquitous use in Queensland. This review looked specifically at the network approach to quality care especially the tools available to the sectors involved in children's services (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2009). The literature is organised around:
- an overview of the Queensland legislative and operational context
- an historical overview which informs current government policy and procurement practices
- experiences of partnerships and other arrangements in the Indigenous part of the child protection system
- potential models; their advantages and disadvantages
- the potential impacts of the emergence of Reconciliation Action Plans in the non-Indigenous part of the child protection system in Queensland.

The review concludes that there is a growing disquiet that past and present practice really can address the quality of care of Indigenous children in Queensland (QATSICPP, 2007, Combined Voices, 2010: 7-8; CAFWAA, 2010) even with the 2004 Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) Blueprint Report and the subsequent increase in resources and infrastructure (The Commission for Children and Young People, 2008).

Research about the problems and some general Australian models and their advantages and disadvantages are outlined (Fizzell et al, 2006; Moyle, 2006; De Guio et al, 2009; Cunneen, 2009; Keast et al, 2009 and 2010; SNAICC, 2010). Child protection systems in New Zealand (Kruger, 2004 and Pitman, 2009), Canada (Blackstock et al, 2006; Giwa et al, 2006, Quebec Native Women, 2010) and United States of America (USA) (The Center for Community Partnerships in Child Welfare of the Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2006) are considered as they

show evidence of responding with varied success in their native lands. Other jurisdictions have not established formal networks as Queensland has. However, each country seeks to address the deepening involvement of their Indigenous or children of colour in the tertiary levels of their systems known as racial "disproportionality" (USA) or "disparity" (Australia).

The Queensland Context

In Queensland there is cause for concern; racial disparity is higher at each point of decision-making within its child protection system; children subject to notification, children substantiated for abuse or neglect, children subject to child protection order and children placed in out-of home care. Adherence to the A&TSI Child Placement Principle has been declining. Only 20% of Indigenous children and young people had regular contact with their mother, 6% had regular contact with their father, 6.5% had regular contact with siblings, 13% had regular contact with extended family (Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, 2009 as cited by Combined Voices, 2010: 7-8).

This Combined Voices campaign called for investment into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled child protection services and to specifically fund collaboration activities as a way forward. The Campaign will monitor the following indicators from 2011:

- Children notified for alleged harm or risk of harm
- Children substantiated for abuse or neglect
- Children subject to a care and protection order
- Children placed with kin or Indigenous carers
- Children having regular contact with their extended families

While Combined Voice campaign focused on the capacity of the governments to achieve their goals in regard to the well-being and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, other networks were focused on the capacity of their community controlled organisations to achieve their government contracts given the fluid nature of the policy development at Commonwealth and state levels. In 2007, the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Human Services Coalition was formed as a network of over 100 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Human Service providers. In 2010, it hosted a symposium in Rockhampton with delegates from all levels of government, participating departments and community controlled organisations. At that time the concerns to be addressed were:

1. The basics card, which was introduced as part of the Northern Territory Intervention significantly, undermines the rights of Aboriginal people living in the Northern Territory.
2. Cultural competencies need to be developed and measured in the context of a 'no wrong door' approach to the human services system. This is a key challenge given that government doesn't currently have a framework for measuring how services are delivered to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people and families.
3. Outcomes can't be achieved in one area of the system unless the other parts of that system also work. Delegates supported the notion that the Coalition needs to have a focus on whole of service system advocacy.

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4. Goodwill does not sustain partnerships. There needs to be benefits for all partners. Partnerships should be built on trust and value both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners.
5. As service delivery agencies, our shared commitment to social justice is a good starting point for building relationships, and valuing human rights is a good reminder of what we have in common.
6. Universities have a part to play in transferring research skills to communities, so that communities can lead the conversations and write-up. This could help with reducing the burden of consultation and help ensure that ownership of information is shared with community.
7. Some of the fragmentation in service delivery reflects fragmentation of policy. There is a clear need to ensure that change impacts on multiple parts of the system.
8. There is a need for a common performance framework, and it needs to be addressed as a whole of system issue. (QATSIHSC, 2010, 3)

The Queensland legislative and operational context

Policy and procurement processes in Queensland surround the relationships between mainstream and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services in the child protection system. The key issues arise from the model of funding. Traditionally the Queensland government has used part funding within a purchaser – provider model. Alam and Robb (2007) indicate that different models of investment have yet to be researched for measures on their impact at the macro- and micro-economic levels. Investment in sector development models has been deemed to provide better outcomes for organisations with few resources to attract government funding (Australia, Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, 2009). The Allen Consulting Group identified that preventive strategies could reduce the demand on tertiary child protection services where agencies are over-burdened with notifications of alleged abuse which have trebled in eight years (Allen Consulting Group, 2008). It is clear that to have impact investment in social infrastructure to support families and prevent child abuse should be on a scale of any other national infrastructure project while retaining the level of funding for the tertiary sector.

A key priority for Queensland has to be the investigation of other models that build capacity. To accommodate a range of characteristics of the sector – influences, programs, products and evidence based research, a suite of models needs to be created and invoked on a "fit for purpose" basis. What would it take to build a system of purchasing that was more than merely dollars and discussions about skills? The paradigm as long as it is unchanged is unsustainable as the size and complexity of skills of the workforce cannot match the demand for services. It is vital that together both sectors - non-government and government - turn to community strengthening rather than service delivery. If this is possible then the environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations could thrive would also improve the outcomes for other small organisations.

The Auditor-General of Queensland (2007) reported to Parliament that government was impacting adversely on the non-government sector requiring too much data too many times and providing no evidence that it was used. A Parliamentary committee was established resulting in a plan for the (now) Department of Communities – Child Safety Services. It was recommended that data requirements across agencies be aligned, that government ask only once and that the funder work out whether they are getting value for money and to decide exactly the category of

provision – purchase or gifting. In the absence of overall reform, initiatives are being taken by parts of the system.

The Queensland government established the *Placements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group* to address lack of compliance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle and the increasing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the child protection system in 2008. The working group was one of four groups established by the *Child Protection Partnership Forum* to progress identified priorities. The working group was comprised of both departmental and non-government representatives.

