

Proposed Plan of Action for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect in Aboriginal Communities



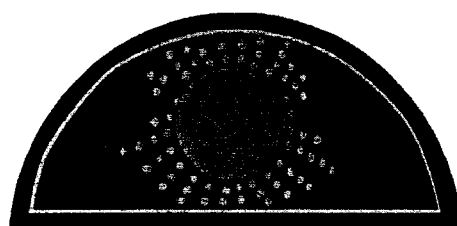
S.N.A.I.C.C

Secretariat National Aboriginal & Islander Child Care

**national
prevention
strategy**

for child abuse and neglect

**Proposed Plan of Action
for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
in Aboriginal Communities**



S.N.A.I.C.C

Secretariat National Aboriginal & Islander Child Care

1996

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ISBN 0 644 47383 5

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This Proposed Plan of Action was commissioned by the former Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health under the auspices of the National Child Protection Council.

Consultations were conducted with a wide range of community organisations as well as State and Territory Government representatives.

The Proposed Plan of Action does not necessarily reflect the policy of any government.

Publications and Design Section, Public Affairs, Parliamentary and Access Branch
Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services

Produced by the Australian Government Publishing Service

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This was a learning experience for all those involved over three years. It is the result of a cooperative effort that drew in people from Aboriginal communities to non-Aboriginal people in Federal and State and Territory Governments.

We would like to thank everyone without singling out anyone.

The greatest reward would be if this Plan made a difference to even one Aboriginal child. We hope, however, that it does more and that those that have helped continue to support its vision and hopes.

Secretariat of the National Aboriginal & Islander Child Care

May 1996

PROPOSED PLAN OF ACTION

Context

This research report outlines the suggested strategies of the Proposed Plan of Action for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect in Aboriginal Communities. The strategies comprise Stage Two of the Action Plan and are based on the findings of the Stage One discussion paper (1993) prepared by the Secretariat for the National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), commissioned and funded by the Department of Health and Family Services under the auspices of the National Child Protection Council, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and the State and Territory Governments (1994).

Terms of Reference

Using the discussion paper developed in Stage One, Stage Two aimed to:

- (i) conduct consultations throughout Aboriginal communities, urban, rural and remote, which would identify the key issues of concern and make recommendations for the prevention of child abuse and neglect in Aboriginal communities.
- (ii) identify, develop and refine child abuse prevention strategies which would be acceptable to Aboriginal communities and would maximise the involvement of Aboriginal people in their design and implementation.
- (iii) develop an Action Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect in Aboriginal Communities.

The plan should clearly identify:

- the target group at which the strategies are aimed;
- what the strategies aim to achieve;
- how the strategies are to be implemented.

The Research

Aboriginal communities, organisations and individuals in urban, rural and remote areas were consulted over a period of eight months. Individuals in government and non-government non-Aboriginal Organisations were also consulted.

Consultations were conducted in the form of workshops, individual discussions or written comments. Workshops were conducted (on a one or two day basis) in Perth, Broome, Darwin, Alice Springs, Cairns, Brisbane, Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. Those consulted represented a wide range of Aboriginal communities and organisations and included men, women, young people and elders.

An extensive literature search was also conducted to determine the key issues of concern.

PRINCIPLE FINDINGS

Key Issues

A number of key issues of concern were identified in the consultation process. However these issues must be viewed within the context of the reality which faces many Aboriginal families and communities. This reality is often framed by:

- dispossession – separation from land, erosion of culture, traditional ways of life, family, kinship ties, traditional relationships, the history of relations with white people and society.
- marginalisation within the greater Australian society.
- socio-economic disadvantage – high levels of poverty – poor, often overcrowded housing, homelessness, unemployment.

These factors contribute greatly to the stresses placed on Aboriginal families and communities and contribute to the incidence of child abuse and neglect in these communities.

Aboriginal kinship and child-rearing

While the European presence has had a real, often destructive influence on Aboriginal child rearing practices, it has not altered the essential values and beliefs of most Aboriginal people as they have adapted to new and ever-changing circumstances.

An Aboriginal child is not isolated from the rest of the community. Children are seen as belonging to the whole community, therefore many adults and children are involved in their lives and in their upbringing.

Aboriginal children are the responsibility of the whole extended family and the community. In many communities the family is biological and classificatory with “skin” groupings defining responsibilities and obligations.

