



SNAICC NEWS

Secretariat of National Aboriginal & Islander Child Care Newsletter

August 2005

Celebrating our children

It's about the children. This was the message of National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day, which was celebrated across the country on 4 August.

At the barbecue for pre-school kids in Ballina, at the fun day in the park for kids in Mackay, and at the Melbourne launch of a new publication for the foster carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the purpose was the same: to celebrate the children of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

It was also an opportunity to recognise and support those who work tirelessly to keep our children in touch with their birth families, culture and spirituality, and connected with their communities.

That is why this year's NAICD theme highlighted the critical and fabulous role of the foster and kinship carers who support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care.

The theme, *Foster and Kinship Carers – Keeping Kids Connected to Community, Family and Culture*, was the feature of



SNAICC's posters and pamphlets for this year's NAICD.

8,000 posters and 10,000 pamphlets were printed and distributed across the country this year to allow child care centres, MACS, AICCAs, pre-schools and government departments and other organisations in SNAICC's network to promote the day and its message.

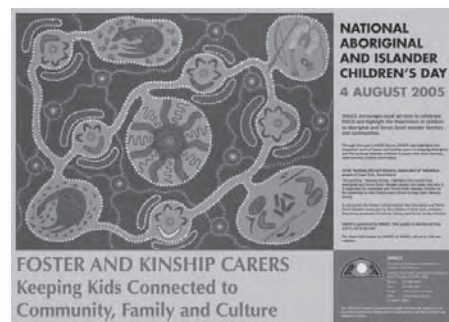
SNAICC Chairperson Muriel Bamblett said, "Making sure kids in care stay connected to their families and culture is the birth right of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait children," when she launched the NAICD 2005 activities in Melbourne at a ceremony at the Aborigines Advancement League.

"Children in foster or kinship care deserve and need stability, family connection, cultural strength and the same love, support and affection all children desire," she said.

This year, SNAICC commissioned the artist Ikanbala (a.k.a. Richard McLean),

The strength and pride of our young people: the One Fire Dancers performing at VACCA and SNAICC's event for NAICD, held at the Aborigines Advancement League in Thornbury, Melbourne, where NAICD 2005 and a resource booklet for foster carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were launched.

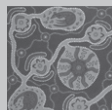
Below: SNAICC's poster for NAICD this year. 8,000 were printed and distributed free across the country.



a descendent of the Yadhakana people of Cape York, Queensland, to paint the original artwork, *Keeping Strong*, featured in this year's NAICD posters.

SNAICC has commissioned and produced a poster for national distribution since the first NAICD in 1988. ♦

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Stable and strong out of home care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

by Julie Sleight, SNAICC Policy Officer

A boriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are at risk of psychological, health, development and educational problems when they are placed in out of home care arrangements that cut them off from their family, culture and spirituality. They suffer as children, and later as adults, from the grief and loneliness of not belonging. They are also being denied their rights as Indigenous people.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family and community connections and spirituality are a source of inner strength and resilience that, as well as being an Aboriginal child's birthright and valuable in themselves, are potentially something which can be protective for the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person over the course of their whole life. The Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, and later the adolescent and the adult they become, who is able to see their self as part of an interconnected network of people and a journey, will have greater capacity to deal with life's difficulties as they arise.

So how do we make sure that Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care have the opportunity to allow their cultural strength and spirituality to develop and emerge during childhood?

The answer is that we must enable the child to maintain their connections to family and community. Family is the cornerstone of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and spirituality. The Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child can only inherit their culture and allow their spirituality to emerge through the experience of culture, connection to family, community and place and embracing the spiritual awareness that evolves from these experiences and connections.

"If you don't know your family, you don't know your culture and where you belong."

SNAICC Executive member

Keeping children in out of home care connected to family and culture can, however, be complex and difficult. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, like families within Australian society as a whole, have become increasingly complex and mobile. Any agency aiming to keep children connected to family needs a good knowledge of the complex and fluid networks of families within communities. This knowledge rests with community based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies, who also understand the cultural and spiritual importance of maintaining family and community connections.

"The first element of the SNAICC approach is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander control of child and family welfare services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including child protection services and out of home care service delivery and case management."

This is why the first element of the SNAICC approach to achieving stable and culturally strong out of home care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is to move towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander control of child and family welfare services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including child protection services and out of home care service delivery and case management.

The second step in the SNAICC approach is to properly implement the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle and underpin this by more effectively recruiting, training and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship and foster carers.

The Aboriginal Child Placement Principle has been in place for over twenty years now but its implementation is inadequate and inconsistent across the country. The Principle was designed to ensure that Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children

that needed to be removed from home were kept connected to their family, community and culture to the maximum extent possible, but compliance with the Principle is very poor in most states and territories.

Serious and sustained efforts must be made to place children according to the first option under the Principle, that is with a member of the child's extended family or kinship group. Kinship placements more easily enable the maintenance of connections to family and community (and are more stable and successful because relatives have a vested interest in making them work).



