



Meeting the Needs of our Children

Effective Community Controlled Strategies
that Prevent and Respond to Family Violence

**DRAFT PROCESS FRAMEWORK
FOR GOOD PRACTICE PRINCIPLES**

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CREDITS and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Please note: the term "Indigenous," where used in this document, refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.

The image used on the cover of this document is one of a series created by students in year 10 at Moree Secondary College, Bathurst in 2011. The students participated in the 'LoveBites' Program - a program that teaches and informs students about Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault.

A component of the LoveBites Program requires students to develop artworks for distribution in the community about messages they would like to promote. The artwork used on the cover of this document is about 'Respect'. It conveys the students' desire to promote a positive element in a relationship... that you need to respect your culture, family, relationship and most importantly yourself to live a life free from violence.

The LoveBites Program was coordinated by Bathurst Women and Children's Refuge.



INTRODUCTION

This research project aims to increase awareness by service providers, researchers, policy makers and other decision makers of effective community controlled strategies targeted to children's needs that prevent and respond to family violence. While there is evidence of the importance of local solutions to prevent and to respond to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence, there is a gap in information on key principles from practice that are critical to effectively working with Aboriginal communities to reduce the incidence of family violence. There is also a gap in understanding what these principles mean and how they can be realised for outcomes for children. This Process Framework seeks to address this gap by assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations to more easily identify and put in place good practice principles they can implement to effectively prevent and respond to family violence.

Information gathered during the literature review stage of this project confirmed that Aboriginal community controlled services in each jurisdiction have used similar words in the principles for their policies, strategies or programs in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence and child protection. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle is embedded in all state/territory legislation. Key principles appear in all Aboriginal community controlled organisation family violence strategies and action plans, and government Aboriginal family violence prevention frameworks. In some cases, a set of values are also included to accompany these principles.

The following Process Framework and Good Practice Principles have been prepared from analysis of existing literature on this issue containing 'principles' which has included strategies and action plans from each jurisdiction in Australia, from international publications and what was said during the preliminary consultations for this research project. They will be tested and refined through further consultations. This draft framework seeks to inform these consultations.

The first part of this document outlines the Good Practice Principles which will be used to guide the Process Framework. The second part of this document focusses on the proposed Process Framework that aims to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations to apply good practice principles to effectively prevent and respond to family violence.

Key Issues and Questions

This project has raised a number of issues that need to be considered and taken into account as part of the process to develop a Process Framework supported by Good Practice Principles that will be used as a baseline for a national Process Framework for services, programs, activities or initiatives that focus on improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities experiencing family violence.

This research has found that performance indicators and compliance benchmarks for most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence prevention programs, projects and initiatives funded by

the Australian and state/territory governments are usually known in advance. Many of these funded programs have not, until more recent times, come from a place where 'principles' or 'values' were already in place. Finally, it was observed that 'principles' have been documented after a program has been operational and/or reviewed. That is, 'principles' only became obvious after the event.

The following key questions were considered during the development of this draft Framework:

1. What are the minimum and shared principles that should be put in place as the cornerstone of a national process framework?
2. Is it possible for a single set of principles to be put in place which incorporate and reflect national policy positions as well as specific policy directions being sought and implemented by stakeholders in each state/territory? Specifically, what are the core principles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services working in this sector and can a single overarching set of principles be put in place to reflect their individual and collective priorities?
3. How will consensus be reached about the type of wording to be used in the proposed key principles to be developed given that there are a number of different historical, geographic and cultural issues that need to be considered and taken into account?
4. How will flexibility be incorporated into the principles so they reflect local, regional and state/territory conditions?
5. Would it be mandatory for all future projects and programs that are to be funded to comply with the principles if they were endorsed and adopted by all jurisdictions?
6. Who would monitor the projects and programs to ensure they comply with the national principles, which may or may not align with jurisdictional principles and values?
7. How will these principles assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations in each jurisdiction to more effectively respond to and/or intervene in family violence situations where they operate?
8. How will these principles fit in with the philosophy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations who are not operating in the family violence sphere but are primarily delivering medical and health services, child and family services and other non-family violence related services and programs?
9. What is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alternative to the 'feminist model' approach to family violence which reflects the preferred holistic approach (men, women and children) to the provision of service responses? And what are the principles required to reflect this?