Aboriginal families tend to be large. Children will have many siblings, cousins, uncles and aunts. They have their grandparents and elders. All of their broader extended family will play a role in their rearing, including older siblings and cousins.

Elders play a major part in the rearing of children.

While Aboriginal families tend to live in household units in urban areas, their interaction with other members of the family and friends is great, reflecting cultural forms of interaction. Nevertheless there are many for whom living in urban areas is isolating and stressful.

Aboriginal community organisations are also part of the social and kinship fabric of the communities they are in. They also play a role in the upbringing of those children whose families are unable to care for them.

The living circumstances of families does naturally affect the ideal operation of this form of child-rearing. Families are spread across the country these days. Adults have problems: alcoholism, mental-illness and other illnesses. Some are in prisons and institutions. Many have not dealt with abuse in their own lives, past and present. Children are removed. Grandparents die young. Poverty affects the ability of some to care for additional children. Some families are isolated by geography, living in urban areas with poor access to transport and communications.

Diversity

Our consultations revealed similar problems in most communities despite diverse living circumstances and cultural practices.

Urban communities in the large centres of population above 100,000, for instance while being comparatively well serviced with Aboriginal organisations and specially designed services, nevertheless are inadequately resourced in terms of need. Specific problems in urban communities include isolation and many of the lifestyle stresses that many other people experience like poor housing and lack of income. Large urban areas tend to have greater mixes of Aboriginal people from different geographical areas. Access to cultural resources is difficult. Respite in country areas is negligible or non-existent.

Rural communities have problems of inadequate access to services, higher cost of living, transport and housing, access to the full range of services and support services in particular. Many communities can be grossly impoverished, lacking access to clean water and other basic amenities. The advantage for rural communities is that they have greater access to cultural resources and do not experience the kind of stresses that people in large urban areas do.

Remote areas have the greatest access to cultural resources, usually living on or near their traditional lands. However this is counter balanced by difficult access to services and programs and inadequate basic amenities. Cost of living and access to foodstuffs is a continual problem even though access to bush foods is greater.

It should be noted that these distinctions still do not account for the diversity within each of the categories. Because of the complexity of dealing with this diversity which extends to the historical, social and political experiences of these communities, we have structured this Plan in a way that enables local design and control of services and programs.

Target Groups

We have not identified specific target groups. The information we have is inadequate to make such assessments. We have proposed more research to enable greater targeting in the future.

Aggregated information from sources like the Australian Bureau of Statistics National Census of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander People, however, suggests that as a population, many Aboriginal people and families are "at risk". By this we mean those families who experience the kind of stress factors in their lives that are closely associated with child abuse and neglect.

Prevention programs need to be aimed at all Aboriginal families and communities. The families and communities that are particularly badly off already have a significant degree of intervention by state institutions in their lives.

We believe that there is a crisis. Prevention in this context needs to mobilise the whole community.

Defining Child Abuse and Neglect

- 1.1 Definitions of child abuse and neglect vary between agencies and between community groups.
- 1.2 Definitions need to be interpreted broadly to include not only obvious physical, sexual and emotional abuse, but also less obvious aspects such as lack of effective parenting, withdrawal of support and love, domestic violence, failure to provide adequate medical care. Cultural deprivation must be recognised as a form of neglect and abuse.
- 1.3 Any interpretation of child abuse and neglect must be sensitive to the cultural practices of the community.
- 1.4 Child abuse and neglect for Aboriginal people is any form of action or inaction that results in the wellbeing of the child being threatened or leading to actual harm. This includes the practices leading to the denial of Aboriginality of children.

- 1.5 The Aboriginal view of child abuse does not separate the responsibility that governments and societal factors have in the creation of the syndrome of “dysfunctional families” and child abuse from the direct responsibility of the “abuser” or carer. Those who deny the cultural needs of Aboriginal children are also abusing or neglecting them.
- 1.6 Dispossession, racism, a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness and poverty are all factors leading to stresses within families that lead to child abuse and neglect. Government is responsible for addressing some of these issues as more often than not they are beyond the control of the families that may neglect or abuse their children.
- 1.7 Often the abuser has themselves not dealt with their own problems and are ill-equipped to properly care for their children.