As a result of the Forum, an initiative of the Attorney General in Queensland is being trialled in Cairns by the local Magistrate's Court. The Magistrate maintains staff in Cairns and in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by invitation to link family management around children coming into care. Family meetings are arranged with a lawyer present to assist information sharing and support.

Previous to the Auditor-General's report being released, the *Child Protection Partnership Forum* was established as an outcome of the 110 recommendations in the CMC Inquiry Report, *Protecting children: an inquiry into abuse of children in foster care*. That report provided for The Child Safety Directors Network, a specialist working group addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the tertiary sector through closer relationships across departments. Directors in this network have the power within their host departments to reform their systems when interacting with children and young people in the care system. The Network has been active in the past two years across Departments of Education, Communities (Child Safety Services, Housing and Homelessness Services), Police Service and Premier and Cabinet. This Network was brought into the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Taskforce set up in 2009 to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children which held its last meeting in December 2010 producing a *Blueprint for Implementation: strategy for addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland's child protection system.* A timeframe for 2011 is outlined in an Implementation Plan.

At the same time as these changes have taken place, the Commission for Children, Young People and the Adult Guardian has come under the control of the Department of Communities. There is concern that it has lost its independence in this move. The *Blueprint* outlines eight themes to the strategy and establishes an advisory group which has yet to meet. These themes pick up on community development approaches including partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Policy planning is to be collaborative and inclusive of other factors impacting on communities such as housing, education, health and well-being services.

The Compact

Since the *Child Protection Partnership Forum* was established a further reform has evolved. Known as The Compact, a number of reforms begun in child protection have since come under The Compact, an agreement to reform the relationship between government and the non-government sector. The goals of The Compact are:
- Building strong working relationships
- Improve engagement in planning and policy
- Improve the sector's capacity and sustainability

- Continue to improve service quality and innovation

Its Governance Committee has taken over a range of activity since the Report of the Auditor-General of Queensland (2007). The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the tertiary child protection system has fallen to The Task Force. It has developed a plan but up to this point the Task Force has been focused on the internal operations of Child Safety Services of the Department of Communities.

In Queensland there has been a realignment of departments into mega-departments to facilitate the "No wrong door" approach to service delivery. It is the goal of this amalgamation of disability services, child safety services, housing and homelessness, office of women, multicultural affairs and community services that clients only tell their story once wherever they enter the system. Services are to be delivered by mainstream organisations or adequately resourced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

The Compact has addressed red tape by developing the Common Service Agreement which will apply to each contracted organisation. Relevant legislation has further facilitated this innovation. This will improve the reporting requirements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations that have multiple contracts across agencies. The Futures Forum hosted by the Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS) has lobbied before the establishment of The Compact that the government needed to move away from micro-management and to cease using benchmarks and the historical practice of part-funding for the services they purchased. While this has not been prioritized in the current action plan (2010) it remains a goal of the group. Further reform is anticipated with a review of the *Queensland Government Framework for Investment in Human Services 2007* which sets out the priorities and principles of government funding in this area. By setting out principles for individual service providers but also the whole human service system provides the vision that informs this report. In such a review partnership between government and the child protection community services sector could be reformed to ensure that the principles of good partnership are embedded in the investment framework. It can expand on the principles in regard to service quality, focused on people, based on effective communication, effective investment and prioritization (Queensland, 2007).

The government is moving from contracting for inputs to contracting for outputs. Funding for output based service provision aims to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of the non-government community sector by reducing costs through the streamlining of reporting and financial accountability requirements. This will allow funded non-government service providers to refocus attention from administrative processing to actual service provision.

This has implications for a number of reforms; full funding for services rather than requiring resources contributed by the service provider to attract government investment, one contract only per organisation and quality measurements which inherently require longer time frames than is the case at present

While this direction in activity is well overdue, at this stage The Compact has a number of pieces of work which needs to be better coordinated. In addition to these developments at the state level, the Commonwealth has a number of reforms in train.

In May 2011, the Australian Charities and Not-for profits Commission report was established as recommended by the Productivity Commission (2010) to ensure consistency across levels of government in policy, regulation and services in recognition of the vast resources that are made available to the sector especially through volunteers.

Human service framework

The Commonwealth government has developed the National Child Protection Framework with seven platforms for reform. The fifth is dedicated to reform of the system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Outside Home Care standards have been developed for all children in care. The Commonwealth is trialling income management for those families who fail to send their children to school. In choosing Logan and Cape York for the pilots, this initiative will have greater impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Data Review

Under the COAG agenda the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the tertiary part of the child protection system was addressed within the National Child Protection Framework. There is a three year plan to look at data common across jurisdictions replacing ad hoc and fluid definitions which can produce only trend data.

An historical overview

The Indigenous part of the child protection system has developed out of a network of Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies (AICCAs) nationally from the early 1970s. In 2004 the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) produced a report into the protection of children and young people in Queensland. This was followed by the government's response, a Blueprint which outlined various recommendations to make the changes required to enact the report. The Blueprint regarded the AICCAs as fundamental to the well-being of vulnerable families and children with statements such as ' the government recognise the ongoing need for independent community based organisations and that these be provided with the necessary support and resources to provide culturally appropriate child protection services to the Indigenous communities' (recommendation 8.1 Blueprint p63).

In addition, further recommendations deal in some detail with the need to provide suitable child protection services and cultural support through community based organisations, compliance with the Indigenous Child Placement principle, contact between children in care and their family and the importance of families and children being involved in case planning decisions.

Over thirty (30) Recognised Entity (RE) 'agencies' were established over the period 2005-2009, funding for which was realigned from the task being given to agencies which formerly had the AICCA funding, new agencies (organisations and individuals) were set up to provide that service. A new peak, QATSICPP, was funded to support and develop these entities. Unfortunately, the new family support and prevention roles were not funded by Child Safety Services, nor were they supported by the then new Department of Communities, despite the clear recommendations of

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the *Blueprint*. Conversely, mainstream organisations were often given funding to care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, due to the increasing numbers of all children entering the care system since the reforms. Over the subsequent years the over representation of A&TSI children in the tertiary care system has increased, year on year yet funding directly to A&TSI community based organisations has not kept pace with those increased numbers. This had lead to increasing numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being placed outside their family and clan groupings.