© SNAICC

Where it is unsafe or for some other reason impossible to place the child with their extended family or community, agencies need a pool of well trained and adequately resourced and supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers with whom to place children.

The training provided to carers should include the importance of the child maintaining connection to family and strategies to facilitate and manage this. It should also cover the importance of the child returning to their family if this is possible. A central responsibility of anyone caring for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child should be to nurture the child's relationship with their land, their family and their community to the greatest extent possible.

Resources available to foster carers should include a life storybook and cultural support plan for each child.

“Children need to know who they are and where they fit in with their families and communities. Even though a child may never live with their community, they should know how they fit in there, what their totem is, where their land is, who their family is. Children need to know that they are part of a journey that began 40,000 years ago; they need to know what the journey tracks were and where they fit into that journey. We are part of the rocks and the river; no Aboriginal child should have that taken away from them.”

SNAICC Executive member

It is appropriate to include a reminder at this point that keeping children free from physical and psychological harm is paramount – equally as important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as it is for other children. An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child's involvement with their family and community is highly important, *but never more important than the child's safety*. Maintaining connections to family and community is not a justification for leaving a child at risk of harm or making a placement that puts them at risk of harm.

The other side of enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to maintain safe connection with family is supporting and encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents from whom children have been removed to feel ongoing responsibility for their children and work towards building a safe, healthy, stable and supportive relationship with them. Ultimately this may extend to re-unification. Intensive support must be provided to parents to help them address whatever problems led to their children being removed.

Stability is important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children but the international trend towards greater use of adoptions and permanent care options is not the way forward

Aboriginal children need to remain connected to their family and community and the possibility of restoration to family should be kept open. Adoption is not part of Aboriginal culture. The stolen generations are still dealing with the trauma of past adoption policies that removed them from family and culture. Their suffering has taught that for many, adoption created pain

that could not be healed and problems that could not be fixed.

“Our history shows that adoption doesn't work.”

SNAICC Executive member

Governments must also develop and support culturally appropriate family support services to prevent problems and stress that may lead to child abuse and neglect and the removal of children. Families must be assisted to build their cultural strength as well as their general health and functioning.

The birthright that each Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child is privileged to inherit is a unique cultural and spiritual heritage that stretches back over 40,000 years. All levels of government and non-government child and family welfare organisations working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families share the responsibility with SNAICC of making sure that, whatever their family circumstances, no Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child is denied this birthright.

SNAICC will seek opportunities to work with state and territory governments to incorporate our approach to out of home care into legislation, policies and practices of all state and territory governments.

A position paper that outlines in further detail the SNAICC approach, *Achieving stable and culturally strong out of home care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*, is available from SNAICC or can be downloaded from our web site at:

www.snaicc.asn.au/briefing-papers



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Contributions, feedback and suggestions to *SNAICC News* are welcome. Copy deadline to our November edition is **17 October 2005**.

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SNAICC Update

National Resource Service Update

The SNAICC National Indigenous Family and Children's Resource Service (NRS) will work across the family and children's services sector with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community based services and other services working directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. It will work to fill resource and information gaps, promote shared learning, document what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community based services consider to be good practice and provide a central clearinghouse function for disseminating information.

SNAICC has determined that the NRS will focus on four priority areas. These areas are important and directly relevant to SNAICC's history and overall mission. The NRS will produce resources and information materials for distribution to family and children's services across the country in relation to each of these four priority areas:

Priority Area One:- Early childhood development, parenting and child rearing;

Priority Area Two:- Child and family wellbeing;

Priority Area Three:- Prevention of family violence, child abuse and child neglect;

Priority Area Four:- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance and organisational development.

Initial NRS projects

Currently, the National Resource Service is funding and implementing seven priority projects. The NRS is not a grant giving organisation but will work, usually in partnership with other organisations, to produce specific resource materials. The initial projects were selected by the SNAICC National Executive and a National Reference Group that SNAICC established to advise us on NRS activities.

All of the resource materials produced through these projects will be made freely available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and mainstream services working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children.

'Through Young Black Eyes' – resources on responding to family violence and child abuse

The resources titled *Through Young Black Eyes* (TYBE) were first produced by SNAICC in 2002 and included a community workers' handbook, leaders' guide and leaflet for families. The resources are being updated and will also include a facilitators guide to assist people run local community workshops using the resources. The project responds to the success of the first production of TYBE in 2002 and to its evaluation, which noted the need to promote the use of the resources through community workshops and more localised information.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fathers – national and local parenting information posters

The project builds on the *Parenting Information Project* work carried out by SNAICC and FaCS in 2004. The project is developing a series of national posters focussed on Indigenous fathers and children 0–8 and a template to allow local services and communities to develop their own local versions of the national posters. The project is being implemented in partnership with the University of Newcastle Family Action Centre and their Engaging Fathers project.

Also see the report on page 11 from Michelle Moloney, the SNAICC-NRS Project Officer working on it.