National Plan to reduce violence against women and their children

It is important to look at what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence prevention plans, strategies, services and programs are currently in place. This is included within the literature review prepared as part of this research. Key guidelines in the current national plan are included here for consideration in the development of this Process Framework.

The National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (the National Plan) recognises the high incidence of violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, and focuses on ways to strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to prevent violence. It states that:

“

Every Indigenous person: woman, man or child, has the right to safety in their own home and community. Indigenous people have the same rights as other Australians and deserve good services and adequate protection.

”

The National Plan:

- recognises the diverse experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children and the need to ensure solutions are right for specific local circumstances.
- supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to create and build on their own solutions to prevent violence. This includes encouraging women to have a stronger voice as community leaders, providing leadership opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men to reject violence as well as improving employment, education and business opportunities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The values and principles that guide the National Plan are:

- Domestic violence, family violence and sexual assault crosses all ages, races and cultures, socioeconomic and demographic barriers, although some women are at higher risk.
- Everyone regardless of their age, gender, sex, sexual orientation, race, culture, disability, religious belief, faith, linguistic background or location, has a right to be safe and live in an environment that is free from violence.
- Domestic violence, family violence and sexual assault are unacceptable and against the law.
- Governments and other organisations will provide holistic services and supports that prioritise the needs of victims and survivors of violence.
- Sustainable change must be built on community participation by men and women taking responsibility for the problems and solutions.

- Everyone has a right to access and to participate in justice processes that enable them to achieve fair and just outcomes.
- Governments acknowledge the legacy of past failures and the need for new collaborative approaches to preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
- Responses to children exposed to violence prioritise the safety and long term well-being of children.

The Process Framework and Good Practice Principles developed as a result of this project will consider the values and principles in the National Plan and identify how consistent they are with community needs and what we know about achieving outcomes for our children.

PART 1: GOOD PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

Why have Good Practice Principles

Over the last 15 years, Australian and state/territory governments have changed their policies and included new service delivery requirements for services they fund. These are now underpinned by Registration and Performance Standards as part of the new regulatory framework. Organisations that do not meet the criteria set under these standards are usually de-funded for a short period of time (until they make changes to meet the set standards) or permanently (because they cannot meet the standards set).

Good Practice Principles are a set of ethical statements or philosophical ideas that clearly state what will drive or underpin the actions of an organisation in what it is seeking to achieve. Their primary purpose is to provide a broad conceptual overview and create a focal point for the actions of an organisation to internal and external stakeholders. At the same time, Good practice principles can draw attention to the critical and core workings of an organisation which, in turn, re-affirm the purpose, objectives and actions they are seeking to achieve.

In more recent times, practice principles have formed the basis for accredited management standards such as ISO 9000 or ISO 14001 which relate to the quality management systems an organisation will implement to meet statutory and regulatory requirements set by government for products, goods and services.

Good practice principles are also a method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means. They are often used as a benchmark and set basic minimum standards for self-assessment.

Consultations for this research identified that there are core principles that must be considered particularly around how community controlled services are guided in their practices to deliver effective family violence prevention strategies for Aboriginal people, particularly children.

The Good Practice Principles and Processes Framework outlined in this document will be used as a basis for engaging with diverse stakeholders about principles of good practice that can be incorporated into existing service practices in order to achieve positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities – with a specific focus on children.

Key Values and Principles

Services consulted suggested that a 'Key Values' statement at the beginning of the Process Framework would be beneficial as it would make it clear what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people might consider to be the primary focus of the principles. The following example has been taken from the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force Report (2003) as a starting point against which to benchmark:

KEY VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

1. Safety and security for victims of violence
2. Strong community leadership and positive role models
3. Shared responsibilities and being supportive of each other
4. Healthy lifestyles based on harmonious relationships and respect for self and others
5. Cultural integrity/respect and cultural safety within Indigenous and mainstream services
6. No more violence – in the home, in the family, in the community or in the workplace

Good Practice Principles

It is proposed that the Good Practice Principles focus on the following key areas. These have been designed to allow for all future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence prevention strategies, programs, activities and initiatives to have the same starting point irrespective of the jurisdiction they occur in.