In 2010 after the Machinery of Government Changes after the March 2009 state election, the Minister for Child Safety Services announced that the Recognised Entity funding would be redistributed and the program revamped to provide for specific family support roles as well as cultural information. No new funding was available for this change but rather a realignment of the existing funding given to the Recognised Entity function, despite the large increase in number of A&TSI children in the care system.

The nature and extent of changes from the previous model of 'Recognised Entities' to the mix of 'Recognised Entities' and family support services are significant and unprecedented. They require major changes to governance and service delivery arrangements moving from more localised (funding for 35 services) to more regionalised arrangements (11 service hubs across 7 regions). In some instances, this will require the development of partnerships, the funding of new service providers and the defunding of existing service providers, with significant impacts for children and families, staff and organisations. It is predicted that the current allocation of funding to both service streams will impact on the responsiveness of Recognised Entity services to maintain their current approach in meeting service delivery demands in all regions due to the following:

- Queensland geographical challenges and limitations on resources capabilities by the Recognised Entity to provide service delivery to children and families, especially those who live in remote and rural areas, given the move from localised operations (funding for 35 services) to regionalised arrangements (11 service hubs across 7 regions)
- The funding of new service providers and the redevelopment of partnerships
- The loss of local knowledge due to regionalised arrangements

In effect this has meant that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies are handling very large case loads and they continue to be significantly under resourced to achieve their goals.

This rapid realignment of funds and programs was conducted under the *Queensland Government Framework for Investment in Human Services 2007.* This policy defines the ways in which government may make investment. It can make multi-agency investments but within the context that "it will rarely be appropriate for Government to form a partnership with an external entity" (2007: 22). This framework is under review in 2011.

Potential policy enablers

The research revealed a number of approaches focusing on racial disparity in the child protection system. They are drawn from examples across Australia and overseas. They each have advantages and disadvantages given the particular local context and history of the Indigenous part of the child protection system in Queensland. Approaches include:

- Establishing a visibility authority
- Reinforcing community control
- Resourcing cultural competence - Professional development approach
- Establishing cultural competence - A framework approach
- Encouraging a partnership approach
- Resourcing a network approach

The approaches are not mutually exclusive. In fact in Australia today all are present and impacting on reform.

While the context is provided through visible authority and community control approaches, cultural competence approaches tackle the practice that can support the contextual reforms. This project, however builds on a belief that context and practice influence the success of services. The real focus of this research is partnership and network models because Queensland in particular has driven policy and service provision through these approaches.

Visible Authority

Many jurisdictions have established commissions to protect the rights of children and young people. Queensland established its commission, Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) in 2000, New South Wales, 1999 and Victoria 2005. Each has different responsibilities with Queensland focusing on particular groups of disadvantaged children including children in government care while others have broader responsibilities.

The SNAICC in its 2010 Federal Election Briefing Paper called for a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commission (SNAICC 2010, p.26). In October 2010, The Australian Rights Commission circulated a Discussion Paper to explore its responsibilities in regard to a Commonwealth Commissioner for Children and Young People in late 2010. Thus far the discussion has not dealt with the particular needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and drawn on the research on disparity. Overseas some jurisdictions have developed such a visible authority focusing *only* on the *disparity* or *disproportionality* issues within their child protection systems thereby allocating specific resources to address the increasing presence and deepening engagement of certain groups of children in the child protection systems. The USA (Center for Community Partnerships in Child Welfare of the Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2006; Sedlak et al, 2010) provides examples of states where visible authorities dealing with disparity have been established.

Depending on the remit of such an authority in Australia, there would be some advantage in focusing on disparity if the commission had independence and could act. Those commissions under the administration of Ministers are regarded a toothless

tigers. The CCYP in Queensland investigated compliance with the Indigenous Child Placement Principle within the Department of Child Safety. Among similar findings, the report stated that over the period 2001-2007 in only 17% of cases was a Recognised Entity given the opportunity to participate in the decision process around placing an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child in out-of-home care. Despite this significant failure to adhere to legislation, no action was taken (CCYP, 2008: 46).
A visible authority which was driven by consumer advocates within the child protection sector would have some merit. However up until this date, many commissions set up to protect the rights of consumer groups lack consumer participation within their structures. This lack of an active consumer voice increases the 'capture' of regulatory authorities by governments undermining the willingness and ability of the authority to take corrective actions to improve standards (Kerrison & Pollock, 2001: 490). This is particularly problematic when the visible authority is investigating government administration as regulator and funder.

Visible authorities are established through legislation and funded by government. This raises the question as to the independence of such authorities. On the other hand there are other approaches that can be truly independent. Philanthropic trusts in these cases underwrite the activities of such commissions and that could see a real advantage in a visible authority. In the USA, the National Coalition for Child Protection Reform (NCCPR) is an independent body which receives its funding from private donors and philanthropic organisations. It has been actively engaged in challenging the dominant discourse around child protection in society, advocating for a less reactive child protection system (Wexler, 2000).

Advantages and Disadvantages

Within the Queensland context an authority that commented on and led public debate could be useful if it were strengthened in being an authentic coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream entities with leadership by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and fully independent. Canada does not have a visible authority and once the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada established a movement their achievements for reform were noticeable (Blackstock et al, 2006). So it is not necessary in some jurisdictions to establish a visible authority to address disparity.

As a statutory body, an independent commission would need very strong powers to investigate government legislation and administration and bring together the various levels of government in a federation such as Australia. The electoral cycle of three years also impacts on programs within authorities. They are inherently hamstrung by lack of funding and legislative teeth to carry out their role. As a statutory authority it could not be seen to treat Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in any way different from non-Indigenous families. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are diverse so such an authority embedded in government would struggle to attract trust from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. A movement such as "Get Up!" or "Greenpeace" driven by grass roots issues and focused on disparity supported by independent research

centres such as the NCCPR in the USA or similar in Australia may be a force to be reckoned with.