Issues seen as contributing factors to child abuse and neglect

- 2.1 The breakdown of traditional Aboriginal society, since colonisation, has meant that many traditional child rearing practices and values have been lost. In the past children were loved and cared for by the whole community. The positive supports given to children and parents through these practices have been eroded.
- 2.2 The removal of Aboriginal children from their parents in the past and the subsequent associated traumas, deprivations, often abuse and neglect, have influenced many of today’s adult’s views of parenting, loving and nurturing. They have no parenting role models from the past and this gap is no longer filled by the traditional community.
- 2.3 The deprivation of culture, confusion of identity and severing of kinship ties, experience by many of those removed from their families even in the 1970s and 1980s contribute to the stresses placed on Aboriginal people.
- 2.4 Violence within the family and the community is a major concern. Many Aboriginal communities are violent places in which to live and grow up. Women and children are especially at risk.
- 2.5 Alcohol abuse has been identified in the workshops as a main contributing factor in family violence.
- 2.6 Substance abuse has also been identified as a main area of concern. Increased petrol and glue sniffing amongst young Aboriginal people, contributes to the dysfunction of some Aboriginal families.
- 2.7 Child sexual abuse, including child prostitution, is of major concern to Aboriginal communities. This type of abuse is often associated with other types of physical, emotional and mental abuse. The long and short term effects of such abuse can be devastating to the victim and subsequently the community.
- 2.8 The issue of inadequate housing was seen as a major contributing factor to the problems of neglect. Overcrowding, poorly designed houses, run-down houses, lack of access to services including public transport – all contribute to the general housing crisis for Aboriginal people.
- 2.9 Inadequate housing facilities also affect the ability of Aboriginal foster carers, to take in Aboriginal children who may be at risk in their own home environment.
- 2.10 The urbanised environment further fragments friendship and family groups, leading to social and physical isolation of individuals and families.
- 2.11 The prevalence of gambling in many Aboriginal communities was identified in the consultations as a cause of family violence. The depletion of the family income through gambling can also lead to poor nutrition and hygiene, contributing to neglect.

- 2.12 The relationship between poverty and the high incidence of child abuse and neglect was frequently noted in the consultations. Aboriginal children are more likely to experience an absence of a decent standard of diet, clothing, housing and health care, than is acceptable to the majority of Australians. Aboriginal people experience high levels of unemployment, reduced participation rates in education and recreation pursuits. Many parents are single, unemployed, living in crowded conditions, and have little access to formal child care.
- 2.13 Racism, inadequate recognition of indigenous status and rights, institutionalised racism – inappropriate structures and systems, policies and laws- the denial of historical influences contribute to the syndrome of child abuse and neglect. More often than not power to change these factors lie with government.

Issues seen as directly related to child abuse and neglect

These issues were identified in the consultations as being directly related to child abuse and neglect.

- 3.1 Learned violence in both the family situation and the community creates a culture and expectation of violence as an acceptable means of behaviour. “Pay back” as a means of redressing a “wrong” is a foundation of the system of Aboriginal law that exists in most communities.
- 3.2 Children who roam the streets at night and/or live on the streets may be subjected to abuse.
- 3.3 Young, single parents who lack both financial and emotional supports can become victims of, and perpetrators of, abuse and neglect.
- 3.4 A lack of parenting and child rearing skills in both young parents and older families contributes to family stresses, violence and abuse.
- 3.5 Poor budgeting skills leads to further family stresses, abuse and neglect.
- 3.6 Neglect of children is associated with alcohol abuse and poverty.

Systemic issues

- 4.1 Poor working relationships generally exist between government services and Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people felt excluded from and intimidated by, the services and systems that deal with their children.
- 4.2 Services were seen to be largely controlled by governments and as not recognising the principle of self-determination for Aboriginal people, cultural and kinship differences.
- 4.3 There is a perception by Aboriginal people that more weight is given to protection rather than prevention. There is an eagerness on the part of government departments to remove Aboriginal children from their families.
- 4.4 Information about services is inadequate and often inaccessible to Aboriginal people.
- 4.5 There is insufficient networking and co-ordination between government services and Aboriginal and non-government community services, often leading to gaps in or duplication of services.
- 4.6 Workers in community based services are often lacking in adequate training and support measures.
- 4.7 Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies (AICCAs) were originally set up to help the extended family to stay together. They are also committed to keeping Aboriginal children in the Aboriginal community. This means that their preventative emphasis is strong. Many Aboriginal people who seek

help at AICCAAs do not have their children in care. They are nevertheless in difficulty usually as a result of inadequate income and without support resources like access to transport, health services, poor neighbourhoods and isolation. However, AICCAAs are consistently dealing with heavy case loads at the intervention stage. This often leaves them under resourced, with little time to develop preventative programs and strategies.

