

Indigenous Parenting Project

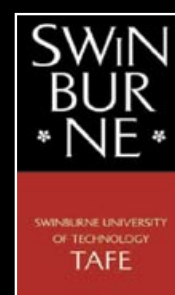
MAIN REPORT

July 2004



SNAICC

SECRETARIAT OF NATIONAL ABORIGINAL
AND ISLANDER CHILD CARE INC.



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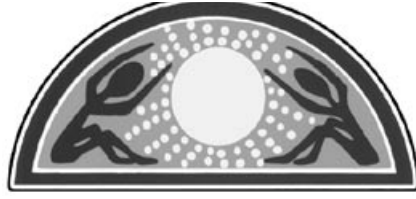
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SECRETARIAT OF NATIONAL ABORIGINAL
AND ISLANDER CHILD CARE INC.

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Glossary

Indigenous

The term “Indigenous” in this document refers to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, communities and groups.

Parent/Parenting

The terms “parent” and “parenting” in this document refers to parent and parenting within the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures where parenting is a community responsibility and will not necessarily be confined to biological parents within a family. It also refers to both male and female community members.

Elders

The term “Elders” in this document refers to both male and female community members who have been identified as such by their community.

Indigenous Names

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander names referred to in the document are listed by their well known acronyms. These are detailed as follows:

AICCA	Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agency
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
MACS	Multifunctional Aboriginal Childcare Service
RAATSICC	Remote Area Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care
SNAICC	Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Inc
VACCA	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
VACCH-	Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
VAEAI	Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.

Mainstream Organisations

ACCAP	Australian Council for Children and Parenting
DHS	Department of Human Services – Victorian Government
FaCS	Department of Family and Community Services, Australian Government
NIFTeY	National Investment For The Early Years

Executive Summary

1.1 BACKGROUND

For at least 40,000 years Indigenous Australians lived as hunter-gathers within a spiritually rich environment. The family life of Indigenous Australians was structured around complex kinship systems, which located each person within a clan structure, with clear lines of rights and obligations to others within the family, the clan and ultimately the linguistic group. (Atkinson and Swain, 1999)

Children were highly valued by their family and clan (Bourke and Bourke, 1995) The education and socialization of young children took place within the rhythms of family life with an emphasis on observation, imitation and interaction with the extended family and the land.

‘The invasion and subsequent colonisation of Australia took a particularly heavy toll on Indigenous families, systematically separating children from their parents under the guise of welfare and assimilation and destroying intergenerational links’ Atkinson, S and Swain S 1999, p 219.

The intergenerational effects of removing Indigenous children from their families have been profound.

‘With several generations Indigenous people being denied normal childhood development, the opportunity to bond with parents and experience consistent love and acceptance, both the skills and the confidence to parent have been damaged, with the result that Indigenous children tend to be over represented in the child welfare system’ (Atkinson and Swain 1999, p 222).

Although Indigenous families are daily living with the legacy of dispossession and continuing oppression in terms of poor health, early deaths, poor housing, poor educational outcomes, high unemployment and high numbers of Indigenous people in custody, the Indigenous family continues to survive as a site of Indigenous culture and identity. This is highly significant in the light of sustained assaults on its existence and demonstrates the strengths of Indigenous communities in spite of the devastating impact of colonisation.

The information gathered from this part of the project aims to support the development of new parenting initiatives for Indigenous communities that help address the continuing effects of dispossession by identifying programs, information and resources that build on the strengths and voices of Indigenous communities. *By Sue Atkinson, Yorta Yorta woman.*

REFERENCES

- Atkinson, S and Swain, S *A Network of Support: mothering across the Koori community in Victoria, Australia* in Women's History Review, Volume 8, No 2, 1999
- Bourke, E and Bourke, C *Aboriginal families in Australia* in Hartley, R (Edit) Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia. Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1995

1.2 RATIONALE FOR PROJECT

The Parenting Information Project has come about primarily as a result of the feedback gathered during consultations held under the National Agenda for Early Childhood. In May 2003, the Commonwealth Government announced a commitment of \$10 million from the Stronger Families and Community Strategy to early childhood prevention and intervention initiatives. \$3.2 million of this funding has been allocated to the Parenting Information Project which has two phases.

Family and Community Services (FaCS) engaged the Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH) to undertake Phase One of this project which consists of a literature review, program audit and substantial national consultations on parenting information and programs for Australian parents including those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The Indigenous component of this was contracted to the Secretariat of the National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) to ensure an Indigenous specific perspective was provided. SNAICC undertook to consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, foster carers, Indigenous people in transition to parenthood and other family or community members responsible for bringing up children in remote, rural and metropolitan areas to find out what additional parenting information and support governments should provide.

The Department of Child and Family Studies at Swinburne University of Technology was contracted by SNAICC and was responsible for the literature review and program audit component of the project.

SECTION TWO: Project Aims and Final Products

The information gathered from the project and the final report will be used by the Department of Family and Community Services to support the development of new parenting initiatives, policies and programs relating to parenting information and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and carers.

The project undertook to produce three related final products in relation to Phase One of the project, all of which are contained in this report.

The project will also inform the ongoing role and responsibilities of SNAICC (Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Inc) in supporting parents and communities with parenting and child rearing issues.

2.1 THE LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the project reviews the literature on Indigenous parenting and is linked to the program audit. The review highlights key findings about support needs of Indigenous communities. It also identifies what is required by Indigenous families to fulfill their parenting roles within a cultural context, in order for them to produce better outcomes for their infants and young children. Some of the underlying issues concerning parenting and family support for Indigenous communities are discussed in order to place the findings within the appropriate historical and cultural context.

2.2 THE PROGRAM AUDIT

The aim of the program audit is to identify the effectiveness of the range of intervention strategies that are utilized in the field of Indigenous parenting education. By identifying the characteristics of effective strategies used for Indigenous groups and in relevant contexts, some guidance on features to incorporate in future programs may be provided. The program audit involved the identification and documentation of the diverse range of current Australian and international Indigenous parenting programs. Each program is identified, described and summarises their positive features. Government and non-government programs are included.

The documentation of these programs and activities will help to identify gaps in information, programs and services, and thereby identify opportunities for the Australian Government to work with states and territories to meet the needs of Indigenous parents and communities.

2.3 THE STAKEHOLDER'S SURVEY

The Stakeholder survey (see Appendix 1) was a tool used to consult with a variety of identified key stakeholders specialising in Indigenous family issues in the areas of policy development, research and development, program planning and service delivery.

The survey was designed to complement information obtained at the National Workshop and the focus groups so that a more complete picture of the national remote, rural, urban and metropolitan Indigenous issues, programs and information/resources could be obtained.

2.4 CONSULTATIONS, FOCUS GROUPS AND NATIONAL WORKSHOP WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The aim of the national consultations, focus groups and National workshop with key stakeholders was to seek comment on current parenting programs and information, which is believed or proven to be effective, and to identify new initiatives, directions and priorities that could be introduced to assist in addressing the gaps. The aim of the National Workshop was to build on the findings from the literature review, program audit, consultations and focus groups and to identify directions and priorities for action.

The feedback received from consultations, focus groups and the National Workshop has been collated and summarised and results in Sections 7, 8 and 9.

SECTION FOUR: Summary findings from the literature review

The literature search has revealed some common threads about the provision of parenting support and capacity building in general for Indigenous communities and includes the need for consideration of social, cultural and historical factors underpinning the provision of any programs, services or information.

There seems ample evidence to suggest that there are differences within the Indigenous communities themselves to consider as well as the differences from the non-Indigenous population. There is also strong evidence about the issue of disempowerment of Aboriginal participants and lack of cultural understanding that results from the use of mainstream programs and staff. Many of the following points have also been made in other reviews and reports.

The numbers against each point can be matched to evidence in the main body of the literature review.

- Australian and international research has shown that positive interventions in the early years including parenting enhancement provide better outcomes for children in the long term.(L1)
- Research into Indigenous family issues reveal that there is a multiplicity of social, cultural and historical factors affecting the ability to parent effectively. These include dispossession of land and traditional culture; breakdown of community kinship systems and Aboriginal lore; racism and vilification; economic exclusion and entrenched poverty; alcohol and drug abuse (substance misuse); the effects of institutionalism and child removal policies; inherited grief and trauma; the adaptation and change of gender roles – both male and female; society attitudes in general and stereotyping¹; incarceration; family violence; young maternal age; unhealthy lifestyle factors including poor nutrition; inadequate antenatal and post natal care and nutrition; poor general health; inadequate housing and poor educational outcomes.(L6)
- The factors discussed above make it very difficult for Indigenous parents to fulfil expectations of the parenting role and build parenting capacity unless programs address some of these underlying issues.(L6)
- Risk factors for Indigenous children include a lack of parenting knowledge by parents and other carers. Enhancing parenting knowledge and skills needs to start before children are born.(L4)
- Protective factors for children include positive parental interactions and secure attachments to parents and other carers. Positive interactions and secure attachments begin from birth therefore early parenting help and support to form positive relationships with infants is essential.(L2)
- Present and future trends show that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are having more children. 15% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are under the age of five years compared to 7% in the general population. Greater access to early childhood services and parenting support is therefore imperative.
- The Indigenous perception of the parenting role is tied closely to the cultural norm of extended family, kin and community child rearing responsibility. The terms parent education and parent programs may be too narrow for the Indigenous context of family and community.(L5)
- Connection to their own Indigenous community is important for Indigenous families and programs that enhance parenting can foster this connection.
- Programs for Indigenous families including parenting support and enhancement programs should use a strengths based approach which builds on existing skills and strengths and acknowledges and respects Indigenous culture and values.(L3)
- The use of mainstream programs based solely on mainstream values and ideas is not considered appropriate and is not conducive to Indigenous community healing and ownership.(L7,9)
- Mainstream programs or parent programs adapted for Indigenous communities should only be used if based on wide Indigenous community consultation and Indigenous community support and involvement.(L7,9,10)
- There is a preference for Indigenous staff working with Indigenous families in order for families to feel safe and secure using services, including parenting support and enhancement services and programs.(L7,11)
- Training for Indigenous workers and non-Indigenous workers in providing parenting enhancement is needed. This should include a cultural component, inclusive practices, knowledge of children's development and behaviour, group facilitation skills and an

1 Report on the findings of the Koori About Better Communication About Drugs(ABCD) project, April 2004, Department of Human Services, Victoria

- understanding of the process of dealing with grief and encouraging healing.(L7)
- Training in cultural awareness and sensitivity is needed for non Indigenous staff across mainstream services including those delivering parenting support and capacity building programs.(L7,12)
 - Individual empowerment and capacity building should be part of programs for Indigenous parents to increase self-esteem and confidence that has been eroded by factors such as the Stolen Generation.(L3)
 - Parenting support and enhancement programs should deal with issues of grief and loss and emotional healing in order to help Indigenous parents develop personal strengths and resilience.(L19)
 - There are differences in the parenting and child rearing practices of Indigenous and non Indigenous families in the main areas of child rearing such as sleeping, feeding, learning, discipline, playing, care and mobility. These should be considered when delivering parenting programs or giving parenting information.(L13,14)
 - The connection to traditional child rearing and parenting practices depends on families' exposure to them. Yarns and stories about traditional methods of parenting and child rearing need to be gathered and shared with other Indigenous parents, especially those who have little or no knowledge of their cultural heritage.(L13,14)
 - Local community situations need responses to their particular needs when designing/delivering programs and services or giving information about parenting.
 - Selective targeting of families at risk can stigmatize and alienate those most needing help therefore criteria should be based on broader demographic factors in order to encourage their participation.
 - A holistic and community capacity building approach to providing programs is a preferred option for Indigenous communities.
 - Ways to engage Indigenous parents and carers includes more informal gatherings such as sharing a meal, venues where they feel safe and comfortable, bringing the children with them, providing transport, and involving extended family.
 - The Canadian experience with First Nation families reveal that early childhood services and schools used by Indigenous families are existing hubs where parenting knowledge and information can be obtained.(L15)
 - Health services and other places used by Indigenous families are also natural hubs where parenting enhancement can be delivered in an integrated way – for example ante natal and pre natal nutrition is a risk factor for Indigenous children. The health service is the natural environment to enhance parents knowledge and provide information in this area of parenting.(L15,17)
 - An integrated service on one site gives a whole of family approach and targets multiple factors (L17).
 - Sites for programs need to feel welcoming and be a comfortable gathering place.
 - Transportation to services is a factor in ability to access programs for Indigenous parents.
 - Parenting enhancement and support programs for fathers as well as mothers need to be provided including programs for incarcerated fathers and mothers to help them reunite with their children.(L16)
 - Young Indigenous parents are also a special target group who require parenting support.
 - Parenting support and programs need to include other family and community members (for example grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles) who may have responsibility for the children of absent parents.
 - Information about children comes mainly from other family and community members within the Indigenous community.(L18)
 - Community role models such as Elders and other strong and resilient parents can be used to model and discuss parenting issues.
 - Indigenous families identify Indigenous community groups, workers, posters or the “Murray grapevine” (word of mouth) as the preferred way of obtaining information.(L18)
 - Written information should be accompanied by oral information from an Indigenous community member or worker.(L18)
 - Extra parenting support and capacity building is needed at the following transition points and in the following circumstances:
 - the pre and post natal period
 - basic life skill development from a young age culminating in practical training for new parents in looking after the physical and emotional and attachment needs of infants
 - Lack of male role models as fathers
 - Young parents
 - Early childhood period – more programs and information to improve outcomes for children.

SECTION FIVE: Summary findings of the Program Audit

The most successful parenting capacity building programs for Indigenous families appear to be those where the following is considered.

- Strength based models looking at acknowledging strengths rather than deficits, looking at difficulties as setbacks rather than as failures, that build confidence and empower.
- Program models that are culturally sensitive and appropriate are community based, owned and controlled.
- Programs which address historical issues and current factors and which have ongoing impact on Indigenous parents ability to parent effectively.
- Indigenous community members input into the design and delivery of programs (ownership).
- Local community approaches – universal programs and services within Indigenous communities.
- Community consultation, collaboration and partnership delivery where mainstream staff or programs are used.
- Use of Indigenous staff as facilitators or as partners in facilitating programs. Facilitators who are trusted by the community and who maintain confidentiality.
- Trained facilitators who share stories, use role plays, recognise informal learning opportunities and use the skills of the group to help each other by problem solving.
- Targeting of specific groups who may need more tailored programs for parenting enhancement
 - fathers, new parents, teenage mothers, incarcerated parents, grandparents.
- Involvement of community mentors and role models with due care that Elders are not over utilised.
- Use of Aboriginal venues where participants feel safe and comfortable.
- Use of existing venues and services where parents already gather to enhance parenting eg supported playgroups, MACS centres, kindergartens, health services, schools.
- Outreach programs – home visiting to enhance parenting capacity on a one to one basis.
- The provision of transport and food to encourage participation.
- A whole of family approach. Many Indigenous communities will have the children with them. Grandparents and other family members may also want to be included.
- Programs which foster the relationship and attachment between parent and child eg. Programs before and after birth which foster the mother/father/child relationship as well as the more practical caring skills.
- Programs which are more holistic and ongoing eg. Antenatal, post natal, birth support, early attachment and relationship support, ongoing child development information and support at key transition points.

SECTION SIX: Summary findings about information/ resources for Indigenous parents

- Should be culturally relevant and respectful
- Visually appealing, culturally appropriate artwork
- Written in “language” appropriate to groups accessing the resources/information
- Posters displaying Indigenous families and children. Posters are preferred to pamphlets
- Videos showing Indigenous families and children used as a tool to assist Indigenous workers for discussion.
- Information is often passed on by word of mouth

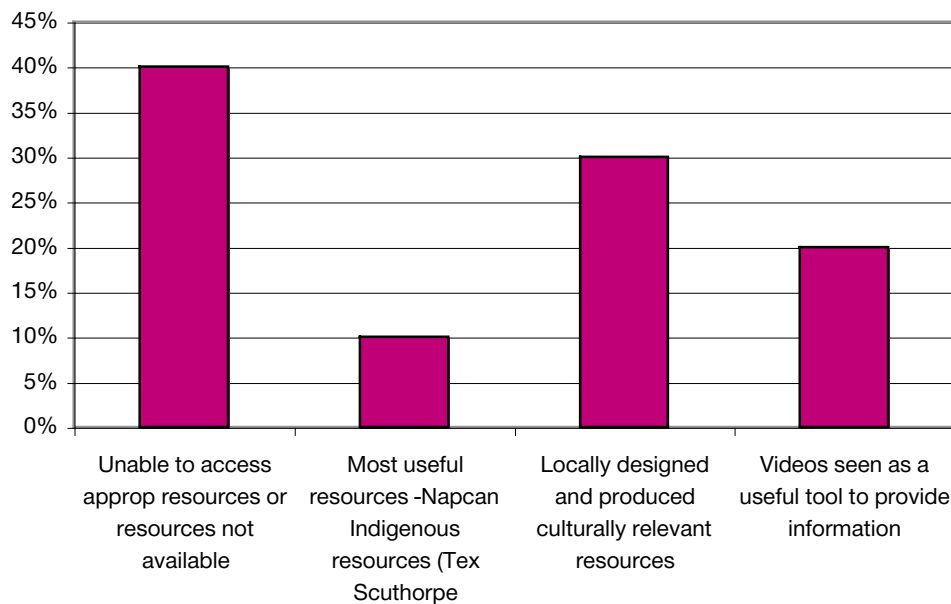
SECTION SEVEN: Summary findings from survey of key stakeholders

PARENTING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES - COMMENTS

Please comment on any current parenting information sets, brochures, videos and other materials you have used to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, carers and families in your community.

- Many commented that resources were neither useful or relevant for Indigenous families or limited or they were not always able to access appropriate resources - this was a common theme (40% of respondents stakeholder surveys)
- Most useful resources were:
 - Those developed by local communities for local communities
 - Napcan Indigenous resources (10% of respondents stakeholder surveys)
- Many commented that parenting courses were not always relevant for the Indigenous community
- Unable to access appropriate resources or resources not available (40%)

ACCESS TO RESOURCES



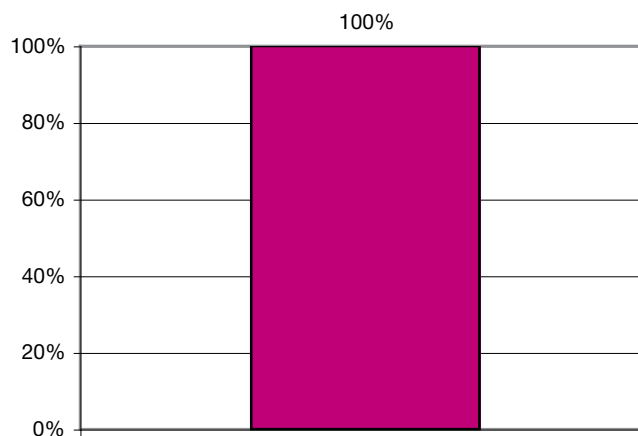
- Most useful resources – Napcan Indigenous resources (Tex Scuthorpe) (10%)
- Locally designed and produced culturally relevant resources (30%)
- Videos seen as a useful tool to provide information (20%)

PARENTING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Do you think it is important to produce parenting information specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, and if so why?

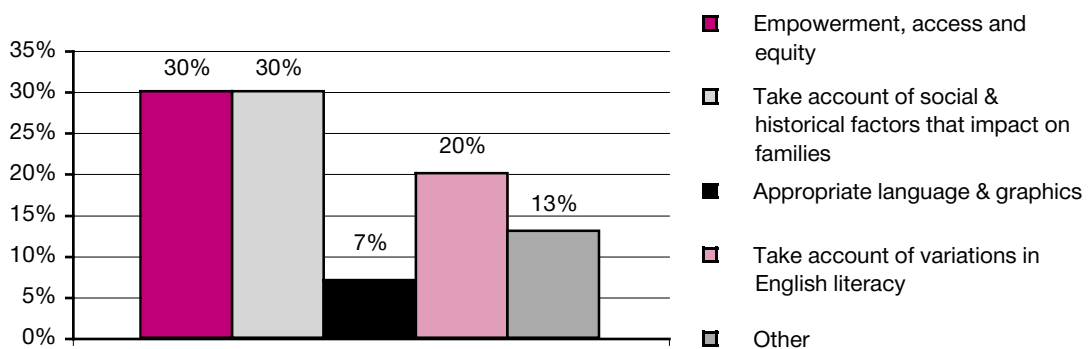
- Specific information for Indigenous communities is seen overwhelmingly as very important (100% of respondents stakeholder surveys)
- Needs to be culturally relevant
- Written in simple language
- Use to empower families/increase their chance of success

THE IMPORTANCE OF AND NEED FOR CULTUALLY SPECIFIC RESOURCES



Info for Indigenous families and carers needs to be culturally specific, relevant, applicable and effective

REASONS FOR CULTUALLY SPECIFIC RESOURCES

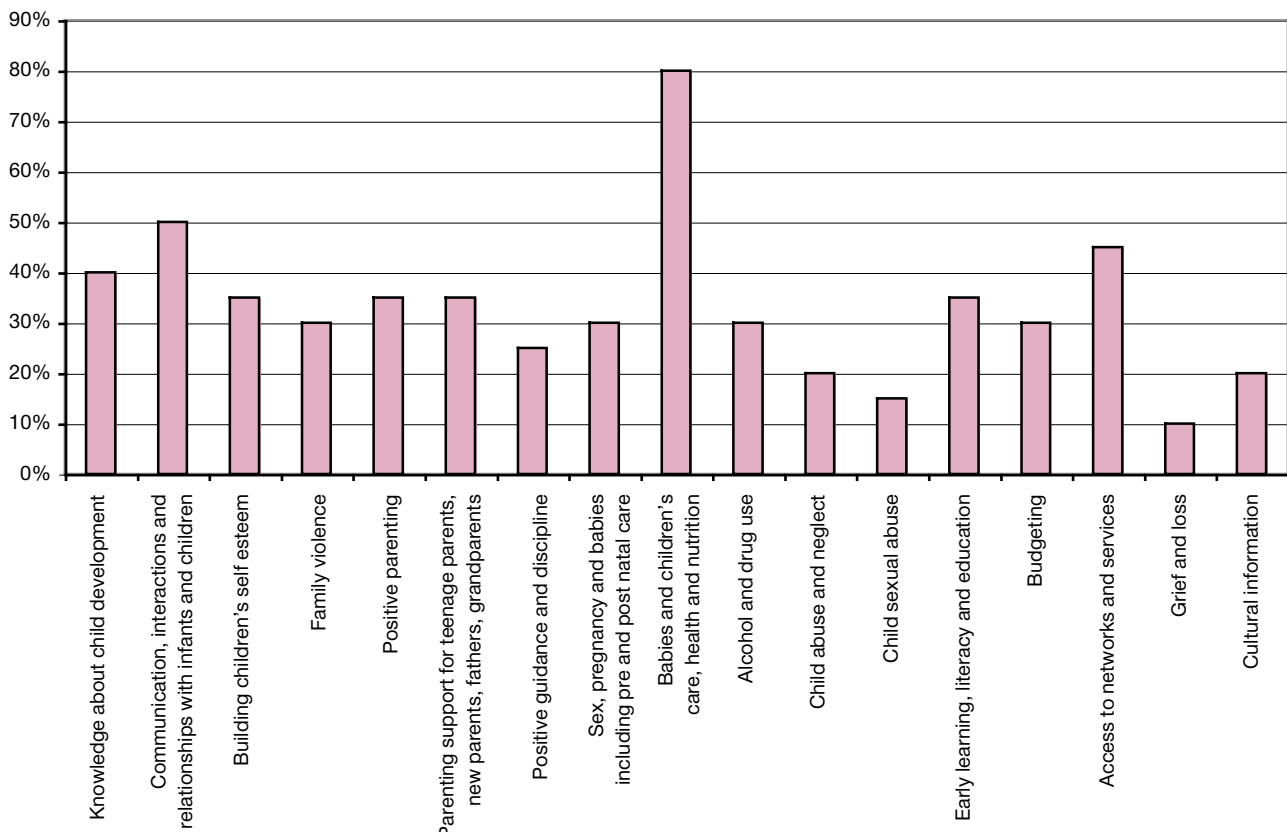


MAIN PARENTING ISSUES THAT PARENTS NEED INFORMATION ABOUT

What issues do you think Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and carers need information about to assist them to be the best parents possible?

- Knowledge about child development (40%)
- Communication, interactions and relationships with infants and children (50%)
- Building children's self esteem (35%)
- Family violence (30%)
- Positive parenting (35%)
- Parenting support for teenage parents, new parents, fathers, grandparents (35%)
- Positive guidance and discipline (25%)
- Sex, pregnancy and babies including pre and post natal care (30%)
- Babies and children's care, health and nutrition (80%)
- Alcohol and drug use (30%)
- Child abuse and neglect (20%)
- Child sexual abuse (15%)
- Early learning, literacy and education (35%)
- Budgeting (30%)
- Access to networks and services (45%)
- Grief and loss (10%)
- Cultural information (20%) previous responses indicated 100% respondents felt that cultural relevance was important in everything about parenting

MAIN PARENTING ISSUES THAT PARENTS NEED INFORMATION ABOUT

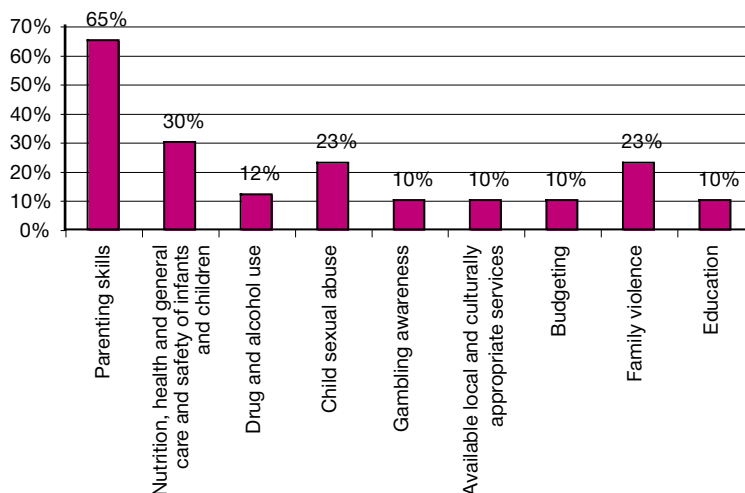


MOST URGENT MAJOR ISSUES

Are there any major issues in your community which you think Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents urgently need more information about?

- Parenting skills (65%)
- Nutrition, health and general care and safety of infants and children (30%)
- Drug and alcohol use (12%)
- Child sexual abuse (23%)
- Gambling awareness (10%)
- Available local and culturally appropriate services (10%)
- Budgeting (10%)
- Family violence (23%)
- Education (10%)

MOST URGENT MAJOR ISSUES IDENTIFIED AT LOCAL COMMUNITY LEVEL

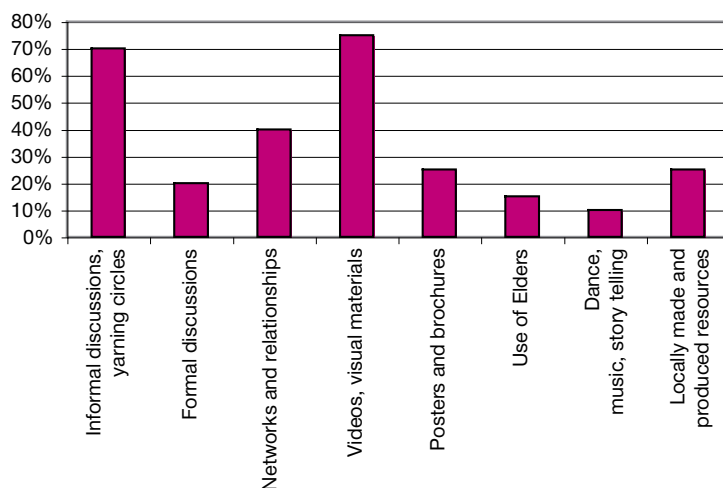


MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO PARENTS

What format for providing information to parents do you think is the most effective? ie printed brochures/ leaflets, videos or other visual materials, spreading information through formal or informal discussion groups.

- Informal discussions, yarning circles (70%)
- Formal discussions (topic based) (20%)
- Through networks and relationships (40%)
- Videos and brochures, visual materials, culturally appropriate – people, images (75%)
- Posters and brochures only if culturally relevant, key messages, brief text (25%)
- Use of Elders, grandmothers, local Indigenous services and workers (15%)
- Dance, music, story telling (10%)
- Through locally made and produced resources – Indigenous ownership of resources (25%)

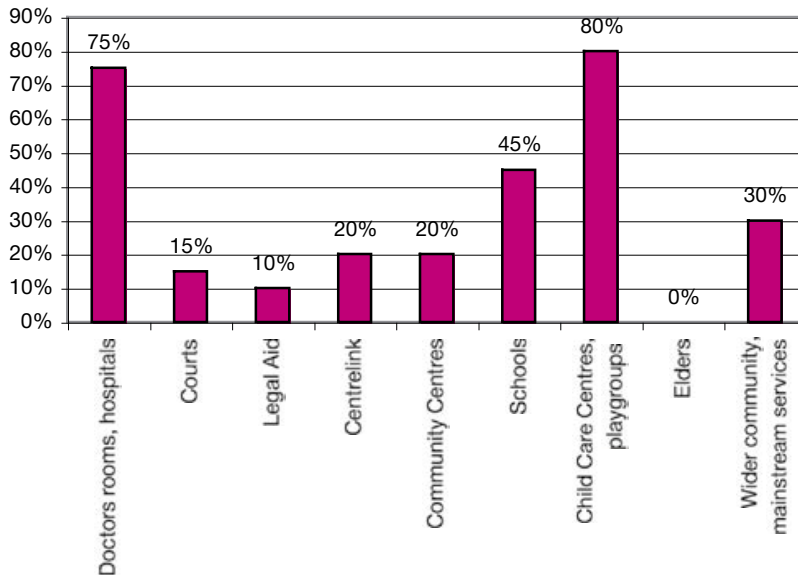
MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO PARENTS



BEST PLACES TO MAKE INFORMATION AVAILABLE

What are the most important places to make information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents available? What are the gaps in information dissemination? Are there any particular groups of parents/ carers who you think miss out on information, ie young fathers, grandparents, first time parents, foster carers, etc.