Community control

Canada uses the community control model because culturally inappropriate standards used in determining a child's need for substitute care have been a major contributor to disproportionate rates of removal in Indigenous populations (First Nations Task Force 1993; Mannes 1993; Community Panel 1992 as cited by Libesman, 2004: 19). There is evidence of a two-tiered system at play in the Canadian experience with this model as the extent of the reforms varies across state jurisdictions. Agencies are funded on the basis of the number of children who are ordinarily resident on the reserve/s the agency serves. Funding is not responsive to factors that can cause wide variations in operating costs, such as differences in community needs or support services available, nor the greater need of Indigenous populations generally given the aforementioned issues (RAGCHC ,2008: 19-20). As a result, the Canadian government spends 22 per cent less per child for children's services on reserves than their provincial counterparts spend in predominantly non-aboriginal communities (Joint National Policy Review, 2000: 94).

This model was designed around an Aboriginal family healing strategy and depended on the provincial government's commitment to devolving authority to Aboriginal communities. Hudson & McKenzie (2003 as cited in Combined Voices, 2010) found that child welfare powers and functions have been devolved mainly to on-reserve children and families in Canada with Manitoba giving authority province-wide.

The USA is currently rolling out a pilot study with elaborate change management processes in place focused on the carer and a strong philosophy of evidence-based support to maintain the children within their family (Action for Children, 2010). The testing of this reform is currently occurring with a partnership of the Alabama Department of Human Services, ACTION for Child Protection, the Ruth Young Center for Families and Children at the University of Maryland, School of Social Work.

Within Australia the establishment of a completely separate sector for the provision of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families could lead to a two-tiered system as it has in Canada. The societal challenges and barriers faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families are complex given an historical and contemporary context of racism, the intergenerational effects on parenting skills of forced removal practices, poverty and marginalisation.

The Canadian system gives responsibility for providing child welfare services to First Nation agencies on reservations only (RAGCHC , 2008: 8). Given that in the 2006 census approx 49% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland lived in major cities or inner regional areas, the applicability of this model to the Queensland context is problematic (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2006: 19). A community control model that only provided for community control in areas exclusively inhabited by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples would not account for a significant portion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

Advantages and Disadvantages

The question of community control is a complex one because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are diverse and if resourced adequately can outline the causes of abuse and the best ways to respond to achieve better outcomes for families. It needs to involve the right people within the community. Often Elders do not have jurisdiction for child and family matters yet under-informed government imposes portfolios which do not have validation from the particular community. Community-controlled organisations funded adequately would meet the goal of holistic services that address the abuse within the life of the families and community.

Community control may reduce the extent of discriminatory processes within the child protection and family support sector. There is significant evidence for a cumulative effect of racial bias leading to more intrusive and coercive interventions for members of racial and ethnic minorities (Hines, Lemon, Wyatt & Merdinger, 2004: 521-524). Community controlled organisations may also be less threatening and thus more accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples than mainstream organisations, given the legacy of coercion, control and discrimination (Bamblett, 2006: 14).

Cultural diversity along with the potential interference by powerful people within small communities can be problematic (Lucienne, 2008: 1).Given the power dynamics around child abuse and domestic violence, for example dominance of women over men, care must be taken to ensure that these power dynamics are nor replicated in community controlled organisations (Libesman, 2004: 20). However unequal power dynamics and extensive diversity are pervasive in all segments of our society, not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Many organisations, for example, are church-based, and potential clients may feel excluded if they do not share that faith. The potential for organisations to be 'captured' by interest groups exists in all segments of society, not just in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Numerous strategies have been employed to engage with these issues, for example to deal with cultural diversity many A&TSI community controlled organisations have employed networking arrangements within organisations, with localised authority (Hunt & Smith, 2007).

It is through community controlled organisations that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been able to "express their collective will, advocate for their rights and needs, develop services and programs for their families and maintain their cultural traditions" (The Secretariat of National Aboriginal Child Care, 2008a,2).

Muriel Bamblett, CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, and Chairperson of SNAICC argues "You only need to look overseas ... to see that Indigenous peoples who have treaties and various self-determining rights have far better health and wellbeing outcomes (Bamblett, 2006, 13).

 As community control was rolled out in Canada, youth suicide rates within those communities who had assumed control and implemented plans for children in care was on average 25% lower than in communities which still lacked control over children and family services (Chandler & Lalonde, 2006: 67).

Cultural competence - Professional Development Approach

Cultural competence has been defined as "a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enable them to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (Tong and Cross, 191: 12

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as cited by Libesman, 2004). Cultural competence has gained particular currency in Australia as an approach for reforming the child protection system. Australia (Frizzell et al, 2006; The Australian Collaboration, 2007; SNAICC, 2010), New Zealand (Walker, 2007; 8) and Canada (Blackstock et al, 2006) and the USA (Weaver, 1998 as cited in Libesman, 2004: 17; ACTION for Child Protection, 2010: 4) are contributing research to promote tools and resources for organisations to improve the well-being Maori, Aboriginal and people of colour in their child protection systems.

Gaining cultural competence needs to be actively pursued by mainstream organisations and workers. Workers need to be prepared to truly engage with the local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities with which they work, and learn about their local protocols and practices. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders cannot be expected to undertake the work of educating the child protection sector alone, it is the responsibility of workers to seek out learning opportunities, and for organisations to provide the resources to facilitate this (Darlington, Garland & Hall, 2008; Bessarab & Crawford, 2010).

Advantages and Disadvantages

A major criticism levelled at current cultural competence education is its capacity to present culture as a collection of relatively fixed and definable set of objective traits and values. There is the potential for cultural education to present a de-politicised view of culture that silences understanding of power within and between cultures (Gordon, 2009). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are described in terms of how they differ from a norm of 'whiteness', which is itself not deconstructed.