Online network for the Indigenous early childhood services sector

The NRS is establishing, in partnership with InfoXchange Australia, an intranet for a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities working in the early childhood development sector. This intranet will provide a means of distributing and sharing information, news, resources and two-way communication between the participants on the intranet.

Through the project, services will be provided with computers, software and training specifically for the purpose of giving them the capacity to access online resources and communicate with each other, building an online community of services. This will



One of the One Fire Dancers performing for NAICD in Melbourne this year.

operate as an action research project and work with a limited number of services, up to 40, before being evaluated and potentially replicated more broadly.

Developing resource tools to support family centred strengths based practice

The reference group has identified the development of resource tools to support strengths based family practice as an immediate priority for the NRS. Through the 2005 consultations, organisations have suggested that it would be valuable for the NRS to produce Indigenous strengths cards, scrapbooks of strengths and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resource materials for use in family support programs and services.

Child abuse prevention and community awareness and training workshops

Building on the re-publishing of *Through Young Black Eyes*, we will develop a coordinated program of community based workshops to assist communities to develop local responses aimed at preventing and responding to child abuse. SNAICC will be seeking project partners for each state and territory who are interested and able to develop and implement community based workshops focussed on preventing child abuse and neglect.

Cultural audit tools for mainstream child welfare agencies

Improving the relevance of mainstream services and programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families is a priority for the NRS. A range of national, state,

territory and local mainstream child and family welfare services and peak bodies have identified working with their members and SNAICC to develop cultural audit tools as a key priority. The tools will assist mainstream child and family welfare services to assess and build the cultural relevance of their programs, organisations and services.

Certificate IV in Aboriginal Child Care for Aboriginal Communities – developing training resource materials

We will develop training resource materials to support the delivery of the Certificate IV in Aboriginal Child Care for Aboriginal Communities into existing Aboriginal childcare services. The resource materials developed will be localised and support training delivery within the services. This project will build on the success of the Perth based agency Yorganop, which has developed and delivered the course successfully in Western Australia with the support of the WA Dept of Community Development.

Ongoing stakeholder consultations – determining future project priorities

SNAICC will carry out periodic consultations focussed on identifying priorities for the development of resource materials and other capacity building priorities of services working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

During the second half of 2005, SNAICC will seek input from local services and other stakeholders in relation to a range of matters including the following:

- Their priorities and needs in relation to resource materials and support;
- Views on existing resource materials they may have utilised or developed that might usefully be distributed to other services;
- Specific projects proposals they would like to see the NRS develop;
- Existing NRS projects they would like to be directly involved in developing.

Please contact me for more information on any of our initiatives.

– Julian Pocock
SNAICC Coordinator

SNAICC projects

Risk & Protective Framework Project – UTS

SNAICC is working with the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) to develop a Risk and Protective Framework that is appropriate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. The project arose through concerns about the framework suggested by the Australian Government that would influence policy and programs under the National Agenda for Early Childhood.

The framework the government is suggesting was developed through consultation with a range of people but there was no consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Hence, we are undertaking this project to devise our own framework that we will provide to the government as an appropriate framework for our people.

The SNAICC and UTS team will travel across the country to talk to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, caregivers and workers in the field, to get their opinions on the current framework suggested by government, and to find out what they think should be in an ATSI Risk and Protective Framework.

A couple of months ago, we called for Expressions of Interest from our member agencies to hold focus groups. Thank you to those who asked to be involved. All focus groups have now been organised and we will be doing quite a bit of travelling over the next couple of months. There will be a representative from SNAICC and UTS going to each focus group and we will be talking to at least 15 people at each location:

Cherbourg (Qld);
Launceston and Hobart (Tas);
Darwin and Daly River (NT);
Campbelltown (NSW);
Perth and Roebourne (WA);
Whyalla (SA); and
Melbourne (Vic).

The first focus group kicked off in Cherbourg on Tuesday 2 August, and the final group will be held in Melbourne in October. Keep an eye on our website and in the next SNAICC News for more updates on this project.

– Tracey Borg
SNAICC Project Officer



SNAICC Chairperson, Muriel Bamblett.

“We now know that fostering cultural identity is in the best interests of the child. ... To promote the best interest of the child requires that carers, workers, therapists, teachers and all who interact with children from other cultures develop an understanding of the importance of culture and support children to maintain their culture.”

This was the message Muriel Bamblett, the SNAICC Chairperson, gave foster carers at the National Foster Carers Conference in Alice Springs last July.

Ms Bamblett was presenting the keynote address at the conference. In her speech, she directly addressed the conference theme, ‘Living and Learning Together: A Celebration and Appreciation of Diversity’, as it relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Foster carers from across the country gathered for the annual Australian Foster Care Association conference, which was held from 29 to 31 July at the Alice Springs Convention Centre.

Foster carer advocates, the representatives of children’s and family services, and organisations supporting children in out of home care, and representatives of government departments for family services and child welfare also attended the conference.