BEST PLACES TO MAKE INFORMATION AVAILABLE



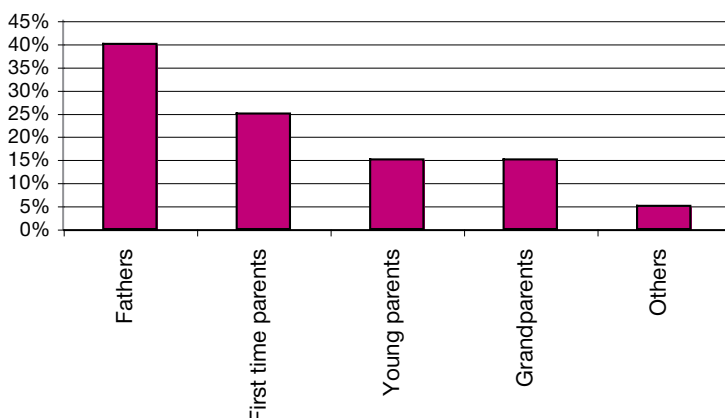
- Doctors rooms, hospitals, health services (75%)
- The courts (15%)
- Legal Aid (15%)
- Centrelink (10%)
- Indigenous local services eg Community centres (20%)
- Child care centres, playgroups, pre schools (80%)
- Elders
- Wider community mainstream services eg libraries, community centres, shopping centres (30%)

PARENTING INFORMATION – OTHER COMMENTS

- Make programs accessible
- More face to face contact
- Consultation – ask parents what they want

GAPS IDENTIFIED OF THOSE WHO MISS OUT ON INFORMATION

GAPS IDENTIFIED OF THOSE WHO MISS OUT ON INFORMATION



- Fathers (40%)
- Young parents (15%)
- Grandparents (15%)
- Others (5%)

EFFECTIVE PARENTING SUPPORT PROGRAMS

- Two thirds of responses not aware of any programs
- Many comments on mainstream programs not effective for Indigenous people
- Children in prison with mothers (up to 3 yrs)
- Family support programs at community centres
- Triple P program not effective
- Aboriginal mothers and babies service
- Strong babies, strong families, strong culture program(grandmothers training)

WHY ARE THE PROGRAMS EFFECTIVE

- Some new mothers and grandmothers groups for Indigenous people very effective as they are run by Aboriginal people
- Strong babies, strong families, strong culture – grandmothers training mothers very effectively. They are using community consultation and involvement.
- Best Start programs – with focus on parent/child interactions

GAPS IN SERVICE DELIVERY

- Programs not inclusive of Indigenous community in the development of content and delivery
- Needs to be more consultation with Indigenous people
- Have a follow up when parent programs are run
- Socially isolated families
- Prisoners and their children
- Fathers and grandparents support
- Lack of resources to provide continuity of care and one to one support
- Remote rural areas
- Transport and resources an issue

SECTION EIGHT: Summary Findings from the Focus Groups

ISSUES AFFECTING ABILITY TO PARENT

Participants were asked a number of questions in regards to issues or factors that impact on their ability to be the best parent they want to be. Responses from participants across the country were not that different despite the vastness of geographical locations. In remote areas, issues around fundamental basic needs were identified including the need for fresh food and other nutritional needs, however issues such as inadequate housing, low education participation and lack of employment opportunity and poverty was reported in all locations.

It is interesting to note, that despite the similarity of identified issues, responses in regard to how these issues should be addressed were more varied in terms of responses being specific to that location, and within a local context. Participants clearly stated that parenting information, support and programs should be locally produced and designed. Therefore, language, local customs and norms need to be considered when developing parenting information, support and programs.

A significant issue consistently raised around the country, was the need for healing of unresolved issues from childhood. Specifically, parents and professionals identified that significant acknowledgement and remedy of past Australian Governments removalist policies is required and that the implications of being stolen and institutionalised affect Indigenous parents today. Parents and professionals identified the following effects of removal and institutionalisation:

- Loss of traditional parenting methods
- Loss of culture
- Loss of extended family (and consequent support networks)
- Lack of appropriate parent role model due to being institutionalised
- Lack of opportunity in regard to accessing education and employment

Other issues participants identified as impacting on their ability to be the best parent they could be included:

- Addictions - drug, alcohol, petrol / glue / paint sniffing, gambling
- Impact of family violence & general issues around safety in the community. Safety in the community was not an issue a generation ago. Parents feel there is now more pressure on them

to provide recreation/play options for children because they feel it is no longer safe for children to play “on the streets”.

- Lack of recognition & support (particularly financial support and program support) for Grandparents and other Kinship Carers.
- Isolation – this was reported in metropolitan and rural areas as a personal issue, and reported as a community issue in remote areas.
- Lack of childcare – Multifunctional Aboriginal Children’s Services and other Indigenous childcare services as well as non-Indigenous childcare.
- Lack of access to education – particularly in rural and remote areas where some schools only provide classes until Year 10 and students need to travel / move to another town in order to complete their high school education.
- People who are locally born & raised seem to be more aware of and connected to supports
- Lack of access to income support – particularly for kinship carers
- Demands on time - juggling work, home, play
- Dealing with children’s behavioural issues e.g. ADHD
- Shame factor – being able to admit there is a problem and seeking help without feeling shame. There seems to be a perception that you are a failure as a parent if you ask for help.
- Lack of respect from children toward parents and grandparents and a loss of discipline methods. Some parents believed there was a connection between these two factors stating the Education system contributed to the lack of respect received from children. In quite a few locations, parents and professionals reported that the Education system was teaching their children about child abuse stating parents were “not allowed to smack their children”. Parents felt this was unfair and that the Education system should also teach children about their responsibilities, not just their rights. Parents also felt confused about how they were “allowed” to discipline their children, having not received any education themselves about what is appropriate or legal. Parents reported they wanted more information about the child protection system.

Hence, parents felt a sense of loss over their right to discipline children in a way they feel is appropriate. Some parents recalled experiences from their own childhood which included traditional methods that were believed to

eliminate the inappropriate behaviour. Parents felt traditional methods worked well.

- Racism, covert and overt racism/discrimination e.g. being refused a service due to being Aboriginal. An example of this was given where a parent sought Emergency Relief from a mainstream service and was told to go to the local Aboriginal Health Service for Emergency Relief because they are Aboriginal.
- Lack of exposure to parenting methods during childhood and adolescence. Parents felt that their children and grandchildren were not being prepared well enough before becoming parents themselves. They felt the loss of traditional methods were again a contributing factor to this issue. For example, it was reported that traditionally women were prepared for motherhood at an early age by participating in or observing the delivery of a newborn and assisting to care for siblings and/or cousins.
- The education system does not do enough in terms of teaching children what it's like to be a parent. Parents and professionals alike reported of programs they had heard of that had been run at different high schools. For example, the program where a life-like doll is used a baby and students are required to care for the "baby". Parents felt this program should be extended throughout all schools as it gave young people a "reality check".
- There is not enough recognition or support for Men and their role as a parent. Women and men alike raised this as an issue reporting that traditionally men and women had specific roles in regards to rearing children and that these roles had either been eroded or become blurred. Single parent men stated it was particularly difficult for them to be a mother and a father at the same time and were concerned that there were little or no support groups for men.
- The influence of "Americanisms", media and technology were reported as having a negative impact on children's lives as they were often chosen as favoured activities. For instance violent movies and music, particularly rap music was seen to be a negative influence on young people's behaviour, parents feeling that young people were trying to imitate what they watched and listened to. In regards to technology, parents felt that video games and the like were also violent and that children preferred these games to more traditional recreation options.
- Single parents told of the difficulties and frustrations of dealing with their child's behaviour when returned to them by the other parent. Some people felt this was due to a difference in parenting styles.
- Indigenous parents with non-Indigenous partners

reported of the difficulty of raising a child with two cultures. Some said they felt pressure from the extended family of the non-Indigenous partner around parenting styles with relatives pushing their belief that "the white way is the right way".

PARENTING SUPPORT

Professionals and parents / caregivers were asked questions in regards to reasons why parents seek support, whom they seek support from, and what is the best way to provide the support they seek. Here are some of the responses:

- Parents seek support in regards to a number of issues e.g. behaviour, nutrition, finances, family violence.
- Peer support groups are beneficial when they are informal and facilitated by a local Indigenous person. There are some excellent examples of support groups facilitated by Indigenous organisations that are producing positive outcomes for parents.
- Support groups that include the whole family are more appropriate than just mother's groups etc. People said it was good to have mothers groups, and fathers groups, but that the two should come together at different times to form "family" groups. People said it is important to remember that Indigenous people see parenting in a much broader spectrum than that of white people. They believe parenting is the responsibility of parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles and the community.
- Mentoring support programs that tap into existing support networks in communities are seen to be the ideal way to provide support to people who, for different reasons, may not ever approach agencies for help.

PARENTING INFORMATION

Participants in the focus groups were asked who they went to for information about parenting, as well as what they thought of the information products they might access or provide, and how information products should be designed and distributed. Overwhelmingly, responses indicate that information products should be locally produced featuring people they know, as Indigenous parents stated they want to identify with the message as well as the messengers.

- Family and friends are the main sources for parenting information.
- Maternal Child Health Nurses, health workers, support workers are other "trusted" sources for information.

- GPs should be a source but usually are not.
- Parenting information should be visual with simple messages. Local people should be featured as the “messengers” utilising local artwork.
- Information should be presented informally along with a yarn about what it’s telling us.
- Information produced by Government Departments is not very useful or appropriate to Indigenous people.
- Locally produced information should be available from both Indigenous and Mainstream services.
- There are some excellent examples of locally produced information already in existence.
- Information should reinforce the importance of culture.
- Parents want more information about the difference between discipline and abuse as well as information about the child protection system.
- Parents and professionals reported having mixed feelings about the use of videos - if they’re locally made and presented well with lots of discussion, then they are useful.

PARENTING PROGRAMS

Again, participants were asked about parenting programs available to them in their community (if any). Questions were posed around the content, delivery and design of programs as well as who the target group of the program(s) might be, and timelines of the program. Participants were asked to give feedback on the effectiveness of programs and any perceived gaps in program delivery.

- Parenting programs should focus on family strengths not weaknesses.
- Mainstream programs need to be adapted to be culturally appropriate otherwise they are not useful.
- Need to include more outreach services – parents state that mainstream don’t seem to do this as well as Indigenous services.
- Programs that include group work need to be informal and flexible, and be facilitated by a trusted (and preferably local) person.
- There are some excellent Indigenous programs already in existence that people report as being useful.
- There is not enough formal evaluation of programs.
- Pilot projects that work well should be funded longer term. People felt there was a loss to the community when programs were “ripped out” of

communities.

- Elders should be included in the development and delivery of programs wherever possible.
- There needs to be more recognition of the number of grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. Grandparents say there should be more programs for Grandparents.
- Need more programs based on Action Research models of community development. Throughout the focus groups, responses indicate that most Indigenous people and professionals feel that community development responses to family issues are far better responses than individualistic responses.
- Indigenous people want a choice between Indigenous and Mainstream services. But, when seeking assistance from mainstream services, Indigenous people still want to access culturally appropriate programs and information, and prefer to see Indigenous people working in mainstream.
- There is a perceived fear of a lack of confidentiality with Indigenous workers who live and work in the same community. This was reported by parents and caregivers as a problem, and was reported as a perceived problem by professionals.
- Parenting programs often seen to be “middle class”, particularly in metropolitan areas, but some Indigenous agencies are successfully running mainstream programs that have been adapted to be more culturally appropriate, and are delivered by Indigenous people.
- Programs need to be longer term rather than 4-8 weeks. People feel that it is especially important to acknowledge and discuss some of the historical factors that impact on today’s Indigenous people as parents, and that this should be incorporated into programs. People felt that long term programs would enable more time to discuss issues such as this and other issues that impact on Indigenous families, rather than just focussing on parenting.
- There is a need for basic parenting skills programs especially in remote communities. People living in remote communities said there should be programs that teach basic parenting skills to young parents, such as how to change a nappy, sleep routines, nutritional requirements etc.
- Both parents and professionals felt that parenting programs should not be called parenting programs as that would not reflect the holistic nature of an ideal Indigenous program and people just wouldn’t come due to the sense of shame that one “needs” or wants parenting help.

SECTION NINE: Summary findings from National workshop

FEEDBACK AND RESPONSES FROM SMALL GROUPS

SNAICC and Swinburne University Department of Child and Family Studies presented findings from the literature review, program audit, focus groups and stakeholder consultation stages of the project. Participants were asked to discuss the findings, key issues and priorities for action on Indigenous parenting information and support in Australia.

Delegates were asked to divide into 4 small groups. Each small group was asked to consider two questions:

1. What does what we have learnt from the Parenting Project so far mean for parenting information and support in Indigenous communities in Australia?
2. What are the priorities for action?
 - For providing information on parenting?
 - For providing parenting support?

The groups considered the two questions in relation to one of the following four areas:

- Group 1 Remote areas
- Group 2 Rural areas
- Group 3 Metropolitan areas
- Group 4 Mainstream or non-Indigenous agencies providing parenting information and support to Indigenous communities

GROUP 1: REMOTE AREAS

- Creole language information important. Language used in information and programs needs to be the same as the local language whether it be a form of broken English or otherwise.
 - Travel to people and work in their space.
 - Program delivery positions should be 'identified' with the right training and retention supports and career structure because:
 - The people who are participating need to be able to speak more freely (they will feel comfortable to do this if their language is used by the facilitator).
 - Respect needed on both sides
 - People are not comfortable dealing with mainstream services unless Indigenous workers are delivering the programs. (Community members, including Elders could play a role in selection panels.)
- Mainstream organisations need to be culturally competent to support Indigenous workers and programs.
 - Indigenous workers roles need to be more flexible than mainstream workers. We need to be more creative in delivery so we can meet community expectations.
 - Remote staff need adequate travel money to visit communities frequently in order to build relationships. Visits need to be lengthy in time. An implication of this is that agencies will probably need to employ extra staff to cover home office duties while others travel.
 - Written information needs to be accompanied by oral information.
 - The first step is to build relationships, partnerships and capacity of communities to decide what is needed, to identify what is there already, and how best to provide it e.g. 'working parties' which exist around the Dubbo area, and 'negotiation tables' in Cape York. Strengthening the capacity of individual community members and organisations such as child care centres needs to be linked to existing programs and services.
 - If submissions are called for, format needs to be a simple question and answer format.
 - If we are able to deliver a parenting program with positive results in only one community, then this in itself would be a positive achievement.
 - We would like to see the \$600,000 (referring to the Minister's financial commitment to Indigenous parenting information within the context of this project) built on e.g. we need to attract more funds such as training dollars.
 - Simple, informal, local delivery is important e.g. camping, social groups etc.
 - An implication of these issues which can be addressed by the SNAICC National Parenting Resource Centre would be to work with communities to attract other Government funding.
 - We would like to see some of the \$600,000 set aside to do some development work with remote communities.

GROUP 2: RURAL AREAS

- Communities need to 'own' projects and program, informing Government how the funds should be spent. The development of projects needs to be shared between Government and communities.
- There is currently limited community input in the developmental stages of programs. Shared development between Government, local services and community people should occur.
- Full consultation processes are required at all levels of the development of projects and programs.
- Government need to recognise and allow for the time that is required to engage and consult with people who are not existing clients (or within the service system 'loop').
- Documenting stories of Elders and other Indigenous peoples parenting experience is required in order to capture their experience and to ensure traditional methods do not continue to be lost.
- Government departments need to rethink parameters around funding and guidelines – communities need to understand these parameters too.
- Accountability needs to happen but should include accountability to the community as well as funding sources.
- Government needs to support communities to develop their own parenting information – maybe develop a resource kit that can be used as a template to be expanded on and adapted by communities.
- We need flexible timeframes in the delivery of programs. We also need flexible methods of distribution of information.
- We need to get the (culturally appropriate) information out to a broad cross section of community – including non-Indigenous and Government services.
- There is a need to provide training to community members and Indigenous employees of Indigenous services in regards to report writing skills, facilitation skills, and submission writing skills.
- A co-ordinated approach to problem-solving and service delivery is required in rural communities. This includes co-ordination between non-Government services, local government, and State and Federal government services.
- Government need to ensure mainstream services are community focussed and culturally appropriate.
- There is a need to employ more Indigenous people in senior positions in Government. These positions need to be supported so that Indigenous people can maintain their links and relationships in community.
- Definite career paths must be developed within bureaucracies with support to sustain individual career goals.
- Recruitment campaigns and training methods need to recognise prior learning and life experience as relevant skills.
- Provide more opportunities (such as this National Workshop) to share information at a national level.
- Regular documentation of best practice programs must occur and be accessible to Indigenous and non-Indigenous services.
- An 'information book' people can take from service to service with them would be a useful way for parents to keep record of the information they have been provided.
- We need to work more closely with Education departments. Schools have been consistently raised throughout the (SNAICC Parenting) Project as a place where parents should be able to access parenting information and support.
- Many Indigenous children have more than one culture. We need to find ways to nurture difference in culture in a caring and sharing way.
- Political factions within communities exist.
- Nobody can assume to be an expert in regards to Indigenous parenting practices.
- Mainstream services must be trained in cultural awareness. Government and mainstream need to recognise the diversity within Indigenous communities.
- Develop Indigenous inclusive practices to serve as a framework for non-Indigenous services. For example, we could develop a national document such as the Reconciliation Statement, which could be linked to funding and service agreements – an audit of non-Indigenous services could occur to ensure they are complying with the framework.
- Don't double up on programs in the same community. Enhance existing programs.
- Action Research models of community development should be the foundation for all the work we do in Indigenous communities.

GROUP 3: METROPOLITAN AREAS

- Change requires leadership. What about leadership at the community level?
- What is the definition of community in metropolitan areas? “Community” is complex, dynamic, shifting. Key elements are family/kin.
- Effective work requires knowledge of community, families, and relationships. This takes time. Government and workers need to take the time to get to know people at the local level. Working in community is not just about what you know, but especially about who you know.
- In metropolitan areas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families can be very isolated and ‘lost’ in the mainstream e.g. schools not addressing individual need. This undermines their cultural identity and community links.
- Part of the response is inclusive practice and outreach from Indigenous specific agencies.
- Indigenous people living away from country can be isolated within another Indigenous community.
- People have connections back to their Indigenous family/kin/country but may also be part of other communities e.g. geographical/local and also to other family with a different racial or cultural origin.
- Each state or territory has its own history that has created the current web of Indigenous communities in metropolitan areas.
- Families may choose mainstream services because they are more available.
- Parenting support should be tailored to family needs and responsive to local circumstances.
- Programs often have very little profile in the community.
- Peer based strengths groups where there is not only learning but support and interaction in an informal setting is the way to go.
- Programs need the resources to respond to the immediate needs of people e.g. material aid.
- Reconnection with Elders needs to be actioned – it won’t just happen. In metropolitan areas Elders are not always identifiable or available.
- Actively building informal support networks and using extended family groups for advice, ideas, and support with raising children can be a successful way of reaching people who don’t seek support from services.
- There are foster care families that seem to do well. We need to identify the elements of support that create this success and make them available to other families.
- Talk with families where children are doing well and find out how these families have done it.
- We have to build the cultural capacity of families recognising that for metropolitan communities this means working over large networks.
- Recognise that at times people might have their own difficult issues to deal with, but they can still be good parents – communities taking responsibility for their children and supporting families when this occurs.
- We need to identify positive role models in metropolitan communities (but not perfect – don’t set people up to fail or create expectations that are inappropriate).
- Asking family to take your children for a while is an example of a good parenting choice. We shouldn’t shame people for this.
- Government and agencies have to encourage re-kindling of family networks.

Priorities for action:

- Give Elders the time, space and chance to tell stories and share their parenting journey.
- Informal support networks that engage ALL the family and give all family time together.
- Develop parenting information products that are interesting and culturally relevant.
- The challenge is to reach children who are not engaged with their community, school, work or anything. We need to go where they are and meet them in their space e.g. on the streets.
- Create ‘Family Engagement’ Workers (as recommended in the Gordon Enquiry).
- Education and support is needed to make sure additional parenting/family payment does not have negative outcomes.
- Start young in school / pre-school to teach children self-respect and cultural pride. Build on this base with parenting information in schools.
- Build on the existing community based services – don’t create new ones.
- Every service site should give people a starting point to access information and support.
- Need to build and extend the reach of the early childhood services.
- Always remember that parents want what is best for their children – never leave people behind, start with what works for that family – from the family’s perspective.
- Trust is essential between families and services. People will continue to be engaged with services if they do not have a sense of trust.

- Start with programs for children and use these to engage with families.
- Parenting is not about making better parents, but about making families well.
- AICCA type services are required in all areas because they work effectively with marginalised children and families.
- Families often do trust AICCA's and other community services.

Priorities for SNAICC:

- Advocating for intensive family support workers to work one on one with families.
- Address basic necessities such as housing, income, health etc.
- Work with peer support and mentor programs – evaluate and document.
- Build on the existing childcare services to provide other forms of support.
- Community driven and culturally appropriate information available in mainstream services.
- Encourage Government agencies to work smarter through development of partnerships with communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies.
- The ultimate aim is to develop a shared vision of the continuum of support for all Indigenous children.
- Advocate for equity of funding (ASSPA) for kindergartens and childcare services.
- Use the existing Indigenous early childhood services to implement and roll out the promised \$650,000.
- Deal with the hard issues that take away families quality of life (e.g. unemployment).
- Pay and support kinship carers according to the real cost of caring.
- Build on the type and coverage of early childhood services.
- SNAICC to monitor use of the old ATSI/ATSIC dollars now gone to mainstream.

GROUP 4: NON-INDIGENOUS SERVICES

- Not a lot has changed in 20 years and Government is still not listening.
- Non-Indigenous agencies need to employ Indigenous staff and retain them in their services.
- We need to be very sure that we have 'agreed' or understood definitions when we talk together. What is a 'parent program' for might feel or seem like I have to stop being black to be a 'good' or 'successful' parent = assimilation.
- Staffing of any programs needs to be a small core (say 3) workers rather than 1 person having (or expected to have) all the answers.
- We need to look in – rather than not look at all.
- Issues around time – mainstream approach around practices, process and flexibility.
- Parallels with “whitefella” issues in what the Indigenous literature and consultations have shown:
 - “whitefellas” also reject being told what to do by experts
 - Value of “Family Partnerships” training (Hilton Davis)
 - Concept of families, children and communities being “co-producers” of children’s outcomes with service providers.
 - Indigenous pain and despair experienced collectively rather than in isolation as in “whitefella” society.
- How about replacing “parenting programs” with “building survival skills across the life course for our people”.
- Issues for non-Indigenous multi-cultural groups are similar to Indigenous issues.
- Framework for ages and stages – based on community development principles, not just “parenting” information in isolation.
- What is stopping us from being able to work in partnership? Indigenous people don't have equal partnership.
- We need to re-story parenting. Too many public parenting stories are bad news stories that parents cannot identify with.
- We need to involve Indigenous people in program design and delivery.
- We need to develop Indigenous specific reporting and evaluation mechanisms. This would have major implications for non-Indigenous organisations in terms of program design and funding criteria.

- Flexibility in funding models is needed as is longer term funding to enable better evaluations to occur.
- Pilots mean we keep re-inventing the wheel.
- There is not a huge amount of money to do what we hope will be done. There will be a need for non-Indigenous agencies to be inclusive.
- Places / people / agencies we should be targeting to raise cultural awareness are: Out of Home Care Services; Early Childhood Services; Schools; Doctors; Judges; Family Law Court; Nurses; Not for Profit Organisations; Government; Hospitals. They would benefit from:
 - Cultural awareness training
 - Developed cultural guidelines
 - Learning about respecting Indigenous culture
 - An audit of cultural competency
- Mainstream getting Aboriginal advisory reference groups where they can't employ Aboriginal people.
- Protocols with mainstream about what the minimum requirements are to work with Aboriginal families (and practice guidelines).
- Indigenous people must have the intellectual rights to any resources that are developed. Mainstream agencies need to pay Indigenous agencies for their specialist advice.
- Family Law Court decisions acknowledge the need for Aboriginal children to maintain connections to community. Who will fund an agency to support this connection?
- Family Law Court – need to get information about rights for grandparents and other kinship carers.
- Liaison between all previously listed services needs to occur.
- Strengthening identity in children and young people.
- Develop value statements for children and Aboriginal families.
- Importance of Aboriginal culture.
- Elders – mainstream services need to understand the importance of their role in community and family.

Priorities for action:

- “Good news” story on parenting
- Using “successes” as examples
- Promote Indigenous child rearing practices
- Listen to the voices of children
- Push for a compact statement of values.

- Make tender documentation and processes for applying for funding simpler.
- Focus on strengthening “Indigenous” component of parenting. “Strength in Aboriginality”.
- Work with communities on strengthening the role of parents, in their language. Include songs and ceremony.
- Ensure consultation in Aboriginal communities when developing programs.
- Use networks to influence other agencies who are providing services to Aboriginal children.
- Develop a strategy to ensure mainstream agencies and government departments working with children and families have culturally appropriate policies, practices, service responses and approaches.

General

General issues raised throughout the day at the workshop by participants:

- No youth (as parents) representation at workshop
 - SNAICC explained that this was an oversight, however young parents did participate in the focus groups held around the country.
- No Torres Strait Islander representation at workshop
 - SNAICC explained we did invite TSI people to the workshop however we did not receive any acceptances.
- Torres Strait Islander traditional adoption
 - Presentation by project team did not include any reference to this issue. Traditional adoption is the practice of rearing child/ren of a relative and usually the child is not returned to the natural parent. Traditional adoption is recognised within the Family Law Act .
- “Parenting is for life” – the role of being a parent does not cease at any given point in time of the child's life. It may however, be transferred to another person.
- It is about a ‘collection’ of people who fulfil a number of roles to each other – a set of relationships. This is in reference to extended families and communities being active participants in the child rearing process.
- Need to infiltrate to get the messages & solutions to decision-makers (legal, social etc) including our own communities.
- Staffing needs to be a small core of people to carry out the jobs, meet the demands rather than 1 lone, solitary person. This is a resourcing decision.

Plenary

A plenary was held to summarise discussions of the day, to capture key points raised, and to reiterate actions determined by participants to be of priority.

In summing up, the plenary panel (Muriel Cadd, David Hazelhurst and Julian Pocock) reflected the following points made by participants:

- The development of protocols or a framework for what is “culturally appropriate” practice – have the framework linked to funding, ensuring appropriate follow up occurs to ensure accountability, and an evaluation to measure the effectiveness of the framework. Agencies working to the framework could undertake a cultural audit attached to an accreditation type system.
- Support for local communities to be able to undertake the processes required when applying for Government funds or when developing Indigenous parenting information and support programs.
- Working with Registered Training Organisations delivering courses with child, family and parenting focuses to ensure cultural awareness is part of the curriculum.
- Strengthen cultural identity awareness – it is imperative that cultural identity is part of any Indigenous parenting initiative and that reflections and capturing of ancestry is included.
- Discussions need to occur with Education and Early Childhood Services to explore the demand for collaboration with services providing parenting support and information.
- Develop an opportunity to hear the voices of children and young people in regards to research projects and delivery of service.
- Don't forget about children with disabilities.

Finally, a workshop participant shares his thoughts on parenting.

THOUGHTS ON PARENTING

I'd like to bring up / raise our children our way.

But then the Department say, “You gotta do it this way”

As a result – our hands are tied.

And some of our children know this!

Some Departments forget that there are lots of different tribes and different ways.

Of course most of our cultural ways are gone but still, I'd like to raise / nurture my children “my way”, not the Government way.

Of what culture we've got today new cultures can be adopted in a positive form.

**William Gulf
Woorabinda Senior Health Worker
SNAICC Parenting Project National Workshop
Tuesday 8th June 2004**

SECTION TEN: Overall Recommendations and Conclusions

RECOMMENDATIONS - PARENTING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

PREAMBLE

This project has identified overwhelming evidence that parenting information and resources should be culturally relevant, and designed and delivered by Indigenous people and communities to suit their local needs.

Information and resources should be aimed at families rather than parents and recognise the broader notion of family and shared responsibility for child rearing within Indigenous communities. It is also clear that parents and carers primarily use their own family networks and local Indigenous people and services with whom they already have an established relationship as their main source of parenting information.

Whilst the scope of the project focussed particularly on younger children, parents participating in focus groups highlighted the need for information and support in relation to older children and young people. Issues that families and communities want included within parenting information and support were typically broad, spanning the full range of health and developmental issues and issues from the pre-natal period through to adulthood.

The project identified utilising a strengths based approach and working to normalise activities which support and strengthen families in their child rearing as essential to securing the engagement of families in parenting information and support activities.

Family stories from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities relating to child rearing were seen as an important source of parenting information. Developing parenting information was seen as involving documenting information from within a community or family group and complimenting this with information from outside the community, ie government information or technical information on child development. Family stories need to be gathered and developed as a culturally relevant resource to strengthen and restore child rearing practices and provide positive role models for Indigenous parents and carers.