There is the potential for cultural competence programs and courses to lead to overconfidence among workers in their ability to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This can be seen as extremely disrespectful by service users. Fredericks (2008), an Aboriginal researcher, whilst outlining issues around current education, states "worse still is when you are told by a worker that they did cross-cultural training and you find out it was a four hour or a two day or a one semester course and before that they had never met or known anything about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and now they are here to help 'fix' you or 'the problem'" (ibid: 82).

Edwards and Taylor (2008), argue there is a capacity for cultural awareness and education to be an opportunity for workers to challenge the structure of their workplaces and consider how they take western culture as the norm.

The slow erosion of funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services is driving a response within mainstream organisations. That said there is no clear body of knowledge which can inform the responses to requests for cultural awareness. Even the term "competence" implies a skill or craft that can be acquired. Most organisations are of the understanding, however that cultural awareness sufficient to the needs of employing and partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services is dynamic and involving, nuanced by the broad history as well as the day to day activities and personalities and pressures on particular families.

Existing coalitions working cross-culturally in Queensland could play a role in cultural training and model an openness and clarity about direction of the heightened sensitivity to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience. Governments by enveloping this training with key performance indicators produces behaviour that is a complete anathema to the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services operate with families. It indicates deep

misunderstanding and appropriateness of the implementation of this response to disparity. Forming relationships and capacity for self-reflection would do more for learning to work within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander world view than "training" per se.

Cultural competence - Cultural Framework Approach

A key example of this approach comes from New Zealand, where Family Group Conferencing has been mandated since 1989. Family Group Conferencing developed out of Maori practices of family meetings to address crises and make decisions regarding family members (Ernst, 2001: 164). It is used as a process to establish the placement of children. In addition to this process, it has attempted meaningful dialogue with Maori underpinned by respect to create their policy settings. From 2002, framed by the Te Puni Kokiri publication, *Transforming Whänau Violence; A Conceptual Framework* the government uses Maori language and thus sensitivities throughout by reframing *mana* within Maori beliefs to promote three forms of *mana* that are important for social order (2004:28).

Family conferencing can have its critics as well. The Mason Report (1992, cited by Libesman, 2004) and the Social Policy Agency Study (1995 cited by Libesman, 2004) noted that gathering in competing interests resulted in a view that the child or young person was increasingly vulnerable. Through privatising the decision-making under the New Zealand legislation like this, undermines the protection provided by judicial decision-making as is the case in the USA. In addition family conferencing has to be placed in the reality of a need for resources and support (1995, Gilling, Patterson and Walker cited by Libesman, 2004) with problems arising when insufficient resources are available. There is a call for clarity, definition and resources in processes of self-determination to avert a raft of problems within the conferencing framework. In Queensland, the current practice of consulting Recognised Entities at key decision points in cases involving Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child can be considered a form of the framework approach.

After the CMC investigation, Queensland established an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Safety Taskforce to reduce over-representation. The government can use the child placement principle to leverage from cultural competence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through the role of the Recognised Entities reduced by 30% in number in 2010. Testro (2010: 2) made a number of recommendations to improve the system in Queensland because despite assurances to the opposite maintains more intrusive and prolonged involvements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander than it does with non-Indigenous families (Testro, 2010:7).

Advantages and Disadvantages

Given the high numbers of Indigenous children in the child protection system, there is a need to adapt current service delivery to more effectively engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Waites, Macgowan, Pennell, Carlton-LaNey & Weil, 2004: 291).

Donna Klein Kawane of the Central Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Association (CQAICCA) said of the reduction of REs "for the past 40 years the Indigenous community controlled sector has fought to be a part of the decision making process...however it is not how government envisaged it being and now (they) have completed their erosion of this sector" (CQAICCA, 2010: 2).

Many of the changes advocated for by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been identified as beneficial for all Australian families. There is a need in the broader context for greater involvement of families; self-determination; greater respect and valuing of cultural differences; and greater investment in universal prevention initiatives and early intervention (QATSICP Partnership, 2007: 3-4; Child and Family Welfare Association of Australia Inc. n.d). Incorporation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in the child protection debate allows for the exploration of alternative methods to achieve the goal of safe and connected children and families (Lynn, 2001).

Partnership Approach

Partnerships are well documented in the Australian literature suggesting that they rely on alignment of partners' practice approach, values and mission to inform the level of engagement, co-operation or co-ordination (ARACY, 2009, SNAICC, 2012). Building trust over a longer time frame that minimizes misunderstandings can build capacity in all members of a collaboration that may be necessary to address the "wicked issues" which continue to challenge the well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Frizzell and Barrow (2006: 51-56) found that organisational changes are required to enact partnerships. Their evidence is based on six case studies. However, only one was an Aboriginal controlled service and it did not use a partnership approach. The USA has taken a professional support approach as one way among many to enact innovative policy contracts. There, the solutions to disparity may be found in developing agency collaborations, improving and expanding service provision and working in partnership with communities (Casey-CSP Alliance for Racial Equity, 2006 as cited in Combined Voices 2010) with signs of improvement in the USA (USA, Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). According to this research a range of alternatives may be part of the work of partnerships and collaborations.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Since European invasion, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples contact with mainstream organisations has been characterised by exploitation, discrimination and coercion. Trust is a difficult commodity to establish even in situations where there is no history of abuse. In relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and mainstream organisations the issue of trust is compounded (Waples-Crowe & Pyett, 2005: 15). Currently the rationale for partnership is often poor given the drivers for this may arise as a requirement of funding. This has resulted in a range of partnerships from instrumental and coercive to one's that are collaborative partnerships with time to establish strong relationships between workers.

Due to different social and cultural backgrounds, the workplace culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream organisations may be very different. Differences may involve different understandings around time, consensus, decision-making protocols and community engagement (Waples-Crowe & Pyett, 2005). In addition to differences of

understanding between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous partners, there are also variances within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In the recent past the professionalisation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce has created a middle class whose experiences are not brought back to community and are not able to speak on behalf of community though governments rarely acknowledge this when they ask advice from such professionals and public servants. Government and mainstream organisations do not account for the issues that surround moieties that preclude recognition and interaction of different individuals in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. There is a number of challenges, therefore in establishing true partnerships between organisations, and there is a need for mainstream organisations to engage in a respectful and collaborative manner that acknowledges moiety and the limitations on a cohesive and consistent approach from a single entity. Partnerships should be motivated by a desire to work together and value what each organisation brings. Partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations should not be used simply as an 'in' to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (SNAICC, 2010; 8).