Priority

1. Safety and security for victims of violence is the number one priority.
2. All people have the right to be free from violence and to be safe in their relationships – in particular the rights of children and young people will come first and be at the heart of all work.
3. Responses to family violence will recognise and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture, traditional lore, beliefs, values and custom.
4. Responses to family violence will recognise the cultural diversity across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
5. Prevention and response efforts will recognise the grief, loss and disempowerment at the heart of family violence, and centre on individual and community healing.
6. Efforts to both prevent and respond to family violence will be owned and driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: community controlled services are fundamental.
7. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are supported to say no to violence and to foster healthy relationships within their community.

Engagement

8. Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and communities is central to the design and delivery of programs and services.
9. Localised geographic factors and cultural practices will drive responses and actions taken to ensure that services, programs, activities and initiatives reflect and meet the needs of the local population – at an individual, family and community level.

Sustainability

10. Programs and services are directed and resourced over the longer term and adequately supported.
11. Programs and services contribute to Closing the Gap by meeting targets endorsed by COAG while being appropriate to local community needs.
12. Programs and services cover the breadth and layers of 'family violence' as it occurs in the community.

Access

13. Holistic approaches will be implemented when identifying and responding to family violence. This includes in particular a focus on perpetrators, and the inclusion of extended families in response strategies as well as personalised attention to children.

14. Programs and services are physically and culturally accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and people recognising the diversity of urban, regional and remote needs.

15. Approaches taken to address family violence will enhance the capacities of the Aboriginal community, government, service systems, organisations and the workforce.

Collaboration

16. Partnership between all levels of government, private and community services sectors, the broader community and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is critical. This will be standard business practice to ensure effective coordination between programs and services.
17. Culturally appropriate approaches will be taken by mainstream services that provide gateways into the service system for vulnerable groups within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community – in particular children, young people and women.
18. Locally based Whole-of Community approaches will occur to ensure ownership of issues and respect for the solutions put forward by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members.
19. A community development approach based on engaging with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members will be at the core of the development and implementation of programs.

Accountability

20. Programs and services will have regular and transparent performance monitoring, review and evaluation.
21. All programs and services will be scrutinised by and held accountable to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who access and/or receive these.

PART 2: PROCESS FRAMEWORK

The Process Framework has been prepared to complement and accompany the Good Practice Principles which were prepared using an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural overlay and lens.

The Process Framework is the 'what' and 'how' aspect of the Good Practice Principles. A list of actions is assigned against each Practice Focus item to identify the specific tasks that we think can be used as a measurement tool.

Measuring effectiveness

It is intended that the following process will be applied to determine the overall effectiveness of a current or proposed program, project, activity or initiative.

Each item listed can be explored with the service and confirmed as either:

- (a) Meeting the standard; or
- (b) Requiring further attention.

A section would also be provided for the service to highlight the good practice of how the service is meeting the standard or alternatively explore why the standard is not currently being fully met. This seeks to be a reflective and fluid process which assists the service to identify where they need to focus further energy on to better meet their goals to reduce the incidence and impacts of family violence on children. It also helps the service identify what it is that is limiting the current program. For example, it may be limited funding, it may be the dynamics in the community, or it may be operating hours are not in sync with community need.

This approach can be adopted for each item listed under the values and principles statements as well as each item listed under the Good Practice Principles. The results could be added up to determine overall the extent to which the program, project, activity or initiative is on track under the proposed Framework.

Proposed Process Framework

The following draft Practice Focus list with examples of how to meet the process, criteria and/or performance indicator has been prepared as a starting point for discussion. This list needs to be developed into concrete measures which state what the practice focus actually require to be properly fulfilled. What can we measure success by?