At the conference, Muriel Bamblett also presented a workshop based on SNAICC’s new position paper on stable and strong out of home care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. (See page 2 for more on this policy statement.)

Ms Bamblett’s speech is now available electronically from SNAICC’s website: <http://networking.snaicc.asn.au/library/resources.shtml>



NORTHERN TERRITORY

Children's artwork published

Produced by RACSSU, *From a child's hand – images from a child's world* is a book of drawings by children aged from 15 months to ten years. These children come from six different Aboriginal communities in the Top End of the Northern Territory – both coastal and inland. The children were asked to do a drawing of what they like about being a kid, some fun things they do with family and friends, the thing they most like, or something that was important to them.



The important places, people and things to do for these children included: community, hunting, fishing, camping, families, Mummy, friends, and playing.

Children from Umbakumba Community who contributed drawings to this project were pleased and quite impressed to receive their own personal copies of the book after it was launched on 26 July.

Contributor: Veronica Johns and Ranu James, RACSSU (Remote Aboriginal Children's Services Support Unit), Darwin

QUEENSLAND

Research on kinship care and the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers in the child protection system

QAIHC (Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council) and Griffith University are about to commence research on the support needs of

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relative carers. Children in care are increasingly placed with relatives, rather than with traditional foster carers, and Indigenous children are much more likely to be placed within their extended family.

The policy of all Australian States is to place Indigenous children with relatives/extended family whenever possible. It is increasingly recognised as important that placement does not sever a child's connection with their family and community. In Australia and internationally there has been a recent trend to favour kinship care because it is less of an upheaval for a child to be placed with someone known to them, and kin placements tend to facilitate ongoing parental contact.

Research on kinship care has found that siblings are more likely to be placed together; kin are more likely to provide stability and continuity but also children may stay in care longer. However, there is little Australian research on kinship care, and no research that gives a voice to kin carers. Yet there is increased reliance on kinship care. The quality of placements, the availability of placements, and support for carers is an urgent issue for government to address.

The research focuses on formal kinship care arranged by State child protection agencies. It employs administrative data analysis and interviews with key Indigenous informants in the child protection system, and aims to:

- Describe the scope and characteristics of relative care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Explore the experiences and needs of Indigenous carers.

Importantly, the project will generate knowledge from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies and carers working in the child protection field. It remains the case that most 'solutions' to problems of Indigenous child protection are developed and implemented by government without Indigenous input, much less control. The research gives

a voice to Indigenous carers, who are providing a service to government and the community on a voluntary basis that is largely unheralded, while also helping to maintain and strengthen their own extended family.

The research is a joint project between the Griffith University and the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council and will be led by Dr Clare Tilbury. It is the first stage of a larger research endeavour on the part of QAIHC to improve the evidence base for child protection initiatives aimed at Indigenous children and families.

QAIHC is the auspicing body for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Partnership, which is made up of AICCAs.

Contributor: Tricia Elarde, Child Protection Policy Officer, QAIHC (References for this article are available from SNAICC.)

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Working and networking with our community

Three times each year, ARMSU (Aboriginal Resource & Management Support Unit) hosts two-day meetings for representatives of all Indigenous children's services in S.A. (Aboriginal Children's Services Meetings). These are State-wide training and professional development seminars for Directors, staff, management committee and Community Council members.

Current issues are discussed, training is provided and inter and intra-state speakers are invited to present relevant information and consult with service providers. This gathering of Indigenous people also provides opportunities for advocacy and collective responses to major issues and government proposals that may directly affect Indigenous children and families.

Our last meeting was our only country

meeting for 2005 and it was held at the Stanpipe Hotel conference venue in Port Augusta on 30 June and 1 July 2005. The guest speakers included Anne Clark, the Chair of the South Australian Care and Education Forum and the editor of a policy resource disk. She ran a workshop on policies and policy writing in early childhood services, and provided copies of the policy resource disk to each Aboriginal service in South Australia. Policies are a major issue for our services and this resource will go a long way in relieving some of those concerns.

Two other guest speakers, from the Port Augusta Health Services, focused on Aboriginal Children's health issues and how the hospital works with families and the whole community to assist them to get the best possible care for their children. We commend the hospital on their cultural understanding and dedication to our children's health.

Finally, two of our own Aboriginal Directors from our services (one in the metropolitan area and one from the country) also presented separate workshops – one on Emotional Intelligence, and the other on parent and community involvement in their child care service.

Our last meeting for this year will be in Adelaide in early December and we hope to discuss the outcomes of the Broadband changes.

Presently, ARMSU is supporting a community to get back up and running with an unlicensed long day care service; we are also supporting a JET crèche through some changes; and are also helping a community council with employing staff for their child care centre. We continually work with all services around trying to get training for staff in relation to qualifications.