- 4.8 In order to meet the demands of their case loads, AICCAAs are increasingly conforming to a system of child welfare service delivery which has departed from the original "Aboriginal" notions of child care, and compromised the principles of self determination.
- 4.9 AICCAAs are placing large numbers of Aboriginal children in alternative family settings to ensure that they do not enter "the system". A shortage of Aboriginal extended family carers and foster carers, coupled with the unresolved issues of foster-care payment and family income payments place increasing pressure on such carers, especially those already living in poverty.
- 4.10 Child abuse and neglect is not being dealt with in a concerted fashion. Aboriginal community organisations are tending to leave matters regarding abused or neglected children to AICCAAs or the State government. The Federal government had left it to the State/Territory government up until recently when the National Child Protection Council was formed. Aboriginal children's services, including the Multifunctional Children's Services (MACS), AICCAAs, early childhood education services, for example and other Aboriginal organisations like the health, education and community services like co-ops need to be brought together to combat child abuse and neglect. The Federal and State and Territory governments need to recognise that this problem has not been solved by governments. The Federal government and the State and Territory governments have a significant role to play in combating child abuse and neglect. This role needs to be in accordance with the principles outlined earlier in this Plan. One of the urgent tasks of all parties is to develop a national policy that addresses the needs of Aboriginal families and children and that establishes the structures necessary to assist Aboriginal communities to help prevent the abuse and neglect of their children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Education and Awareness development

1. Awareness programs to be developed aimed at educating Aboriginal people about the identification of child abuse and neglect, the causes and effects, the need for reporting and community responsibility for the abuse.
2. Cultural awareness training to be developed for non-Aboriginal workers in government agencies.
3. Education programs to be developed for Aboriginal carers, including young people and single parents. Such programs are to address the following:
 - parenting skills;
 - health and hygiene;
 - proper nutrition;
 - budgeting;
 - information about the child welfare and protection system.
4. Training in dealing with child abuse and neglect, and related issues, to be given to Aboriginal workers in government and non-government agencies.
5. Programs designed to teach community members about their own culture to be developed and implemented.
6. Aboriginal children to be involved in programs in schools which teach protective behaviours and their rights.
7. Establish a community controlled national Aboriginal children's and family resource centre to gather relevant information, develop training and education resources and build up research capacity accessible to Aboriginal communities.

Systemic/Resources

8. The control of responses to abuse and neglect of Aboriginal children to be with Aboriginal communities, resourced by the appropriate government departments. Establish a national children and family resource centre to gather relevant information, develop training and education resources and build up research capacity accessible to Aboriginal community.
9. Crisis intervention centres to be provided in appropriate community settings. Such centres to include:
 - safe houses for women and children
 - support and counselling services for abuse victims and their families.
10. Elders Councils to be formed to increase the involvement of elders in policy making, resource provision, program development and delivery at both government and community levels.
11. The establishment of Healing Centres which utilise the skills of Aboriginal healers and provide services and programs for community members. Services and programs specifically aimed at children are to be developed. Such centres must be culturally appropriate for the local community.

Policy

12. The Federal and State and Territory governments must recognise the role of child carers through the payment of support benefits. Such carers would include members of the extended family caring for children.
13. The Federal government must ensure that recommendations arising from the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal Children (1995) and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991) are implemented.
14. The importance of family violence prevention and awareness programs must be recognised through adequate levels of funding by ATSIC regional councils.
15. Legislative and policy measures must ensure that Aboriginal people are given the right to self-determination in all child protection and abuse prevention policies and services.
16. Laws which prosecute offenders must be made to be more effective – ensuring that the rights of children are protected.
17. This Plan endorses the proposals made by SNAICC at the First National Child Abuse conference (1994).