It is also clear that there are some very good local, regional and state based information products and resources which could be of use to other communities but which are at present unknown to others.

The findings from all sources suggest the following recommendations.

If implemented, these recommendations would improve the dissemination, quality, cultural relevance and impact of information for Indigenous families and communities regarding parenting and child rearing.

RECOMMENDATION ONE

Parenting information for Indigenous communities should combine local content with more broadly applicable information drawn from the evidence base on child and adolescent development.

Localised content within parenting information for Indigenous communities might appropriately include:

- Reference to local role models, leaders and mentors
- Recognition of family and kinship networks
- Language and artwork
- Advice on access to and contacts for local services and supports
- Community background and history, and
- Important local cultural norms and traditions

Common content within parenting information for Indigenous communities might appropriately include:

- Information on pre-natal health and nutrition
- Common experiences and strategies in coping with infants and babies
- Child and adolescent developmental milestones, health and nutrition
- Strategies regarding child behaviour and discipline
- Parents and children's rights and responsibilities
- Child protection with emphasis on prevention of abuse and neglect

RECOMMENDATION TWO

Parenting information (and support) needs to target parents prior to their child's birth and afterwards at key points throughout the early childhood and adolescent development periods as a priority, given the research on the importance of developmental periods for future outcomes for children.

Information should include cultural knowledge and deal with issues of healing and empowerment, care of self and relationships with partners. The key transition points are:

Pre natal and post natal period

- Information on health, nutrition, pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding
- Information on how to care for babies, including practical tasks and routines, babies health and nutrition, interactions and relationships with babies, including reading and telling stories.

Parenting Toddlers

- Child development knowledge, characteristics of toddlers
- Dealing with toddler behaviour and providing appropriate limits and guidelines
- Toddler play and experiences

Parenting Pre schoolers

- Child development knowledge, characteristics of pre schoolers
- Building children's strength and resilience
- Showing children how to solve problems and resolve conflict

Transition to school

- Getting children ready for school
- Social and emotional readiness
- Early literacy

Early Adolescence

- Adolescent development and transition to adulthood
- Harm minimisation, personal safety and risk taking
- Family relationships, discipline and boundary setting

RECOMMENDATION THREE

Government funding priorities should support the gathering of family stories from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities relating to child rearing to value and acknowledge traditional and current parenting strengths and child rearing practices.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

Funding for parenting information and support should take account of the preference for Aboriginal and Islander communities to develop their own parenting information products including printed and audio-visual materials.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE

A priority for funding Indigenous parenting information resources should be the production of highly visual materials designed for use in facilitated group settings. This should include materials utilising plain English and where possible local language. Resources should be available in a variety of formats including, AV materials, posters and leaflets and be provided to parents and families with conversation about what the information is covering.

RECOMMENDATION SIX

Indigenous parenting information resources should be produced targeting local Indigenous mentors, leaders and workers to enable them to establish, facilitate and support a range of parenting and family support groups linked to existing local services.

RECOMMENDATION SEVEN

SNAICC and FaCS should consider the establishment of a national clearinghouse function for the ongoing collection, promotion and sharing of Indigenous parenting information resources as part of the development of the National Indigenous Family and Children's Resource Centre.

RECOMMENDATION EIGHT

Existing Indigenous parenting information such as the NAPCAN Indigenous resources, RAATSIC parenting information and the University of Newcastle, Family Action Centre Indigenous video and posters should be more widely promoted as examples of useful parenting information.

RECOMMENDATION NINE

Where mainstream services, particularly those focussed on families and children, are funded for the production of parenting information and resources, funding requirements should ensure that mainstream agencies:

- assess the existing availability of Indigenous specific resources in their community
- engage in some dialogue with local Indigenous agencies in relation to the need for Indigenous specific information products, and

- develop appropriate strategies for the production of Indigenous information resources to compliment the activities of local Indigenous services

RECOMMENDATIONS - PARENTING SUPPORT AND SKILLS ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

PREAMBLE

Messages from this project about the forms of parent support groups and services stress the need for cultural relevance and Indigenous ownership in program design and delivery. Families need to feel empowered, understood and strengthened through their contact with parenting support services rather than shamed, blamed and disempowered.

This project, as well as other research and government reports about Indigenous children and families, identifies an overwhelming need for underlying issues to be addressed in conjunction with programs and services. These underlying issues include the repercussions from past and present policies that have impacted hugely on the health, wellbeing, parenting and aspirations of Indigenous Australians.

Where mainstream services, supports and programs are used by Indigenous families, the messages from the project are that there has to be partnerships formed with Indigenous organisations, consultation with the local Indigenous community, training in cultural awareness and Indigenous staff employed so that Indigenous families feel safe accessing these services. Cultural awareness training has to be focussed on supporting mainstream agencies to know and appreciate in detail the local Indigenous culture and family networks rather than focus only on very broad aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

RECOMMENDATION TEN

Develop a framework (linked to funding requirements), including guidelines and benchmarks for culturally appropriate practices for mainstream and Indigenous agencies seeking to deliver Indigenous parenting support programs.

RECOMMENDATION ELEVEN

That funding criteria for mainstream or Indigenous agencies to facilitate parenting support groups recognise:

- the broad family responsibility for child rearing favoured by Indigenous communities

- that support groups should be facilitated by a known local Indigenous community member, or an Indigenous person who has established relationships within the community or by non Indigenous facilitator as a partner with a local Indigenous person
- that communities require the flexibility to develop groups that address the needs of and recognise the role of extended family in child rearing including mothers, fathers, uncles, aunties, grandparents, siblings and other kin, and
- the preference for parenting groups to be informal, flexible, holistic, long term, and culturally appropriate

RECOMMENDATION TWELVE

Parenting support (and information) needs to target parents prior to their child's birth and afterwards at key points throughout the early childhood and adolescent development periods as a priority, given the research on the importance of developmental periods for future outcomes for children.

Pre natal and post natal period

Programs and services which:

- Provide knowledge about pregnancy birth and breastfeeding
- Provide respite and Indigenous social networks and support for parents eg. mother/grandmother/baby program, supported playgroups, child care services
- Develop parent/baby relationships
- Provide skill development in basic care, routines, health(including immunization), nutrition of infants and child development

Parenting Toddlers

Programs and services which:

- Provide respite and Indigenous social and learning networks and support for parents and stimulation for children eg supported playgroups, child care services
- Provide knowledge about what to expect in the development and behaviour of the toddler
- Provide skill development in appropriate guidance of toddler behaviour

Parenting Pre schoolers

Programs and services which:

- Provide respite and Indigenous social and learning networks and support for parents

and stimulation for children eg. pre schools, kindergartens, child care services

- Provide knowledge about child development and expectations of pre school children
- Provide knowledge about how to strengthen children's self esteem and build their resilience
- Provide knowledge about strategies to manage children's behaviour and how to help the children make decisions and solve problems

Transition to school

Programs and services which:

- Provide parents with knowledge and skills to help their children prepare for and settle into school, Eg Parents as Teachers Program

Early Adolescence

Programs and services which:

- Provide parents with knowledge and skills to help them understand adolescent development and the transition to adulthood including harm minimisation, personal safety and risk taking, family relationships, discipline and boundary setting with adolescents.

RECOMMENDATION THIRTEEN

Indigenous and non Indigenous facilitators of parent programs and support groups need appropriate training to be able to engage Indigenous parents and other family members in an approach that strengthens parenting and cultural knowledge and uses a group problem solving approach.

RECOMMENDATION FOURTEEN

SNAICC and FaCS should develop or document a range of different ways of evaluating Indigenous parenting programs and services which take a strengths based approach and are meaningful, manageable and acceptable to Indigenous communities and funding bodies. These should be documented and promoted through the National Indigenous Family and Children's Resource Centre.

RECOMMENDATION FIFTEEN

Evaluation should be linked to funding criteria and FaCS should provide assistance, support and flexible ideas on evaluation processes at the time communities or agencies are preparing funding applications for parenting information and support programs

RECOMMENDATION SIXTEEN

Evaluation outcomes from funded projects and activities should be documented and accessible through the FaCS and SNAICC websites to assist professionals and others working with Indigenous families to readily access documented descriptions and evaluations of effective parenting information and support programs.

RECOMMENDATION SEVENTEEN

Existing services used by Indigenous parents and families such as children's services and health services should be prioritised as sites for the development and implementation of parenting information and support activities.

RECOMMENDATION EIGHTEEN

That FaCS develop a multi faceted approach to parent support and parenting skills enhancement targeted to local communities and designed and developed by local communities or in consultation with local communities. An example of a local framework for this is attached as Appendix 15 in the Appendices document. (VACCA/Good Beginnings Parenting Project)

RECOMMENDATIONS - GENERAL

PREAMBLE

There are a number of issues which were raised, particularly during focus groups which require some consideration but are broader than the scope of the project. Some of these require consideration and action within the context of other Australian Government initiatives or at the State and Territory level.

Discipline Vs Physical Abuse

Through the focus groups and stakeholder survey, issues relating to child discipline and child protection were raised. A commonly and strongly expressed view was that children from primary school age absorb messages from school and child protection agencies that physical discipline is a form of child abuse. Children, according to parents, threaten to report them to child protection if they use any form of physical discipline. Parents commented that this left them unable to control children.

More generally there were views expressed that parents felt uncertain about physical discipline, what constitutes physical child abuse and alternative strategies for setting boundaries for children and young people. Parents felt that the school systems have too much focus on children's rights

undermining their role and ability as parents to control or guide children's behaviour. SNAICC believes that even if this is merely a perception amongst parents it still requires some response from State and Territory governments.

RECOMMENDATION NINETEEN

That the Australian Government (and SNAICC) initiate discussions with relevant State and Territory authorities regarding the definitions of physical abuse, disciplining and physical punishment of children and appropriate messages to convey to children, young people and families through schools and other forums.

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY

That State and Territory Governments be encouraged to register any parenting information materials and programs they fund directly or indirectly with a central clearinghouse or website, potentially the National Indigenous Family and Children's Resource Centre.

Family Income Support

A significant issue raised in all focus groups was the family conflict and tension which arise following changes to family income support payments. In particular when payments previously paid to parents in respect of dependent children begin to be paid directly to the young people in a family. It was commonly reported that many young people lack the budgeting skills or inclination to use these funds appropriately. Many families reported that young people use these funds for the purchase of alcohol, cigarettes or illicit substances and for short term entertainment. Thus funds previously used for meeting the families basic needs are diverted to purposes that parents view as harmful.

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY ONE

That as part of broader policy considerations in FaCS in relation to welfare reform and income support consideration be given to developing different models for phasing in or negotiating the transfer of payments from parents to young people.

Other FaCS reports and processes

Through the literature review and other elements of the project it is clear that there have been previous reports written in relation to Indigenous parenting. Secondly there are currently reviews occurring within the FaCS portfolio including the AICCA program review and Indigenous Parenting and Family Well Being Program Review which are exploring similar themes.

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY TWO

That FaCs consider this report within the context of the AICCA program review and Indigenous Parenting and Family Well Being Program Review as well as the ongoing development of the National Agenda for Early Childhood.

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY THREE

That FaCs convene discussions with SNAICC and other relevant stakeholders to consider the implications of this report for the:

- allocation of existing resources for parenting information and support
- review of the AICCA and Indigenous Parenting & Family Well Being Programs
- ongoing development of the National Agenda for Early Childhood
- work in relation to the Aboriginal Child Rearing Strategy by FaCs and SNAICC
- establishment of the National Indigenous Family and Children's Resource Centre, and
- other Indigenous programs with FaCS or other Australian Government departments.

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY FOUR

That an executive summary of this report be developed by FaCS and SNAICC for publication and broad public distribution including to state, territory and local Governments.

SECTION ONE: Introduction Main Report

1.1 BACKGROUND

For at least 40,000 years Indigenous Australians lived as hunter-gathers within a spiritually rich environment. The family life of Indigenous Australians was structured around complex kinship systems, which located each person within a clan structure, with clear lines of rights and obligations to others within the family, the clan and ultimately the linguistic group. (Atkinson and Swain, 1999)

Children were highly valued by their family and clan (Bourke and Bourke, 1995) The education and socialization of young children took place within the rhythms of family life with an emphasis on observation, imitation and interaction with the extended family and the land.

‘The invasion and subsequent colonisation of Australia took a particularly heavy toll on Indigenous families, systematically separating children from their parents under the guise of welfare and assimilation and destroying intergenerational links’ Atkinson, S and Swain S 1999, p 219.

The intergenerational effects of removing Indigenous children from their families have been profound.

‘With several generations Indigenous people being denied normal childhood development, the opportunity to bond with parents and experience consistent love and acceptance, both the skills and the confidence to parent have been damaged, with the result that Indigenous children tend to be over represented in the child welfare system’ (Atkinson and Swain 1999, p 222).

Although Indigenous families are daily living with the legacy of dispossession and continuing oppression in terms of poor health, early deaths, poor housing, poor educational outcomes, high unemployment and high numbers of Indigenous people in custody, the Indigenous family continues to survive as a site of Indigenous culture and identity. This is highly significant in the light of sustained assaults on its existence and demonstrates the strengths of Indigenous communities in spite of the devastating impact of colonisation.

The information gathered from this part of the project aims to support the development of new parenting initiatives for Indigenous communities that help address the continuing effects of dispossession by identifying programs, information and resources that build on the strengths and voices of Indigenous communities. By Sue Atkinson, Yorta Yorta woman.

1.2 REFERENCES

Atkinson, S and Swain, S *A Network of Support: mothering across the Koori community in Victoria, Australia* in Women’s History Review, Volume 8, No 2, 1999

Bourke, E and Bourke, C *Aboriginal families in Australia* in Hartley, R (Edit) Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia. Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1995

1.3 RATIONALE FOR PROJECT

The Parenting Information Project has come about primarily as a result of the feedback gathered during consultations held under the National Agenda for Early Childhood. In May 2003, the Commonwealth Government announced a commitment of \$10 million from the Stronger Families and Community Strategy to early childhood prevention and intervention initiatives. \$3.2 million of this funding has been allocated to the Parenting Information Project which has two phases.

Family and Community Services (FaCS) engaged the Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH) to undertake Phase One of this project which consists of a literature review, program audit and substantial national consultations on parenting information and programs for Australian parents including those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The Indigenous component of this was contracted to the Secretariat of the National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) to ensure an Indigenous specific perspective was provided. SNAICC undertook to consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, foster carers, Indigenous people in transition to parenthood and other family or community members responsible for bringing up children in remote, rural and metropolitan areas to find out what additional parenting information and support governments should provide.

The Department of Child and Family Studies at Swinburne University of Technology was contracted by SNAICC and was responsible for the literature review and program audit component of the project.

SECTION TWO: Project Aims and Final Products

The information gathered from the project and the final report will be used by the Department of Family and Community Services to support the development of new parenting initiatives, policies and programs relating to parenting information and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and carers.

The project undertook to produce three related final products in relation to Phase One of the project, all of which are contained in this report.

The project will also inform the ongoing role and responsibilities of SNAICC (Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Inc) in supporting parents and communities with parenting and child rearing issues.

2.1 THE LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the project reviews the literature on Indigenous parenting and is linked to the program audit. The review highlights key findings about support needs of Indigenous communities. It also identifies what is required by Indigenous families to fulfill their parenting roles within a cultural context, in order for them to produce better outcomes for their infants and young children. Some of the underlying issues concerning parenting and family support for Indigenous communities are discussed in order to place the findings within the appropriate historical and cultural context.

2.2 THE PROGRAM AUDIT

The aim of the program audit is to identify the effectiveness of the range of intervention strategies that are utilized in the field of Indigenous parenting education. By identifying the characteristics of effective strategies used for Indigenous groups and in relevant contexts, some guidance on features to incorporate in future programs may be provided. The program audit involved the identification and documentation of the diverse range of current Australian and international Indigenous parenting programs. Each program is identified, described and summarises their positive features. Government and non-government programs are included.

The documentation of these programs and activities will help to identify gaps in information, programs and services, and thereby identify opportunities for the Australian Government to work with states and territories to meet the needs of Indigenous parents and communities.

2.3 THE STAKEHOLDER'S SURVEY

The Stakeholder survey (see Appendix 1) was a tool used to consult with a variety of identified key stakeholders specialising in Indigenous family issues in the areas of policy development, research and development, program planning and service delivery.

The survey was designed to complement information obtained at the National Workshop and the focus groups so that a more complete picture of the national remote, rural, urban and metropolitan Indigenous issues, programs and information/resources could be obtained.

2.4 CONSULTATIONS, FOCUS GROUPS AND NATIONAL WORKSHOP WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The aim of the national consultations, focus groups and National workshop with key stakeholders was to seek comment on current parenting programs and information, which is believed or proven to be effective, and to identify new initiatives, directions and priorities that could be introduced to assist in addressing the gaps. The aim of the National Workshop was to build on the findings from the literature review, program audit, consultations and focus groups and to identify directions and priorities for action.

The feedback received from consultations, focus groups and the National Workshop has been collated and summarized within this report.

SECTION THREE: Advisory Committee and Project Team

3.1 ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The role of the Advisory Committee was to provide guidelines, feedback and contact information to inform the project.

David Hazelhurst

Assistant Secretary
Family and Children's Policy
Department of Family & Community Services

Eris Harrison

Assistant Director
Family and Children's Policy
Department of Family & Community Services

Muriel Cadd

Chairperson
SNAICC

Julian Pocock

Co-ordinator
SNAICC

Tracey Borg

Parenting Project Officer
SNAICC

Clare Forbes

Manager
Department of Child and Family Studies
Swinburne University of Technology

Anne Paul

Program Coordinator
Department of Child and Family Studies
Swinburne University

3.2 PROJECT TEAM

The Project Team consisted of:

Tracey Borg

Parenting Project Officer
SNAICC

Anne Paul

Program Coordinator
Department of Child and Family Studies
Swinburne University of Technology

Julian Pocock

Co-ordinator
SNAICC

Julie Sleight

Policy Officer
SNAICC

Carmen Dunn

Administration Officer
SNAICC

Cecilia Gore-Birch

Capacity Building Project Officer
SNAICC

Helen Boettcher

Administration Officer
Swinburne University of Technology

Christine Fransella

Teacher
Child and Family Studies
Swinburne University of Technology

SECTION FOUR: Literature Review

The summary findings from this review are detailed on page 64.

INTRODUCTION

This section of the project reviews the literature on Indigenous parenting and highlights key findings about support needs of Indigenous communities. It also identifies from the literature what is required by Indigenous families to fulfil their parenting roles within a cultural context, in order for them to produce better outcomes for their infants and young children.

Some of the underlying issues concerning parenting and family support for Indigenous communities are discussed in order to place the findings within the appropriate historical and cultural context.

The literature review also focused on the following:

What are the messages?

- What information and support do Indigenous parents and communities need in order to create a nurturing environment for their children's development?
- What is the evidence that support and information can change parenting/caretaking practices?

How are these messages best delivered?

- What strategies have been shown to work.

This literature review is linked to an audit of parenting and family support programs and parenting information resources. These will add to the conclusions of the overall report.

METHODOLOGY

The Department of Child and Family Studies at Swinburne University of Technology was responsible for the literature review.

A range of relevant literature was consulted including:

- Research and reviews from the last three years conducted in Australia and overseas on parenting practices and support and needs within Indigenous communities.
- Research and reviews about parenting and the link to developmental outcomes for children including the importance of the early years in relation to those outcomes.

The review covered research already conducted by or on behalf of FaCS and included:

- findings from the consultations conducted as part of the consultation paper *Towards the Development of a National Agenda for Early Childhood*
- the review of the *Early Intervention Parenting Program* funded under the Child Abuse Prevention Allocation
- the evaluation of *Triple P (Positive Parenting Program)* for Indigenous communities, and
- any early findings from the Indigenous Parenting and Family Well-Being program, including individual project review and/or evaluations
- Orima Research: *Report on the Qualitative Research into Parents, Children and Early Childhood Services*
- evaluation of The National Good Beginnings Parenting Project
- Australia's Children, Current State of Play for Children and Families
- Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators
- Review of the Early Intervention Parenting Program and Good Beginnings Prototype Report

Also included were:

- Report on the findings about the Koori About Better Communication about Drugs(ABCD) project
- Other relevant references listed in the Bibliography
- Review of Electronic data bases and web sites including:
 - The Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse
 - Australian Institute of Family Studies, Stronger Families Learning Exchange

L1. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EARLY YEARS AND THE LINK TO PARENTING PRACTICES AS THEY APPLY TO INDIGENOUS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Towards the Development of a National Agenda for Early Childhood, (2003) has identified the specific developmental and health issues of Indigenous children as needing special attention. “All children deserve a good start in life. However, some Australian children do not get off to such a good start. Indigenous children in particular have markedly poorer outcomes over their life course – in health, education, representation in foster care, contact with the criminal justice system, employment and expected life span.”

Research from Canada has also informed us about the particular needs of Indigenous communities who are disadvantaged on every level of health and well being including family well being. In *The Early Years Report, 1999* It was identified by the Canadian Government that Canadian First Nations (Indigenous) children had poorer outcomes than the non Indigenous population and needed special consideration as is the case for Australian Indigenous children.

The Orima Evaluation Report (2003) identified the importance of helping parents adjust to and cope with parenthood as a key way to help the child. “The research identified a clear link between parental and child wellbeing”.

Cant (page 1, 2000) stated in her evaluation of the *National Good Beginnings Parenting Project* that “Research has shown that the experience and quality of nurturing and cognitive stimulation that children have in their first few years of life have a profound effect on their later well being. Poor parenting in these early years can have adverse effects in later life”.

The Research to Inform the Development of a Capacity Building Program Report (page 24, 2003) discusses many factors that can affect early child development. The quality of parenting is one of these factors. The report states that “How children develop is deeply affected by their relationships with parents (and other significant carers) and the environment of the homes in which they live.”

Although effective parenting is needed throughout a child’s life, research into the early years has confirmed their importance for later outcomes. The period from pregnancy until a child reaches school age is a crucial time to ensure that effective parenting supports are in place and parents are given skills and information about how to help the child’s optimum development.

L2. PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Many research projects have identified protective factors which enhance children’s development in the 0-5 age range. The factors, which produce positive outcomes and resilience in children, are also detailed in *Towards a National Agenda for Early Childhood (page 16, 2003)*.

These protective factors include pre and post natal health care, healthy lifestyle factors, positive parental interactions, secure attachments, family harmony, use of health and community services, good social networks and cultural identity and pride. Protective factors are sadly lacking for many Indigenous Australians. Their children are locked into a generational cycle of poverty, alienation, disadvantage and less than adequate parenting.

The Review of the Early Intervention Parenting Program (page 4, 2004) highlights that “there is substantial evidence that increasing parenting capacity for appropriate and responsive parenting through the life of a child into adulthood helps to increase children’s and young people’s resilience and positive outcomes”. While increasing capacity to parent effectively is very positive, many Indigenous families require other practical support related to breaking the cycle of poverty and disadvantage to enable them to carry out their parenting role.

L3. PARENTING/CHILD REARING STRENGTHS WITHIN THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

Some of the reviewed literature proposes solutions to parenting issues, which focus on deficits rather than strengths. A deficit model of parenting looks at imposing solutions on parents for ineffective parenting practices. Examples of this are giving them strategies on what they need to do to fix their children’s behaviour or what food they need to give their children to improve nutrition.

This approach does not build on strengths already existing within Indigenous families and communities and also sets up situations where self esteem, which is already low, is further eroded. *The Review of Early Intervention Programs (page 3, 2004)* discusses successful intervention projects targeting families identified as having high need for parenting support as using “strength based, holistic and multi faceted approaches”. A strength based approach might use experiences parents and carers have had with parenting issues and discuss what is the most appropriate approach to take.

The Evaluation of Parent Programs under the National Parenting Initiative (page 15) revealed

that almost all of the effective parenting programs “placed central importance on building parents’ self esteem by encouraging awareness of and building on strengths. It is argued that programs which focus on remediating skill deficits can have the effect of reducing parental confidence.” In the same report (page 16) the discussion on the effectiveness of programs reveals that in order to parent effectively parents and carers need for more than skill development ‘the Home Start Program is based on the assumption that meeting parents needs for friendship, support and positive regard is critical to their ability to parent effectively’.

The parenting strengths that have been identified in various research projects have some commonalities but also some differences within different Indigenous communities. The level of confidence and comfort around young children was a parenting strength identified in the *Orima research paper September 2003*. “Many of the Indigenous participants reported they had been brought up looking after other family members’ children and this had assisted making them feel more comfortable and confident raising their own.”

The *Parenting in Australian Families* research report found that “In effect, it was Torres Strait Islander families who represented an example of communities which were relatively high in “social capital” (Winter 2000). This manifested itself at the neighborhood and community level where there was a sense of security, friendliness and mutual trust, largely nurtured by a shared culture as well as the small geographic size of the communities. It is a culture bound by a strong sense of familial obligations and responsibilities and one where child rearing is valued and recognised as a responsibility of not only the parents, but also the whole community.”

The report went on to say however “Such strong social support and high ‘social capital’ could do little, however, to counter the impact of the physical environment, which created considerable difficulties for Islander parents”. These factors negatively impacted on parents’ ability to fulfil their parenting responsibilities and posed developmental risks for their children.

Strengths of community members living in metropolitan Melbourne identified in the *VACCA/ Good Beginnings Aboriginal Parenting Project Stage 1, 2003* provided a basis for developing some strategies to reach and engage Indigenous families.

These strengths were identified as:

- A knowledge and respect for Elders
- Extended family support structures
- Networks between agencies (Indigenous)

- Child rearing practices, in particular the valuing of children
- Professionals are part of the community
- A strong sense of community
- Wide acceptance of all age ranges
- Strength in children and young people acknowledged (in particular taking on family responsibilities)
- A desire to be good parents
- A sense of ownership and responsibility for the children in the community
- A strong cultural identity
- A recognition of own strengths as parents
- Strong survival skills in the community
- Men and women have personal inner strengths
- Strong role models across all age groups

Harnett, Clarke and Shocket in their discussion of the *Resourceful Adolescent Parent Program (RAP) for Indigenous Communities* discuss the strength based aims of this program as providing an opportunity to reflect on personal strengths and that the self esteem and confidence of parents are fundamental to effectively promoting self esteem and confidence in their children. The fundamental assumption of this program is that parents enter the program with existing personal resources.

Harnett et al., also discuss the need for Indigenous parents to recognise their vast collective and personal parenting knowledge inherited from family and communities across the generations as, despite the adversity, many extensive family and community systems have survived.

L4. RISK FACTORS FOR YOUNG INDIGENOUS CHILDREN

Research literature across many disciplines has identified that Indigenous children are highly represented across risk factors that lead to poor outcomes for them. These factors are identified in *Towards the Development of a National Agenda for Early Childhood*, (page 15, 2003). The risk factors include such things as poor antenatal and post natal nutrition, unhealthy lifestyle factors, young maternal age, drug and alcohol misuse, criminality, incarceration and other causes of separation from parents, socio economic disadvantage, social and cultural discrimination and lack of parenting knowledge.

In the report *Their Future, Our Responsibility*, (page 7) the issue of the higher rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care

compared to non Aboriginal children was challenged and discussed as an issue of great injustice. “The major contributor to the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child welfare system and out of home care is child neglect - not child abuse. In fact an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child who has been removed is less likely to have been abused than a non-Aboriginal child. The importance of looking at the issues of child abuse and child neglect as separate issues is that it highlights the impoverished and disadvantaged position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.”

The report goes on to say, “Poverty and disadvantage is the major cause of child removal – not inappropriate parenting. Rather than supporting families in poverty to care for their children, all too often the response of government to family poverty within Indigenous communities is to remove the children. This is an intolerable, unjust and ineffective way to respond to child neglect. It is a response that blames Indigenous families for entrenched societal problems such as poverty and unemployment. Too little attention is directed towards preventing the need for children to be removed in the first place.”

It is significant to note that the report above cites statistics which show that 15% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are under the age of five while only 7% of the whole population is under the age of five. The implications of this are already having an impact on Indigenous children’s access to early childhood care and education services. The rate of child removal and children in detention is likely to increase substantially in the future if no extra resources are available to support parents and improve their ability to parent effectively starting from infancy.

Due to the high needs of Indigenous families and the increase in population of young Indigenous children compared to the non Indigenous population, parenting support and enhancement needs to be part of a broader community development focus that deals with multiple factors affecting Indigenous families.

L5. PERCEPTIONS OF THE PARENTING ROLE

Support for parents in their parenting role has a different context for Indigenous communities. The responsibility for child rearing and teaching children has traditionally been an extended family, kin and community responsibility and is seen very much still tied to this cultural norm, even when families and children face isolation from their own Indigenous communities.

Building in a connection to their own community and community values is important in the provision of programs and services to enhance parenting for Indigenous families.

L6. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PARENTING AND CHILD REARING BEHAVIOUR AND SKILLS OF INDIGENOUS FAMILIES (PARENTING CAPACITY)

Systemic inequity and discrimination, poverty, loss of cultural identity and inadequate infrastructure add to the over representation of Indigenous children in care and protection and in the higher rate of family violence and substance abuse experienced within the Indigenous community. “Factors that affect the health and well being of all Indigenous Australians are also likely to affect families and parenting behaviour”. These factors are discussed in detail in the main report (3.5.2) and must be considered when discussing the parenting support and information needs of Indigenous families many of whom are faced with all or some of the above.