We note that all of these practice focus areas need to be considered holistically as part of an integrated approach. Some cannot be chosen without the others, it is intended as a complete whole.

Priority	
Practice Principle	Process, Criteria and/or Performance Indicator
1. Safety and security for victims of violence is the number one priority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This statement appears in all promotional material published about a project, activity and/or initiative.
2. All people have the right to be free from violence and to be safe in their relationships – in particular the rights of children and young people will come first and be at the heart of all work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal organisations and services display formal statements at all sites. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients are aware of this practice principle. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous family violence services staff demonstrate that children's safety and security is the number one priority in their practice.
3. Responses to family violence will recognise and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture, traditional lore, beliefs, values and custom.	<p>This principle underpins all responses put in place in each location.</p> <p>A strengths based approach is taken, ensuring that local cultural practices and protocols are embedded in all activities and approaches undertaken.</p> <p>All service providers are expected to provide documentation which re-affirms that their service and staff are culturally competent.</p> <p>This will include statements and service practices which reflect the local cultural practices and protocols specific to each community where they are engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p> <p>For example:</p> <p>Urban Locations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses in (Melbourne) may incorporate specific information about local history where there is an awareness about the expectations of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people who grew up in a non-traditional environment. Specifically, recognising that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families living in this urban environment are highly likely to have taken on a number of western values in terms of jobs, education, clothes, leisure activities, etc. <p>Rural Locations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses delivered in (Alice Springs) will reflect an awareness that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families living in the township may be short term residents who have come in from an Aboriginal settlement or community and that family obligations are an issue for permanent residents who are expected to provide short term accommodation. <p>Remote Locations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services being delivered in a remote location in (the NT) where a specific language is spoken will also reflect customary lore/law practices and protocols. An Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employee with specific language skills may be employed. Responses delivered in the Torres Strait will reflect local factors such as the diversity between people living on one island group and another.
4. Responses to family violence will recognise the cultural diversity across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.	
5. Prevention and response efforts will recognise the grief, loss and disempowerment at the heart of family violence, and centre on individual and community healing.	<p>Professionals have participated in cultural awareness training which has included specific sessions about the Stolen Generations and other issues relevant to a particular community taking into account access to employment, education, health, housing, etc. Services responses, programs, activities and initiatives put in place provide opportunities for one-on-one sessions as well as group activities that involve opportunities for different family groups to participate.</p>

Priority (continued)	
Practice Principle	Process, Criteria and/or Performance Indicator
6. Efforts to both prevent and respond to family violence will be owned and driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: community controlled services are fundamental.	Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives (including family Elders) and senior staff of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services are actively involved in the planning and scoping stages for projects, programs, activities and initiatives.
7. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are supported to say no to violence and to foster healthy relationships within their community.	Community education and awareness campaigns are funded and/or supported and "No to Violence" promotional material is displayed and incorporated into all signage and advertising.
Engagement	
Practice Principle	Process, Criteria and/or Performance Indicator
8. Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and communities is central to the design and delivery of programs and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community leaders are actively engaged in discussions with community members to identify problems issues and possible solutions. Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents who have experienced family violence are invited to participate in the planning and design stage for all projects, programs, activities and initiatives.
9. Localised geographic factors and cultural practices will drive responses and actions taken to ensure that services, programs, activities and initiatives reflect and meet the needs of the local population – at an individual, family and community level.	Documentation submitted for a project clearly identifies place specific cultural practices that need to be considered in delivering a new service, program, activity or initiative. This can be demonstrated by having a one page "Cultural Protocols & Practices Guidelines" document that is signed by key Elders and/or staff of the services delivering the response.
Sustainability	
Practice Principle	Process, Criteria and/or Performance Indicator
10. Programs and services are directed and resourced over the longer term and adequately supported.	A detailed Financial Plan is prepared which clearly identifies individual expense items that will be met over the life of the project. This will include information over a 5 year period as a minimum.
11. Programs and services contribute to Closing the Gap by meeting targets endorsed by COAG while being appropriate to local community needs.	Each submission clearly identifies which Closing the Gap target the project is addressing. This information will be clearly stated on all promotional material associated with the project. It will also be clearly stated in any position description associated with a project where a person is employed.
12. Programs and services cover the breadth and layers of 'family violence' as it occurs in the community.	Arrangements are put in place to develop a Family Violence Action Plan which clearly identifies the family violence issues occurring in an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community, the factors contributing to the violence, the impact on victims, perpetrators and witnesses to the violence and the actions will be taken to address and/or respond to these.
Access	
Practice Principle	Process, Criteria and/or Performance Indicator
13. Holistic approaches will be implemented when identifying and responding to family violence. This includes in particular a focus on perpetrators, and the inclusion of extended families in response strategies as well as personalised attention to children.	Project and program methodology make clear statements about action that will be taken to provide a service response to perpetrators of family violence and will, where appropriate, also include specific information about what will be done to address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, family members and extended family members.
14. Programs and services are physically and culturally accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and people recognising the diversity of urban, regional and remote needs.	The specific location where a service, program, activity or initiative is clearly identified in the project submission. Specific information is also included in the documentation which identifies how staff who will be delivering the service, program, activity or initiative will engage with clients – including those who are not physically located in the same location as the service provider – and will be assessed against cultural competence criteria.
15. Approaches taken to address family violence will enhance the capacities of the Aboriginal community, government, service systems, organisations and the workforce.	Clear statements are made in all project documentation describing how a service, program, activity or initiative will add value to the capabilities of the local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community and to the skills level and knowledge base of staff of government services and mainstream services.