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The following implementation strategies detail the implementation of the recommendations made above. The strategies form the basis of the Action Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect in Aboriginal Communities. The plan is premised on five basic principles which should underpin the design and delivery of services to Aboriginal people. These are:

1. recognition of the right of self determination of Aboriginal people.
2. community control over design and delivery of services.
3. a holistic view of child abuse and neglect¹.
4. affirmation of the importance of the role of kinship groups.
5. acknowledgment and recognition of the cultural, linguistic, experiential and geographic diversity that exists amongst Aboriginal people.

Education and Awareness Development

Recommendation No. 1

Awareness programs to be developed, aimed at educating Aboriginal people about the identification of child abuse and neglect, the causes and effects, the need for reporting and community responsibility for the abuse.

Implementation Strategies:

- Regionally based awareness centres are to be developed under the auspices of AICCA's and locally based child abuse prevention committees.
- Regional community awareness workers are to be trained in the relevant issues of child abuse and neglect and will in turn train local community based awareness workers – preferably well known and respected community members.
- Community based workshops are to be held raising awareness of the issues of child abuse and neglect reporting and community responsibility.
- Community based workshops facilitators are to be given access to, and training in, the use of locally produced, culturally relevant materials with which to lead discussions.
- Regional awareness centres are to be based with existing AICCA's, Aboriginal organisations or networks operating under the auspices of the local child abuse prevention committees. These regional centres would cost approximately \$60 – \$70,000 to run depending upon the size of the region, including one salary, travel and oncosts, administration for the auspicing organisation and materials.
- An information campaign using Aboriginal radio, television, newspapers and appropriate pamphlets and posters to be developed to disseminate information about child abuse and neglect, reporting procedures and contributing factors. The campaign must be mindful of catering for the diversity of literacy levels and language amongst Aboriginal people.

¹A holistic view of child abuse and neglect includes the historical (personal and general), the immediate factors surrounding the abuse or neglect, the environmental factors and the systemic factors that contribute to that abuse and neglect and perpetuate the syndrome.

- Culturally appropriate awareness packages on child abuse and neglect issues are to be developed targeting children and parents. Such packages could include:
 - a video presentation;
 - pamphlets and easy to read books;
 - workshop discussion stimuli;
 - suggestions for presentation by Aboriginal awareness workers.
- Such packages are to be delivered through schools, child care centres and relevant Aboriginal organisations.
- Community education programs to be developed on the causes and effects of drug, alcohol and substance abuse and their relationship to child abuse and neglect. Research to inform this education program.
- Locally based organisations who receive funding to conduct awareness programs within communities should aim to speak to family and clan groups and their elders.
- Funding decisions for awareness programs to be made by the national committee upon advice from local and state based committees. Funding for awareness programs to be the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government, in this case the National Child Protection Council.

Recommendation No. 2

Cultural awareness training to be developed for non-Aboriginal workers in government agencies.

Implementation Strategies:

- State and Territory government departments and institutions dealing with children, particularly those involved in child health, welfare, protection and juvenile justice, to formally recognise Aboriginal kinships, relationships and values on the primary influence of child rearing practices. This recognition is to be translated into the training given to non-Aboriginal workers in government agencies.

Recommendation No. 3

Education programs, to be developed for Aboriginal carers, including young people and single parents. Such programs are to address the following:

- parenting skills;
- health and hygiene;
- proper nutrition;
- budgeting;
- information about the child welfare and protection system.

Implementation Strategies:

- Parenting programs should be developed and delivered on a local basis – especially those tailored to remote communities, through forums such as Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) committees.

- Parenting skills to be included in the school curriculum for young people from year 7 onwards.

Recommendation No. 4

Training in dealing with child abuse and neglect, and related issues, to be given to Aboriginal workers in government and non-government agencies.

Implementation Strategies:

- Aboriginal community child welfare agencies to coordinate and convene, with adequate resources from government, appropriate training schedules and training content for workers with the assistance of State and Territory Government agencies and other non-government agencies with skills and expertise in this area.
- Existing curriculum and workshop or training plans to be modified by and for these training purposes under the direction of AICCAs and/or existing Aboriginal community organisations dealing with child welfare matters.

Recommendation No. 5

Programs designed to teach community members about their own culture to be developed and implemented.