Contributor: Debbie Bond, ARMSU Management Support, ARMSU

VICTORIA

Children's Services (Victoria) Award increased

Child care staff employed under the Children's Services (Victoria) Award received a well deserved wage increase from 1 July 2005. The increase ranges from \$6 per week for unqualified workers

to \$148 to be paid in four instalments as appropriate (July 2005, January 2006, July 06, January 2007). This increase is in addition to the \$17 per week awarded under the 2005 Safety Net Review.

The new Award structure now at long last recognises Certificate III as well as Second in Charge.

The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI) and the the MACS staff in Victoria welcome the increase and will now be working on strategies to make the MACS budget break even, as Commonwealth funding has not increased in proportion to the wage increase.

Contributor: Roland Finnete, ECH Coordinator, VAEAI

Supporting boys to be fine men



VAEAI organised an Indigenous Forum in conjunction with the *Working with Boys Building Fine Men Forum* in Melbourne in April this year, at the invitation of the conference organisers, Family Action Centre. Geraldine Atkinson (above), President of VAEAI and SNAICC's Secretary, presented the welcoming address, where she said:

"There are a great many issues facing our boys and young men and the solutions will come from our communities. Our boys and young men have many strengths to offer."

Source: VAEAI

Contributions welcome

What's happening in your state/territory or organisation? Share your news, reports and issues in the next Roundup. Send contributions (of less than 300 words) to Mark at SNAICC.

Teeth health kit for kids



© Brett Duane, Awabakal Dental

SNAICC and NACCHO have recently endorsed *Tiddalick Takes on Teeth* for nationwide release.

Tiddalick Takes on Teeth is an Oral Health Package designed for children younger than six years old. It has been developed by the Aboriginal community of Awabakal in conjunction with Hunter New England Health. Dental decay may be increasing due to a number of factors including the increased frequency that sugary snacks and drinks are consumed. It encourages the use of water in child care centres and is a fun way to teach children about oral health and support dental friendly environments. The kit also encourages awareness of Aboriginal cultures.

It is suitable for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal pre-schools.

The kit consists of:

- ♦ A storybook for children (Narootah and Tiddalick visit the dentist);
- ♦ A teacher's handbook with activities to perform;
- ♦ A CD song ('Swig Swish Swallow');
- ♦ A video (a child's first day at preschool – we drink water here);
- ♦ An oral health policy proforma (suggestions for effective oral health at preschool);
- ♦ A magnet (dental professionals recommend water only for healthy teeth);
- ♦ A drink bottle.

Winner of the inaugural NSW Health Aboriginal Health Award for "Most innovative and effective program in Aboriginal Health" 2004; Finalist Premier's award, NSW; NSW Health Baxter Awards 2004; Finalist International Association Paediatric Dentistry 2005.

Contact Brett Duane, Awabakal Dental – email: bduane@awabakal.org or telephone: (02) 4969 2505

Contributor: Brett Duane

News

Indigenous child mortality rate still high

The latest statistics on child mortality show Indigenous children are almost five times as likely to die before the age of five as other children.

According to the latest National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey, the chance of an Indigenous child dying before the age of five is 3.2 per cent.

That is compared to a 0.7 per cent mortality rate for those who are non-Indigenous.

The survey found the risk of a child dying increased in circumstances where parents were either raising the child on their own, were unemployed, or consumed high amounts of alcohol.

The presence of neighbourhood problems was also a risk factor.

The snapshot found positive influences on a child's health included home ownership, a good environment, and absence of stress.

From: *ABC News Online*
<<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newstems/200508/s1435523.htm>>
Posted Thursday, August 11, 2005

Poor health tops list of Indigenous disadvantage

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still face poor health compared to the wider population, a recent government report has found.

The report, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage*, identifies the key indicators of the disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It found that life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is around 17 years lower than that for the total Australian population. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males have a life expectancy of 59 years (compared to 77 years for the rest of Australia's males population) and females have a life expectancy of 65 years (compared to 82 in the rest of the female population).

The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) says its members are saddened but not surprised at the findings of the report.

"On any marker of disadvantage, Aboriginal people consistently feature at the lowest point," said NACCHO's Chief Executive Officer, Ms Dea Delaney-Thiele.

"The markers are not unique to Aboriginal people. However, the

coalescence of markers of disadvantage into a single group is unique to Aboriginal people, as are the health outcomes which flow from them," she said.

The report, the second produced by the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP), takes stock of the present situation and will help governments and communities to focus on pressing areas of need.

While its health finding received significant media coverage, the report found other areas of need had changed little, despite improvements in some areas.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women are still disproportionately represented in the prison system, and also experience twice the crime victimisation rates of other Australians.

Substantiated child protection notifications involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children had increased. In most jurisdictions, the rate was higher than that for other children.

Ms Delaney-Thiele said, "NACCHO agrees that there are inroads being made into some areas, but there is still a long way to go. We urge the Government to act and act now."