A Network Approach

Since 1999, Queensland has developed a network approach providing co-ordination and fostering relationships mainstream and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations (Coffey, 2010). Members of the networks are involved in regulation, licensing and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advice to the statutory processes as well as therapeutic and out of home care. It takes time to establish an authentic collaboration (Hardy et al, 2003; Frizzell & Barrow, 2006; Millar & Geunther, 2007; Keast & Mandell, 2009), Coffey, 2010); no quick fix here. According to Keast et al (2007), trust is regarded as a lubricant for collaborative processes; companion trust based on good will, competence trust, confidence in capacity of others, commitment trust, from contractual or enforceable cross-institutional agreements. To nurture trust requires regular, preferably personal contact, dialogue and quality monitoring as part of the usual activities. Adjustments will have to be made to give effect to any collaboration. Governance structures need to be minimal but have rules explicit to the collaboration jointly set by its participants. Organisations in accommodating the operations of collaborative networks may have to look to more flexible recruiting resulting in changing organisational culture. This could result in including collaborative behaviour in position descriptions, introducing arrangements that facilitate the work of collaboration and developing accountability and reporting schedules which reflect shared and interdependent effort.

The approach involves creating networks of organisations in the same locale, or with similar clients/services, and creating structures to facilitate communication and collaboration between the organisations. A key example of this approach is the Planning and Partnership Program developed by the Department of Child Safety in response to the 2004 Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) report Protecting Children: An Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Foster Care (Keast, Brown & McAuley 2007, p.2).

Advantages and Disadvantages

Competitive tendering can work to erode much of the capacity within the A&TSI child protection and family support sector. There have been numerous instances of well-established organisations that have worked hard to develop trust and respect with their communities, losing funding in tendering processes. If the organisation survives solely or predominantly on government funding, this can mean the loss of the organisation and its wealth of

knowledge and community ties (SNAICC 2008b: 18). Overall, the effect of competitive tendering is to erode the trust necessary for the development of effective networks (Child and Family Welfare Association of Australia Inc., 2010: 4).

The three Cs of co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration represent the continuum from maintaining complete independence whilst sharing information and resources, through to strong and highly interdependent relationships which involve radical shifts in the way organisations operate. Significant resources need to be made available to efforts to move towards true collaborations, along with recognition of the degree of work involved (Keast & Mandell, 2009: 2).

RAP: Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) in child protection services

Reconciliation Australia is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that was established in 2000 by the former Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. As the peak national organisation, it builds and promotes reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians for the wellbeing of the nation. Reconciliation Australia is dedicated to closing the unacceptable life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. One of their key strategies in achieving that ambition is to support and encourage organisations to sign up to their own tailored Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

The RAP program was launched in July 2006 as a forward looking aspect of the 40th anniversary of the 1967 referendum, the most successful in Australia's history, in which more than 90% of voters said "YES" to equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fellow citizens. The RAP program turns "good intentions into action" by encouraging and supporting organisations, large and small, to engage within their sphere of influence in the national effort to close the 17-year gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and other Australians. To protect the integrity of a RAP program, Reconciliation Australia has lodged a trademark application for the term, *Reconciliation Action Plan*. Where organisations choose not to be part of Reconciliation Australia's formal RAP program, involving consultation and registration by Reconciliation Australia, they should not be publicly using the term on websites, documentation or for publicity.

Government departments at Commonwealth and state level have registered RAPs as have a number of peak organisations that advocate for children and young people. Services providers, some members of PEAKCARE QUEENSLAND also have registered RAPs, some since the program was instituted.

Conclusion

PeakCare Queensland believes that given the complexity and layering of partnerships, government can do more to foster partnership cultures in Queensland to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are supported and safe in thriving families even though it cannot in the main form partnerships with external entities. It believes the Reconciliation Action Plans developing in the child protection and public sectors can be strengthened through realigning current networks already resourced through Child Safety Services.

This report has arisen during a time of unprecedented shifts in policy in child protection in Australia and in Queensland. Having developed a research methodology

which provided for continuous reflection and adjustment of the focus and the means of gaining what was possible, the sector is able to be exposed to a range of contemporary partnerships. At all points in the research it was recognised and accepted that PEAKCARE QUEENSLAND had a need for partnership and that we needed to develop clarity and realism of purpose through discussion. It was important that Indigenous organisations were committed and owned the research question. Every attempt was made to develop and maintain trust with our partner with open discussion of the challenges to access sites being addressed and supported. Embedding the work within a RAP has ensured that the efforts can be monitored, measured according to benchmarks agreed in partnership and that the learnings become the 2011 – 2012 RAP.

This report has outlined the considerable good will but also the structural and cultural gaps to be addressed through reform in the partnership approach. Models from here, other states and overseas that call on partnerships have both advantages and disadvantages within the current Queensland context. Systems that clearly outline work flow and evidence gathering that removes children and young people away from their families is seen as the very last resort. All resources in those best practice systems support the care giver closest to the child or young person. There is little evidence that this is the case in Queensland. The situation is worsening over time (Combined Voices, 2009).

> *Across Queensland, only a small number of community controlled agencies are*
> *funded to provide these services. So, not only are there too few culturally*
> *competent services where Indigenous families need them, there can be a mis-match*
> *with the level and type of service needed to meet the different pattern of*
> *involvement of Aboriginal children and families with the child welfare system.*
> (Combined Voices, January, 2010)

Chapter 3   Findings

Chapter Three outlines the findings of the case studies and state-wide forums.

Introduction

An overview of the case studies confirms and expands on the findings of case studies from Australia and overseas. The local case studies have been written up to the same headings so that comparisons may be made. Their characteristics have been identified by using the Collaboration Resources (Keast, ARACY, 2010) in the interviews with partnership participants.

