

Promising Practices in Out-of-Home Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Carers and Children

Funded by
Dept. of Families, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs
for the
Australian Council for Children & Parenting



Acknowledgments

- The project was conducted by:
 - Jenny Higgins, *Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)*
 - Nikki Butler, *Secretariat of National Aboriginal & Islander Child Care (SNAICC)*
- All participants & services



Project Background

- Previous research identified Indigenous services & programs Australia-wide with promising practices in out-of home care
- Interviews were conducted with all these services
- 11 programs were profiled as a result



Documented Findings

Key characteristics:

Booklet 1

Characteristics of promising out-of-home care programs & services

Profiles of 11 services:

Booklet 2

Assessing, training & recruiting Indigenous carers

Booklet 3

Comprehensive support for carers & young people

Booklet 4

Indigenous responses to child protection issues



Profiles of Promising Programs

**Services for Indigenous Carers,
Children & Young People
in Out-of-Home Care**

BOOKLETS 2 – 4



The 11 Programs Profiled

Lakidjeka VIC

Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice & Support Service –
Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

Keeping Kids Connected SA

Short-term emergency placements with non-Indigenous
carers – *Aboriginal Family Support Services*

Panyappi SA

Indigenous youth mentoring service – *Metropolitan
Aboriginal Youth & Family Services*

Safe Families NT

Family-inclusive approach to child protection –
Tangentyere Council



Aboriginal Carer Network *NSW*

Carer support group network – *Aboriginal Child, Family & Community Care State Secretariat*

Step by Step NSW

Aboriginal assessment tool – Association of Children's Welfare Agencies & Dept. Community Services

Marungbai NSW

Leaving & after-care service for Indigenous youth – *Great Lakes Manning Aboriginal Children's Services*

IFACSS QLD

Support service for kinship & general carers – *Indigenous Family & Child Support Service*



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RAATSICC QLD

Remote community response to child protection –
*Remote Area Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander
Child Care*

Yarning about Kids with Yorganop Carers WA

Indigenous training program for general & kinship
carers – *Yorganop Childcare Aboriginal Corp.*

Growing Up Our Kids Safe and Strong WA

Indigenous training program for kinship carers
– *Dept. Community Development*



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Agencies who contributed to the *Characteristics Booklet* but were not profiled:

- Central Queensland Aboriginal & Islander Child Care Agency, Rockhampton QLD
- Dept. Community Development (Indigenous Policy Unit), Perth WA



What's in the Profiles

- Each booklet contains program profiles on specific areas of out-of-home care
- The profiles give information about:
 - Steps taken to get the program up & running
 - Why the program works well
 - How it addresses client needs

Assessing, Training & Recruiting Indigenous Carers

BOOKLET 2



Aboriginal assessment tool *Step by Step*

Carers of both Indigenous & non-Indigenous children in out-of-home care all need the same 4 general care-giving competencies:

1. Personal readiness to care
2. Capacity & willingness to be a team player
3. Capacity & willingness to promote child's positive development
4. Ability to keep the child safe