The main report from the Centre for Community Child Health attempts to define parenting and the factors that impact on a parent’s ability to parent effectively (3.5.2). “Functional and resilient families and communities are generally seen as being fundamental to the physical and mental health of adults and children. Ideally, a functioning family and community will provide a supportive and caring environment that acts as a conduit for positive outcomes in (among other things) life expectancy, education, employment and income.” (SCRGSP 2003).

It is therefore likely that Indigenous families struggle to be functional and resilient as they show so poorly on all indicators of health and well being and lack many basic life choices and opportunities compared to non Indigenous families.

The ability to parent in a way that produces positive outcomes for children is severely affected by past and present interventions in Indigenous family life.

As Libesman T., and Cuneen C. (page 3, 2001) discuss “The intergenerational effects of the forced separation of Indigenous children from their families has included a loss of parenting skills as a result of the lack of a parent or caring role model in the child’s life once they were removed from their families and communities. Great care must be taken not to “pathologise” another generation of Indigenous parents because of their own history of being forcibly removed from their parents. However, it is also equally the case that the forced removal of Indigenous children has led to specific problems for those who were removed as they have reached adulthood and become parents themselves. There

is a need therefore to find a balance between understanding the specific effects of colonial policy on current generations, while not reproducing ideas which represent Indigenous parenting as inherently problematic.”

The *Bringing Them Home National Inquiry, 1997* found that the child separation policies had caused Indigenous parenting skills to be undermined, leading directly to risks for current and future generations.

The multiplicity and complexity of factors affecting Indigenous parents ability to develop parenting skills and behaviours, including repercussions from the *stolen generations*, points to the need for a considered holistic, integrated approach. What is required is an approach which targets many aspects of parenting capacity and family support and which also fits the needs and local conditions of diverse Indigenous communities.

Care should be taken that the focus of support and enhancement is not based on the deficits that are a constant in much of the reports and literature reviewed. Strength based solutions are a key to building the necessary psychological framework. They are also necessary to empower and build strength in Indigenous communities and families who are faced with multiple barriers against being effective parents and carers.

L7. GOOD PRACTICES IN WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Szirom (page 2-3, 2003) in her evaluation of the *Partnerships against Domestic Violence Initiative*, described good practice programs in the Indigenous communities as ones where there was a “strong commitment to developing an holistic, integrated approach which involves all levels of government and community services working with the community to bring about change”.

She also reiterated that the response to family violence in Indigenous communities - which could include parenting support and education programs - “needs to occur within a social, cultural and historical framework”.

She cited the following as evidence of good practice in Indigenous programs:

- Indigenous involvement and leadership
- A shared vision and agreed priorities for action within government, community services and the local community
- Effective accountability and transparency in decision making
- Maximizing effective training

- Co-facilitation by a male and a female worker
- Familiarity within the parameters of local community protocols
- Use of models which acknowledge and affirm Indigenous culture and build positive cultural identity
- Collaborative and integrated approaches

Leech (page 9, 2001) in her research on early intervention and prevention services in Australia mentioned “there was strong support in the Aboriginal community for:

- Aboriginal control and administration of services
- Detailed consultation with Aboriginal communities on issues relating to family and children’s services
- Facilitating access to education
- Aboriginal workers for Aboriginal clients
- The introduction of innovative practices in mainstream services in order to increase provision
- The view that the Stolen Generation had had wide-ranging impacts on family life and on behaviour due to the loss of culturally appropriate parenting skills”

There is a need for programs delivered to Indigenous parents from mainstream services or individuals to take a more collaborative, partnership approach to enhancing parenting skills and knowledge. They also need to consult widely with Indigenous communities before introducing adapted or customised versions of programs.

Harnett, Clarke and Shocket, (December 1998) talked about wide community consultation and a partnership approach to providing a cultural adaptation of the RAP program to Indigenous communities. Some features of collaborative approaches that have succeeded are described as follows:

In the *Review of Early Intervention Parent Programs* (page 66, 2004) one case study, a Parenting Australia project, adapted from the Pace (*Parenting Adolescents: A Creative Experience*) program provides training for Indigenous service staff as well as parents. “It focuses on building the capacity of service providers to provide parenting education programs which are responsive to local needs and are culturally inclusive.” These programs have been delivered in four different communities, two urban and two rural.

One of the service provider staff who completed the course delivers parenting programs to Indigenous parent groups and has had great success engaging

mothers, fathers and grandparents. She attributes the success of the parenting course to the following (page 69):

- The facilitators as well as participants sharing success and failures, helping to get over the hurdle of the "expert" and everyone else
- Using an Aboriginal venue that is comfortable and safe
- Eating a meal together in a relaxed way, including having the children present
- Acknowledging and using the skills of the group to help each other by problem solving each week
- Using role plays to do it 'differently'
- Accepting difficulties that people experience as setbacks rather than failures

Another collaborative program mentioned in the *Review of EIPP* (page 69) is a Parent as Partners program where Burnside Uniting Care and Coffs Harbour Community Care have collaborated to train Aboriginal mentors for parents to help them access services. "The Aboriginal mentors mentioned the difficulties that Aboriginal people have in using non Indigenous services. Agencies and government departments are impersonal and Aboriginal people often feel confronted and intimidated." (page 71)

The role of trained Aboriginal mentors will help young parents access services they need and help them also to cope with bureaucracies.

L8. PROGRAM DELIVERY

There has been a move away from the use of more structured and prescriptive parent programs within the parent education field in recent years. Finding out what strengths parents already have and what parents really want from a parenting group is perceived as crucial across Indigenous and non-Indigenous community parenting groups. It is a facilitator's ability to draw out what differing groups want and need that differentiates those programs that work well for parents and those that do not. This points to the need for well-trained facilitators.

The programs described in 5.9 above, although adapted from mainstream models, have managed to fit the needs of the Indigenous parents and carers they have been working with.

In addition to a well trained and sensitive facilitator, ways to engage Indigenous parents may include sharing a meal, having the children attend, inviting extended family, using a venue they feel safe in, having a craft group or other informal gathering, having Indigenous staff known to the group or providing transport.

In the *Research to Inform the Development of a Capacity Building Program Report* (2003 page18), there is a discussion on the importance of cultural knowledge, skills and sensitivity when delivering programs.

The report states "culture provides a virtual how-to manual for rearing children and establishes role expectations for all members of the immediate or extended family. The child rearing customs of any given society, however peculiar or unnatural they may at first seem to an outsider, make sense when understood within the context of that society. This suggests that we need to be wary of judging child rearing customs that are different from our own as inappropriate or bad for the child."

The report also states (page 20) that "it is possible for children to follow different developmental paths to the same goal, that children grow up successfully in a range of different cultures with diverse values and child rearing practices, and that what children need is 'good enough' parenting. While we would be sure to protect children from adverse conditions and experiences, we need to be accepting of 'good enough' parenting in its many forms".

The training needs of those delivering programs to Indigenous communities needs to include culturally inclusive practices as well as cultural knowledge.

Lack of cultural knowledge about parenting and child rearing has been lost to many Indigenous communities. This suggests this information needs to be gathered and passed on through information or programs.

L9. SOLVING INDIGENOUS PROBLEMS WITH MAINSTREAM IDEAS AND VALUES IS AN ISSUE FOR ALL INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Using a "one size fits all approach" to enhancing parenting skills and providing universal parenting information is not considering the differences inherent in culture, values and attitudes about parenting, children and families between the non Indigenous and Indigenous communities in Australia.

The issue of using a mainstream model based on mainstream ideas is clearly an issue for both remote Indigenous Australians and for urban Indigenous Australians. "Current and past models of family interventions based on non Koori family values and structures have been shown to invariably fail if applied to Koori family problems. Koori families and communities are best positioned to identify their problems and develop responses, which very closely match the particular kinship, family and cultural requirements of the Koori community." *Muriel Cadd*

OA, VACCA/Good Beginnings Aboriginal Parenting Project (2003). This was also discussed from a remote community perspective in *Working together everyone and Listening*, (May 2002).

“Community ownership and control is very difficult to achieve when all services are designed from mainstream models, and in particular, when they rely on staff being brought in from outside the community to run them” *Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi*, (2001, page 2).

One Indigenous pilot program based on a mainstream model has had some early promising results. A culturally tailored Triple P program was evaluated using a randomised controlled trial approach. In this program the parenting practices of the Indigenous parents changed with an accompanying change in their children’s behaviours to less disruptive, more positive behaviours as a result of improved skills learned at a group parent program.

These parents were compared to an Indigenous parent cohort who had not attended the program and they were followed up six months later - at which time their parenting enhancement seems to have been sustained. This is a very preliminary finding based on only one small group and results from such a small sample should be approached with caution.

The beliefs that some within the Indigenous community have about the inappropriateness of mainstream programs being “customised” as described above, may still hold true for a larger sample or a different Indigenous community. Therefore community consultation on the use of mainstream models, customised or otherwise, is very important.

There are parenting programs designed for non-Indigenous parents that have been adapted on the basis of consultations with Indigenous communities. Many of these parenting enhancement programs that have been successful have been pilot programs with limited funding. Therefore no long term follow up or quantitative evaluation is available. However the features of good practice have been well documented from anecdotal information and qualitative evaluations for many of these programs. A few are described in this review. Others are described in the *audit of programs* section of this project.

L10. PARTNERSHIPS AND JOINT INITIATIVES

Community based solutions to parenting support and enhancement can take a partnership approach with other Indigenous organisations or sensitive non-Indigenous organisations to obtain the best

outcomes. The evaluation of the parenting programs funded under the *National Youth Suicide Strategy for the National Parenting Initiative* revealed the need for different approaches and resources for Indigenous parents. “Consultation with key Indigenous community leaders and parents indicated that while the RAP-P (program) did have relevance to Indigenous parents, it would need adaptation to the Indigenous cultural context.

Specifically, it was recommended that the program needed to emphasise the importance of community involvement and traditional culture. Accordingly the team produced a completely new manual that focuses on issues of particular relevance to Indigenous communities” This program is also now flexible enough to modify the format as needed to fit different Indigenous communities. This approach fits in with the community development style of program delivery that has consultation, collaboration and flexibility as core requirements.

L11. INDIGENOUS PROGRAMS NEED INDIGENOUS STAFF

In the *Report into substantiated cases of emotional abuse and neglect against Indigenous children, 2001*, one of the recommendations was to ensure Indigenous staff worked in direct service delivery for Indigenous families. In discussion about the staffing of programs for the Indigenous community, this report states that the Indigenous community require “Programs, in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, which facilitate Indigenous staff to work with families and who have an interest in understanding their own personal, historical and communal context”. In Findings of the Koori ABCD project it was pointed out that Aboriginal workers “are commonly asked to extend their services beyond that required within their role and workers comply by performing beyond the scope of their role. The difficulty for these workers is that this increases the expectations of constant availability to clients. This expectation contributes to workers having an unnecessary build up of pressure and stress on them.”

Clearly a preferred option for building parenting capacity and effectiveness is the employment of Indigenous staff with the appropriate knowledge and expertise to pass on to parents, carers and communities. Training and education of Indigenous workers to fill all of the roles required by Indigenous programs and organisations is also an issue.

The Koori ABCD project also stated that “workers are often on call to clients 24 hours, seven days a week due to their unique knowledge of the dynamics of their community and their kinship systems” and the lines are often blurred between their professional role and their respected community member role.

“Aboriginal people take time to trust and build relationships with workers and organisations and often turn to one trusted known worker. “ It is also the case that some non-Indigenous staff are successfully working in partnership with Indigenous staff to enhance delivery to Indigenous families.

L12. MAINSTREAM SERVICES NEED INDIGENOUS STAFF AND CULTURAL AWARENESS AND SENSITIVITY TRAINING TO WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH INDIGENOUS FAMILIES

The *Aboriginal Best Start Status Report, January 2004* reiterated the need for cultural awareness and sensitivity and the employment of Indigenous staff when discussing the barriers to Indigenous families accessing mainstream services. “All regions stated that mainstream services display insensitivity and lack of awareness of Aboriginal people and their cultures, as a major barrier to accessing educational services.” Also “there are not enough Aboriginal workers employed within mainstream services, including ante natal and pre natal medical centres, child and maternal health clinics and public hospitals. Mainstream services and programs are not culturally appropriate.”

The discomfort of using mainstream services, where they exist, is obviously keenly felt. “It is important that we understand the legacy of Australia’s history, as it helps to explain the deep sense of injustice felt by Aboriginal people, their disadvantaged status today, and their current attitudes towards non-Aboriginal people and society” *Walker, Yolande, Aboriginal Family Issues (SNAICC), Family Matters No. 35 August 1993, AIFS.*

In the Canadian Indigenous context this is also an issue, where a representative from one of the regional inter-tribe health authorities in British Columbia put it this way: “Yes, we need training. But what do we want to train them to do and become? The transition to Aboriginal control should not simply mean Aboriginal people taking over White jobs, doing things in White ways. We want to do things in Aboriginal ways, and we need training that will support our members in remembering their cultures and creating Aboriginal services that are really Aboriginal.” *Ball, J., Indigenous early childhood development programs as “hook” and “hub” for inter-sectoral service delivery.*

L13. DIFFERENCES IN PARENTING VALUES AND PRACTICES

Aboriginal child rearing practices are different from non-Aboriginal child rearing practices particularly in more remote and traditional communities where traditional values are stronger.

In a remote community 540 kms West of Alice Springs, a study of parenting/child rearing practices was carried out. This particular community “still adheres to traditional values, has a large population of families, has a variety of families and has an established and flourishing child care service” (Pipirri Wiimaku, page 54, 55, 2001).

This study discussed the differences between the child rearing practices of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parents. Some of the Aboriginal child rearing/parenting practices detailed in this document are compared to non-Aboriginal patterns of child rearing and found to be different in the basic parenting areas of children’s sleeping, feeding, learning, discipline, playing, care and mobility. The cultural conflict that happens as a result of these differences in values and practices must be considered when parenting information and programs are proposed for Indigenous families.

L14. DIFFERENCES IN NEEDS OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The needs of different Indigenous groups and families in remote, rural, regional and metropolitan areas will also reveal differences in practices which are the result of historical factors such as the forced break up of families, demographic factors such as differences in access to services and support from other family and community members experienced by urban, metropolitan and remote Indigenous communities and also incarcerated parents.

The connection to traditional parenting and child rearing values and practices will depend on their level of exposure to them. Butterworth and Candy (1998) reiterate caution when considering the needs of Indigenous families and discuss that although there are commonalities between the various groups throughout Australia. “There are wide variations in the needs of individual families and their links with Aboriginal cultures, values and languages spread along a continuum from the traditional to urban styles of living...Nevertheless, Aboriginal culture still influences the living practices of urban (apparently mainstream) Aboriginal people in many respects – including social, cultural, economic, and language – as well as different value systems and expectations in child rearing, all of which can lead to misunderstandings and incompatibility between people of different cultural upbringings and origins(Butterworth and Candy, 1998) from the *Final Report on Research to Inform the Development of a Capacity Building Program, 2003.*

Much of the literature calls for more individualised responses to individual and local situations when designing programs and services. A holistic but individualised approach which helps restore a

connection to Indigenous community values and practices for children and families, would better meet the parenting and care giving needs of children within an Indigenous cultural context.

L15. THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE OF PARENTING ENHANCEMENT FOR INDIGENOUS FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

The importance of parent involvement and participation in programs for young children as a key to enhancing parenting skills and knowledge is recognized in many successful early childhood and early intervention programs such as Head Start USA. The successful *Canadian Aboriginal Head Start Initiative*, which is an ongoing program for first nation children and families targeting urban and northern (remote) communities, is designed to help enhance child development and school readiness. The projects delivered on ninety-nine sites” are run by locally managed Aboriginal non profit organisations that see the parent/caregiver as the natural advocate of the child”.

www.se.parl.gc.ca/pearson/htmfiles. “Indigenous communities in Canada have placed high priority upon community development and capacity building that will improve outcomes for Indigenous (Canadian) children. Promising innovations by First Nations communities in rural British Columbia are demonstrating the potential of Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers to (a) enhance child safety, health and development; (b) increase opportunities for education, employment social support and well being among Indigenous parents; and (c) serve as hubs for a range of programs and services that promote wellness, social cohesion and cultural continuity.” *Ball, J., Indigenous Early Childhood development programs as “hook” and “hub” for inter-sectoral service delivery.*

L16. UNDERSTANDING FATHERING IN THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

“Until recently, parenting programs generally addressed the mothering role of parenting and the specific roles that fathers take were largely unacknowledged. Specialised support programs for fathers were almost non-existent, as were programs for incarcerated, Indigenous or other minority fathers” *Sullivan, R., Children’s Commission of Queens land, A Collaborative Approach to Supporting Fathers.* International forum for child welfare, August 2000. When quoting statistics on the ratio of fathers to children in the State of Queensland, Sullivan noted that “In communities where many of the fathers are absent through incarceration, the adult to child ratio is even

less” (than the one adult to one child ratio). The implication for the well being of these children is profound for Indigenous families.

In the Indigenous community as in the non-Indigenous community mothers are more likely to be the parent involved in parenting enhancement and family support programs. Due to the high incidence of male incarceration within the Indigenous population compared to the non-Indigenous population, the lack of positive male fathering role models is an issue.

In the *Young Aboriginal Fathers Project* Hammond, Fletcher et al., (page 7, 2003) recommendations for Aboriginal-identified and non Indigenous services were for them to:

- Recognize the importance of Indigenous fathers for the well being of Indigenous children.
- Document Indigenous fathers access to services
- Develop programs and service delivery for Indigenous fathers
- Develop resources to support the value and practice of Indigenous fathering

The Sure Start program in the UK is similar in aims to the Best Start programs in Australia that focus on local community programs and solutions for parents of children in the early years. Their evaluation research into father involvement in programs found a strong maternal focus in service management and delivery. The research also found that where some of the programs were successful in engaging fathers they used different, innovative strategies to engage males.

Good Beginnings in Australia have delivered parenting skills enhancement programs for incarcerated fathers, including Indigenous fathers. The *Review of EIPP* (page 29) states “the program aims to provide opportunities for parents in prison to gain a greater understanding of their parenting role and to support families of prisoners”.

With the high rate of incarceration of Indigenous males and the high suicide rate it is important to support fathers as well as mothers and build parenting capacity for both. The Sure Start program in the UK used strategies such as sports projects and carpentry projects as “hooks” to attend programs.

L17. WHAT WORKS - A HOLISTIC APPROACH WITH INTEGRATED SERVICES AND COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

Ball (page 5), when discussing research into services and programs for Canadian Indigenous communities, identified three guiding principles

which are similar to what Australian Indigenous communities are saying is needed:

- ”(1) that services appropriate to Indigenous people should probably be based on conceptualisations of child and family wellness as holistic, ecologically contextualised and embedded within specific community development and health needs, goals and cultural knowledge
- (2) that training and services must recognise the socio-historical experiences that have negatively predisposed many Indigenous people towards health, social and education services and integrated, community- based service delivery with families as a whole
- (3) that Indigenous communities must be the drivers of initiatives to improve Indigenous population health and well-being. All of participating First Nations in the research are exploring the proposition that community- involving early childhood development initiatives of various kinds can be effective “hooks” for mobilizing community commitment and energy and affective “hubs” for the gradual introduction of inter-relating, inter-sectoral programs.”

World Literacy of Canada when discussing the *Canadian Early Years Report* also suggested that there is a need for a more integrated framework for early childhood development and parenting support.

Szirom (page 3, March 2003) refers in her evaluation of the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Initiative to the need for a more holistic and integrated approach and that “many Indigenous communities have adopted community capacity building as their key approach”. The evaluation identified the following factors for a successful community building approach:

- A philosophy that values and builds on existing strengths and promotes healing for individuals and the whole community
- Inclusion and empowerment of the whole community to support and own the problem and solution
- Inclusion of drug and alcohol abuse as a fundamental component of family violence in Indigenous communities
- Building the capacity of individuals as a major component of community building capacity
- Involving men in identifying and implementing solutions
- Recognition that changing the incidence of family violence (and parenting behaviours) will require change in health, education and economic development

The Jalaris Drop in Centre in Derby Western Australia catering for children 0-12 and young mothers is an example of a whole of family and community approach providing a range of services and supports and community developments including parenting skills enhancement on one site and providing a liaison with the local Aboriginal community and other groups. It has attracted a particularly hard to access target group and has gained a lot of respect from the local Aboriginal community. (2003, page 13).

A similar concept of an urban drop in centre for Indigenous families was established in a Melbourne Western suburbs shopping hub in 2003. *The Gathering Place* produced a vision statement that places emphasis on a sense of belonging and ownership which are very important in building Indigenous community strengths and which places responsibility for driving initiatives like parenting capacity building programs with the community themselves.

The Victorian Government’s *Integrated Strategy for Child Protection and Placement services* in their response to providing more effective support to Indigenous children and families suggest that “effective solutions must be locally based and offer comprehensive, sustained support. Many existing services could take a more integrated, collaborative and partnership approach to service delivery including delivering parenting enhancement and support programs.” The above drop in centres are well placed to deliver the kind of integrated approach that is needed.

The Canadian Aboriginal Head Start programs and the South Australian Local Child Development and Parenting centres have been established to provide a range of integrated services on the one site and focus on delivering primary health care, education and early intervention and parenting services as a whole of family approach.

L18. WAYS OF OBTAINING INFORMATION ABOUT PARENTING/CHILD REARING

In the Indigenous community much of the information about parenting and child rearing has been lost for the “stolen generation” and for future generations. The literature review Warrki Jarrinjaku found that in more traditional communities such as those of the desert region people of central Australia, WA, NT and SA the Aboriginal Elders are deeply concerned about the health and well being of their children.

”The literature review affirms what Yapa and Anangu (the people as distinct from animals, plants and land and Pitjantjatjara, Pintupi, Luritja (language groups), (page 7, 2002) have been asserting for many years, that their cultural knowledge is strong

and has survived – despite the devastating impact of colonisation.”(page 13, 2002).”The literature supports the view that traditional Yapa and Anangu child rearing practices strengthen relationships and foster cultural knowledge” (page 123, 2002). It seems that information about parenting and child rearing is closely tied to cultural expectations of that role and may not fit the non-Aboriginal expectations about parenting and child rearing.

The Orima Evaluation concludes when discussing parents that “Multiple communication channels are required to effectively increase parental awareness of the range of services and supports available”, however, within the Indigenous community families were identified as the main source of information. When asked about communication approaches for early childhood information, Indigenous parents indicated a preference for communication via local Indigenous community groups, workers or posters. Word of mouth (or the Murray grapevine) was considered to be a more effective way of disseminating information than written information. The traditional yarns and stories are an effective way of passing on information.

L19. INDIGENOUS RESILIENCE AND PROBLEM SOLVING

In the evaluation of Parenting projects in *the National Parenting Initiative* (page 12) “The Resourceful Family Project and the Family Well being course run by the Tangentyere Council both emphasize the importance of addressing the historical and political factors that continue to impact on family well being for Aboriginal people. The Family well-being course aims to help participants develop the skills required to solve the day to day problems and ensure that their basic needs are met satisfactorily. The team also argues that a process of healing at the personal level is necessary to come to terms with their past. This healing will form the basis for developing resilience and other problem solving skills to enable them to move on in life. At the same time, an understanding of the historical factors and current political forces impacting on Aboriginal people is considered to be essential for Aboriginal people to learn how to take greater control over the issues that affect their lives.

In an evaluation of The Jalaris Aboriginal Corporation, project in Western Australia (2003, page 17) a strength of the program is the fact that it is working in an Aboriginal model of organisation.”Jalaris is operating within an Aboriginal structure and way that the expectations are Aboriginal. This is really important ‘cause it gives credence to this way, shows that this way can work, that you can achieve stuff without following white-fella structure”.

One of the points from the evaluation is that it is important that this model works through the family structure “The fact that Jalaris is a family organisation is important to their success because it comes back to respect within the family. You can instill discipline a lot more easily in your family than someone else and you can communicate a lot more. You can do a lot of things more effectively with the family structure. The structure of Jalaris provides opportunities for the extended family and then what that structure generates creates benefits for the broader community.”

L20. WHEN DO INDIGENOUS FAMILIES NEED EXTRA PARENTING SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING?

There are many social indicators and statistics that alert us to particular points when intervention to build parenting capacity would be of most benefit. Many of these risk factors are detailed previously in this literature review.

The higher rate of infant mortality and the poor ante and post natal health and nutrition risk factors may indicate that information about pregnancy risk factors and health and nutrition information would be appropriate for parents and other family members prior to and during pregnancy.

The higher rate of children in protective care in the Indigenous community due to neglect and abuse may indicate the need for basic life skill development in caring for babies and children with information and programs that look at practical ways to look after the physical and emotional needs of infants and young children.

The higher rate of incarcerated parents and the removal of children may indicate that information about the importance of early relationships, interactions and attachment with infants and babies is vital to developing resilience and strength.

The lack of male role models in Indigenous communities due to factors such as incarceration may indicate that the fathers role in parenting (at any age) should be encouraged more through information and programs targeting fathers.

Low maternal age of young Indigenous women may indicate particular parenting information and programs are targeted to them but also to younger Indigenous people in general to try to develop some of the good parenting skills that may be missing from their lives before they become parents.

Research on brain development indicating the importance of the early childhood period in all areas of a child’s development may indicate the need for information and programs showing parents how to stimulate and provide experiences for the

optimum development in the early years. This could be through the provision of more early childhood programs such as playgroups, outreach and home visiting services, child care centres and pre school programs for Indigenous children with a parent capacity building program built in.

The higher rate of Indigenous children doing poorly at school may indicate the need for programs such as “parents as teachers” (detailed in the program audit) to encourage early literacy and numeracy in the pre school and primary school years.

The higher rate of substance abuse by Indigenous parents may indicate parenting capacity building and personal healing should be part of substance abuse programs.

The transition from primary to secondary school may be another point where parenting information and knowledge is needed for Indigenous parents to deal with teenage risk taking behaviours and early school drop out.

The ongoing disadvantage of Indigenous families and communities, who show higher on risk factors than the non Indigenous communities, may indicate the need for information and programs to have a longer term focus and funding model in order to produce positive change.

Information and programs about parenting should follow the aims of the Indigenous Parenting and Family Wellbeing Initiative that aims to:

- Recognise and promote the importance of strong families among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Increase understanding, knowledge and skills about parenting and family wellbeing
- Promote culturally appropriate quality family support mechanisms that recognise the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
- Provide support and assistance for the younger generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participate in family life and build stronger families and communities for the future.

Summary findings from the literature review

The literature search has revealed some common threads about the provision of parenting support and capacity building in general for Indigenous communities and includes the need for consideration of social, cultural and historical factors underpinning the provision of any programs, services or information.

There seems ample evidence to suggest that there are differences within the Indigenous communities themselves to consider as well as the differences from the non-Indigenous population. There is also strong evidence about the issue of disempowerment of Aboriginal participants and lack of cultural understanding that results from the use of mainstream programs and staff. Many of the following points have also been made in other reviews and reports.

The numbers against each point can be matched to evidence in the main body of the literature review.