The report, first released on 12 July, is available online at:
www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/indigenous/keyindicators2005/index.html

- ML

Sources: SCRGSP 2005, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2005* <www.pc.gov.au/gsp/>; NACCHO statement 12 July 05; ABC News Online <www.abc.net.au/news>

Call for artists and illustrators

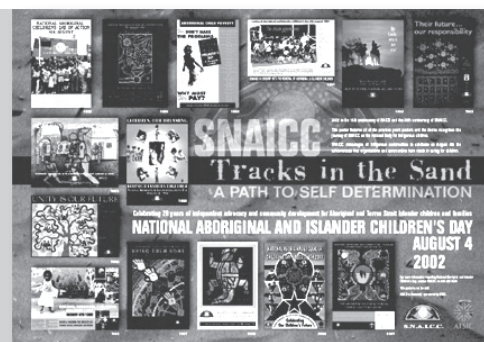
Cathy Kirwan, SNAICC-NRS
Project Officer

SNAICC is always interested to hear from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists who may be available to produce original artwork for SNAICC at various times. We regularly commission Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists to produce original artwork and/or illustrations when we put out resources such as publications and posters.

Later this year, we will also be looking for an artist to develop a logo for the National Indigenous Family and Children's Resource Service. This logo will need to represent the themes attached to the service and the name that is chosen.

If you are interested in producing art and design work for SNAICC, then we would like to hear from you and see examples of some of your work.

Please contact Mark Lawrence at the SNAICC office to discuss further and to arrange to send a folio of your work.



The 2002 NAICD poster. SNAICC has commissioned original artwork by a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists for its annual National Aboriginal & Islander Children's Day posters

Email: publications@snaicc.asn.au
Telephone: 03 9489 8099

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parenting report out now

SNAICC has published its comprehensive report on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parenting issues and the information and parenting program support needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. The report, *Indigenous Parenting Project*, has been produced in two sections – the *Executive Summary* and the *Main Report* – and is now available.

The publication is based on SNAICC's project on parenting and family issues, run in the first half of 2004. The project and the publication were funded by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS).

SNAICC Project Officer Tracey Borg conducted the project, which included focus groups with families and workers, stakeholder consultations, a national workshop and a program audit. SNAICC contracted out the literature review to Swinburne University.

The publications identifies a number of problems and issues that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face in their parenting, as well as identifies important areas for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, including SNAICC, and mainstream organisations and government to work on to support the parenting needs and abilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents.

If you would like a copy of the publication sent to you, please contact the SNAICC office.

Both the detailed final report and the executive summary are also available electronically online:

www.snaicc.asn.au/publications



SNAICC publications

We have a number of other publications still available in print. SNAICC publishes a number of project reports, resources and policy statements to advanced the discussion, reflection and action in our communities and in government on the well-being and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Besides the *Indigenous Parenting Report* mentioned above, some recent publications available in print include:

- ♦ *Research Priorities for Indigenous Children and Youth*, published this year for ARACY; and
- ♦ *Our Future Generations*, the report from SNAICC's National Indigenous Child Welfare and Development Seminar in 2003.

Contact our office to have any of these mailed to you. Alternatively, you can download electronic versions (in pdf) of our publications from our website. Go to:

www.snaicc.asn.au/publications

Spring is coming



by Michelle Moloney

What I want to write about is a little fluffy cloud - a little fluffy cloud. Yes, but this little fluffy cloud is not just an ordinary cloud, it is a special little cloud. Just when it seems like the winter of discontent has set in and the sky is foreboding and grey, a little fluffy cloud comes bobbing by just to say that spring will come.

That little fluffy cloud popped up for me on a DVD that I was watching here at work on the mobs from somewhere in NSW. One of the Nans watching the young men performing dance at a function lamented, "we were not allowed to do that". The comment held two things: the pain of being denied her culture and the absolute pride in her grandson and the others. These days they can learn and practice their culture with pride.

Nan has survived because her parents had survived and their parents had survived. To put it into contemporary terms, as Mum Shirl (who I am re-reading at the moment) says:

"When I think of the government and how they talk about all they think they are giving to Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people have had to fight for everything, the legal services, the medical services on the streets and in paddy wagons and cells, for housing for money for electricity or warm clothes. The government puts out through the radio, newspapers and television that they give so many millions of dollars every year. But it is just like a piece of elastic, all stretched out, and when they let it go, it springs back into just being a little piece."

These comments were made some 30 years ago but things are no different today, given the fact that more and more services are being withdrawn.

We all know the litany of events over the last 200 years – we know them inside out. They are the dark clouds with the winter of discontent; but then up pops fluffy. Nan was awed by what she was seeing, **what** she would never have thought possible as a child.

But fluffy also represents more than the awe and the pride – it can also do something about the loss. Maybe there should be a cultural camp or two – it is not too late for Nan and many others to learn and participate in culture and even dance. We have the opportunity to close those gaps. Here's to Fluffy. What's on your cloud?

