

# Elements of a Framework of Practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statutory Kinship Care



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- ◆ The Benevolent Society -2009 report
- ◆ ARC Grandparent study (SPRC) current
- ◆ New assessment tool – current work
- ◆ Kinship care models & tools based on foster care
- ◆ Models & tools not culturally appropriate
- ◆ Examine 7 aspects
- ◆ Best practice for Indigenous carers

- ◆ All Australian jurisdictions promote/mandate the use of kinship care
- ◆ All Australian jurisdictions implement an 'Aboriginal Child Placement Principle'
- ◆ Increasing use of kinship care as preferred option when placing children
- ◆ Increasing numbers in care
- ◆ Over-representation of Indigenous children in care

**Table 1: Children in OOHC placed with relatives/kin by Indigenous status, Australia, 30 June, 2009**

	<i>Unit</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
Number of children at 30 June										
Indigenous	no.	2 926	279	767	651	229	30	35	52	4969
Non-Indigenous	no.	4 797	1 548	1 479	485	434	150	133	20	9046
All children	no.	7 723	1 827	2 246	1 136	663	180	168	72	14015
As a proportion of all children in out-of-home care by Indigenous status at 30 June										
Indigenous	%	67.8	42.3	36.8	60.4	49.0	29.4	43.2	18.5	54.8
Non-Indigenous	%	51.9	35.2	32.3	33.0	31.6	26.7	38.7	17.1	40.9
All children	%	56.9	36.1	33.7	44.6	36.0	27.1	39.5	18.1	45.0

Source: Productivity Commission, 2009, Table15A.21

# Family Group Conferencing (FGC) or Family Decision Making (FDM) Models

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- ◆ Understand family & community relationships
  - Identify potential relative/kinship carers
  - Provide information to potential carers
  - Highly adaptable across cultures
- ◆ High user satisfaction
  - Promotes better placement stability;
  - Promotes better understanding of child's family & friendship network.
- ◆ Highly recommended for Indigenous families

**Key to success of FGC is consensual agreement by family**

- ◆ Family mapping (genogram) critical
- ◆ Include child (age-appropriate) in process
- ◆ Include Aboriginal worker for Aboriginal families
- ◆ Ongoing process during placement
- ◆ Family satisfaction - critical aspect
- ◆ Trained & experienced staff
- ◆ Dedicated family placement officer

## Obstacles to FGC & FDM

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- ◆ Time-consuming & complex process
- ◆ Crisis driven nature of child protection
- ◆ Little time to check with all family members
- ◆ Importance of parents being involved
- ◆ Geographical barriers
- ◆ Maternal & paternal sides conflict
- ◆ Birth parents not consulted

- ◆ Assessment - exchange of information model
- ◆ Focus on 'enabling' rather than 'approving'
- ◆ Identify kinship carers strengths and needs
- ◆ Reflect cultural norms and differing thresholds
- ◆ Term 'training' problematic - kinship carers want services, support and information
- ◆ Need new culturally sensitive model that recognises uniqueness of kinship care carers **raising** not caring for children



# Indigenous Kinship Assessment Tool

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- ◆ Reflects aspirations of kinship carers
- ◆ Competency based and culturally appropriate
- ◆ Ecological framework, inclusive of family & community
- ◆ Focuses of 4 key competencies
- ◆ Staying strong as a carer
- ◆ Growing our kids strong
- ◆ Keeping our kids SAFE
- ◆ Working with others

## Support and support groups

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- ◆ Support from workers who are trained, culturally competent, respect unique role of kinship carers
- ◆ Information and practical assistance
- ◆ Partnership treated with respect-support supervise all placements
- ◆ Support groups wide range of benefits
- ◆ Groups provide information, support and develop resources
- ◆ Principle self determination apply in formation of Aboriginal support groups

- ◆ Contact the most challenging issue in Kinship Care
- ◆ Potential risks to much too little contact
- ◆ History of conflictual family relationships as to complexities exacerbates issues
- ◆ Danger of children's wishes being submerged under adult concerns
- ◆ Birth parents decision making re contact crucial
- ◆ On going involvement children's services to manage contact

## Non-Indigenous workers

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- ◆ Non-Indigenous agencies highly involved in Indigenous placements
- ◆ Non-Indigenous agencies require Aboriginal Unit - Aboriginal workers
- ◆ Cultural training essential for non-Indigenous workers
- ◆ Non-Indigenous and Indigenous carers need cultural sensitivity training

## Conclusion

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- ◆ Please contact either Marilyn or Paula if interested in the kinship studies or the assessment model being developed for kinship carers

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