- Australian and international research has shown that positive interventions in the early years including parenting enhancement provide better outcomes for children in the long term.(L1)
- Research into Indigenous family issues reveal that there is a multiplicity of social, cultural and historical factors affecting the ability to parent effectively. These include dispossession of land and traditional culture; breakdown of community kinship systems and Aboriginal lore; racism and vilification; economic exclusion and entrenched poverty; alcohol and drug abuse(substance misuse); the effects of institutionalism and child removal policies; inherited grief and trauma; the adaptation and change of gender roles – both male and female; society attitudes in general and stereotyping¹; incarceration; family violence; young maternal age; unhealthy lifestyle factors including poor nutrition; inadequate antenatal and post natal care and nutrition; poor general health; inadequate housing and poor educational outcomes.(L6)
- The factors discussed above make it very difficult for Indigenous parents to fulfil expectations of the parenting role and build parenting capacity unless programs address some of these underlying issues.(L6)
- Risk factors for Indigenous children include a lack of parenting knowledge by parents and other carers. Enhancing parenting knowledge and skills needs to start before children are born.(L4)

1 Report on the findings of the Koori About Better Communication About Drugs(ABCD) project, April 2004, Department of Human Services, Victoria

- Protective factors for children include positive parental interactions and secure attachments to parents and other carers. Positive interactions and secure attachments begin from birth therefore early parenting help and support to form positive relationships with infants is essential.(L2)
- Present and future trends show that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are having more children. 15% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are under the age of five years compared to 7% in the general population. Greater access to early childhood services and parenting support is therefore imperative.
- The Indigenous perception of the parenting role is tied closely to the cultural norm of extended family, kin and community child rearing responsibility. The terms parent education and parent programs may be too narrow for the Indigenous context of family and community.(L5)
- Connection to their own Indigenous community is important for Indigenous families and programs to enhance parenting can foster this connection.
- Programs for Indigenous families including parenting support and enhancement programs should use a strengths based approach which builds on existing skills and strengths and acknowledges and respects Indigenous culture and values.(L3)
- The use of mainstream programs based solely on mainstream values and ideas is not considered appropriate and is not conducive to Indigenous community healing and ownership.(L7,L9)
- Mainstream programs or parent programs adapted for Indigenous communities should only be used if based on wide Indigenous community consultation and Indigenous community support and involvement.(L7,L9,L10)
- There is a preference for Indigenous staff working with Indigenous families in order for families to feel safe and secure using services, including parenting support and enhancement services and programs.(L7,L11)
- Training for Indigenous workers and non-Indigenous workers in providing parenting enhancement is needed. This should include a cultural component, inclusive practices, knowledge of children's development and behaviour, group facilitation skills and an understanding of the process of dealing with grief and encouraging healing.(L7)
- Training in cultural awareness and sensitivity is needed for non Indigenous staff across mainstream services including those delivering parenting support and capacity building programs.(L7,L12)
- Individual empowerment and capacity building should be part of programs for Indigenous parents to increase self-esteem and confidence that has been eroded by factors such as the Stolen Generation.(L3)
- Parenting support and enhancement programs should deal with issues of grief and loss and emotional healing in order to help Indigenous parents develop personal strengths and resilience.(L19)
- There are differences in the parenting and child rearing practices of Indigenous and non Indigenous families in the main areas of child rearing such as sleeping, feeding, learning, discipline, playing, care and mobility. These should be considered when delivering parenting programs or giving parenting information.(L13,L14)
- The connection to traditional child rearing and parenting practices depends on families' exposure to them. Yarns and stories about traditional methods of parenting and child rearing need to be gathered and shared with other Indigenous parents, especially those who have little or no knowledge of their cultural heritage.(L13,L14)
- Local community situations need responses to their particular needs when designing/delivering programs and services or giving information about parenting.
- Selective targeting of families at risk can stigmatize and alienate those most needing help therefore criteria should be based on broader demographic factors in order to encourage their participation.
- A holistic and community capacity building approach to providing programs is a preferred option for Indigenous communities.
- Ways to engage Indigenous parents and carers includes more informal gatherings such as sharing a meal, venues where they feel safe and comfortable, bringing the children with them, providing transport, involving extended family.
- The Canadian experience with First Nation families reveal that early childhood services and schools used by Indigenous families are existing hubs where parenting knowledge and information can be obtained.(L15)
- Health services and other places used by Indigenous families are also natural hubs where parenting enhancement can be delivered in an integrated way – for example ante natal and pre natal nutrition is a risk factor for Indigenous children. The health service is the natural environment to enhance parents knowledge and provide information in this area of parenting.(L15,L17)

- An integrated service on one site gives a whole of family approach and targets multiple factors (L17).
- Sites for programs need to feel welcoming and be a comfortable gathering place.
- Transportation to services is a factor in ability to access programs for Indigenous parents.
- Parenting enhancement and support programs for fathers as well as mothers need to be provided including programs for incarcerated fathers and mothers to help them reunite with their children.(L16)
- Young Indigenous parents are also a special target group who require parenting support.
- Parenting support and programs need to include other family and community members (for example grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles) who may have responsibility for the children of absent parents.
- Information about children comes mainly from other family and community members within the Indigenous community.(L18)
- Community role models such as Elders and other strong and resilient parents can be used to model and discuss parenting issues.
- Indigenous families identify Indigenous community groups, workers, posters or the “Murray grapevine”(word of mouth) as the preferred way of obtaining information.(L18)
- Written information should be accompanied by oral information from an Indigenous community member or worker.(L18)
- Extra parenting support and capacity building is needed at the following transition points and in the following circumstances
 - The pre and post natal period
 - Basic life skill development from a young age culminating in practical training for new parents in looking after the physical and emotional and attachment needs of infants
 - Lack of male role models as fathers
 - Young parents
 - Early childhood period – more programs and information to improve relationships, environments and provide early literacy experiences
 - Parenting as part of substance abuse information and programs
 - Transition to school and from primary to secondary school
 - Longer term programs and funding
- There appear to be gaps in antenatal parenting enhancement and support generally. This is particularly crucial for Indigenous families considering the higher rate of poor nutrition, health care needs, young maternal age and infant mortality rate in the Indigenous population compared to the non Indigenous population.



SECTION FIVE: Program Audit

INTRODUCTION

Parenting supports available to parents in Australia include many health and community service organisations which offer various forms of support and help to children and families. These forms of support may take the form of direct service delivery such as that given by maternal and child health nurses to mothers and infants.

More indirect support for parents can come from organisations such as a child care service which primarily works with the child but may provide respite for parents as well as parenting information, either written or oral. A child care service may even provide more parent support such as conducting parenting enhancement programs.

Parenting enhancement programs for non Indigenous Australian parents have changed somewhat in the last ten years, where there has been a move away from some of the more prescriptive models such as the STEP (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting) USA to programs using an adult learning principle approach. This less structured and more flexible approach uses the expertise within the parent group to find solutions to parenting issues through group discussion.

This more flexible style of program builds on family strengths, rather than the more prescriptive deficit model of parent skills enhancement which had been used universally without thought to diverse backgrounds, cultures or values. Facilitators need to be well trained to facilitate such groups and for Indigenous communities they also need to deliver programs within a social, cultural and historical context of parenting, child rearing and family support.

The use of a strength based model of parenting is particularly appropriate for Indigenous parents who face great adversity in their endeavours to parent effectively and which are discussed in the background of this report (page 44) and in the literature review (page 50).

Many programs to enhance parenting capacity in the Indigenous community have used mainstream models directly or customised them in some way to “fit” Indigenous parents. The National Audit of Child Abuse Prevention Programs (1999) discussed the incidence of culturally sensitive programs, targeting Indigenous communities as relatively low and where only 23% of the programs offered to Indigenous communities were specifically developed or tailored to the Indigenous population.

There appear to be few Indigenous specific parenting programs totally designed for and by Indigenous communities. Specific parenting skills enhancement programs, where delivered, appear to be customised from mainstream models. There is however some anecdotal evidence to suggest that some programs bear little or no resemblance to the original in order to be accepted by Indigenous participants. In focus group discussions for this project the Triple P, Positive Parenting program was discussed in this context as was the Parenting Australia program mentioned in the *Review of Early Intervention Parent Programs* (page 66, 2004). When evaluating the strengths of these programs in the audit, it is important to keep this in mind.

Many of the reports in the literature review and comments from the stakeholders survey in this project reiterate the importance of providing Indigenous specific programs and staff in order to engage Indigenous families and communities and help them achieve a sense of ownership.

The Review of the Early Intervention Parenting Program and Good Beginnings Prototypes (page 8) discussed the importance of universal targeting within Indigenous communities as a way to address the historical and political factors which have impacted so severely on parenting capacity. This report states that “a whole of community approach that involves members of the community in program design and delivery facilitates active recognition of historical and political factors that impact on all members of such communities”.

The majority of the parent support and capacity building programs described in the audit have been funded mainly from the Commonwealth Government and mainly through the Department of Family and Community Services. State and Territory governments have also contributed funding for some family support, information and capacity building programs. In the report *Early Intervention and Family Relationships Support Initiative* (Program Design Document, Dec. 2001), a guide in good practice in parenting programs for community organisations was identified and included the following:

- a) Being responsive to local needs and promoting consumer participation in the design of programs
- b) Holistic approaches
- c) Focus on the family’s strengths
- d) Accessible and inclusive
- e) Implementation early in the child’s life and at key

transition points

- f) Skilled and experienced workers
- g) Effective local level coordination and intersectoral collaboration
- h) Outcomes, evidence-driven approach

The programs in the audit comply with the above guidelines, the exception being information on the outcomes (h).

Methodology

The Department of Child and Family Studies, Swinburne University of Technology also undertook the Program Audit. The audit focussed on current parenting information and Indigenous parenting programs available in Australia and overseas and included:

- Collecting illustrative examples of current information and activities for parents/caregivers of Indigenous children in the areas of health, child development, well-being and behaviour.
- Documenting detailed examples of current Government and non-government Indigenous parenting programs and projects, and summarises content, target groups, **methods of delivery, funding mechanisms** and outcome data where it was available.

The audit has focused mainly on parenting in the early years, A few overseas programs have been included. The Canadian and New Zealand programs listed are targeted to their countries Indigenous populations and provide some comparisons with those offered in Australia. This is not an exhaustive list of programs and some programs included have not yet been comprehensively evaluated.

AUSTRALIA

VICTORIA

P1	Project title:	The Koori Maternity Strategy
	Organisation:	VACCHO (Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation)
	Location:	Rumbalara Medical Clinic, Goulburn Valley Koori Women's Resource Group, Shepparton
	Funding:	Department of Human Services
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	This birthing program was originally a pilot program and is one of 8 Aboriginal community health services running Koori specific maternity services for Aboriginal women. The main aim of the service is to provide culturally appropriate maternity care to Koori women and align their birthing experiences and outcomes with those experienced by all Australian women. The program provides both ante- and postnatal care, antenatal education, birthing support and a health service for children in early childhood. Transport is provided for mothers to facilitate access to the clinic. Aboriginal women still have their babies in the local hospital, but it is not uncommon for them to be discharged after only two days. The birthing program is able to provide support for mothers in this situation, particularly in relation to continuation of breastfeeding after discharge from hospital
Strengths of the program:	The self assessment of the strengths of the program pointed to the cultural appropriateness of the service provided, its flexibility and reliability, with confidentiality assured, and to the fact that it is community based, owned and controlled. Social networks have improved and better working relationships with mainstream organisations have been established.	

P2	Project title:	HIPPY Australia – Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters
	Organisation:	HIPPY Australia – Brotherhood of St. Lawrence
	Location:	Moore Street, Fitzroy, Victoria
	Funding:	Brotherhood of St. Lawrence
	Project duration:	1996-1998
	Description:	HIPPY is a 2 year, home based early childhood enrichment program for preschool children targeting communities who have experienced disadvantage. It believes parents play a critical role in their child's education and offers a structure which builds upon parental strengths so they can provide their child with necessary skills and confidence to being school with a positive attitude towards learning.
Strengths of the program:	The program actively works with other early childhood and local services within the community. Research has shown that children in the program grow in eagerness to learn new concepts and new skills and gain more confidence in themselves as learners. The research also shows an improvement in parent-child relationships, and parents increased engagement in their children's education.	

P3	Project title:	The HUGS Program (Happiness, Understanding, Giving & Sharing)
	Organisation:	Alys Key Family Services
	Location:	Heidelberg, Victoria.
	Funding:	Department of Human Services - Victoria
	Project duration:	Developed in 1990's and ongoing
	Description:	The HUGS program is an early intervention program developed by Alys Key Family Services in the 1990's that targeted vulnerable families in the West Heidelberg area. It was designed for parents who have difficulty relating to their babies and preschool children. The aim of the HUGS program is to develop attachment by encouraging more positive interaction and enjoyment between parents and children. The most appropriate children/families for the HUGS program are families under significant stress. They may have had their first child during their mid to late teens, be single mothers, lack self-esteem, and be grieving over a range of issues including the legacy of stolen generations and family violence and abuse. The <i>Sing and Grow Program</i> is part of the HUGS program and is conducted within a family-centred model of care. The session plans use music-based interactive activities and devised to increase opportunities for the playful interaction of parents and babies within a structured yet flexible environment
Strengths of the program:	The program can identify why interaction is not occurring and uses a range of activities and strategies to change this process. The program builds on parents' strengths and is culturally relevant.	

P4	Project title:	The Aboriginal Children's Health Promotion Project
	Organisation:	Victorian Aboriginal Health Service
	Location:	Fitzroy, Victoria
	Funding:	Department for Human Services - Victoria
	Project duration:	Unknown
	Description:	The project involved working with the Koori community to produce health related educational materials. The aim of these materials was to reduce the level of recurrent infection among young Aboriginal children caused by exposure to passive smoking, as well as to increase the rate of breastfeeding and support for breastfeeding in the community. The project also aims to increase the level of support for women during the antenatal and postnatal periods and when their children are very young.
	Strengths of the program:	The project is community based and owned. Local women have been used in posters and video. Boori (baby) classes have been set up. The support from the project was seen to alleviate stress of parenting and to increase women's self-esteem and well-being. There has been a conscious attempt to engage the community in the process of cultural development.

P5	Project title:	Milla Milla Playgroup
	Organisation:	Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative
	Location:	20a Forster Street, Norlane, Victoria
	Funding:	Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	A playgroup was established to fulfil a need for Aboriginal children to have a place where they can meet other Aboriginal children and learn about their culture. Families are assisted with immunisation and welfare. Programs provided also include health promotion, diabetic and hearing screening, speech therapy.
	Strengths of the program:	Support and practical assistance is given to parents. The playgroup provides a venue for mums to liaise with each other. As a result, support group has been formed and outings for children, mums, and elders take place.

P6	Project title:	Infants in Vulnerable Families Project
	Organisation:	Goulburn Valley Family Care Inc.
	Location:	Goulburn Valley
	Funding:	Commonwealth Government
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	The overarching goal of the project is to promote family self-sufficiency. The project aims to reduce the need for protective services and crisis intervention by increasing parenting, life skills and coping abilities and by maintaining a relationship with the family so that the family is able to recognise and call upon the supports that are available to them from the service.
	Strengths of the program	The project works in a respectful way with families to recognise and realise their strengths. The project works closely with other agencies within Goulburn Valley Family Care building on interagency collaboration and support.

P7	Project title:	Stronger Families and Communities – Stage 2
	Organisation:	City of Greater Dandenong
	Location:	Dandenong
	Funding:	Commonwealth Government
	Project duration:	6 months
	Description:	Employment of two community development workers for 6 months to work with the local Indigenous community and families with young children, particularly mothers. Playgroups have been set up. The workers use role modelling to help parents learn behaviour guidance techniques, how to play with their children, read books, talk and sing to their children. Health and safety issues are discussed with parents. Meals are eaten together and used as social times.
	Strengths of the program:	The program is promoted in the community as a community activity. Suggestions and ideas from parents are welcomed. The children's own culture is reinforced.

P8	Project title:	Indigenous Parenting Program
	Organisation:	Good Beginnings, Australia and VACCA
	Location:	Darebin, Victoria
	Funding:	Commonwealth
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	Develop and test a model of parenting support for Koori mothers in the Darebin area.
	Strengths of the program:	Supported Playgroup Program based on research about local community needs and issues in regard to parenting support. Early stages of project evaluation is promising. Project includes collecting parenting/family stories from community Elders in order to pass these on to other Koori parents as culturally relevant practices.

P9	Project title:	Wajana Lidj (<i>to hold the children</i>)
	Organisation:	Wajana Lidj - Aboriginal Family Preservation
	Funding:	Commonwealth
	Location:	Morwell, Victoria
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	The program is a parenting course for Indigenous families and has been adapted from the mainstream Parenting Australia course. While the original course was based on eight sessions, the group now sets its own topics. An Aboriginal venue is used which participants consider to be safe and comfortable
	Strengths of the program:	Food and transportation for families living in outlying areas is provided. While the problems for Aboriginal families are very different in scale to those of mainstream families, the parenting course is built around supporting parents to communicate with their children and to learn to set appropriate boundaries. The course builds on parent's existing strengths and uses the group's experience to help find solutions to improving communication in families. Families have continued social contact after the course. Fathers and grandparents are regular attendees. The sessions are relaxed and children are present. A spin off from the group has been gaining funding under the Indigenous Parenting Program to help prevent teenage pregnancy.

P10	Project title:	The Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services Centres (MACS)
	Organisation:	Department of Family and Community Services
	Location:	Thornbury, Mooroopna, Lakes Entrance, Bairnsdale, Echuca, Robinvale and Morwell.
	Funding:	Commonwealth
	Project duration:	Ongoing since 1987
	Description:	Multifunctional centres were established because of the recognition that many Aboriginal children are disadvantaged because of a number of factors including the denial of their cultural identity, poverty and an educationally deprived background. The centres are based on the right of Aboriginal children to access culturally appropriate learning centres, access a system that can nurture and monitor them as they progress through their education and provide them with equity. The MACS centres provide a range of services which may include long day care, family day care, outside school hours care, occasional care and school holiday care. They are located in areas which do not have a large enough population to support individual services
	Strengths of the program:	MACS Centres provide a cultural awareness program and respond to the development needs of the Koori children rather than the work-related needs of the parent. The programs have excellent programs that enhance cultural, physical, social-emotional, language and learning development. These are natural hubs where parents can be provided with parenting information and support.

P11	Project title:	East Gippsland Indigenous Project
	Organisation:	Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative (GEGAC)
	Location:	Bairnsdale, Orbost and Lakes Entrance
	Funding	Victorian Government
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	A community based parenting group model has been set up which includes home visiting, modelling of parenting skills, and supporting Indigenous identity/family. The model has been developed in close consultation with the Indigenous community and agencies. The model has been delivered via a consortium of a number of Indigenous Co-operatives in the East Gippsland Region, the lead agency being GEGAC.
	Strengths of the program	There is ownership of the program by the Indigenous community of East Gippsland. The project works in a respectful way with families to recognise and realise their strengths. The program is individualised and responsive to family needs and circumstances. It works closely with other agencies within the East Gippsland region. It is part of a larger project whose key priorities are families and children, youth and health. The project recognises that these areas are interlinked.

QUEENSLAND

P12	Project title:	Stronger Families and Communities Strategy – Wide Bay Burnett Indigenous Stronger Family Program
	Organisation:	Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress
	Location:	Queensland
	Funding	Commonwealth Government
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	A rural, Indigenous specific family counselling service providing fact to face, individual and group counselling, relationships skills development and early intervention and prevention, effective parenting and support information
	Strengths of the program:	The project is developing effective parenting training, running community workshops and identifying and developing community leaders.

P13	Project title:	Stronger Families – Pathways to Prevention Project
	Organisation:	Mission Australia and Griffith University
	Location:	Inala, Brisbane, PO Box 280, Inala, QLD, 4077.
	Funding	Commonwealth Government
	Project duration:	March 2001 to March 2004
	Description:	The Pathways to Prevention Project offers specialist support services to young children and their families in Inala and the surrounding suburbs to assist with the transition from home to school. The project aims to provide positive parenting, healthy family relationships and to enhance children's readiness for school.
	Strengths of the program:	Positing Parenting group programs delivered to parents of local preschoolers and other parent support programs. Counselling service and family support given to clients on an individual basis. Four supported playgroups – Vietnamese, Tongan, Samoan, Indigenous have been established.

P14	Project title:	Ngua Gundi – The Mother/Child Project
	Organisation:	Central Regional Health Authority of Queensland
	Location:	Woorabinda, Queensland.
	Funding	Commonwealth Government – Commonwealth Birthing Services Project
	Project duration:	1993 onwards
	Description:	The project was funded by the Commonwealth Birthing Services Project to address the serious under utilisation of ante natal services by young Aboriginal mothers in the area. An initial needs analysis indicated that because of a lack of hospital facilities in the area, the Aboriginal women were reluctant to attend the Rockhampton Hospital for antenatal classes and/or have their babies in the hospital away from their communities. The promotion and support of breastfeeding and provision of education and support in relation to infant nutrition are integrated into the maternal and child health care services. The program has expanded its range of services to include not only adolescent mothers but also older mothers, birthing support and the health needs of children 0 – 5years.
Strengths of the program:	The program provides a holistic approach to health care. Trust has built up between the community and the Aboriginal Health Workers. Transport is provided for mothers wanting to attend the clinic and the midwife will visit mothers in their own homes. There is a high level of acceptance of, and involvement with the program.	

P15	Project title:	The Triple P – Positive Parenting Program
	Organisation:	University of Queensland
	Location:	Australia wide
	Funding:	Groups apply for local funding to run the program
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	Triple P is a multilevel parenting and family support strategy. It aims to prevent severe behavioural, emotional and developmental problems in children by enhancing the knowledge, skills and confidence of parents. It has been implemented in a range of health, education and welfare settings throughout Australia.
Strengths of the program:	Triple P addresses the broader contest by making parenting strategies available to all parents in the community. Multi levels of intervention are used to facilitate matching the intensity of intervention to the needs of each individual family. The program use of the mass media involves wide exposure and easy access to the program. Further evidence from focus groups and consultations reveal mixed feelings about the suitability of what is regarded as a mainstream program.	

P16	Project title:	Indigenous Early Years Family Support and Access Program (IEYFSAP)
	Organisation:	Crèche and Kindergarten Association, Queensland
	Location:	Djagim-Gur Indigenous Services Unit 14 Edmondstone Street, Newmarket, Qld 4051
	Funding	Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training under the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	The program supports Indigenous families with young children through its activities that are empowering and enhance early learning experiences that lead to early literacy and numeracy development. Indigenous home support workers work with Indigenous families and young children in two main activities: conducting home visits and small playgroups. Programs are based in Ipswich, Rockhampton, Townsville and Cairns.
	Strengths of the program:	Parents/carers experience different ideas for learning and playing with their children, and learn how young children learn and grow. Parents are also reassured that some of the things they already know and do are important for young children's learning.

P17	Project title:	Adolescent Parents Project
	Organisation:	Centre for Indigenous Development, Education and Research, University of Wollongong, NSW.
	Location:	Cape York and Cairns, Queensland
	Funding:	Commonwealth Government
	Project duration:	3 year pilot program commenced 1997
	Description:	The program targets, 13, 14 and 15 year old young Indigenous mothers and their children. The target group is regarded as particularly vulnerable and requiring urgent assistance. The program aims to provide a holistic approach to a family development program for the group.
	Strengths of the program:	The program includes pre-natal care, culturally appropriate parenting programs, early intervention in the assessment, referral and treatment of developmental delays and disabilities.

P18	Project title:	Come on Sista, Brotha (Stop the Cycle of Abuse Program)
	Organisation:	Yelang Pre School and Kindergarten
	Location:	Queensland
	Funding:	Queensland Health, Queensland Government
	Project duration:	recent
	Description:	This program has been very successful after other parenting and life skills programs have been trialed including the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P)
	Strengths of the program:	Didactic programs such as Triple P have been shown not to work with Indigenous participants in this community. The approach taken by Dr. Lynn Briggs and Queensland Health based on the Stop the Cycle of Abuse program has been successful due to the social critical approach which takes into account the context of Indigenous family life and a whole of family, whole of community approach to parenting.

NEW SOUTH WALES AND ACT

P19	Project title:	Stronger Families and Communities Strategy – Bankstown Family Support
	Organisation:	Bankstown Family Support
	Location:	Bankstown, PO Box 896, 122 South Terrace, Bankstown, NSW, 1885,
	Funding:	Commonwealth
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	Bankstown Family Support is aimed at families experiencing stress or crisis who live in the Bankstown Area and who have children under the age of 12 years. Support services now have five Families First Workers. Two generalist, one Koori, one Arabic and one Vietnamese designated positions working with vulnerable families to prevent parent difficulties becoming crisis situations. Support services include intensive one to one work with families, group work, court support, books, tapes and videos on parenting and life skills available to workers and students. Specialist workers include a financial counsellor, a developmental disability worker, a Vietnamese-speaking worker and a court assistance coordinator, and an Arabic court support worker who is skilled in domestic violence issues. The program targets: families with infants 0-4 years, and children five to 12 years; people from non-English speaking backgrounds; parents or children affected by intellectual or physical disabilities.
	Strengths of the program:	Can provide intensive one to one work with families experiencing difficulties, which might result in crisis situations. Has a designated Koori Family First Worker.

P20	Project title:	Early Intervention Family Support (Aboriginal) – Brewarrina, NSW.
	Organisation:	MacKillop Rural Community Services
	Location:	7 Young Street, Brewarrina, NSW.
	Funding:	Commonwealth
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	The initial focus of the program has been on developing a relationship with young Aboriginal parents in the area. The program combines the management expertise of the MacKillop organisation and the local experience of an Aboriginal Family Worker. The service is provided from a cottage which is near to other community services and provides easy access for families. The project aims to improve family functioning, improve child health, support parents in raising their children and to establish a service that is valued by the Aboriginal community.

P21	Project title:	Koorana Supported Playgroups
	Organisation:	Koorana Child and Family Centre
	Location:	PO Box 403, Lakemba, NSW.
	Funding:	Funded under Families First Project
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	The program provides for five supported playgroups operating each day of the week. The target groups for the supported playgroups are: Parents and carers with children 0 – 5years including, single parent families, teenage parents, socially isolated families, families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
Strengths of the program:	The program enhances the capacity of the service network to respond to the needs of families who are not currently accessing other early learning childhood services or who have limited formal or informal support networks.	

P22	Project title:	Karitane Volunteer Programs, Karitane Parent Support Program and Karitane Linking Families
	Organisation:	Karitane
	Location:	Carramar, South West Sydney, NSW
	Funding:	Government of NSW
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	The program targets families of all cultural groups in the ante-natal period and/or with children 0 – 3years of age with priority given to access by Aboriginal, CALD families and those with a disability living in the areas of Bankstown, Fairfield and Liverpool. The program includes home visits, playgroups, Parent Support Groups, telephone support.
Strengths of the program:	Structure of each group program is based on the community needs. Groups can be ongoing, one-off, centre-based or client home-based.	

P23	Project title:	Macarthur Aboriginal Home Visiting Program
	Organisation:	Macarthur Aboriginal Health Team Health Service
	Location:	Campbelltown, NSW.
	Funding:	Government of NSW
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	The program targets the ATSI Community and partner of ATSI people. It provides home visiting and support in the areas of antenatal and postnatal care, immunisation, family health issues and social emotional and wellbeing issues.
Strengths of the program:	The program focuses on helping the community with ideas from the community. Parenting groups are developed to allow access to more local services. Issues covered by programs include isolation, housing issues.	

P24	Project title:	Engaging Fathers Project
	Organisation:	Family Action Centre and U Mulliko Centre for Indigenous Higher Education
	Location:	University of Newcastle, Callaghan, NSW, 2308
	Funding	NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs
	Project duration:	4 years
	Description:	The project aimed to survey organisations with potential for service delivery to young Aboriginal fathers; record the perceptions of young Aboriginal males in their needs as fathers and to consult with the service providers in the development of strategies to increase the access of this group to family-related services This project aims to work with service providers in health, education and welfare services to involve fathers with children. Although the focus is on the Hunter Valley in NSW, the project offers resources and training nationally. There is a special focus on low income and Aboriginal populations.
Strengths of the program:	The project has created a model of father involvement based on fathers' strengths and has produced research on fathers' access to family-related services. As a result of the project, poster and DVD resources have been produced in consultation with the Indigenous (Community) services and Indigenous people. Indigenous fathers and their families were photographed at a BBQ for the posters. These locally designed visual resources have been very successful.	

P25	Project title:	Families First – The Malanee Bugilmah Family Preservation Project
	Organisation:	Casino Aboriginal Intensive Family Based Services
	Location:	PO Box 1005, Casino, NSW 2470
	Funding	Department of Community Services NSW
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	The goal of the program is family preservation and to address generational issues associated with removal of children. The program aims to maintain family relations, improve parenting skills and support families in stressful life events.
Strengths of the program:	An intensive service is provided to families in crisis. While working with a family, workers are on call 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. Family and worker form a partnership and an essential component is goal setting for the family	

P26	Project title:	Ivanhoe Parents as Teachers Program
	Organisation:	Department of Education & Training – Early Childhood and Primary Education
	Location:	Ivanhoe Central School
	Funding:	Government of NSW
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	The program offers parenting programs for families with children 0 –3 years. It offers home visits, group support and information on child development. It targets families who live in the Ivanhoe area, expectant parents, first time parents, teenage parents and Aboriginal families.
Strengths of the program:	The parenting consultants create an individualised program for each child and family. The program assists in reducing the effect of isolation. The facilitated groups are designed to help parents share experiences and develop networks and build on parents' strengths.	

P27	Project title:	Supported Playgroup (Aboriginal) - Queanbeyan
	Organisation:	Queanbeyan Public School
	Location:	Cameron Road, Queanbeyan, NSW
	Funding:	Government of NSW
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	The program provides one flexible, weekly supported playgroup for two hours throughout the school year. It provides accessible support for Aboriginal families and play and social skills development opportunities for their children –It also provides information for parents about relevant topics including child development, health, hygiene and child safety. It helps to develop social networks for parents and helps to identify developmental problems which can be referred to relevant services.
	Strengths of the program:	Although an evaluation of the project is not yet complete it is hoped that the project will improve parent/child interaction -increase parent/carer knowledge about matters, including child development, health, hygiene and safety -increase parent/carer use of appropriate health and community services -increase children's preparedness for pre-school -develop supportive relationships with family and/or friends.

P28	Project title:	DjuliGablan Project
	Organisation:	Durri Aboriginal Corporation Medical Service
	Location:	Smith Street, Kempsey, NSW
	Funding	Not known
	Project duration:	From 1992 - Ongoing
	Description:	The program was introduced to enhance the well-being of women and children and to reduce the morbidity associated with pregnancy, childbirth, the post partum period and during childhood. The aims of the program are to increase the rate of breastfeeding and the level of nutrition among pregnant women and children in the 0 – 5 age group, to increase Aboriginal women's levels of attendance at the antenatal clinic and women's health screening programs and to increase the immunisation rate among children. There is also an infant feeding support group.
	Strengths of the program:	The success of the service relies heavily on the work of the Aboriginal health workers. Their knowledge of local conditions and of culturally correct protocol is a key factor in the success of the service.

P29	Project title:	Parenting our Way
	Organisation:	Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service ACT Inc.
	Location:	91A Wakefield Gardens, Ainslie, ACT
	Funding	Commonwealth Government
	Funding:	Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	The parenting program is an integral part of the overall Winnunga Nimmithjah Aboriginal Health Services Social Health Program. Parenting issues have been identified as a major cause of stress and distress for parents attending the service. The program is a resource of support for families and aims to empower parents to make the right choices for their children. Parents have access to parenting information, parent groups and parent educations resources.
Strengths of the program:	The programs are culturally appropriate. There are mums' programs and dads' programs and grandparents or other carers are invited to be part of the program. There is support for mothers who are expecting or caring for a new baby.	