Overall the findings of Waples-Crowe and Pyett (2006) and Burton (SNAICC, 2012) have been substantiated through the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander case studies. They outlined the following ten steps to a successful Mainstream and Indigenous Collaborative project. Using the list as indicators, the five case studies reinforce their findings.

1. *A long time frame* - The case studies found that this ranged from two years to fifteen years.

2. *Building trust* - All case studies weathered the crisis through trusting the other partner.

3. *Valuing each other* - All case studies indicated that without respect for each other's knowledge and capacity and a belief that alone each could not accomplish their mutual goal, nothing can be achieved.

4. *Get educated* - All case studies reinforced their vision through cultural awareness and training.

5. *Good planning*- All case studies used facilitation methods to plan their mutual activity and take the long term view.

6. *Useful product*- All case studies produced buildings and / or service infrastructure that was desperately required by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

7. *Community initiated* - While most case studies were community initiated, some were initiated by the mainstream organisation in the partnership often as a response to government policy which required partnership as basis for funding.

8. *Identifying the partners and formalising partnerships*- Not all partnerships had formalised agreements. One collaboration had a one page co-signed agreement, other partnerships were formalised through their joint application for funds and
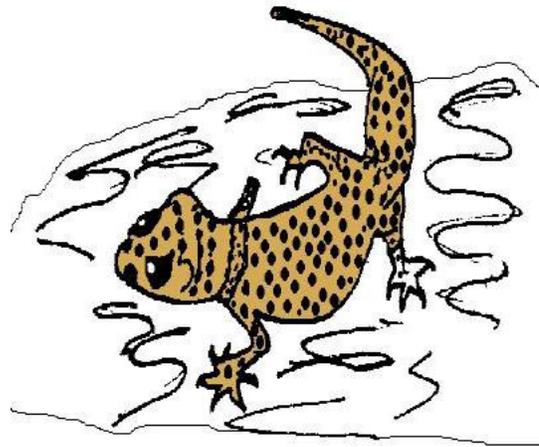
the sharing of resources to attract the funds while others embedded the partnership in their Constitution and governance structures.

9. *Supportive work environments* - All the case studies gave their attention to the partnership over the long term. The main stream organisations infused their staff from CEO to service level to improve their relationships and understanding of issues from an Indigenous perspective. They wanted to employ more staff from diverse backgrounds, they wanted to provide better services in their regions to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. They wanted to create employment opportunities in other sectors that would sustain local economies and build community capacity.

10. *Cultural awareness* – All case studies had ongoing ways to reinforce understanding of local culture and history to gain a better appreciation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview. Looking for solutions through openness and understanding of a completely different paradigm was integral to meeting the mutual goals.

Less obvious is the adherence to the Principles for Partnership Development which QATSICPP advocates sourced from *Assessing Strategic Partnership: The Partnership Assessment Tool* (Hardy, Hudson & Waddington, 2003). These are:

Principle 1 – recognise and accept need for partnership
Principle 2 – develop clarity and realism of purpose
Principle 3 - ensure commitment and ownership
Principle 4 - develop and maintain trust
Principle 5 – create clear and robust partnership arrangements
Principle 6 – monitor, measure and learn

Principle 1 – In all case studies the partners recognised and accepted that the only way that their organisations could improve their particular service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities was through their partnership

Principle 2 – In all cases the partners took the necessary time (15 years to 2 years) before entering into a partnership in order to develop clarity and a sense of reality about the challenges and opportunities of the partnership work

Principle 3 - In all cases the partnership work was phased and planned to ensure that sufficient commitment and ownership was evident to move to the next level

 Principle 4 – In all cases the partnership did not emerge until there was sufficient trust developed not only between management in each organisation or agency but also across the governance bodies and staff who would ultimately implement the partnership on the ground

Principle 5 – In all cases the partnership participants were prompted by unfolding events to create clear and robust partnership arrangements to maintain the original vision to address a mutual problem

Principle 6 – In all cases the partnerships set out through their joint work (and often formalised through joint government contracts) to monitor the partnership work and strengthen or realign original activities to meet new challenges, to measure the partnership project outcomes and to learn from the partnership experiences to take to other partnerships

Aspects of Partnership – Case Studies

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4	Case 5	Case 6
The Place	SEQ	SEQ	FNQ	Central Q	FNQ	State
The project	Service co-location and child placement advice	Amalgamation	Collaboration	A&TSI Control charity	Absorptive Community Development	Co-operation
The driver	SNAICC Child Placement Principle	Expansion of housing for A&TSI families	Lack of services across a region	Employment in an isolated community	Government promise to build capacity with Knowledge Centres	Influence child protection reform
The reason	Meeting the complex needs of A&TSI communities	Security of existence	Political influence to build infrastructure and services	Corrosive effects of welfare dependence	Decommissioning of ATSIC	Meeting the complex needs of A&TSI controlled services
The intension	Mutual strength & profiling	Position small organisations within Commonwealth policy	Infrastructure and capacity building to meet service needs in remote communities	Build infrastructure and service capability in the region in hospitality & natural resource management	Strengthen partnership with local council to establish and maintain knowledge centres in their regions	Strengthen capacity of organisations and capability of boards and staff to meet the complex demands of the child protection system
The partners	A development corporation & a charity	Community Rent Schemes	Development company and charity	Urban based business and local community	State Library of Queensland and eight Councils	Elected representatives from A&TSI controlled services