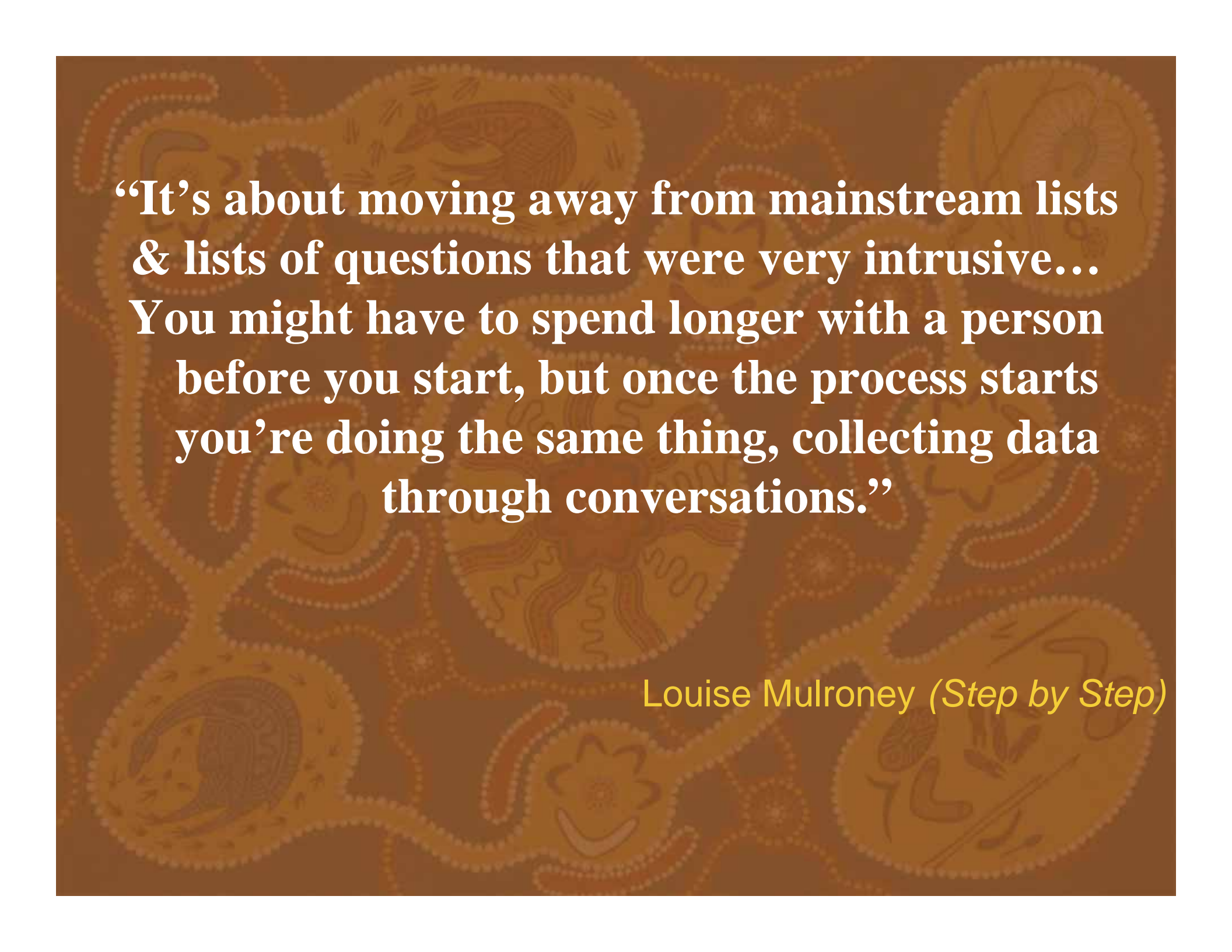
Carers of Indigenous children also need these additional competencies:

- Active participation in Aboriginal communities
- An understanding of Aboriginal kinship systems & the impact of past welfare practices
- Knowledge of services for Aboriginal children & young people



Step by Step uses a culturally sensitive approach to assessment by:

- Taking time to build trust
- Using story telling rather than direct questions
- Not asking questions if the information is elsewhere
- Using community knowledge about the potential of a carer/family



**“It’s about moving away from mainstream lists
& lists of questions that were very intrusive...
You might have to spend longer with a person
before you start, but once the process starts
you’re doing the same thing, collecting data
through conversations.”**

Louise Mulroney (*Step by Step*)

Comprehensive Support for Carers & Young People

BOOKLET 3



Mentoring for Indigenous young people *Panyappi*

Support Indigenous young people by:

- Reconnecting/maintaining connections with their families, communities & culture
- Taking a family-inclusive approach to resolving issues & supporting young person
- Building competence, identity & self esteem
- Being responsive to the young person's needs



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The background of the slide is a dark brown color with a repeating pattern of light brown Aboriginal dot art. The patterns include stylized faces, floral motifs, and geometric shapes, all rendered in a traditional dot-painting style.

“Mentoring has been a part of Aboriginal culture for many years. It’s like looking back at our roots. Looking at what the Elders did in the old days.”

“Doing the family tree gives [the young people] their spirit back... And that makes a difference. The identity & belonging.”

