



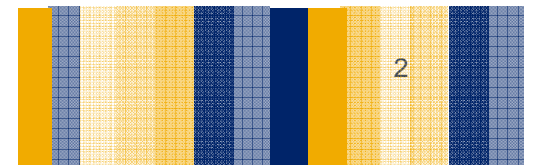
Families SA

Families SA Aboriginal Culture & Identity Project Liz Tongerie



What we know about the system

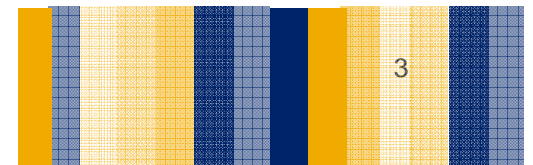
- Aboriginal children and young people in Families SA care have experienced and continue to experience disconnection with their family and kinship groups
- The current system does not effectively facilitate culturally appropriate practices for Aboriginal children and young people to continue to maintain and/or acquire cultural knowledge, values and connection with their families and communities
- This disconnection impairs the development of a positive cultural identity and a healthy individual identity, as well as positive relationships with Aboriginal communities



What we know about the system

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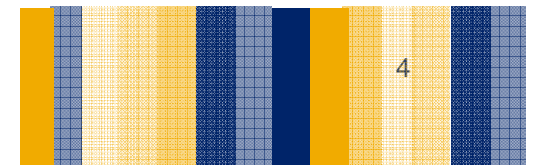
- Aboriginal children and young people are over represented in the child protection, alternative care and juvenile justice systems. Aboriginal children and young people are a minority group within these systems and are further disadvantaged by a lack of culturally appropriate services
- Families SA has a statutory responsibility to keep children safe and ensure that they are provided with opportunities for healthy development



What we know about the system

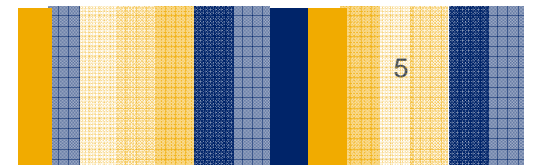
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- As a pivotal agency in the child protection, justice and alternative care systems Families SA is in a “privileged position to either perpetuate or break the cycle” of intergenerational disadvantage for Aboriginal children and young people (Department of Human Services, Review of Aboriginal children in non Aboriginal care in South Australia, 2003 p.6)
- The future implications of Families SA not taking a lead role in this are that there is a risk that Aboriginal children and young people will continue to be over represented in the welfare and justice systems and this will continue to impact on the next generation



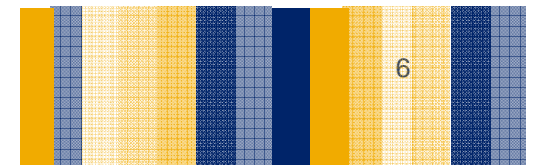
Developing the Project

- Idea conceived by Liz Tongerie to redress the multiple disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal children and young people who are under Guardianship of the Minister and case managed by Marion District Centre
- The Project's development was based on the recommendations of several reports which place the well being of Aboriginal children and young people firmly within their cultural context and identity, as necessary to both their own resilience and to the survival of Aboriginal culture and identity (e.g. Layton Robyn A, Our Best Investment: A State Plan To protect and Advance the Interests of Children 2003, Department of Human Services, Review of Aboriginal Children in non-Aboriginal Care in South Australia 2003, Bringing them Home Report 1997)



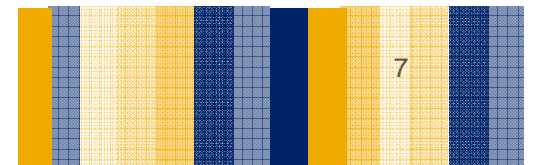
Key Aspects

- A workshop program delivered to Aboriginal children and young people
- Professional development for staff to develop cultural competencies
- Case management, that includes developing genograms and building kinship and community connections for children and young people
- Building connections between communities and Families SA



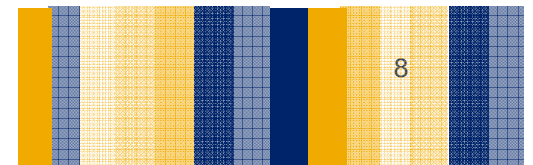
What we need to do

- Enhance the emotional, physical and spiritual well being of Aboriginal children and young people under Guardianship of the Minister
- Employ innovative, practical strategies in reconnecting Aboriginal children and young people with family, kinship groups and their community
- Build and strengthen relationships with key Aboriginal community members
- Improve the cultural and family information recorded about the children on files and Case Management system