Implementation Strategies:

- Elders to be involved in designing and delivering programs to the community in community based meetings and informal gatherings.
- Programs developing awareness in young Aboriginal people of their culture and history to be delivered in schools.
- Cultural camps to be held for families, community groups and children's groups. Elders should be involved in the conducting of such camps. Some issues which the camps should address are:
 - culture and heritage;
 - identity, pride and self-esteem;
 - respect for elders and the community;
 - know the boundaries of traditional and mainstream laws.

Recommendation No. 6

Aboriginal parents and carers and their children and teachers to be involved in programs in schools which teach protective behaviours and their rights.

Implementation Strategies:

- Culturally appropriate child protection education packages to be developed.
- Such packages to be delivered in schools by appropriately trained Aboriginal role models, for example, community elders, community leaders, sporting, media personalities and through the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Committees (ASSPA).

Systemic/Resources

Recommendation No. 7

The control of responses to abuse and neglect of Aboriginal children to be with Aboriginal communities, resourced by the appropriate government departments.

Implementation Strategies:

- Policies to be put in place to ensure that adequate resources are, and training is, given to child care workers in Aboriginal organisations.
- Discussions between local communities and government departments to ensure that government service delivery meets the needs of the community.
- Resources developed to deal with and prevent the incidence of child abuse and neglect must be developed at the Aboriginal community level and funded by State and Territory governments.
- The development of resources and/or child care services should initially be based in existing Aboriginal health and child care services.
- Establish a national community-controlled Aboriginal children's and family resource centre to gather relevant information, develop training and education resources and build up research capacity accessible to Aboriginal communities to be funded by the Commonwealth Government.
- Recognise existing Aboriginal community networks, structures and services, for example Remote Areas Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Child Care Program (Qld.), Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Inc., AICCAs, in establishing permanent consultative processes to implement this Plan and to foster the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

Recommendation No. 8

Crisis intervention centres be provided in appropriate community settings. Such centres to include:

- safe houses for women and children
- support and counselling services for abuse victims and their families.

Implementation Strategies:

- Involvement of community elders in children's programs and centres.

Recommendation No. 9

Elders Council to be formed to increase involvement of elders in policy making, resource provision, program development and delivery at both government and community levels.

Implementation Strategies:

- Investigation and locally specific application of the Elders Council model recently developed in Tasmania. In communities where traditional kinship and customary functions have broken down, they are attempting to revive these roles. As yet their role is not entirely clear, they are however making attempts which deserve support. Caution should be exercised however, as the worst thing would be to overload these Councils with responsibilities before they are strong enough to take them on.

Recommendation No. 10

The establishment of Healing Centres which utilise the skills of Aboriginal healers and provide services and programs for community members. Services and programs that are specifically aimed at children should be developed. Such centres must be culturally appropriate and locally developed addressing among other things, identity and self-esteem, apart from factors directly related to abuse or neglect.

Implementation Strategies:

- Government recognition must be given to the importance of Aboriginal healers for the Aboriginal community. This recognition would be through funding Aboriginal healers and healing centres, training and program funding.

Recommendation No. 11

The Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer program to be expanded in areas of high use. Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officers to be given further training in child abuse related issues.

Implementation Strategies:

- Hospital Liaison Officers need to be included in locally developed child abuse networks that coordinate the work of abuse prevention.

Policy

Recommendation No. 12

State and Federal governments must recognise the role of child carers through the payment of support benefits. Such carers would include members of the extended family caring for children.

Implementation Strategies

- Department of Social Security (DSS) to work with AICCAs and other Aboriginal agencies working with families to ensure that they are receiving their entitlements;
- DSS to conduct research to gauge the adequacy of current payments for Aboriginal families and whether top-ups are required to take account of community disadvantage and locational disadvantage;
- Research on distribution of emergency relief by Aboriginal organisations to be conducted by the proposed National Aboriginal Children's and Family Resource Centre.
- State and Territory governments to ensure that alternate care payments are being paid to extended family informal care arrangements where required.
- Aboriginal child care agencies to ensure that informal care arrangements are being adequately supported through the provision of carer payment entitlements.

Recommendation No. 13

The Federal government must ensure that recommendations arising from the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal Children (1995) and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody (1991) are implemented.