P30	Project title:	Mentoring Program for young first time Aboriginal parents
	Organisation:	Coff's Harbour Aboriginal Community Care Centre and Burnside Uniting Care
	Location:	Coff's Harbour, NSW
	Funding:	Commonwealth
	Project duration:	Commenced in 2002 – refunded until 2007
	Description:	The program involves one to one support with an Indigenous member drawn from and trained in the local community. Potential mentors were approached and encouraged to apply. Originally 10 mentors were trained and the local TAFE provides a Certificate of Mentoring. Training includes referral systems, limit-setting, confidentiality, early detection of post natal depression, family and community involvement.
	Strengths of the program:	Consultation with the community has taken place and community organisations involved with the training. A mentoring for fathers program is being developed. Mentors are also being trained to run playgroups.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

P31	Project title:	South Australia Program for Child Development and Parenting Centres
	Organisation:	South Australian Government
	Location:	South Australia
	Funding:	State Government SA
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	South Australia has established a program for child development and parenting centres in four communities as 'centres of excellence'. Each centre will provide outreach services to parents and children as well as centre based services; opportunities for parents to learn about parenting skills and child development; opportunities/experiences for the involvement of and support for parents, assistance to children in relation to the development of early literacy and numeracy skills, and .provide a centre for community relationship building and participation" (MCEETYA, 2001a:37), In addition, "a special multidisciplinary, multi-agency clinic will be set up as part of the centre focus on delivering a range of primary health education intervention services" (MCEETYA, 2001a:37) (see references: MCEETYA, 2001a).
Strengths of the program:	There is a high level of acceptance of, and involvement with the program. Women are seeking antenatal care earlier than previously and attending more frequently. There has been a decline of hospital admissions of children in the 0 – 5 age group with severe health problems. The program provides a holistic approach to health care. The women have been involved in all aspects of the services from the initial needs analysis through the planning stage to its final development.	

NORTHERN TERRITORY

P32	Project title:	Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture
	Organisation:	Northern Territory Government
	Location:	Pilbara/Gasgoyne Health region, Northern Territory.
	Funding:	NT Government
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	Strong women, strong babies, strong culture" is a program which aims to improve birth weights and health of mothers and babies living in the Pilbara area of the Northern Territory. The program relies on and supports senior women in participating communities to provide direct support to pregnant women and their families. The senior women encourage attendance at antenatal care clinics and provide advice on nutrition. Connections and support for involvement in cultural events is an important part of the program.
Strengths of the program:	This particular program is one that has a strong community development focus and potentially major health benefits to Aboriginal people. This has a long term outlook with lasting benefits rather than only treating immediate health problems. Changes in birth weight coincide with the commencement of the program and are larger than the secular trend in surrounding communities. As a result of the project, traditional women's ceremonies have been revived especially those relating to young women, pregnancy and childbirth.	

P33	Project title:	Nutrition Awareness Project for Young Mothers and Children
	Organisation:	NPY Women's Council
	Location:	3 Wilkinson Street, Alice Springs, N.T.
	Funding:	Not known
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	The project aims to reduce the incidence of failure to thrive (FTT) in children under 5 years at remote Aboriginal communities in Central Australia. The project was initiated by senior women in the area because of their concern about the high rates of hospitalisation of young infants due to FTT.
	Strengths of the program:	The program runs nutrition workshops for one week in the community for all mothers and children under 5 years, as well as high school students and antenatal women. The service also provides a home visiting service. The project team distributes recommendations to the community store owners to help improve quality and price of produce. The team also produces manuals for mothers which are bilingual and have a comprehensive guide to nutrition for babies.

P34	Project title:	Parenting project FAST Program
	Organisation:	Mulden Park School and Neighborhood Centre
	Location:	Palmerstone NT
	Funding	NT Government Health
	Project duration:	2 years
	Description:	An eight week program for parents of primary school aged children. FAST(Families and Schools Together) builds the central protective factor of family cohesion through five intermediate goals in three areas: strengthening the parents, increasing parental involvement on multiple levels, and reducing the risk factors of chronic daily stress, substance abuse, and chronic family conflict. To ensure that families use all the social supports available, rather than becoming dependent on the FAST trainers, the process also stresses community-building and family social networking strategies. The core of the program involves eight weekly meetings, usually held in the school, during which positive, fun interactions for families are structured and facilitated by a collaborative leadership team. Every meeting includes a family meal.
	Strengths of the program:	This program has had outstanding results compared to previous attempts to engage parents in this community. The attendance rate for children attending the school has increased and feedback from parents has been very positive with parents saying that eight weeks was not long enough, "it did not come across as a white fella program". There is an ongoing component of family support over two years. The coaching aspect means that participants who have completed the course can go on and mentor new parents.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

P35	Project title:	Best Start
	Organisation:	Department of Community Development, W.A.
	Location:	Local communities in Western Australia
	Funding	State Government WA
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	Best Start is a service for Aboriginal children from birth to five years. Projects and activities are provided to enhance their health, education, social and cultural development.
	Strengths of the program:	The service recognises Aboriginal child rearing practices and builds on the cultural strengths within families to enhance parenting skills. It is developed with the local community and is responsive to their needs and wishes. Through the establishment of the project a range of services and activities has been developed across W.A. They include – playgroups, nutritional and health education, women's support groups, mentoring and role modelling by mature Aboriginal mothers, safety workshops.

P36	Project title:	Building Strong and Healthy Families in Derby
	Organisation:	Jalaris Aboriginal Corporation
	Location:	Derby, West Kimberley, W.A.
	Funding:	Commonwealth
	Project duration:	3 years
	Description:	The objectives of the project are to provide support in the areas of child nutrition, school attendance, parenting skills, poverty and budgeting, substance abuse, violence self esteem community response to identified issues, enhance child development and health. Jalaris acts as a resource centre and has established a drop-in centre catering for children 0 – 12 years and for young mothers.
	Strengths of the program:	The project has promoted linkages between, and support to, agencies in Derby addressing family's and children's issues. Family support workers provide support to parents around identified issues affecting children and parents. The project works within an Aboriginal model of organisation.

P37	Project title:	Strong Men, Strong Families
	Organisation:	Family and Children's Services
	Location:	Roebourne, W.A.
	Funding	Government of WA
	Project duration:	3 years
	Description:	The project aims to strengthen men in their roles as Elders, family members and parents and involves mentoring young Aboriginal males.
	Strengths of the program:	A collaborative community development and whole of community approach in defining the role and responsibilities of men as family members, parents and Elders in their community. The program is highly regarded in the community.

TASMANIA

P38	Project title:	Prisoners and Their Families Program
	Organisation:	Good Beginnings
	Location:	Risdon Prison, Tasmania
	Funding	Department of Family and Community Services, Commonwealth Government
	Project duration:	Ongoing since 1998
	Description:	The program aims to maintain links with a parent in prison via positive and supportive visits and to improve the adjustment of parents back into families and community during the pre and post release phases. The program provides parenting information to selected prisoners, and practical support and assistance to the children and families of prisoners. (The Risdon program was the original pilot program and now runs in other states)

The following programs have been added to provide some comparisons. These are mainly Indigenous programs which have been successful in other countries. Some of the features of these programs are consistent with the Australian Indigenous context.

CANADA

PP1	Project title:	ROOTS OF EMPATHY
	Organisation:	Roots of Empathy
	Location:	401 Richmond Street West, Suite 205 Toronto, ON Canada, M5V 3A8 Tel: (416) 944-3001 / Fax: (416) 944-9295
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	The Roots of Empathy is a classroom program which is a Canadian initiative that aims to reduce aggression and bullying in children. It does so by adding 'emotional literacy' to the range of literacies incorporated into the curriculum. The program introduces babies into the classroom. The babies provide a link to the community, allow for positive models of interaction and expression of emotion, and help create a space for the kids to actively reflect and discuss their feelings.
	Strengths of the program:	The emotional literacy taught in the program lays foundation for more caring classrooms. Research results indicate significant reduction of aggression and increase in pro-social behaviour. Observations of a loving child relationship also gives children a model of competent parenting. The program prepares students for responsible and responsive parenting and strives to break the intergenerational transmission of poor parenting and violence.

PP2	Project title:	Aboriginal Family Support Program
	Organisation:	Odawa Native Friendship Centre
	Location:	12 Stirling Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	The program provides support to children and their families through culturally appropriate holistic, healing and preventative services. These services address child development from the pre-conception stage, and offer support and parental skills training for parents and youth in urban Aboriginal communities.
	Strengths of the program:	The program reinforces Aboriginal cultural development and promotes positive Aboriginal images and self-respect. The program increases parent feelings of competence and confidences. The program is also designed to give participants the opportunity to share in a traditional setting whilst learning Aboriginal parenting. Outings and special events are part of the programming.

PP3	Project title:	Program for Early Parenting Support (PEPS) – Parenting Circle
	Organisation:	Odawa Native Friendship Centre
	Location:	12 Stirling Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	Each session allows time for parents to share concerns and events, take part in activities with their babies and/or toddlers, enjoy a family snack together and participate in parenting-related discussion. The sessions take place once a week between 5 – 7.30pm.
	Strengths of the program:	A hot nutritious meal is served, parents and children come along and parents can share in fun things to do with their children. It encourages new friendships between parents and there is an opportunity for parents to have their questions answered. The timing allows for working parents to take part. The program has become a weekly social event for families.

PP4	Project title:	Parents as Teachers (PAT)
	Organisation:	Odawa Native Friendship Centre
	Location:	12 Stirling Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	<p>It is an international early childhood parent education and family support program serving families throughout pregnancy until their child enters kindergarten, usually aged 5. It is designed to enhance child development and school achievement through parent education accessible to all families. It is a universal access model.</p> <p>The Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc. develops curricula, trains early childhood professionals, and certifies parent educators to work with parents to provide them with parenting support and information on their developing child.</p>
Strengths of the program:	The program recognises that all families can benefit from support and is adaptable to fit community needs. It is a national model but a local program. Increases parent knowledge of child development and appropriate ways to stimulate their children's intellectual, language, social, and physical development. Helps to develop strong partnerships between parents and schools.	

PP5	Project title:	Aboriginal Head Start Initiative Tiknagin (Chiannou)
	Organisation:	Ministry of Health, Canada
	Location:	Val d'Or and Seneterre, Quebec
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	The program aims to help enhance child development and school readiness of the Algonquin, Cree and Attikamek First Nations. The program uses the playgroup model.
Strengths of the program:	The programs are run by locally managed Aboriginal non-profit organisations that see the parent/caregiver as the natural advocate of the child. Active parental and community involvement is a key aspect of the program. The local groups are responsible for the design, development and delivery of their program.	

The Sure Start program from the United Kingdom, though not Indigenous, has provided information which has informed some Australian initiatives such as Best Start projects and has been included on the basis that there have been some successful Indigenous Best Start programs.

UNITED KINGDOM

PP6	Project title:	Sure Start
	Organisation:	DfES UK
	Location:	UK
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	The program aims to improve the health and well-being of families and young children under 4, particularly those who are disadvantaged, so that children have greater opportunity to flourish when they go to school. Sure Start is delivered through community based local programs. Most programs provide parenting programs with over half providing specialist parenting programs for parents with children with disabilities, travellers' families and asylum seeking families.
	Strengths of the program:	Good progress is being made towards developing the kinds of services parents want and need and also parents have a strong voice in shaping the service. The programs are making good use of multi-disciplinary workers as well as existing health and social care professionals.

NEW ZEALAND

PP7	Project title:	Atawhaingia Te Pa Harakeke “Nurture the Family”
	Organisation:	Tekomako
	Location:	Private Bag 9015, Whangarei, Kainga.
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	This is a training and support programme that delivers to up to 90 Maori and Iwi providers. It is aimed at the safety and on-going wellbeing of Maori children. It helps children who have been affected by domestic violence and neglect.
	Strengths of the program:	The program empowers the entire community to recognise unsafe situations, and actively safeguard against them.

USA

PP8	Project title:	The Carolina Abercaderian Project
	Organisation:	FPG Child Development Institute, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina
	Location:	North Carolina
	Project duration:	8 years
	Description:	The project was a carefully controlled scientific study of the potential benefits of early childhood education for poor children. Children from low-income families received full time, high quality educational intervention in a childcare setting from infancy through to age 5. Activities focused on social, emotional, and cognitive areas of development but gave particular emphasis to language.
	Strengths of the program:	Each child had an individualised prescription of education activities and consisted of “games” incorporated into the child’s day. The findings of the project underscore the importance of child development during the first five years of life. The project provided scientific evidence that early childhood education significantly improves the scholastic success and education attainments of poor children even into early adulthood.

PP9	Project title:	The Even Start Program
	Organisation:	The National Even Start Program
	Location:	San Diego, California
	Project duration:	Ongoing
	Description:	The program provides literacy programs for families and children under 7 years who are classed as disadvantaged. The aim of the program is to break the cycle of poverty. In addition to early childhood education, the program also provides parenting and adult education programs.
	Strengths of the program:	The early childhood and adult education programs and the parenting programs are integrated into a unified literacy program. Parents and their children learn together. This builds support for parents to succeed with their educational and employment goals, and develop habits of life-long learning for their children.

PP10	Project title:	Baby FAST
	Organisation:	Wisconsin Centre for Educational Research
	Location:	Wisconsin, USA
	Project duration:	8 weeks – 2 years
	Description:	Families and Schools Together (FAST) and baby fast is a collaborative prevention and parenting involvement program. It is a research based, family support and prevention program for infants (0-3), their mother and the new mother's natural supports. It is a multi-family group process that brings together families of high school teenagers to build and enhance the relationships of young new parents.
	Strengths of the program:	The program is structured around social activities for parents and families. These activities include games, children's sports, music, eating a family meal together. Parent graduates of the course follow up school teacher recommendations to invite families to a cluster meeting. This is a very successful method of encouraging families to join the program.

Summary findings of the Program Audit

The most successful parenting capacity building programs for Indigenous families appear to be those where the following is considered.

- Strength based models looking at acknowledging strengths rather than deficits, looking at difficulties as setbacks rather than as failures, that build confidence and empower.
- Program models that are culturally sensitive and appropriate are community based, owned and controlled.
- Programs which address historical issues and current factors and which have ongoing impact on Indigenous parent's ability to parent effectively.
- Indigenous community members input into the design and delivery of programs (ownership).
- Local community approaches – universal programs and services within Indigenous communities.
- Community consultation, collaboration and partnership delivery where mainstream staff or programs are used.
- Use of Indigenous staff as facilitators or as partners in facilitating programs. Facilitators who are trusted by the community and who maintain confidentiality.
- Trained facilitators who share stories, use role plays, recognise informal learning opportunities and use the skills of the group to help each other by problem solving.
- Targeting of specific groups who may need more tailored programs for parenting enhancement – fathers, new parents, teenage mothers, incarcerated parents, grandparents.
- Involvement of community mentors and role models with due care that Elders are not over utilised.
- Use of Aboriginal venues where participants feel safe and comfortable.
- Use of existing venues and services where parents already gather to enhance parenting e.g. supported playgroups, MACS centres, kindergartens, health services, schools.
- Outreach programs – home visiting to enhance parenting capacity on a one to one basis.
- The provision of transport and food to encourage participation.
- A whole of family approach. Many Indigenous communities will have the children with them. Grandparents and other family members may also want to be included.
- Programs which foster the relationship and attachment between parent and child e.g. Programs before and after birth which foster the mother/father/child relationship as well as the more practical caring skills.
- Programs which are more holistic and ongoing e.g. Antenatal, post natal, birth support, early attachment and relationship support, ongoing child development information and support.

SECTION SIX: Parenting information and resources for Indigenous families

INTRODUCTION

Parenting information and resources are widespread in the general community through print media, audio visual resources including videos and world wide web information sites. There is so much information on parenting that it would be difficult for parents to make a decision about which information is relevant or indeed correct.

Many resources have been developed by organisations targeting specific parent’s needs such as information for new parents on immunisation. These may be developed by State, Territory or Commonwealth government health or community services departments and distributed to parents for example, through doctors and maternal and child health nurses.

Where universal mainstream resources are used with Indigenous parents there are some issues to consider and question:

- Indigenous parents prefer materials which reflect their culture and lifestyle

- Are Indigenous parents represented in a positive way and not a negative, stereotyped way?
- Is the language clear and understandable?
- Are there visual representations of the information for those with lower literacy levels?

Resources and information targeted specifically to Indigenous communities are less widespread, however this could be more positive than negative, since there is greater likelihood of being able to evaluate the materials and information and their usefulness to parents and carers.

METHODOLOGY

The following resource information was collected from a variety of sources including from the stakeholder surveys, focus groups and the literature review. It is by no means an exhaustive listing as some local community resources have been developed and information was scarce therefore they have not been included.

Name of Resource	Description	Strengths	Location
Growing Up Kids Topics	Parenting Video and Tip Sheets dealing with common issues and topics across a variety of age ranges	Written in “language” Written in a way that is very understandable to parents	Western Australian Government
Napcan posters , booklets and pamphlets	Artwork by Tex Scuthorpe.	These Indigenous resources have been very well received by both Indigenous organisations and mainstream organisations. They are a very good source of culturally relevant parenting information	Distributed from State and National offices of NAPCAN
Department of Community Development and Rural Children’s Support Network		Local staff who are seeking ways to engage the Aboriginal community	Western Australia
Reconnecting Families Program	Resource manual developed in consultation with community members, service providers, focus groups and reviewing of literature		Health Promotion Unit, Northern Rivers Area Health Service, Lismore NSW
Otitis media		Excellent, well presented, clearly understood	Woomera Aboriginal Corporation

Name of Resource	Description	Strengths	Location
Parent Support Network Training Manual	By Cheryl Davis and Linda Johnson	The evaluations over the past years have been very positive on the program and training manual	Queensland
Family Day Care Scheme books, counting cards, pictures		Children enjoyed all these items	
"Speaking Out" Calendar	Dept of Families – Communities Speaking Out About Child Sexual Abuse – fact sheet		
Video about child sexual abuse	Source unknown	Used by two Aboriginal communities and found to be useful	Unknown
"Living with Love"	Dr/Healthy Relationships Kit		Geraldton, WA
Eat Good Myee & Kai Kai	Video about good food for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. By the Tropical Public Health Unit	It's about eating good and healthy food and shows the food pyramid and what to eat. Diabetics/heart and health risks	Cairns
Babies Break if You Shake Them	Video		
Growing up Steps	Pamphlets		
Moorditjh Tucker	Video		
Positive Parenting Program	Brochures – information sheets		
Parenting large format colour teaching aid books	Produced by Waltja, Alice Springs. On hygiene and feeding	Used very successfully in informal family gatherings. Also produced in A4 size to be left with families. Are culturally relevant and respectful	
Maiku Kulintjaku' – Food for Thought	4 video set produced by NPY Women's Council & Ngaanyatjarra Media on nutrition and feeding education	The success and effectiveness of the videos is attributed to the use of Pitjantjarra language (with English subtitles) and the videos being filmed and produced in the lands using local community members and settings	Alice Springs
Through Young Black Eyes	SNAICC resource book		
First Food For Babies	Pictorial recipes and pamphlets produced by Jirnani Childcare	Other remote centres have gained ideas from pictorial recipes	
Jannowi videos (re family violence)		Very effective with children. Aboriginal lads were proud to identify with those in video	
Pipirri Palya	A Family resource book. Produced by Waltja Tjntangle Palyapayi	Effective as a discussion starter and in promoting information distribution in remote community settings	
Talking Early Childhood	Resource book. Produced by Batchelor College.	Certain sections of this resource are useful to use with parents/caregivers although most of the resource is aimed at Aboriginal childcare staff in remote communities	

Name of Resource	Description	Strengths	Location
Eating Well for You and Baby	Produced by Indigenous Health Program, Inala, Qld.	Clear visual information aimed at Indigenous parents. Effective because images include those of Aboriginal people, information is relevant and tangible.	
Our Scrapbook of Strengths	The Australian Family Strengths Research Project, a collaboration between The University of Newcastle Family Action Centre and St Lukes Innovative Resources	A visual representation aimed at all families to identify strengths. It will assist family support workers to help identify the families individual strengths	Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle NSW
Engaging Fathers Project Video and poster set of Indigenous fathers and children	This project run by the University of Newcastle recognises that traditionally Indigenous fathers have faced particular challenges above and beyond non- Indigenous fathers.	As part of the project. A video and a series of posters has been developed, depicting positive images of Indigenous dads with their children, in places such as the park, eating meals,. These are excellent resources, newly developed . Participants from around the country attending the National workshop for this project were impressed with these resources	Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle NSW

Summary findings about information/ resources for Indigenous parents

- Should be culturally relevant and respectful.
- Visually appealing, culturally appropriate artwork.
- Written in “language” appropriate to groups accessing the resources/information.
- Less written and more visual information to take account of lower literacy levels in some communities
- Posters displaying Indigenous families and children. Posters are preferred to pamphlets.
- Videos showing Indigenous families and children. Used as a tool to assist Indigenous workers for discussion and also to broaden access to information for those with low literacy levels and for those in remote, isolated communities.
- Information is often passed on by word of mouth.

Focus groups and stakeholder surveys revealed a lack of appropriate resources to enhance parenting. However many mentioned local resources designed to cater for the needs of parents in local communities. Some, but not all have been included. Gathering of these resources from around the country by an Indigenous organisation would make them more accessible for others to use or customise to suit their particular communities. This would broaden the pool of resources and reduce duplication.



matharitina

Matharitina

trungana

layrina

nimiwatina

SECTION SEVEN: Consultations with Key Stakeholders

INTRODUCTION

Consultation with identified key stakeholders specialising in Indigenous family issues in the areas of policy development, research and development, program planning and service delivery occurred as a component of the overall methodology of the project.

The aim of the consultations was to seek comment from key stakeholders in regards to existing Indigenous parenting programs, support services and information, and to identify any gaps they perceive in their community, state or territory.

METHODOLOGY

Due to time limitations of the project, SNAICC decided the most effective way to consult with key stakeholders would be to seek feedback via completion of a survey. See **Appendix 1 and 3**.

To ensure a broad cross section of identified key stakeholders were targeted, SNAICC sent out surveys for completion to over 500 people who were identified from the above list. A covering letter (**Appendix 2**) and copy of the Project Brief (**Appendix 11**) was also sent to key stakeholders to ensure they had background information about the project.

SNAICC received 62 responses from key stakeholders. The responses and findings are detailed in full in **Appendix 1** and summarised on page 105 of this document.

STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

SNAICC sought input from the following identified key stakeholders:

- Australian Council for Children and Parenting (ACCAP)
- Relevant government departments in each state and territory
- Relevant Australian Government agencies, including FaCS national office and state office staff
- Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies (AICCA's) and Commonwealth funded Indigenous children's services including Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) and playgroups
- Experts in developing and market testing Indigenous parenting resources, information and products
- Advocates for Indigenous parents and children including ATSIC regional councils
- National Investment for the Early Years (NIFTeY), and
- Key professionals and academics.

Key stakeholders were requested to complete a survey (**Appendix 1**)

The following list of Stakeholders are coded R1, R2 etc. to match their names to their individual responses which have been collated and are detailed at **Appendix 1:**

LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

R1	William Montague-Elliott, Vikki Macallef	Bugalma Bihyn [Indigerelate]
R2	Adam Foster	NAPCAN
R3	Raema Mahony and Cheryl Rothwell	Parenting Network in South Australia
R4		Indigenous Policy Branch FaCS
R5	Anne Glover	de Lissa Institute, University of South Australia
R6	Virginia Healy, Manager, Indigenous Health	Child and Youth Health, South Australia
R7	Cheryl Berryman	Commonwealth Family and Community Services (Indigenous Policy and North Australian Office, NT)
R8	Judith Tempest	Lady Gowrie Child Centre, Sydney – MACS Training Project
R9	Alana Egerton-Green	Geraldton Family Advocacy Service
R10	Craig Hammond, Indigenous Community Worker	Engaging Fathers Project, Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle
R11	Dawn Casey	Child Care Services – Family and Community Services
R12	Bronwyn Clee, Community Development Officer	Moulden Park School & Neighbourhood Centre
R13		Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services, State Office – Queensland
R14		Yelang Preschool and Kindergarten
R15		Aboriginal Housing Services Tasmania
R16	Heather Downie	Child and Youth Health
R17	Charmaine Green	ATSIS Geraldton
R18	Anthony Franks	Health Promotion Unit Northern Rivers Area Health Service, Lismore NSW
R19	Dr Priscilla Clarke	FKA Children's Services Inc
R20	Chelsea Malinas-Barba	Ipswich Women's Centre Against Domestic Violence
R21	Koori Kindermann Preschool	Woomera Aboriginal Corporation
R22	Klasina Abetz-Visser	Maranoa Family Support Service
R23	Barbara Anderson	Ozcare Women's Shelter
R24	Alexis Jackson	Family and Children's Services, Katherine
R25	Maureen Dawson	Maternity Unit, Tamworth Base Hospital, Tamworth, NSW
R26		Napranum Preschool, Weipa, Qld
R27	Amanda Speers	Roebourne Kindy, Roebourne, WA
R28	Eli McGuire and Maureen McCarthy	Coffs Harbour Aboriginal Family Community Care Centre
R29	Suzanne Hand – Field Coordinator	Frontier Services, remote Area Families Service, MTISA
R30	Unknown	Unknown
R31	Tracy Pollett	1. Midland Information, Debt and Legal Advice Service 2. City of Swan Early Years Project Support Officer 3. Eastern Region Domestic Violence Prevention Council Chairman
R32		Contact House, Townsville, Qld (a service of the Abused Child Trust)
R33	Maureen Mossman	Boopa Werem Kindergarten and Preschool Cairns 4870
R34	Ooranga Wandarrah	Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation
R35	Joanne Della Bona and Lisa Rutherford	Coolabaroo Neighbourhood Centre
R36		SNAICC Secretariat National Aboriginal Islander Child Care

R37	Roland Finette	VAEAI (Comments made by ECH Advisory Sub-committee)
R38	Karen Martin	Creche & Kindergarten Association of Qld
R39	Jenny Smith	Yaandina Day Care Centre
R40	Val Tucker – Co-ordinator	Murray Valley Aboriginal Co-op, Family Services Program
R41	Christina Burns	Robinvale Aboriginal Child Care Murray Valley Aboriginal Co-operative – Robinvale
R42	Karen Walshaw	Tangentyere Council
R43	Barry Watson	Multilink Child & Family Services, Logan Central Qld
R44	Tina Harrison	Tasmanian Aboriginal Child Care Association
R45	Alison Overeem	Aboriginal Children's Centre
R46	Lee Ryall	Domestic Violence Children's Counselling Service (DUCCS)
R47	Kym Blechynden, Nutrition Project Officer	NPY Women's Council, Alice Springs
R48	Mandala Pupangmirri	Jirnani Childcare Centre, Bathurst Island
R49	Rochell Byrne & Naomi Knight	Indigenous Early Years Family Support & Access Program Creche & Kindergarten Assoc Qld
R50	Nancy Hegarty	Tarumbal Kindergarten/Pre School
R51	Ann Falkingham – Manager, Aboriginal Islander Alcohol Awareness and Family Recovery	Centacare NT
R52	Sandra Basham	Incest Survivors' Association Inc
R53	Jill Crouch – Hall	MCHN @ Wodonga Council
R54	Adam Hahs	Southern Family Life
R55		Hunter Child Protection and Family Counselling Service (PANOC), Hunter Area Health Service Please note: we have not had a large number of Aboriginal families attend our service
R56	Glynis Richardson/Trish Denisenko	Albury/Wodonga Mobile Children's Services, Continuing Education Centre, Wodonga, Vic 3690
R57	Anne M Williams	Lady Gowrie Child Centre
R58	Louise Mulroney	Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) – NSW Peak Child & Family Organisation
R59	Michelle Winteer-Gallagles	KHLO St Vincent Hospital
R60	Teresa Bulter-Bowdon	ARMSU (Aboriginal Resource and Management Support Unit) Regency Park, SA
R61	Debbie Bond/Sue Nowland/Teresa Butler Bowden	ARMSU/ACAT
R62	Roslynne Webb	Noogaleek Children's Centre (MACS)

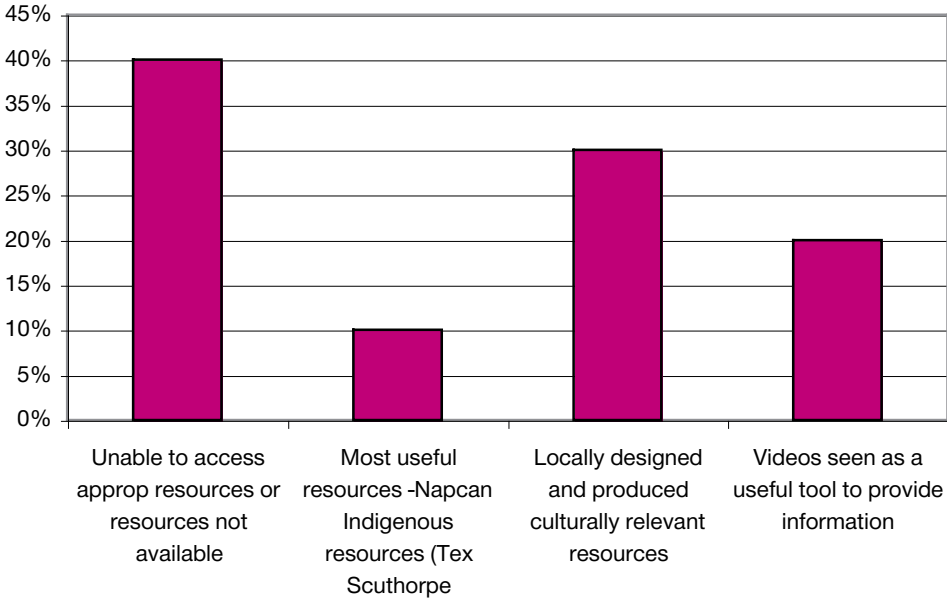
Summary findings from survey of key stakeholders

PARENTING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES - COMMENTS

Please comment on any current parenting information sets, brochures, videos and other materials you have used to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, carers and families in your community.