Collaboration	
Practice Principle	Process, Criteria and/or Performance Indicator
16. Partnership between all levels of government, private and community services sectors, the broader community and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is critical. This will be standard business practice to ensure effective coordination between programs and services.	A Memorandum of Understanding document or Partnership Agreement document is prepared and signed by all stakeholders involved in a project. This document will be regularly reviewed and updated and made available to the public.
17. Culturally appropriate approaches will be taken by mainstream services that provide gateways into the service system for vulnerable groups within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community – in particular children, young people and women.	Non-Indigenous services will complete an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency/Audit tool or Checklist which contains specific criteria. Action Plans are developed and supported by Non-Indigenous services to support the findings of the audit tool outcomes.
18. Locally based Whole-of-Community approaches will occur to ensure ownership of issues and respect for the solutions put forward by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members.	Local Project Steering Committees will be established to oversee and monitor each project, program, activity or initiative.
19. A community development approach based on engaging with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members will be at the core of the development and implementation of programs.	
Collaboration	
Practice Principle	Process, Criteria and/or Performance Indicator
20. Programs and services will have regular and transparent performance monitoring, review and evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Project Steering Committee will be established for each project, program, activity or initiative which will have a Terms of Reference document. Performance indicators will be identified in the project brief.
21. All programs and services will be scrutinised by and held accountable to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who access and/or receive these.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A report will be prepared and published each year for the life of a project. This will be made publically available where appropriate and opportunities will be provided for comment and feedback to be made by members of the local Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander community. This includes immediate or extended families participating in the program.• Activity and evaluation reports include quantitative (participation) data as well as qualitative information about how the program being implemented has impacted on victims, perpetrators and witnesses to family violence.

NEXT STEPS

It is expected that this project will provide an opportunity for government stakeholders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services currently delivering family violence prevention programs, projects, activities and initiatives to input into this draft Framework:

- To discuss the research project in more detail through various forums
- To reach consensus about what should be included in a proposed National Process Framework supported by Good Practice Principles in relation to developing and implementing effective family violence prevention strategies
- To identify the types of supports that would be needed to implement a National Process Framework that brings together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled services together to share each other's experiences on the effectiveness of good practice principles that are applied at the local, regional and national level.

Other considerations and opportunities

If agreed, there is also scope for additional information to be gathered against each item appearing in the Framework. A 'Self-Evaluation' template can be prepared which can be filled in and submitted to SNAICC to form part of a national centralised database. That is, SNAICC becomes the clearinghouse, repository for and custodian of this information.

FURTHER INFORMATION

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS PROJECT
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