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4	Case 5	Case 6
The People	Both boards & their staff	CEOs and Board members	CEOs & staff	A&TSI controlled Board Non-indigenous CEO	Mayors and State Librarian	CEO & Board members
Achievements	Several successful funding bids	Exponential increase in range of tenancy options Influence over tenancy policy	Remote services increased Local employment	A conference centre and contracts with local councils and corporations International profile	Well-supported information and resources to strengthen culture and history in remote communities	Leadership of the Combi9ned Voices campaign
Relationships	Co-ordination	Collaboration	Collaboration	Co-ordination	Collaboration	Co-operation
Structure	Development corporation form the advisory group within the charity	A&TSI on the board, advisory committee, information partnership with A&TSI housing organisation	A&TSI business unit to form a single entity over time	Board, CEO & site manager & local community elder	Mayors and State Librarian Local co-ordinator and Indigenous Library Services	Board, CEO, policy and operations staff
Leadership	Open communication between CEOs	Strong presence along with consistent reinforcement	CEOs goals aligned A&TSI company with high levels of trust in their former CEO	Board - two of three members A&TSI women	Mayors and councils	CEOs of A&TSI services

|	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4	Case 5	Case 6
Resources	Commonwealth and State contracts	Commonwealth	State and Commonwealth	Land asset in trust Gifting testimonials from Queensland Government	Council resources State Library fund equipment and resources and half the staff time	State government funding
The biggest challenges	Short term contracts Shifting policy framework	Cultural awareness and cultural competence to deliver tenancies for people with complex needs	Project management – remote delivery geographic factors	Continuity of contracts Timing for ultimate gifting of land to local community control	Sustainability when funding under threat	Sustainability when membership decommissioned in their RE roles
The Solutions	New relationships with government	Performance management systems, professional development & support	Local decision-making Local employment	Building governance capacity & opportunistic initiatives with current contracts Skills transfer	Building longevity through local ownership and exercising political influence	Building strength through productive partnerships as services and across peak bodies

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4	Case 5	Case 6
The keys to success	Strong leadership with mutual benefits clearly stated Pre-empting policy changes	Deliberate process over years, resources for planning and facilitation to commit to common goals	Long lead time well over a decade for A&TSI organisation to research possible partners Complete trust over the long term	Positive and resourceful team management	Flexibility by government agency to meet Mayors and formalize agreement around negotiated solution Relevance of activity programs and knowledge events to local people	Constant ability to adapt to a fluid political environment
Lessons for next time	Patience & perseverance, Cultural awareness, SNAICC principles as purpose	Eternal vigilance & inclusive solutions to manage exponential growth	Patience and accommodating of the issues around distance and capacity	Team leaders are key to building capability and confidence	Meeting the scarcity problem together to find local solutions	Find partnership in unlikely circumstances and look for solutions through thinking differently

In summary partnership work can become a deliberate and predictable exercise given the tools and resources now available. A belief in the wisdom of the process and principles can and does guide activities. The mystery ingredients are the personalities and commitment of individuals at all levels within the partnership organisations and agencies to continue to agree to work out challenges together. These challenges can arise from changes in leadership and staff, the tyranny of distance, the new direction from management committees, the sudden change of policy of governments at local, state and commonwealth levels and fundamentally the culturally disparate world views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and mainstream Australia.
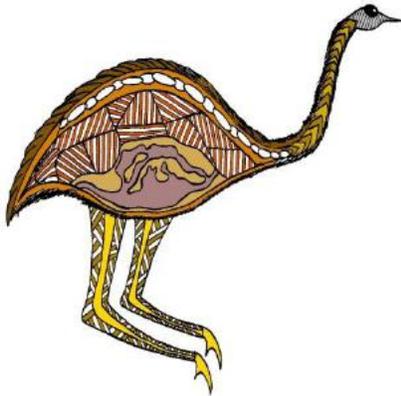
Chapter 4   Conclusion

Chapter Four is a conclusion with suggestions as to how to establish and maintain a range of activities within partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous services. The report contains appendices which provide deeper analysis.

Partnerships have become the ubiquitous response to the myriad of issues that need to be addressed by service providers in the child protection and other sectors in Australia and overseas. Initially the partnership response was promoted to address "wicked issues" that governments alone could not resolve. Government supported partnerships have been encouraged, documented and analysed for lessons which could be more broadly used by other organisations in similar formats.

This report introduced the concept that government initiated partnerships needed further analysis to discover their experiences were relevant to the study of success in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships. We presented information about the context of child protection policy in other jurisdictions, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and USA and how these policies are supported to address an effective engagement that improves incidence of "racial disparity" or the over-representation of Indigenous or children of colour in the tertiary part of their child protection systems. In addition we presented other issues which need to be addressed in addition to those canvassed by government instigated partnerships to improve interaction between services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and between organisations. Some in the child protection sector argue that the highly political and moral space afforded child protection in our society makes it immensely open to changes in ideology and perspective. Partnership making in child protection constitutes a space that could be seen in this light.

However it has become evident that organisations fostering successful partnerships with Indigenous organisations can overcome policy exposure in a resolve to improve services and the quality of care for vulnerable families. Australia is focused on a national framework as well as a national visible authority though not particularly addressing disparity. Reconciliation Action Plans have currency in governments and in services across a range of public, community and business sectors. Broad accountability that is derived from the possible at the local and individual level encourages steps towards better understandings across the cultural divide.

So while the concerns about the broad policy context of Australian child protection systems cannot be ignored, statements can be made in regard to establishing more robust investment strategies based on a partnership approach between government and non-government sectors. The fact that current multi-agency investment modes as part of the *Queensland Government Framework for Investment in Human Services 2007* preclude joint liability of government as a partner

is of concern and may be addressed in its review. If the public and community services sectors can adapt the same partnership work tools, relationships can improve between stakeholders and strengthen services and their effectiveness with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The case studies were analysed for their demonstration of the ten steps used in earlier studies (Waples-Crowe and Pyett, 2006) and sets of principles promoted by QATSICPP our project partner (Hardy et al, 2003. For consistency with other collaboration resources (ARACY, 2010), these studies were written using a consistent set of headings upon which to link the narratives of the participants.

The case studies show that a blend of individual risk taking on the part of management and willingness to continue a journey of discovery in trust can challenge stakeholders' cynicism. Not reporting abuse is not the answer to disparity. This reticence can be replaced with deliberate and purposeful partnership work in parallel with policy reform.

Recently in Australia Indigenous children appear to have faced further risk by not entering the tertiary setting. Will more of this approach be welcomed by Indigenous families? What arrangements can address these persistent failures to care for children in our community? Do networks form safety for children or disguise it? This report suggests that the most successful arrangements that support Indigenous children to be cared for outside the tertiary system can include partnerships and formal agreements, however other ways of working can prevail to seize the moment and make an impact.

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