Lisa Kambouris (*Panyappi*)

**Indigenous Responses
to
Child Protection Issues**

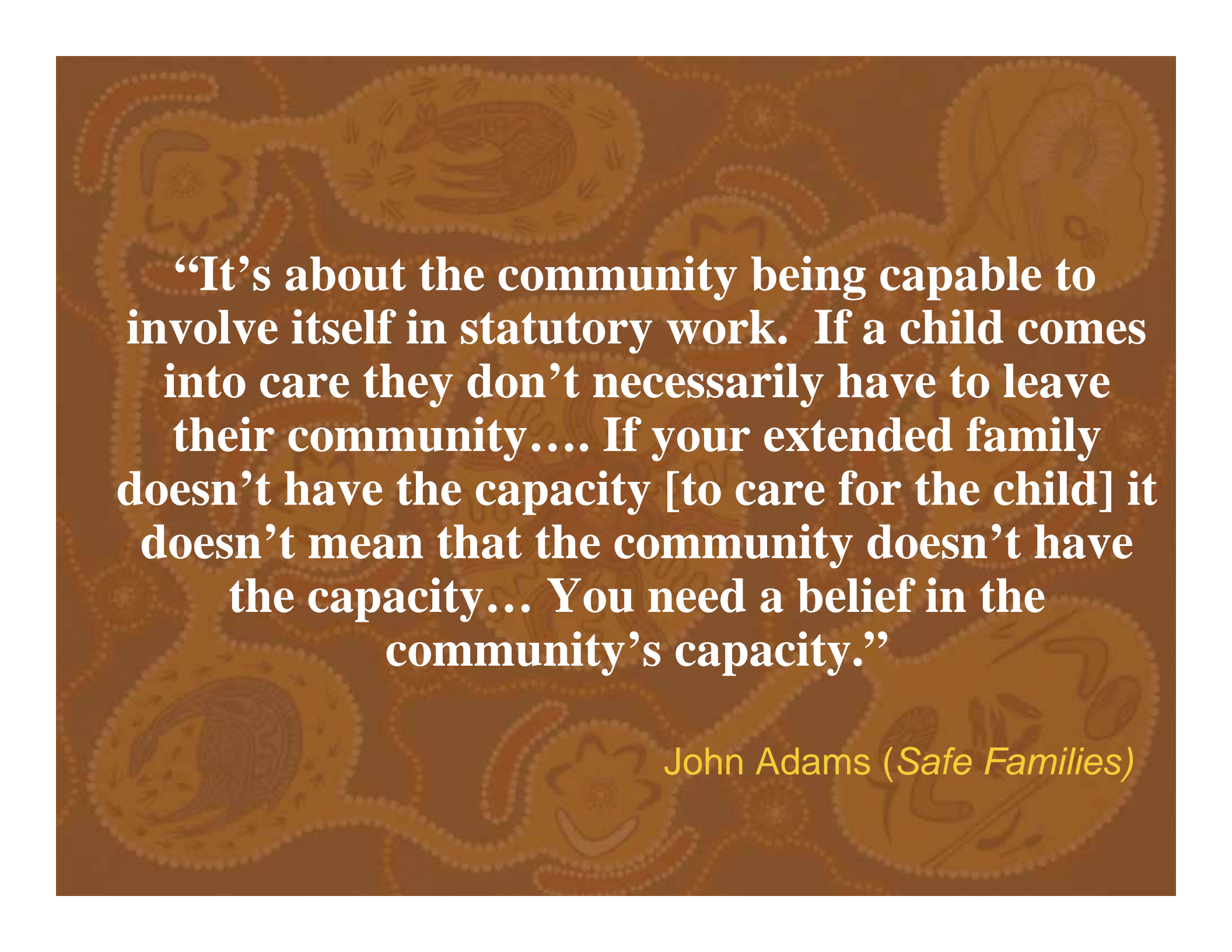
BOOKLET 4



Indigenous response to child protection issues *Safe Families*

Supports children & their families by:

- Being community & family inclusive
- Advocating an Indigenous perspective
- Explaining child protection issues to families & communities
- Building collaborative relationships with child protection & other agencies
- Ensuring children are physically, emotionally AND culturally safe



“It’s about the community being capable to involve itself in statutory work. If a child comes into care they don’t necessarily have to leave their community.... If your extended family doesn’t have the capacity [to care for the child] it doesn’t mean that the community doesn’t have the capacity... You need a belief in the community’s capacity.”