- Many commented that resources were neither useful or relevant for Indigenous families **or** limited **or** they were not always able to access appropriate resources - this was a common theme (40% of respondents stakeholder surveys)
- Most useful resources were:
 - Those developed by local communities for local communities
 - Napcan Indigenous resources (10% of respondents stakeholder surveys)
- Many commented that parenting courses were not always relevant for the Indigenous community
- Unable to access appropriate resources or resources not available (40%)

ACCESS TO RESOURCES



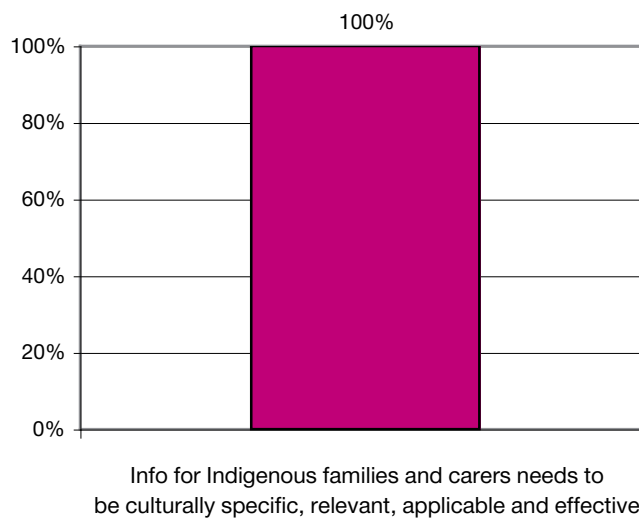
- Most useful resources – Napcan Indigenous resources (Tex Scuthorpe) (10%)
- Locally designed and produced culturally relevant resources (30%)
- Videos seen as a useful tool to provide information (20%)

PARENTING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

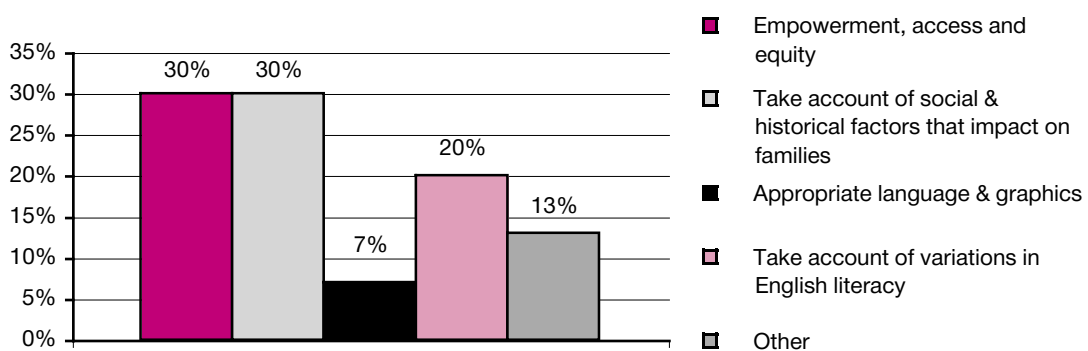
Do you think it is important to produce parenting information specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, and if so why?

- Specific information for Indigenous communities is seen overwhelmingly as very important (100% of respondents stakeholder surveys)
- Needs to be culturally relevant
- Written in simple language
- Use to empower families/increase their chance of success

THE IMPORTANCE OF AND NEED FOR CULTUALLY SPECIFIC RESOURCES



REASONS FOR CULTUALLY SPECIFIC RESOURCES

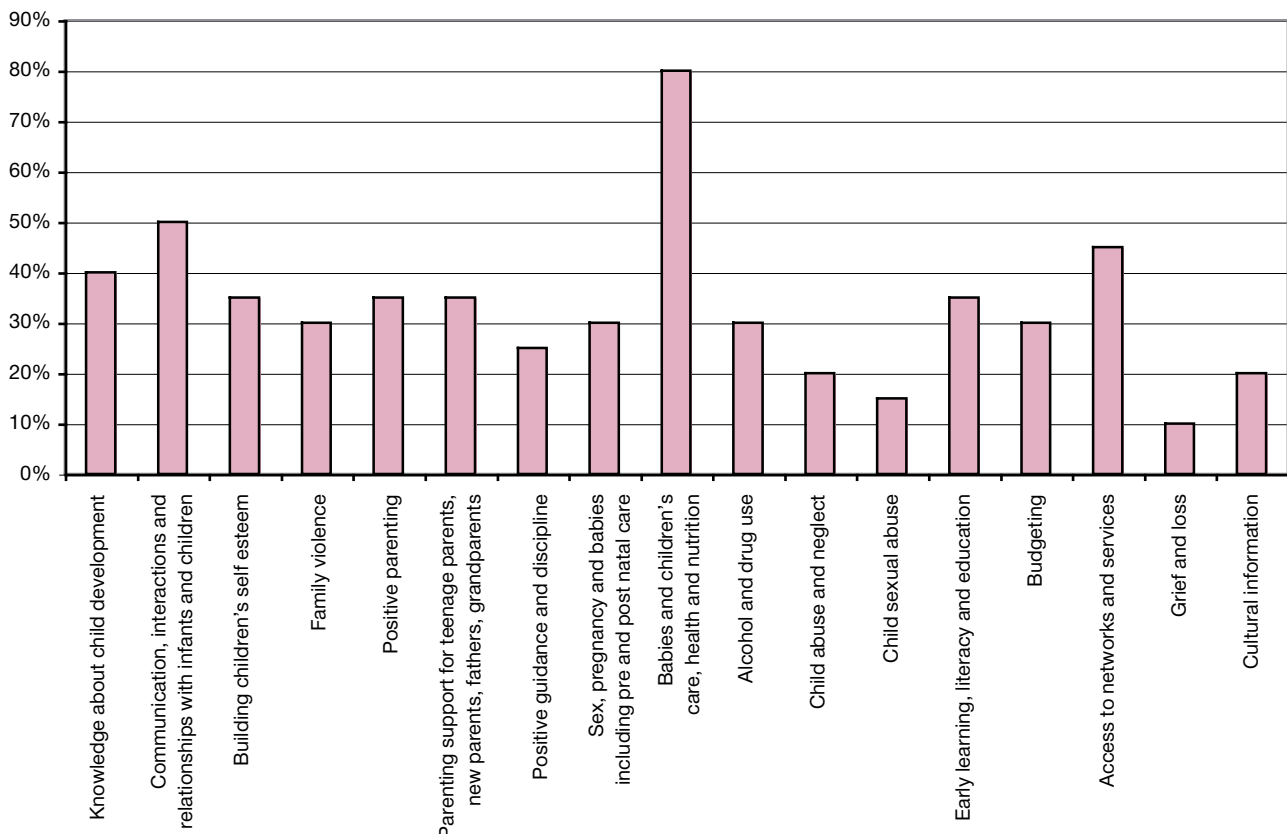


MAIN PARENTING ISSUES THAT PARENTS NEED INFORMATION ABOUT

What issues do you think Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and carers need information about to assist them to be the best parents possible?

- Knowledge about child development (40%)
- Communication, interactions and relationships with infants and children (50%)
- Building children's self esteem (35%)
- Family violence (30%)
- Positive parenting (35%)
- Parenting support for teenage parents, new parents, fathers, grandparents (35%)
- Positive guidance and discipline (25%)
- Sex, pregnancy and babies including pre and post natal care (30%)
- Babies and children's care, health and nutrition (80%)
- Alcohol and drug use (30%)
- Child abuse and neglect (20%)
- Child sexual abuse (15%)
- Early learning, literacy and education (35%)
- Budgeting (30%)
- Access to networks and services (45%)
- Grief and loss (10%)
- Cultural information (20%) previous responses indicated 100% respondents felt that cultural relevance was important in everything about parenting

MAIN PARENTING ISSUES THAT PARENTS NEED INFORMATION ABOUT

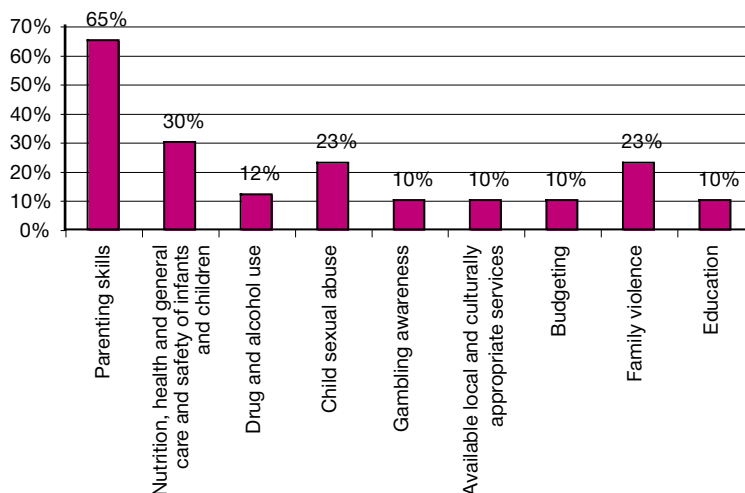


MOST URGENT MAJOR ISSUES

Are there any major issues in your community which you think Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents urgently need more information about?

- Parenting skills (65%)
- Nutrition, health and general care and safety of infants and children (30%)
- Drug and alcohol use (12%)
- Child sexual abuse (23%)
- Gambling awareness (10%)
- Available local and culturally appropriate services (10%)
- Budgeting (10%)
- Family violence (23%)
- Education (10%)

MOST URGENT MAJOR ISSUES IDENTIFIED AT LOCAL COMMUNITY LEVEL

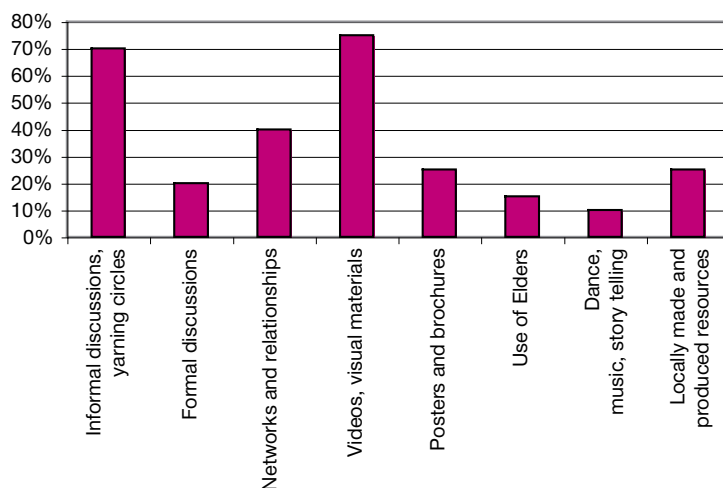


MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO PARENTS

What format for providing information to parents do you think is the most effective? ie printed brochures/ leaflets, videos or other visual materials, spreading information through formal or informal discussion groups.

- Informal discussions, yarning circles (70%)
- Formal discussions (topic based) (20%)
- Through networks and relationships (40%)
- Videos and brochures, visual materials, culturally appropriate – people, images (75%)
- Posters and brochures only if culturally relevant, key messages, brief text (25%)
- Use of Elders, grandmothers, local Indigenous services and workers (15%)
- Dance, music, story telling (10%)
- Through locally made and produced resources – Indigenous ownership of resources (25%)

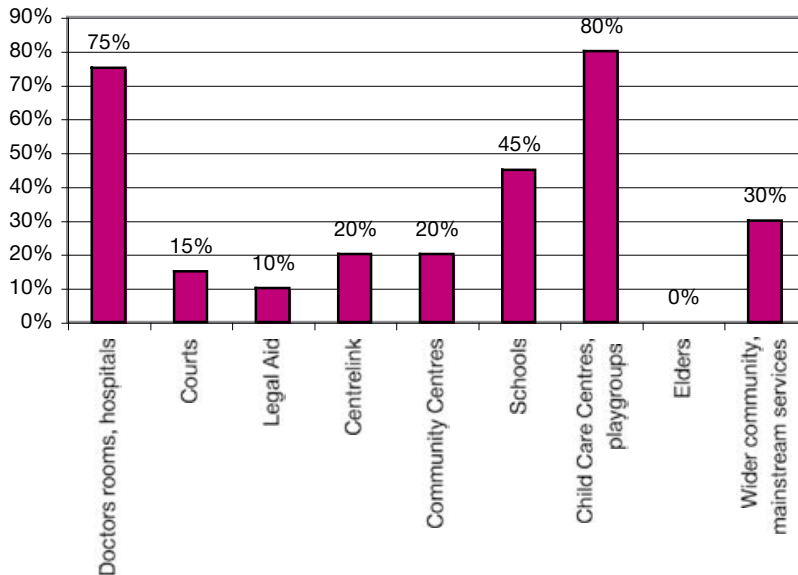
MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO PARENTS



BEST PLACES TO MAKE INFORMATION AVAILABLE

What are the most important places to make information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents available? What are the gaps in information dissemination? Are there any particular groups of parents/carers who you think miss out on information, ie young fathers, grandparents, first time parents, foster carers, etc.

BEST PLACES TO MAKE INFORMATION AVAILABLE



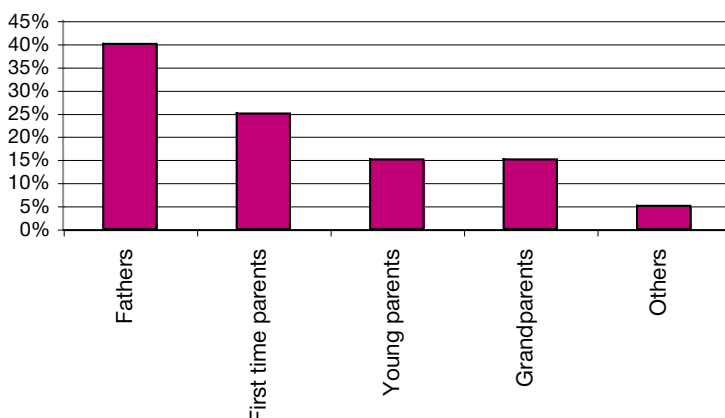
- Doctors rooms, hospitals, health services (75%)
- The courts (15%)
- Legal Aid (15%)
- Centrelink (10%)
- Indigenous local services eg Community centres (20%)
- Child care centres, playgroups, pre schools (80%)
- Elders
- Wider community mainstream services eg libraries, community centres, shopping centres (30%)

PARENTING INFORMATION – OTHER COMMENTS

- Make programs accessible
- More face to face contact
- Consultation – ask parents what they want

GAPS IDENTIFIED OF THOSE WHO MISS OUT ON INFORMATION

GAPS IDENTIFIED OF THOSE WHO MISS OUT ON INFORMATION



- Fathers (40%)
- Young parents (15%)
- Grandparents (15%)
- Others (5%)

EFFECTIVE PARENTING SUPPORT PROGRAMS

- Two thirds of responses not aware of any programs
- Many comments on mainstream programs not effective for Indigenous people
- Children in prison with mothers (up to 3 yrs)
- Family support programs at community centres
- Triple P program not effective
- Aboriginal mothers and babies service
- Strong babies, strong families, strong culture program(grandmothers training)

WHY ARE THE PROGRAMS EFFECTIVE

- Some new mothers and grandmothers groups for Indigenous people very effective as they are run by Aboriginal people
- Strong babies, strong families, strong culture – grandmothers training mothers very effectively. They are using community consultation and involvement.
- Best Start programs – with focus on parent/child interactions

GAPS IN SERVICE DELIVERY

- Programs not inclusive of Indigenous community in the development of content and delivery
- Needs to be more consultation with Indigenous people
- Have a follow up when parent programs are run
- Socially isolated families
- Prisoners and their children
- Fathers and grandparents support
- Lack of resources to provide continuity of care and one to one support
- Remote rural areas
- Transport and resources an issue



SECTION EIGHT: Focus Groups

INTRODUCTION

The focus groups were included in the overall methodology of the project so that information could be collected directly from Indigenous parents and caregivers, including extended family members providing kinship care, and to also collect information from people working with Indigenous families.

More specifically, utilising the information from the literature review as a framework, information collected included the type of strategies, programs and information professionals access, use, and find works, the type of information used by professionals and strategies employed to disseminate information, as well as any gaps they perceived.

The aim of the parent / caregiver focus groups was to find out:

- What information, programs, services parents / caregivers currently use and think works
- What parents / carers / communities need to know and when
- How best to get it to them
- What are the gaps?

METHODOLOGY

A total of 16 focus groups were held around Australia in eight different locations. The Project Brief called for 3 groups to be held in metropolitan areas, 3 groups in rural areas and 2 in remote settings. There were 2 groups held at each location: a morning group with parents / caregivers and an afternoon session with professionals working with Indigenous parents and caregivers.

To assist in seeking locations to hold the focus groups, SNAICC sent out requests to over 80 Indigenous child care and protection services around Australia for expression of interest to host focus groups. (see Appendix 4). These 80 organisations were all members of SNAICC. SNAICC received approximately 12 responses from which SNAICC chose areas based on the geographical location of the service, ensuring the requirements of the project brief were met, but at the same time attempting to cover all states or territories across Australia. Hence focus groups were held in the following locations:

Metropolitan:

Perth, Western Australia
Hobart, Tasmania
Melbourne, Victoria

Rural:

Coffs Harbour, New South Wales
Port Lincoln, South Australia
Townsville, Queensland

Remote:

Bathurst Island, Northern Territory
Woorabinda, Queensland

The focus groups were facilitated by SNAICC employees and were structured as group interviews. Questions asked during the focus groups can be found at Appendix 5 and Appendix 7 and detailed responses at Appendix 6 and Appendix 8.

Host agencies arranged for people to attend the focus groups. Professionals were sought from a variety of services and included (but not limited to) child care workers, health workers, protection and care workers, family support workers and housing support workers. Parents and caregivers were generally people who utilised services of the host agencies or connected to the agency in some way e.g. community members who are parents, employees who are parents, or relatives caring for children of their relatives.

Prior to attending the focus groups, or before the group started on the day, participants were provided with information about the project (Project Brief) and a question and answer sheet explaining what would happen during the group and how their responses would be used (Appendices 4, 5, 7 and 11).

Participants responses were recorded by a note taker and a tape recorder was also used in most locations. Permission was sought from participants to use the tape recorder and facilitators explained people would not be directly quoted in the write up of the report.

Parents and caregivers were paid \$50 each for participating in the project. Some parents and caregivers who attended the remote area focus groups who had travelled long distances to attend the groups were also paid monies to reimburse them for their travel costs.

A list of all people who participated in the focus groups can be found at Appendix 10.

Each focus group had two parts, one session with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working with Indigenous children and families, and another with Indigenous parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, carers – kinship and foster.

People working with Indigenous children and families included professionals who use and refer parents or caregivers to parenting programs and information. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous services were included. The aim of this group was to determine:

- the type of strategies used by professionals
- which programs or information they access and utilise
- which programs work best, and
- any perceived gaps

The session with parents and caregivers aimed to provide people with an opportunity to talk about what information and support would assist them as parents/caregivers) This included which programs they currently use, what has worked best, what else they need to know and how it can be provided. This group included:

Couples	Foster carers	Single parents
Grandparents	Young mothers	Kinship parents
Young parents	Young fathers	

Summary Findings from the Focus Groups

ISSUES AFFECTING ABILITY TO PARENT

Participants were asked a number of questions in regards to issues or factors that impact on their ability to be the best parent they want to be. Responses from participants across the country were not that different despite the vastness of geographical locations. In remote areas, issues around fundamental basic needs were identified including the need for fresh food and other nutritional needs, however issues such as inadequate housing, low education participation and lack of employment opportunity and poverty was reported in all locations.

It is interesting to note, that despite the similarity of identified issues, responses in regard to how these issues should be addressed were more varied in terms of responses being specific to that location, and within a local context. Participants clearly stated that parenting information, support and programs should be locally produced and designed. Therefore, language, local customs and norms need to be considered when developing parenting information, support and programs.

A significant issue consistently raised around the country, was the need for healing of unresolved issues from childhood. Specifically, parents and professionals identified that significant acknowledgement and remedy of past Australian Governments removalist policies is required and that the implications of being stolen and institutionalised affect Indigenous parents today. Parents and professionals identified the following effects of removal and institutionalisation:

- Loss of traditional parenting methods
- Loss of culture
- Loss of extended family (and consequent support networks)
- Lack of appropriate parent role model due to being institutionalised
- Lack of opportunity in regard to accessing education and employment

Other issues participants identified as impacting on their ability to be the best parent they could be included:

- Addictions - drug, alcohol, petrol / glue / paint sniffing, gambling
- Impact of family violence & general issues around safety in the community. Safety in the community was not an issue a generation ago. Parents feel there is now more pressure on them

to provide recreation/play options for children because they feel it is no longer safe for children to play “on the streets”.

- Lack of recognition & support (particularly financial support and programmatic support) for Grandparents and other Kinship Carers.
- Isolation – this was reported in metropolitan and rural areas as a personal issue, and reported as a community issue in remote areas.
- Nutrition – lack of basic nutritional needs in remote communities, for example at Woorabinda the local grocery store is the only store in the town with a fluctuating population of between 800 – 1100 people. The store only receives fresh food once a week and is of minimal supply.
- Lack of childcare – Multifunctional Aboriginal Children’s Services and other Indigenous childcare services as well as non-Indigenous childcare.
- Lack of access to education – particularly in rural and remote areas where some schools only provide classes up until Year 10 and students need to travel / move to another town in order to complete their high school education.
- People who are locally born & raised seem to be more aware of and connected to supports
- Lack of access to income support – particularly for kinship carers
- Lack of recognition of the role of grandparents and other relatives in terms of program planning and delivery as well as a lack of access to programs for Grandparents and other Kinship Carers
- Demands on time for single and coupled parents - juggling work, home, play was a day to day issue which parents felt was part of the pressures of today’s societal expectations.
- Dealing with children’s behavioural issues e.g. ADHD
- Shame factor – being able to admit there is a problem and seeking help without feeling shame. There seems to be a perception that you are a failure as a parent if you ask for help.
- Lack of respect from children toward parents and grandparents and a loss of discipline methods. Some parents believed there was a connection between these two factors stating the Education system contributed to the lack of respect received from children. In quite a few locations, parents and professionals reported that the Education system was teaching their children about child abuse stating parents were “not allowed to smack their children”. Parents felt this was unfair and that the Education

system should also teach children about their responsibilities, not just their rights. Parents also felt confused about how they were “allowed” to discipline their children, having not received any education themselves about what is appropriate or legal. Parents reported they wanted more information about the child protection system.

Hence, parents felt a sense of loss over their right to discipline children in a way they feel is appropriate. Some parents recalled experiences from their own childhood which included traditional methods that were believed to eliminate the inappropriate behaviour. Parents felt traditional methods worked well.

- Racism, covert and overt racism/discrimination e.g. being refused a service due to being Aboriginal. An example of this was given where a parent sought Emergency Relief from a mainstream service and was told to go to the local Aboriginal Health Service for Emergency Relief because they are Aboriginal.
- Lack of exposure to parenting methods during childhood and adolescence. Parents felt that their children and grandchildren were not being prepared well enough before becoming parents themselves. They felt the loss of traditional methods were again a contributing factor to this issue. For example, it was reported that traditionally women were prepared for motherhood at an early age by participating in or observing the delivery of a newborn and assisting to care for siblings and/or cousins.
- The education system does not do enough in terms of teaching children what it’s like to be a parent. Parents and professionals alike reported of programs they had heard of that had been run at different high schools. For example, the program where a life-like doll is used a baby and students are required to care for the “baby”. Parents felt this program should be extended throughout all schools as it gave young people a “reality check”.
- There is not enough recognition or support for Men and their role as a parent. Women and men alike raised this as an issue reporting that traditionally men and women had specific roles in regards to rearing children and that these roles had either been eroded or become blurred. Single parent men stated it was particularly difficult for them to be a mother and a father at the same time and were concerned that there were little or no support groups for men.
- The influence of “Americanisms”, media and technology were reported as having a negative impact on children’s lives as they were often chosen as favoured activities. For instance violent movies and music, particularly rap music

was seen to be a negative influence on young people's behaviour, parents feeling that young people were trying to imitate what they watched and listened to. In regards to technology, parents felt that video games and the like were also violent and that children preferred these games to more traditional recreation options.

- Single parents told of the difficulties and frustrations of dealing with their child's behaviour when returned to them by the other parent. Some people felt this was due to a difference in parenting styles.
- Indigenous parents with non-Indigenous partners reported of the difficulty of raising a child with two cultures. Some said they felt pressure from the extended family of the non-Indigenous partner around parenting styles with relatives pushing their belief that "the white way is the right way".

PARENTING SUPPORT

Professionals and parents / caregivers were asked questions in regards to reasons why parents seek support, whom they seek support from, and what is the best way to provide the support they seek.

- Parents seek support in regards to a number of issues e.g. behaviour, nutrition, finances, family violence.
- Peer support groups are beneficial when they are informal and facilitated by a local Indigenous person. There are some excellent examples of support groups facilitated by Indigenous organisations that are producing positive outcomes for parents.
- Support groups that include the whole family are more appropriate than just mother's groups etc. People said it was good to have mothers groups, and fathers groups, but that the two should come together at different times to form "family" groups. People said it is important to remember that Indigenous people see parenting in a much broader spectrum than that of white people. They believe parenting is the responsibility of parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles and the community.
- Mentoring support programs that tap into existing support networks in communities are seen to be the ideal way to provide support to people who, for different reasons, may not ever approach agencies for help. Parents felt there needs to be a whole of community response to support needs and mentoring brought people from the community together and felt people would feel more connected to their community if this system was employed.

PARENTING INFORMATION

Participants in the focus groups were asked who they went to for information about parenting, as well as what they thought of the information products they might access or provide, and how information products should be designed and distributed. Overwhelmingly, responses indicate that information products should be locally produced featuring people they know, as Indigenous parents stated they want to identify with the message as well as the messengers.

- Family and friends are the main sources for parenting information.
- Maternal Child Health Nurses, health workers, support workers are other "trusted" sources for information.
- GPs should be a source but usually are not.
- Parenting information should be visual with simple messages. Local people should be featured as the "messengers" utilising local artwork.
- Information should be presented informally along with a yarn about what it's telling us.
- Information produced by Government Departments is not very useful or appropriate to Indigenous people.
- Locally produced information should be available from both Indigenous and Mainstream services.
- There are some excellent examples of locally produced information already in existence.
- Information should reinforce the importance of culture.
- Parents want more information about the difference between discipline and abuse as well as information about the child protection system.
- Parents and professionals reported having mixed feelings about the use of videos - if they're locally made and presented well with lots of discussion, then they are useful.

PARENTING PROGRAMS

Again, participants were asked about parenting programs available to them in their community (if any). Questions were posed around the content, delivery and design of programs as well as who the target group of the program(s) might be, and timelines of the program. Participants were asked to give feedback on the effectiveness of programs and any perceived gaps in program delivery.

- Parenting programs should focus on family strengths not weaknesses.
- Mainstream programs need to be adapted to

be culturally appropriate otherwise they are not useful.

- Need to include more outreach services - Mainstream don't seem to do as well as Indigenous services.
- Programs that include group work need to be informal and flexible, and be facilitated by a trusted (and preferably local) person.
- There are some excellent Indigenous programs already in existence that people report as being useful.
- There is not enough formal evaluation of programs.
- Pilot projects that work well should be funded longer term. People felt there was a loss to the community when programs were "ripped out" of communities.
- Elders should be included in the development and delivery of programs wherever possible.
- There needs to be more recognition of the number of grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. Grandparents say there should be more programs for Grandparents.
- Need more programs based on Action Research models of community development. Throughout the focus groups, responses indicate that most Indigenous people and professionals feel that community development responses to family issues are far better responses than individualistic responses.
- Indigenous people want a choice between Indigenous and Mainstream services. But, when seeking assistance from mainstream services, Indigenous people still want to access culturally appropriate programs and information, and prefer to see Indigenous people working in mainstream.
- There is a perceived fear of a lack of confidentiality with Indigenous workers who live and work in the same community. This was reported by parents and caregivers as a problem, and was reported as a perceived problem by professionals.
- Parenting programs often seen to be "middle class", particularly in metropolitan areas, but some Indigenous agencies are successfully running mainstream programs that have been adapted to be more culturally appropriate, and are delivered by Indigenous people.
- Programs need to be longer term rather than 4-8 weeks. People feel that especially it is important to acknowledge and discuss some of the historical factors that impact on today's Indigenous people as parents, and that this should be incorporated into programs. People

felt that long term programs would enable more time to discuss issues such as this and other issues that impact on Indigenous families, rather than just focussing on parenting.

- There is a need for basic parenting skills programs especially in remote communities. People living in remote communities said there should be programs that teach basic parenting skills to young parents, such as how to change a nappy, sleep routines, nutritional requirements etc.
- Both parents and professionals felt that parenting programs should not be called parenting programs as that would not reflect the whollistic nature of an ideal Indigenous program and people just wouldn't come due to the sense of shame that one "needs" or wants parenting help.

More detailed information from each focus group has been included in Appendices 5,6 7, 8 and 9 in the Appendices document accompanying this report.

SECTION NINE: National Workshop

INTRODUCTION

This National Workshop was held to discuss and comment on the findings of the SNAICC National Parenting Project.

The National Workshop followed the consultations and focus groups.

The workshop was held at Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre, Preston on Tuesday 8th June 2004.

Expressions of interest to attend the workshop were sought and participants consisted of relevant key stakeholders and some participants from the focus groups. A list of attendees is attached (Appendix 14).