Michele is a SNAICC Project Officer for the NRS. Email her at: project1@snaicc.asn.au

CONFERENCES

Family & Community Strengths Conference

5–8 December 2005

The University of Newcastle, NSW

Brings together practitioners and organisations interested in a strengths approach when supporting families and communities. The conference will explore:

- the impact of strengths-based approaches
- how to build accountable practice
- how to make the best uses of resources available
- what counts as evidence in strengths-based practice
- how we use research to strengthen practice
- how can we use our practice to strengthen research
- how can we use practice-based research to influence
- policy.

Earlybird registration closes 9 September 2005.

Presented by The Family Action Centre, The University of Newcastle.

Information:

www.pco.com.au/family
Tulips Meetings Management
tel: 02 4984 2554; fax: 02 4984 2755
email: family@pco.com.au

CEIEC Annual Conference

Honouring the child, honouring equity 5 – Reconsidering rights and relationships

17–20 November 2005

The University of Melbourne, Victoria

- Identify strategies for reconsidering children's rights and producing greater social justice;
- Explore how early childhood research, theory, policy and practice can honor the child and honor equity;
- Inspire collaborative change projects in local communities;
- Plan strategies for maintaining networks and actions post-conference.

Presented by Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC).

Information

<http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/LED/CEIEC/conf05>
tel: Janet Treweek 03 8344 7780
email: education-ceiec@unimelb.edu.au

ACOSS Congress 2005

Re-imagining Australian Society – visions and solutions

10–11 November 2005

Brisbane

Speeches, seminars and workshops cover welfare reform, housing, carers, children and families, health in rural and remote areas, campaigning and fundraising and changes in industrial relations.

Register and Book:

www.hotelnetwork.com.au
email: acoss@hotelnetwork.com.au
or call the ACOSS office: 02 9310 4844

Father Inclusive Practice Forum

5–6 October 2005

University of Newcastle, Newcastle

National Forum of practitioners, educators, trainers and managers in early intervention and family related services to increase awareness of the competencies and strategies for engaging fathers, and offering training solutions to establish a Father Inclusive Practice Framework for early intervention and family services. Places strictly limited, so book early!

Presented by Family Action Centre.

Information:

www.newcastle.edu.au/engagingfathers

National Symposium 2005

Their Lives, Our Work: Critical questions for practice in child, youth and family services

10-12 October 2005

Preston, Melbourne, Victoria

Showcases practical approaches that assist in responding to, and supporting children, young people and families with complex needs.

Presented by Child and Family Welfare

Association of Australia & The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare. Information:

www.acwa.asn.au/cafwa/Symposium2005.html
dbconferences
tel: 03 9347 0062
www.dbconferences.com.au

Family Services Conference 2005

Family Services : Champions of Change

17–20 October 2005

Sydney Olympic Park, Sydney

- Early Intervention & Prevention with Families
- Families where there are Drug and Alcohol Issues
- Parents with an Intellectual Disability
- Capacity Building (maximising opportunities and outputs within existing frameworks)
- 1 Day Management and Governance workshop (designed for Management Committee members)

All streams will include some content around working with Indigenous families and where possible we will also involve parents who have used family services.

Early Bird registration by 31 August. FamS members get discounted fees.

Organised by NSW Family Services Inc.

Information:

www.nswfamilyservices.asn.au/Main/Conferences/FS2005Conference.htm
or email Sharyn Low at Matrix on Board: sharyn@mob.com.au

KAPCS Annual Conference

Learning and Growing Respectfully together

16–18 September

Fitzroy Crossing, WA

The Kimberly and Pilbara Children's Services presents its annual children's services conference. Includes Indigenous specific services.

Information:

Louise Ullah, Conference Coordinator
tel: 08 9193 5510
email: kapcservices@yahoo.com.au
www.kapcs.org.au

Engaging fathers project

by Michelle Maloney, SNAICC
Project Worker – NRS

Hi again, it is Michele. Some of you may be aware and some may not that we are undertaking a new project at the moment involving fathers and babies 0–6 years. We have lots of mums and bubs programs all around the country but no dads and bubs. So we are trying to address this. How, will be in stages.

The first stage is developing some national posters and some local posters. In order to do the local posters we need to run a small focus group for up to six groups out there on the ground. I am aware that you get asked to run focus groups a bit, but over the next couple of years you will be asked to run more.

At the moment we are doing Queensland, so could some people nominate from other states. I am aware that with this one more people will nominate their community than we are going to do, but out of this exercise

we are hoping to develop some templates which will give other communities some help to develop their own. Or alternatively, we will do some others next year and the following. So I am asking some communities to nominate at this stage please.

To do so please email project1@snaicc.asn.au – which is me.

The second part of the project will involve other resources and following up on the research findings that the previous research established. I can do an article on that for you in the next edition.

Many thanks, Michele



CONFERENCES

Imagining Childhood - Children, Culture and Community

Imagining Childhood - Children, Culture and Community

20-22 September 2005

Araluen Centre, Alice Springs

"What we say about our children says a lot about who we are and the kind of society we want. What is our vision for society and its members? What demands are we imposing on children, and what does this say about us? Who is vulnerable in our society and what do we do to help them? How can our children reach their potential in a changing world?"