John Adams (*Safe Families*)



Characteristics of Promising Out-of-Home Care Programs & Services

Experiences of service providers

BOOKLET 1

Organisational Practice

Establish effective relationships with stakeholders

Cultivate KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Find the right person to CHAMPION the program

Use an EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION style

Seek project funding & approval strategically

Be PROACTIVE

Use the POLITICAL CLIMATE to advantage

Seek EXPERT ADVICE

Build the service/program profile

Encourage strong LEADERSHIP

Have A VOICE in the mainstream

INVOLVE the community

Service Delivery

Prioritise the organisation's core business

Use opportunities to REVIEW PRACTICE

Take on new business that ENHANCES core business

Operate WITHIN FUNDING parameters

Consider staff expertise & value their contributions

Have an organisational structure that ALLOWS STAFF EMPOWERMENT

Hire SKILLED, COMMITTED INDIGENOUS staff

Take a TEAMWORK APPROACH

Aim for a responsive & inclusive approach

Seek & apply COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE & opinions

Addressing NEEDS as they arise

ADVOCATE for carers & young people

Be AVAILABLE & SUPPORTIVE of carers & young people

Empower the community, carers & young people

SKILL UP & INFORM carers, young people & community

SUPPORT & GUIDE carers & young people to make change

Facilitate KNOWLEDGE SHARING



Organisational Practice

Key elements:

- Establish effective relationships with stakeholders
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Service Delivery

Key elements:

- Prioritise the organisation's core business
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- Aim for a responsive & inclusive approach
- Empower the community, carers & young people




Successful Organisations

- ❖ Establish & maintain **EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS** with **STAKEHOLDERS**
- ❖ Are **STRATEGIC** about seeking project funding & approval
- ❖ **BUILD THE PROFILE** of their service/program
- ❖ **PRIORITISE** their **CORE BUSINESS**
- ❖ Consider staff **EXPERTISE** & value their **CONTRIBUTIONS**
- ❖ Offer a **RESPONSIVE & INCLUSIVE** approach
- ❖ **EMPOWER** the community, carers & young people



Final Thoughts...

- ❖ The safety and wellbeing of the child is always paramount
- ❖ This is the case for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children



**Good
practice is
catching...
everything
is
connected!**

- **Successful organisations prioritise, are strategic, build their profile, have partnerships, engage & empower community**
- **Successful programs seek Indigenous input from staff & community around program development & delivery**
- **Good training programs are flexible, needs-based & use learning circles**
- **Good support programs are family-inclusive, collaborate with other services & provide advocacy**
- **Supported carers provide good placements & increased commitment to cultural-awareness**
- **Children whose needs are met in care have improved outcomes**



More Information

To find out more go to:

www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs

www.snaicc.asn.au

And access the reports:

- *Characteristics of Promising Indigenous Out-of-Home Care Programs and Services*. Higgins, J. R. & Butler, N. (2007). 'Promising Practices in Out-of-Home Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Carers and Children, No. 1'.



- *Assessing, Training and Recruiting Indigenous Carers.* Higgins, J. R. & Butler, N. (2007). 'Promising Practices in Out-of-Home Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Carers and Children, No. 2'.
- *Comprehensive Support for Indigenous Carers and Young People.* Higgins, J. R. & Butler, N. (2007). 'Promising Practices in Out-of-Home Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Carers and Children, No. 3'.
- *Indigenous Responses to Child Protection Issues.* Higgins, J. R. & Butler, N. (2007). 'Promising Practices in Out-of-Home Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Carers and Children, No. 4'.



Background Information

For background information on the issues covered in this presentation go to:

www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs

And access the seven summary papers:

- *Why is There a Shortage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Carers?* Bromfield, L.M., Higgins, J.R., Higgins, D.J. & Richardson, N. (2007).
- *Barriers, Incentives and Strategies to Enhance Recruitment of Indigenous Carers.* Bromfield, L.M., Higgins, J.R., Higgins, D.J. & Richardson, N. (2007).
- *Why Standard Assessment Processes are Culturally Inappropriate.* Bromfield, L.M., Higgins, J.R., Richardson, N. & Higgins, D.J. (2007).

...Cont'd.



- *Training Carers*. Richardson, N., Bromfield, L.M., Higgins, J.R. & Higgins, D.J. (2007).
- *Supporting Carers*. Higgins, D.J., Bromfield, L.M., Higgins, J.R. & Richardson, N. (2007).
- *Children with Complex Needs*. Higgins, D.J., Bromfield, L.M., Higgins J.R. & Richardson, N. (2007).
- *Voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People in Care*. Higgins, J.R., Higgins, D.J., Bromfield, L.M. & Richardson, N. (2007).

For reports from this project go to:

www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/2005/reports

And access:

- *The Recruitment, Retention and Support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foster Carers: A Literature Review*. Richardson, N. et al. (2005).
- *Enhancing Out-of-Home Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young People*. Higgins, D.J., Bromfield, L.M., & Richardson, N. (2005).

National Child Protection Clearinghouse



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