What we have done so far

- 2 workshop programs for children and young people have been delivered
- The first with 6 Aboriginal children and young people aged 8 to 13 years: Phase 1 (has been evaluated) - the second with 6 Aboriginal young people aged 13 to 18 years: Phase 2
- For Phase 2 picture journals are being created for each young person
- 4 professional development sessions for staff have been delivered



What we did

- The Project provided the opportunity to develop a way of integrating culture and identity into the mainstream case management
- Provide opportunities for Families SA staff to enhance their knowledge and competencies in their work with Aboriginal children and their families

What we did cont...

- ✿ Offered Aboriginal children and young people significant learning opportunities to reconnect with and experience their culture, family and community, through:
 - ✿ Discovering their cultural and kinship groups
 - ✿ Connecting with Elders
 - ✿ Connecting with their Dreaming stories
 - ✿ Producing a genogram
 - ✿ Visiting culturally significant sites
 - ✿ Tracking their own personal journey in a journal or in their Life Story Book
 - ✿ Attending Aboriginal functions e.g., Reconciliation, NAIDOC
 - ✿ Visiting places of significance such as the Museum, Tandanya, Art Gallery, Aboriginal Language Centre, Tauondi College

What we did cont...

- Feedback along the way from young people's experience:
 - Learning about their own culture
 - Learning about other Aboriginal cultures
 - Learning about non-Aboriginal cultures
 - Information about racism and how to deal with it

What we learned from the first group of young people

- The children and young people's well being and sense of pride in their Aboriginal identity was enhanced through cultural activities
- Provided an opportunity to review and identify gaps in service systems, for example, intake and case management processes
- Integrating the learnings into practice at the front end and in case management processes is essential to ensure effective culturally appropriate services

What we learned from the first group of young people cont...

- Identified how assessment and case management can be improved to be inclusive of Aboriginal children and young people's identity and culture
- This knowledge will inform the development of a future service model for best practice in the case management of Aboriginal children and young people

What we learned from the first group of young people cont...

- ☼ Feedback from children & young people:
 - ☼ 'Helped heaps. Learned about other cultures. Met new people. It was fun. Learned heaps of stuff.'
 - ☼ 'Learn about my culture. Learn about my relations, cousins, from the Elders that came to the program. Learned Dreaming stories.'
 - ☼ 'Learned how to do dot paintings. Liked the stories lots – especially Mulya Wonk'
 - ☼ 'Learned about my life and how Aboriginal people survive'
 - ☼ 'Made me happy, learning about Aboriginal cultures on the map and where I come from.'
 - ☼ 'Liked going to Point Pearce, especially the beach, meeting some of my family – first time for a while. Was invited to Wardang Island youth camp.'
 - ☼ 'Feel comfortable being Aboriginal and making friends with Aboriginal girls at school and am talking to other Aboriginal students about my culture.'

The journey continues

- Provide Aboriginal young people with opportunities to learn and experience their culture and develop a sense of connectedness/relationship to culture, community, to kinship group and family and to determine their cultural identity
- Develop Aboriginal young people as role models and mentors to pass on cultural knowledge and experience to the younger generation (2002, Bourke, Bourke & Edwards: 168)

The journey continues...

- The goal is to provide Aboriginal young people in care with opportunities to develop skills and knowledge that support their community and cultural participation, their leadership and their wider engagement in society and community
- The program has developed a sustainable model of community participation for Aboriginal young people by involving Aboriginal Elders and other members of the wider Aboriginal communities

The journey continues...

- We are working to extend this sustainable and realistic model of culturally competent practice within Families SA so that other children and young people have the opportunity to develop and maintain their Aboriginal Culture and identity.
- We want to make sure that all children and young people in care have an Aboriginal Culture and identity Plan embedded within their Case Plan

Key principles

- Aboriginal children's needs - best interests of the child
- Cultural competence
- Opportunities for Aboriginal staff
- Understanding of the impact of history
- Flexible Practice
- Interpretation
- Experience
- Knowledge
- Non Judgemental

The Point Pearce Trip: Looking for Periwinkles



3/10/2007

Presentation to For Our Children 'Ngadluko
Ngartunnaitya' (SNAICC) National Conference
2007