These questions are addressed in a challenging symposium on children and childhood."

This national seminar is free with on-line registration. Organised by Charles Darwin University.

Information:

Gary Robinson
tel: 08 8946 6893
www.cdu.edu.au/cdss/

Discover, Explore, Enrich *An interactive early years conference*

28–29 October 2005
Adelaide

Workshops on philosophy, practice and application, for early childhood professionals. Targeted at South Australian services/practitioners.

Funding is being sought for scholarships for Indigenous participants, so contact Gowrie Adelaide for details. Professional development presented by Gowrie Training Centre Adelaide.

Information:

tel: 08 8234 5219
email: train@gowrie-adelaide.com.au
www.gowrie-adelaide.com.au

A 2005 NATIONAL ABORIGINAL & ISLANDER CHILDREN'S DAY EVENT



Minister Garbutt launching the new booklet on National Aboriginal & Islander Children's Day.

Foster carers' cultural resource launched on Children's Day

A new resource booklet will assist non-Indigenous carers who care for Aboriginal and Islander Children in out of home care to maintain these children's connections to their community, family and culture.

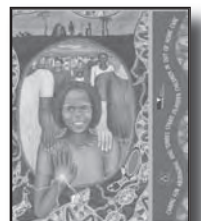
The booklet was produced by VACCA (the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency) with funding from the Victorian Department of Human Services.

Ms Muriel Bamblett, CEO of VACCA and SNAICC Chairperson, said, 'those who care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, whether they are immediate family or foster or kinship carers, must be supported and encouraged' – especially if they are to nurture the children's relationship with their land, family and their community.

The Victorian Minister for Community Services and Minister for Children, the Hon Sherryl Garbutt MP, and VACCA Chairperson Margaret Stewart, launched the booklet in Melbourne on National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day, Thursday 4 August.

'This year's NAICD theme highlights the significance of foster and kinship carers in our children's lives,' Ms Bamblett also said.

SNAICC will use this booklet as a model to develop a national resource.





**Have you moved or changed your address details?
Has your organisation changed its name?**

SNAICC receives a large number of returned mail due to incorrect postal details each time a mail-out is done. It would assist us immensely if you let us know whether your details have changed or are about to change. Please complete this change of address slip and either fax or post it back to SNAICC, attention to Simone Andy.

Send this form to SNAICC at:
Suite 8, 1st Floor, 252-260 St Georges Road
North Fitzroy, VIC 3068
Fax: 03 9489 8044
email: snaicc@vicnet.net.au

Please tick :

Yes, we would like to stay on the SNAICC database – please update our details.

OR

Please remove us from the SNAICC database.

Organisation:	
Contact person:	
Address:	
State:	Postcode:
Phone:	
Fax:	
Email:	
Website:	

Privacy statement: This information is collected for SNAICC's mailing database and is used for its activities, including for mailing our publications. This information is treated with strict confidentiality.

Name the National Indigenous Family and Children's Resource Service



Win a Green PC computer package!

Give us your suggestions for the name of the National Indigenous Family and Children's Resource Service (NRS) and you could win a Green PC computer-internet-software package!

SNAICC invites Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community based organisations to suggest a name for the National Indigenous Family and Children's Resource Service. SNAICC would like the name to be an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander word that will give the service a strong identity. Some of the themes that you might like to think about when coming up with ideas are: families, children, sharing ideas and resources, and a national organisation supporting local leadership and communities.

In 2004, SNAICC was funded by the Department of Family and Community Services to develop a National Indigenous Family and Children's Resource Service over the following four years. The Service works with the sector to enhance services, assist in the development

of new services and support local leadership capacity building. The four priority areas for the National Resource Service are early childhood development, prevention of child abuse and neglect, child and family wellbeing, and governance and capacity building.

The Service works in partnership with organisations throughout the sector to provide resources and materials that support communities, families and children and creates opportunities for local organisations and communities to share their work and stories at a broader level.

Over the past 12 months, SNAICC has been developing the service and has started a number of projects as well as undertaking a lot of planning and thinking about the next four years for the National Resource Service.

Please send all entries to the SNAICC office by close of business on 30 September 2005.

You can send a letter, email snaicc@vicnet.asn.au or phone the office and speak to Cathy Kirwan or Julian Pocock. SNAICC will need to verify an organisation's permission to use local Indigenous language.

The winner will receive a Green PC package from Infoxchange Australia to the value of \$700. Check out the packages available at:

www.greenpc.com.au

– Cathy Kirwan



Did you know...

You can promote your conference, training programme or community event through SNAICC's website.

You can receive the latest information from SNAICC's Network News and Calendar via email.

Go to www.networking.snaicc.asn.au where you can:

- register for the weekly email Network News Infocast
- add your news story or
- promote your event or conference
- share publications and resources.