METHODOLOGY

Prior to attending the workshop, participants were provided with an information pack, which included the Agenda for the day, snapshots of findings thus far, a copy of the draft literature review and draft program audit. (Workshop pack Appendix 12)

David Hazlehurst from the Department of Family and Community Services spoke to participants giving the background and aims of the National Parenting Project. Workshop participants were invited to respond to David Hazlehurst's speech. Points raised were as follows:

- The opportunity to have this interaction and dialogue with senior government representatives is highly valuable and should occur more frequently.
- We need to ensure that advisory structures not only exist, and are well resourced.
- Government should look at enhancing the role of "other" agencies in terms of the role they can play in delivering parenting information and support programs. This includes schools,

childcare centres and Centrelink).

- Government could initiate the development and continued support of processes, which would enable Indigenous communities to access Government funds. For example, submission writing skills training, identifying grants or funds for which Indigenous organisations could submit.

SNAICC and Swinburne University Department of Child and Family Studies presented findings from the literature review, program audit, focus groups and stakeholder consultation stages of the project. Participants were asked to discuss the findings, key issues and priorities for action on Indigenous parenting information and support in Australia.

In the afternoon delegates were asked to divide into 4 small group workshops. Each small group was asked to consider two questions:

1. What does what we have learnt from the Parenting Project so far mean for parenting information and support in Indigenous communities in Australia?
2. What are the priorities for action?
 - For providing information on parenting?
 - For providing parenting support?

The groups considered the two questions in relation to one of the following four areas:

Group 1	Remote areas
Group 2	Rural areas
Group 3	Metropolitan areas
Group 4	Mainstream or non-Indigenous agencies providing parenting information and support to Indigenous communities

A facilitator was assigned to each group in order to capture the ideas, issues and recommendations from the group.

Summary findings from National workshop

FEEDBACK AND RESPONSES FROM SMALL GROUPS

GROUP 1: REMOTE AREAS

- Creole language information important. Language used in information and programs needs to be the same as the local language whether it be a form of broken English or otherwise.
- Travel to people and work in their space.
- Program delivery positions should be 'identified' with the right training and retention supports and career structure because:
 - The people who are participating need to be able to speak more freely (they will feel comfortable to do this if their language is used by the facilitator).
 - Respect needed on both sides
 - People are not comfortable dealing with mainstream services unless Indigenous workers are delivering the programs. (Community members, including Elders could play a role in selection panels.)
 - Mainstream organisations need to be culturally competent to support Indigenous workers and programs.
- Indigenous workers roles need to be more flexible than mainstream workers. We need to be more creative in delivery so we can meet community expectations.
- Remote staff need adequate travel money to visit communities frequently in order to build relationships. Visits need to be lengthy in time. An implication of this is that agencies will probably need to employ extra staff to cover home office duties while others travel.
- Written information needs to be accompanied by oral information.
- The first step is to build relationships, partnerships and capacity of communities to decide what is needed, to identify what is there already, and how best to provide it e.g. 'working parties' which exist around the Dubbo area, and 'negotiation tables' in Cape York. Strengthening the capacity of individual community members and organisations such as child care centres needs to be linked to existing programs and services.
- If submissions are called for, format needs to be a simple question and answer format.
- If we are able to deliver a parenting program with positive results in only one community, then this in itself would be a positive achievement.
- We would like to see the \$600,000 (referring to the Minister's financial commitment to Indigenous parenting information within the context of this project) built on e.g. we need to attract more funds such as training dollars.
- Simple, informal, local delivery is important e.g. camping, social groups etc.
- An implication of these issues which can be addressed by the SNAICC National Parenting Resource Centre would be to work with communities to attract other Government funding.
- We would like to see some of the \$600,000 set aside to do some development work with remote communities.

GROUP 2: RURAL AREAS

- Communities need to 'own' projects and program, informing Government how the funds should be spent. The development of projects needs to be shared between Government and communities.
- There is currently limited community input in the developmental stages of programs. Shared development between Government, local services and community people should occur.
- Full consultation processes are required at all levels of the development of projects and programs.
- Government need to recognise and allow for the time that is required to engage and consult with people who are not existing clients (or within the service system 'loop').
- Documenting stories of Elders and other Indigenous peoples parenting experience is required in order to capture their experience and to ensure traditional methods do not continue to be lost.
- Government departments need to rethink parameters around funding and guidelines – communities need to understand these parameters too.
- Accountability needs to happen but should include accountability to the community as well as funding sources.

- Government needs to support communities to develop their own parenting information – maybe develop a resource kit that can be used as a template to be expanded on and adapted by communities.
- We need flexible timeframes in the delivery of programs. We also need flexible methods of distribution of information.
- We need to get the (culturally appropriate) information out to a broad cross section of community – including non-Indigenous and Government services.
- There is a need to provide training to community members and Indigenous employees of Indigenous services in regards to report writing skills, facilitation skills, and submission writing skills.
- A co-ordinated approach to problem-solving and service delivery is required in rural communities. This includes co-ordination between non-Government services, local government, and State and Federal government services.
- Government need to ensure mainstream services are community focussed and culturally appropriate.
- There is a need to employ more Indigenous people in senior positions in Government. These positions need to be supported so that Indigenous people can maintain their links and relationships in community.
- Definite career paths must be developed within bureaucracies with support to sustain individual career goals.
- Recruitment campaigns and training methods need to recognise prior learning and life experience as relevant skills.
- Provide more opportunities (such as this National Workshop) to share information at a national level.
- Regular documentation of best practice programs must occur and be accessible to Indigenous and non-Indigenous services.
- An ‘information book’ people can take from service to service with them would be a useful way for parents to keep record of the information they have been provided.
- We need to work more closely with Education departments. Schools have been consistently raised throughout the (SNAICC Parenting) Project as a place where parents should be able to access parenting information and support.
- Many Indigenous children have more than one culture. We need to find ways to nurture difference in culture in a caring and sharing way.
- Political factions within communities exist.
- Nobody can assume to be an expert in regards to Indigenous parenting practices.
- Mainstream services must be trained in cultural awareness. Government and mainstream need to recognise the diversity within Indigenous communities.
- Develop Indigenous inclusive practices to serve as a framework for non-Indigenous services. For example, we could develop a national document such as the Reconciliation Statement, which could be linked to funding and service agreements – an audit of non-Indigenous services could occur to ensure they are complying with the framework.
- Don’t double up on programs in the same community. Enhance existing programs.
- Action Research models of community development should be the foundation for all the work we do in Indigenous communities.

GROUP 3: METROPOLITAN AREAS

- Change requires leadership. What about leadership at the community level?
- What is the definition of community in metropolitan areas? “Community” is complex, dynamic, shifting. Key elements are family/kin.
- Effective work requires knowledge of community, families, and relationships. This takes time. Government and workers need to take the time to get to know people at the local level. Working in community is not just about what you know, but especially about who you know.
- In metropolitan areas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families can be very isolated and ‘lost’ in the mainstream e.g. schools not addressing individual need. This undermines their cultural identity and community links.
- Part of the response is inclusive practice and outreach from Indigenous specific agencies.
- Indigenous people living away from country can be isolated within another Indigenous community.
- People have connections back to their Indigenous family/kin/country but may also be part of other communities e.g. geographical/local and also to other family with a different racial or cultural origin.
- Each state or territory has its own history that has created the current web of Indigenous communities in metropolitan areas.
- Families may choose mainstream services

because they are more available.

- Parenting support should be tailored to family needs and responsive to local circumstances.
- Programs often have very little profile in the community.
- Peer based strengths groups where there is not only learning but support and interaction in an informal setting is the way to go.
- Programs need the resources to respond to the immediate needs of people e.g. material aid.
- Reconnection with Elders needs to be actioned – it won't just happen. In metropolitan areas Elders are not always identifiable or available.
- Actively building informal support networks and using extended family groups for advice, ideas, and support with raising children can be a successful way of reaching people who don't seek support from services.
- There are foster care families that seem to do well. We need to identify the elements of support that create this success and make them available to other families.
- Talk with families where children are doing well and find out how these families have done it.
- We have to build the cultural capacity of families recognising that for metropolitan communities this means working over large networks.
- Recognise that at times people might have their own difficult issues to deal with, but they can still be good parents – communities taking responsibility for their children and supporting families when this occurs.
- We need to identify positive role models in metropolitan communities (but not perfect – don't set people up to fail or create expectations that are inappropriate).
- Asking family to take your children for a while is an example of a good parenting choice. We shouldn't shame people for this.
- Government and agencies have to encourage re-kindling of family networks.

Priorities for action:

- Give Elders the time, space and chance to tell stories and share their parenting journey.
- Informal support networks that engage ALL the family and give all family time together.
- Develop parenting information products that are interesting and culturally relevant.
- The challenge is to reach children who are not engaged with their community, school, work or

anything. We need to go where they are and meet them in their space e.g. on the streets.

- Create 'Family Engagement' Workers (as recommended in the Gordon Enquiry).
- Education and support is needed to make sure additional parenting/family payment does not have negative outcomes.
- Start young in school / pre-school to teach children self-respect and cultural pride. Build on this base with parenting information in schools.
- Build on the existing community based services – don't create new ones.
- Every service site should give people a starting point to access information and support.
- Need to build and extend the reach of the early childhood services.
- Always remember that parents want what is best for their children – never leave people behind, start with what works for that family – from the family's perspective.
- Trust is essential between families and services. People will continue to be engaged with services if they do not have a sense of trust.
- Start with programs for children and use these to engage with families.
- Parenting is not about making better parents, but about making families well.
- AICCA type services are required in all areas because they work effectively with marginalised children and families.
- Families often do trust AICCA's and other community services.

Priorities for SNAICC:

- Advocating for intensive family support workers to work one on one with families.
- Address basic necessities such as housing, income, health etc.
- Work with peer support and mentor programs – evaluate and document.
- Build on the existing childcare services to provide other forms of support.
- Community driven and culturally appropriate information available in mainstream services.
- Encourage Government agencies to work smarter through development of partnerships with communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies.
- The ultimate aim is to develop a shared vision of the continuum of support for all Indigenous children.

- Advocate for equity of funding (ASSPA) for kindergartens and childcare services.
- Use the existing Indigenous early childhood services to implement and roll out the promised \$650,000.
- Deal with the hard issues that take away families quality of life (e.g. unemployment).
- Pay and support kinship carers according to the real cost of caring.
- Build on the type and coverage of early childhood services.
- SNAICC to monitor use of the old ATSI/ATSIC dollars now gone to mainstream.
- Framework for ages and stages – based on community development principles, not just “parenting” information in isolation.
- What is stopping us from being able to work in partnership? Indigenous people don’t have equal partnership.
- We need to re-story parenting. Too many public parenting stories are bad news stories that parents cannot identify with.
- We need to involve Indigenous people in program design and delivery.
- We need to develop Indigenous specific reporting and evaluation mechanisms. This would have major implications for non-Indigenous organisations in terms of program design and funding criteria.

GROUP 4: NON-INDIGENOUS SERVICES

- Not a lot has changed in 20 years and Government is still not listening.
- Non-Indigenous agencies need to employ Indigenous staff and retain them in their services.
- We need to be very sure that we have ‘agreed’ or understood definitions when we talk together. What is a ‘parent program’ for might feel or seem like I have to stop being black to be a ‘good’ or ‘successful’ parent = assimilation.
- Staffing of any programs needs to be a small core (say 3) workers rather than 1 person having (or expected to have) all the answers.
- We need to look in – rather than not look at all.
- Issues around time – mainstream approach around practices, process and flexibility.
- Parallels with “whitefella” issues in what the Indigenous literature and consultations have shown:
 - “whitefellas” also reject being told what to do by experts
 - Value of “Family Partnerships” training (Hilton Davis)
 - Concept of families, children and communities being “co-producers” of children’s outcomes with service providers.
 - Indigenous pain and despair experienced collectively rather than in isolation as in “whitefella” society.
- How about replacing “parenting programs” with “building survival skills across the life course for our people”.
- Issues for non-Indigenous multi-cultural groups are similar to Indigenous issues.
- Flexibility in funding models is needed as is longer term funding to enable better evaluations to occur.
- Pilots mean we keep re-inventing the wheel.
- There is not a huge amount of money to do what we hope will be done. There will be a need for non-Indigenous agencies to be inclusive.
- Places / people / agencies we should be targeting to raise cultural awareness are: Out of Home Care Services; Early Childhood Services; Schools; Doctors; Judges; Family Law Court; Nurses; Not for Profit Organisations; Government; Hospitals. They would benefit from:
 - Cultural awareness training
 - Developed cultural guidelines
 - Learning about respecting Indigenous culture
 - An audit of cultural competency
- Mainstream getting Aboriginal advisory reference groups where they can’t employ Aboriginal people.
- Protocols with mainstream about what the minimum requirements are to work with Aboriginal families (and practice guidelines).
- Indigenous people must have the intellectual rights to any resources that are developed. Mainstream agencies need to pay Indigenous agencies for their specialist advice.
- Family Law Court decisions acknowledge the need for Aboriginal children to maintain connections to community. Who will fund an agency to support this connection?
- Family Law Court – need to get information about rights for grandparents and other kinship carers.
- Liaison between all previously listed services needs to occur.

- Strengthening identity in children and young people.
- Develop value statements for children and Aboriginal families.
- Importance of Aboriginal culture.
- Elders – mainstream services need to understand the importance of their role in community and family.

Priorities for action:

- “Good news” story on parenting
- Using “successes” as examples
- Promote Indigenous child rearing practices
- Listen to the voices of children
- Push for a compact statement of values.
- Make tender documentation and processes for applying for funding simpler.
- Focus on strengthening “Indigenous” component of parenting. “Strength in Aboriginality”.
- Work with communities on strengthening the role of parents, in their language. Include songs and ceremony.
- Ensure consultation in Aboriginal communities when developing programs.
- Use networks to influence other agencies who are providing services to Aboriginal children.
- Develop a strategy to ensure mainstream agencies and government departments working with children and families have culturally appropriate policies, practices, service responses and approaches.

General

General issues raised throughout the day at the workshop by participants:

- No youth (as parents) representation at workshop
 - SNAICC explained that this was an oversight, however young parents did participate in the focus groups held around the country.
- No Torres Strait Islander representation at workshop
 - SNAICC explained we did invite TSI people to the workshop however we did not receive any acceptances.
- Torres Strait Islander traditional adoption
 - Presentation by project team did not include any reference to this issue. Traditional adoption is the practice of rearing child/ren of a relative and usually the child is not returned

to the natural parent. Traditional adoption is recognised within the Family Law Act (.....).

- “Parenting is for life” – the role of being a parent does not cease at any given point in time of the child’s life. It may however, be transferred to another person.
- It is about a ‘collection’ of people who fulfil a number of roles to each other – a set of relationships. This is in reference to extended families and communities being active participants in the child rearing process.
- Need to infiltrate to get the messages & solutions to decision-makers (legal, social etc) including our own communities.
- Staffing needs to be a small core of people to carry out the jobs, meet the demands rather than 1 lone, solitary person. This is a resourcing decision.

Plenary

A plenary was held to summarise discussions of the day, to capture key points raised, and to reiterate actions determined by participants to be of priority.

In summing up, the plenary panel (Muriel Cadd, David Hazelhurst and Julian Pocock) reflected the following points made by participants:

- The development of protocols or a framework for what is “culturally appropriate” practice – have the framework linked to funding, ensuring appropriate follow up occurs to ensure accountability, and an evaluation to measure the effectiveness of the framework. Agencies working to the framework could undertake a cultural audit attached to an accreditation type system.
- Support for local communities to be able to undertake the processes required when applying for Government funds or when developing Indigenous parenting information and support programs.
- Working with Registered Training Organisations delivering courses with child, family and parenting focuses to ensure cultural awareness is part of the curriculum.
- Strengthen cultural identity awareness – it is imperative that cultural identity is part of any Indigenous parenting initiative and that reflections and capturing of ancestry is included.
- Discussions need to occur with Education and Early Childhood Services to explore the demand for collaboration with services providing parenting support and information.
- Develop an opportunity to hear the voices of children and young people in regards to research

projects and delivery of service.

- Don't forget about children with disabilities.

Finally, a workshop participant shares his thoughts on parenting.

THOUGHTS ON PARENTING

I'd like to bring up / raise our children our way.

But then the Department say, "You gotta do it this way"

As a result – our hands are tied.

And some of our children know this!

Some Departments forget that there are lots of different tribes and different ways.

Of course most of our cultural ways are gone but still, I'd like to raise / nurture my children "my way", not the Government way.

Of what culture we've got today new cultures can be adopted in a positive form.

**William Gulf
Woorabinda Senior Health Worker
SNAICC Parenting Project National Workshop
Tuesday 8th June 2004**

SECTION TEN: Overall Recommendations from literature review, focus groups, national workshop and stakeholder consultations

RECOMMENDATIONS - PARENTING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

PREAMBLE

This project has identified overwhelming evidence that parenting information and resources should be culturally relevant, and designed and delivered by Indigenous people and communities to suit their local needs.

Information and resources should be aimed at families rather than parents and recognise the broader notion of family and shared responsibility for child rearing within Indigenous communities. It is also clear that parents and carers primarily use their own family networks and local Indigenous people and services with whom they already have an established relationship as their main source of parenting information.

Whilst the scope of the project focussed particularly on younger children parents participating in focus groups highlighted the need for information and support in relation to older children and young people. Issues that families and communities want included within parenting information and support were typically broad spanning the full range of health and developmental issues and issues from the pre-natal period through to adulthood.

The project identified utilising a strengths based approach and working to normalise activities which support and strengthen families in their child rearing as essential to securing the engagement of families in parenting information and support activities.

Family stories from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities relating to child rearing were seen as an important source of parenting information. Developing parenting information was seen as involving documenting information from within a community or family group and complimenting this with information from outside the community, ie government information or technical information on child development. Family stories need to be gathered and developed as a culturally relevant resource to strengthen and restore child rearing practices and provide positive role models for Indigenous parents and carers.

It is also clear that there are some very good local, regional and state based information products and resources which could be of use to other communities but which are at present unknown to others.

The findings from all sources suggest the following recommendations.

If implemented, these recommendations would improve the dissemination, quality, cultural relevance and impact of information for Indigenous families and communities regarding parenting and child rearing.

RECOMMENDATION ONE

Parenting information for Indigenous communities should combine local content with more broadly applicable information drawn from the evidence base on child and adolescent development.

Localised content within parenting information for Indigenous communities might appropriately include:

- Reference to local role models, leaders and mentors
- Recognition of family and kinship networks
- Language and artwork
- Advice on access to and contacts for local services and supports
- Community background and history, and
- Important local cultural norms and traditions

Common content within parenting information for Indigenous communities might appropriately include:

- Information on pre-natal health and nutrition
- Common experiences and strategies in coping with infants and babies
- Child and adolescent developmental milestones, health and nutrition
- Strategies regarding child behaviour and discipline
- Parents and children's rights and responsibilities
- Child protection with emphasis on prevention of abuse and neglect

RECOMMENDATION TWO

Parenting information (and support) needs to target parents prior to their child's birth and afterwards at key points throughout the early childhood and adolescent development periods as a priority, given

the research on the importance of developmental periods for future outcomes for children.

Information should include cultural knowledge and deal with issues of healing and empowerment, care of self and relationships with partners. The key transition points are:

PRE NATAL AND POST NATAL PERIOD

- Information on health, nutrition, pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding
- Information on how to care for babies, including practical tasks and routines, babies health and nutrition, interactions and relationships with babies, including reading and telling stories.

PARENTING TODDLERS

- Child development knowledge, characteristics of toddlers
- Dealing with toddler behaviour and providing appropriate limits and guidelines
- Toddler play and experiences

PARENTING PRE SCHOOLERS

- Child development knowledge, characteristics of pre schoolers
- Building children's strength and resilience
- Showing children how to solve problems and resolve conflict

TRANSITION TO SCHOOL

- Getting children ready for school
- Social and emotional readiness
- Early literacy

EARLY ADOLESCENCE

- Adolescent development and transition to adulthood
- Harm minimisation, personal safety and risk taking
- Family relationships, discipline and boundary setting

RECOMMENDATION THREE

Government funding priorities should support the gathering of family stories from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities relating to child rearing to value and acknowledge traditional and current parenting strengths and child rearing practices.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

Funding for parenting information and support should take account of the preference for Aboriginal and Islander communities to develop their own parenting information products including printed and audio-visual materials.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE

A priority for funding Indigenous parenting information resources should be the production of highly visual materials designed for use in facilitated group settings. This should include materials utilising plain English and where possible local language. Resources should be available in a variety of formats including, AV materials, posters and leaflets and be provided to parents and families with conversation about what the information is covering.

RECOMMENDATION SIX

Indigenous parenting information resources should be produced targeting local Indigenous mentors, leaders and workers to enable them to establish, facilitate and support a range of parenting and family support groups linked to existing local services.

RECOMMENDATION SEVEN

SNAICC and FaCS should consider the establishment of a national clearinghouse function for the ongoing collection, promotion and sharing of Indigenous parenting information resources as part of the development of the National Indigenous Family and Children's Resource Centre.

RECOMMENDATION EIGHT

Existing Indigenous parenting information such as the NAPCAN Indigenous resources, RAATSIC parenting information and the University of Newcastle, Family Action Centre Indigenous video and posters should be more widely promoted as examples of useful parenting information.

RECOMMENDATION NINE

Where mainstream services, particularly those focussed on families and children, are funded for the production of parenting information and resources, funding requirements should ensure that mainstream agencies:

- assess the existing availability of Indigenous specific resources in their community
- engage in some dialogue with local Indigenous agencies in relation to the need for Indigenous specific information products, and

- develop appropriate strategies for the production of Indigenous information resources to compliment the activities of local Indigenous services

RECOMMENDATIONS - PARENTING SUPPORT AND SKILLS ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

PREAMBLE

Messages from this project about the forms of parent support groups and services stress the need for cultural relevance and Indigenous ownership in program design and delivery. Families need to feel empowered, understood and strengthened through their contact with parenting support services rather than shamed, blamed and disempowered.

This project, as well as other research and government reports about Indigenous children and families, identifies an overwhelming need for underlying issues to be addressed in conjunction with programs and services. These underlying issues include the repercussions from past and present policies that have impacted hugely on the health, wellbeing, parenting and aspirations of Indigenous Australians.

Where mainstream services, supports and programs are used by Indigenous families, the messages from the project are that there has to be partnerships formed with Indigenous organisations, consultation with the local Indigenous community, training in cultural awareness and Indigenous staff employed so that Indigenous families feel safe accessing these services. Cultural awareness training has to be focussed on supporting mainstream agencies to know and appreciate in detail the local Indigenous culture and family networks rather than focus only on very broad aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

RECOMMENDATION TEN

Develop a framework (linked to funding requirements), including guidelines and benchmarks for culturally appropriate practices for mainstream and Indigenous agencies seeking to deliver Indigenous parenting support programs.

RECOMMENDATION ELEVEN

That funding criteria for mainstream or Indigenous agencies to facilitate parenting support groups recognise:

- the broad family responsibility for child rearing favoured by Indigenous communities

- that support groups should be facilitated by a known local Indigenous community member, or an Indigenous person who has established relationships within the community or by non Indigenous facilitator as a partner with a local Indigenous person
- that communities require the flexibility to develop groups that address the needs of and recognise the role of extended family in child rearing including mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, grandparents, siblings and other kin, and
- the preference for parenting groups to be informal, flexible, holistic, long term, and culturally appropriate

RECOMMENDATION TWELVE

Parenting support (and information) needs to target parents prior to their child's birth and afterwards at key points throughout the early childhood and adolescent development periods as a priority, given the research on the importance of developmental periods for future outcomes for children.

PRE NATAL AND POST NATAL PERIOD

Programs and services which:

- Provide knowledge about pregnancy birth and breastfeeding
- Provide respite and Indigenous social networks and support for parents eg. mother/grandmother/baby program, supported playgroups, child care services
- Develop parent/baby relationships
- Provide skill development in basic care, routines, health (including immunization), nutrition of infants and child development

PARENTING TODDLERS

Programs and services which:

- Provide respite and Indigenous social and learning networks and support for parents and stimulation for children eg supported playgroups, child care services
- Provide knowledge about what to expect in the development and behaviour of the toddler
- Provide skill development in appropriate guidance of toddler behaviour

PARENTING PRE SCHOOLERS

Programs and services which:

- Provide respite and Indigenous social and learning networks and support for parents and stimulation for children eg. pre schools, kindergartens, child care services
- Provide knowledge about child development and expectations of pre school children
- Provide knowledge about how to strengthen children's self esteem and build their resilience
- Provide knowledge about strategies to manage children's behaviour and how to help the children make decisions and solve problems

TRANSITION TO SCHOOL

Programs and services which:

- Provide parents with knowledge and skills to help their children prepare for and settle into school, Eg Parents as Teachers Program

EARLY ADOLESCENCE

Programs and services which:

- Provide parents with knowledge and skills to help them understand adolescent development and the transition to adulthood including harm minimisation, personal safety and risk taking, family relationships, discipline and boundary setting with adolescents.

RECOMMENDATION THIRTEEN

Indigenous and non Indigenous facilitators of parent programs and support groups need appropriate training to be able to engage Indigenous parents and other family members in an approach that strengthens parenting and cultural knowledge and uses a group problem solving approach.

RECOMMENDATION FOURTEEN

SNAICC and FaCS should develop or document a range of different ways of evaluating Indigenous parenting programs and services which take a strengths based approach and are meaningful, manageable and acceptable to Indigenous communities and funding bodies. These should be documented and promoted through the National Indigenous Family and Children's Resource Centre.

RECOMMENDATION FIFTEEN

Evaluation should be linked to funding criteria and FaCS should provide assistance, support and flexible ideas on evaluation processes at the time communities or agencies are preparing funding applications for parenting information and support programs

RECOMMENDATION SIXTEEN

Evaluation outcomes from funded projects and activities should be documented and accessible through the FaCS and SNAICC websites to assist professionals and others working with Indigenous families to readily access documented descriptions and evaluations of effective parenting information and support programs.

RECOMMENDATION SEVENTEEN

Existing services used by Indigenous parents and families such as children's services and health services should be prioritised as sites for the development and implementation of parenting information and support activities.

RECOMMENDATION EIGHTEEN

That FaCS develop a multi faceted approach to parent support and parenting skills enhancement targeted to local communities and designed and developed by local communities or in consultation with local communities. An example of a local framework for this is attached as Appendix 15 in the Appendices document.(VACCA/Good Beginnings Parenting Project)

RECOMMENDATIONS - GENERAL

PREAMBLE

There are a number of issues which were raised, particularly during focus groups which require some consideration but are broader than the scope of the project. Some of these require consideration and action within the context of other Australian Government initiatives or at the State and Territory level.

DISCIPLINE VS PHYSICAL ABUSE

Through the focus groups and stakeholder survey, issues relating to child discipline and child protection were raised. A commonly and strongly expressed view was that children from primary school age absorb messages from school and child protection agencies that physical discipline is a form of child abuse. Children, according to parents, threaten to report them to child protection if they use any form of physical discipline. Parents commented that this left them unable to control children.

More generally there were views expressed that parents felt uncertain about physical discipline, what constitutes physical child abuse and alternative strategies for setting boundaries for children and young people. Parents felt that the school systems have too much focus on children's rights

undermining their role and ability as parents to control or guide children's behaviour. SNAICC believes that even if this is merely a perception amongst parents it still requires some response from State and Territory governments.

RECOMMENDATION NINETEEN

That the Australian Government (and SNAICC) initiate discussions with relevant State and Territory authorities regarding the definitions of physical abuse, disciplining and physical punishment of children and appropriate messages to convey to children, young people and families through schools and other forums.

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY

That State and Territory Governments be encouraged to register any parenting information materials and programs they fund directly or indirectly with a central clearinghouse or website, potentially the National Indigenous Family and Children's Resource Centre.

FAMILY INCOME SUPPORT

A significant issue raised in all focus groups was the family conflict and tension which arise following changes to family income support payments. In particular when payments previously paid to parents in respect of dependent children begin to be paid directly to the young people in a family. It was commonly reported that many young people lack the budgeting skills or inclination to use these funds appropriately. Many families reported that young people use these funds for the purchase of alcohol, cigarettes or illicit substances and for short term entertainment. Thus funds previously used for meeting the families basic needs are diverted to purposes that parents view as harmful.

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY ONE

That as part of broader policy considerations in FaCS in relation to welfare reform and income support consideration be given to developing different models for phasing in or negotiating the transfer of payments from parents to young people.

OTHER FACs REPORTS AND PROCESSES

Through the literature review and other elements of the project it is clear that there have been previous reports written in relation to Indigenous parenting. Secondly there are currently reviews occurring within the FaCS portfolio including the AICCA program review and Indigenous Parenting and Family Well Being Program Review which are exploring similar themes.

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY TWO

That FaCs consider this report within the context of the AICCA program review and Indigenous Parenting and Family Well Being Program Review as well as the ongoing development of the National Agenda for Early Childhood.

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY THREE

That FaCs convene discussions with SNAICC and other relevant stakeholders to consider the implications of this report for the:

- allocation of existing resources for parenting information and support
- review of the AICCA and Indigenous Parenting & Family Well Being Programs
- ongoing development of the National Agenda for Early Childhood
- work in relation to the Aboriginal Child Rearing Strategy by FaCs and SNAICC
- establishment of the National Indigenous Family and Children's Resource Centre, and
- other Indigenous programs with FaCS or other Australian Government departments.

RECOMMENDATION TWENTY FOUR

That an executive summary of this report be developed by FaCS and SNAICC for publication and broad public distribution including to state, territory and local Governments.

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