Implementation Strategies:

- ATSIC monitoring process to include Aboriginal organisations working in the field of children's services;

- Monitoring to place particular emphasis on recommendations from the Royal Commission about children and young people.
- National Aboriginal Child Abuse Prevention Committee to monitor the implementation of recommendations arising from these reports.

Recommendation No. 14

The importance of family violence prevention and awareness programs must be recognised by ATSIC regional councils.

Implementation Strategies:

- Family violence prevention and awareness programs to be expanded and strengthened through increased funding from ATSIC through Regional Councils.

Recommendation No. 15

Legislative and policy measures must ensure that Aboriginal people are given the right to self-determination in all child protection and abuse prevention policies and services.

Implementation Strategies:

- Commonwealth to formulate national policy for Aboriginal children and families as recommended by the International Year of the Family Council (National Council for the International Year of the Family [1994]: 142);
- State and Territory Governments to ensure that policies affecting Aboriginal families and children conform to the recommendations arising from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody particularly those regarding the right of Aboriginal people to self-determination.
- Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to ensure that their legislation and policies conform to international instruments including the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and International Labour Organisation Convention 169.
- The Commonwealth Government to set up a permanent forum called the National Aboriginal Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention Committee (See Recommendation 18 for further details of the role and functions of this Committee) with similar structures at the State and local / regional level. These structures to be based on existing networks.

Recommendation No. 16

Laws which prosecute offenders must be made to be more effective, ensuring that the rights of children are protected.

Implementation Strategies:

- Commonwealth to discuss with State / Territory Attorney's General

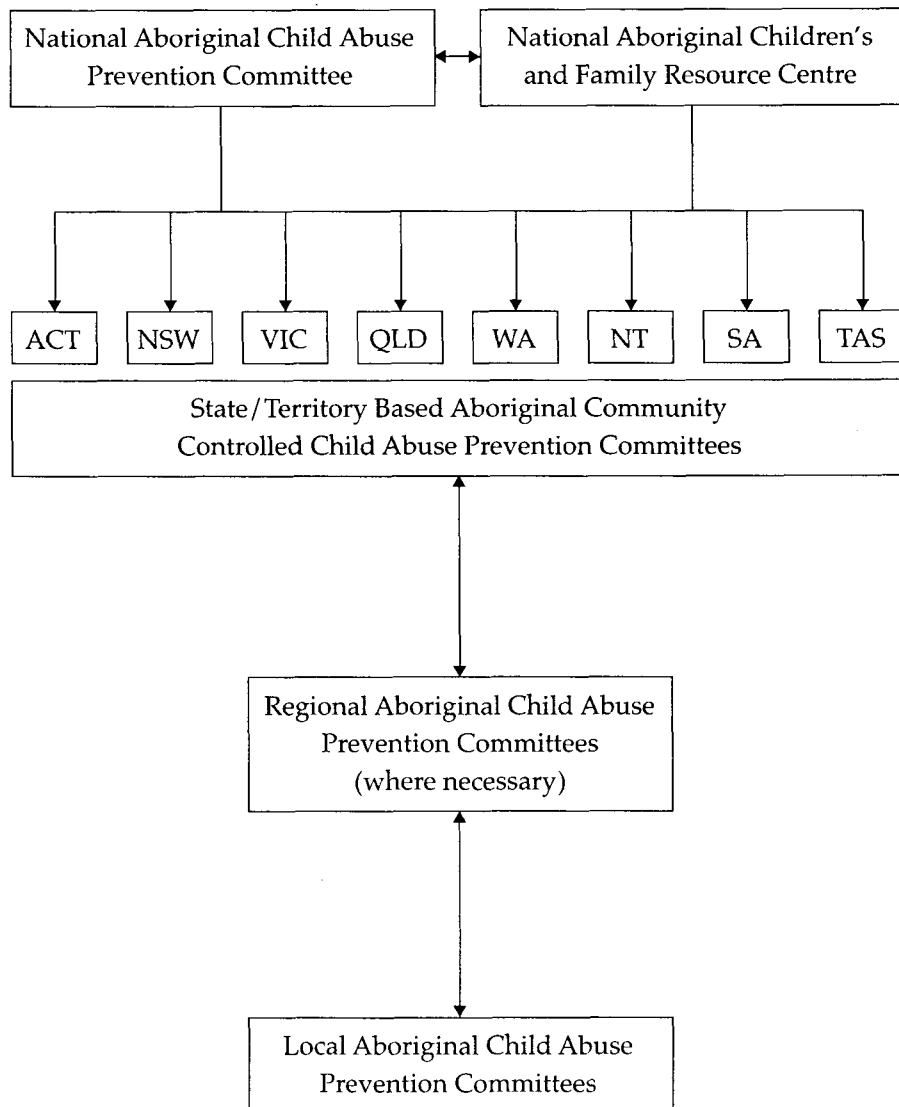
Recommendation No. 17

The proposals made by SNAICC at the First National Child Abuse Conference March 1994, to be implemented.

Implementation Strategies:

- restore control in matters related to children and families to Aboriginal communities;
- conduct research on child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities, prevalence by age, geographical distribution and family, and comparison with prevalence rates in non-Aboriginal communities through the National Aboriginal Children's and Family Resource Centre;
- develop treatment resources at community level within existing services like health and children's services;
- develop community resources through training of Aboriginal workers in health and children's services, make tertiary education in relevant fields like social work accessible to workers;
- conduct research with a view towards developing community based awareness of child sexual abuse;

Figure 1.



Recommendation No. 18

That permanent structures be established that enable dialogue between government and Aboriginal communities as an essential means towards the implementation of the National Plan. This structure to be based on the principles of local Aboriginal community control and self-determination for Aboriginal people at every level. (See Figure 1.)

The Structure to have three levels, with a fourth where the geography of the State involved requires it.

Each of these levels must be exclusively based on Aboriginal community representation and decision-making. However, recognising that child abuse and neglect can only be addressed through a co-operative approach with governments, we suggest that each forum at each level set aside adequate time to discuss with government representatives ways in which decisions can be implemented and other issues of concern.

This Plan also calls for the setting-up of a National Aboriginal Children's and Family Resource Centre to assist the work of the implementation structure.

Functions of the Centre:

- Provide specialised training and education for workers in the field;
- Collect information and research of relevance to child abuse prevention in Indigenous communities;
- Provide expert advice and other information resources to Aboriginal community organisations which require it for work that is preventative;
- Develop information packages, electronic, audio-visual and written, to assist communities in awareness raising and education;
- Conduct research and evaluation at the national level for the National Committee and NCPC;
- Provide expert advice on research and evaluation for Aboriginal communities.

The Centre to be funded by the Department of Health and Family Services. Supplementary funding could be obtained through fee for service arrangements with organisations who are in a position to pay.

The Centre could be auspiced by an existing Aboriginal community-controlled organisation that is concerned with children's and family issues.

Initial staffing levels should be no less than three experienced and qualified staff with policy and research skills, including one with training and adult education experience.

The National Aboriginal Child Abuse Prevention Committee to comprise of membership from the following agencies:

- SNAICC
- Representatives from State/ Territory based committees
- ATSIC (1 Commissioner, 1 Officer)
- State/ Territory Government
- Department of Health and Family Services.

Role of the Committee:

- Oversee the implementation of the Plan;
- Commission research, evaluation and policy development related to child abuse;
- Coordination and implementation with other government departments
- Coordination and implementation with Aboriginal organisations and communities;
- Act as Advisory Board for National Aboriginal Children's and Family Resource Centre;
- Advise the Commonwealth Government about funding of research and other projects for Aboriginal Communities.

State/ Territory Based Committees

Membership:

- AICCAs
- Aboriginal Children's Services
- Aboriginal Health Services
- Representatives of local and/or regional committees
- ATSIC Regional Councils
- State Government.

Role:

- Implementation of Prevention Plan at the State level;
- Coordination of services in State;
- Coordination between Aboriginal organisations;
- Awareness and education campaigns Statewide
- Policy, legislative and program matters related to child abuse prevention
- Provide feedback and advice to National Committee.

The State based Committees are to be funded by the State Governments. They are to be based on existing networks wherever possible.

Regional/Local Aboriginal Child Abuse Prevention Committees

Membership:

- Aboriginal community organisations
- Representatives of State government
- Elders (Council) members where these exist
- Aboriginal community members.

Role:

- Implement Prevention Plan locally;
- conduct or auspice awareness & education campaigns.