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Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs

**Response to Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry
Discussion Paper February 2013**

The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs (DATSIMA) thanks the Commission for the opportunity to provide a response to their February 2013 Discussion Paper.

The response provides a departmental perspective on the issues being considered by the Commission as opposed to an endorsed, whole-of-government position. As such, DATSIMA requests that the Commission specifically notes that this response is a departmental response and is not government policy.

In responding to the Commission's questions, the Department has identified a number of key guiding principles that we believe should inform the Commission's recommendations for reforms and responses for the child protection system, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families:

- The focus of the child protection system should be on early intervention and prevention, providing high-level, sustained and targeted support to children, parents and the extended family;
- The child's best interests are paramount which includes consideration of cultural identity together with physical, psychological and emotional well-being;
- Any reforms to the child protection system need to be based on effective and value-for-money services and programs, supported by best practice and a rigorous system of review and evaluation to build an evidence base;
- The whole system at every level should consider the needs of Indigenous children, young people and their families within the context of cultural issues, including the requirement for staff to be culturally competent and for services to be culturally appropriate and responsive;
- If the non-government sector, including Indigenous non-government organisations, are recommended to undertake any new roles and responsibilities in a reformed child protection system, they need to be adequately resourced and trained to do so and should be provided with ongoing support at all levels;
- Consultation with the non-government sector and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak is essential to developing realistic and workable reforms to the child protection system;
- Services need to be delivered in a coordinated and culturally appropriate manner and tailored to meet the needs of the child and family;
- To ensure effective service delivery, services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families need to overcome barriers caused by past practices such as lack of trust, a reluctance to access services and fears about confidentiality being breached; and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and respected community members should play a critical role in providing ongoing support to children, parents and families.

Please see responses to the specific questions provided in the Discussion Paper below. The Department would be happy to meet with the Commission if required to further discuss its responses.

Chapter 3: Reducing demand on the tertiary system

1. What is the best way to get agencies working together to plan for secondary child protection services?

DATSIMA notes that for secondary child protection services to work effectively for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, a coordinated approach founded on an assessment of the needs of each family and a plan to deliver targeted services to meet those needs is required.

One approach to facilitate collaboration between agencies in planning for secondary child protection services could be through the use of a “family support hub” model in which a range of component services and programs provided by government and non-government providers are brought together into a single system.¹

The establishment of family hubs would need to be supported by:

- mechanisms to formally and informally bind member agencies and services to the hub;
- an agreed assessment framework and approach;
- a local governance structure to address hub issues at the regional level;
- an agreed referral pathway system; and
- the development of service standards to guide operations and provide consistency of approach.

Key drivers for the establishment of effective family support hubs include:

- joint planning and shared goals;
- role clarity for all agencies;
- a genuine commitment from all agencies to supporting families;
- strong local leadership and co-operative relationships via local networking groups;
- the development of long-term sustainable systems; and
- a process of review and continuous improvement.

2. What is the best way to get agencies working together to deliver secondary services in the most cost effective way?

DATSIMA acknowledges the need for an appropriate balance to be established between tertiary child protection and the provision of secondary, community-based services as this will ensure that notification of suspected child abuse and neglect is not the primary pathway for access to services.

Such a systems change would require the establishment of collaborative working relationships among the various service systems that bring together the non-government sector and State and Australian Government services that provide intake, secondary and tertiary interventions. This collaboration should include:

¹ The Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) currently utilises a system of Child and Family Support Hubs (Hubs) which are multi-functional and highly flexible services focussing on activities for families with young children as a universal entry point, with wrap-around family support services. Hubs deliver a range of integrated child and family support services and may include combinations of parenting education, links to or delivery of early childhood education and care services, family support, child health services, resource libraries, information and referral services and pre-post natal health care. Department of Education, Training and Employment website, accessed on 4 March 2013 at: <http://deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/families/ey-services/support-hubs.html>.

- identifying the needs of individual families;
- involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and community leaders in the process;
- making plans, including agency commitments to each family;
- the articulation of a shared vision; and
- integrated governance arrangements.

The transitioning of funding and resources to secondary services is likely to accrue benefits in the medium to long term for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. Nevertheless, there will still be a need to continue investing in the tertiary system at current levels in the short term to ensure the safety of children within the system. This is because the demands on the tertiary system will continue until gains are able to be made in the secondary system.

In these circumstances, an initial injection of additional funding and resources targeted at intake and secondary services would be necessary before longer term improvements are realised in the tertiary system.

In order to ensure that the initial injection of funds is realising appropriate and timely gains, there would need to be careful monitoring of the services delivered and the outcomes achieved. Monitoring, reviews and evaluations (with corrective action where required) would need to be conducted on a regular basis at all points in the system.

Planning to improve cost effectiveness should acknowledge the importance of incorporating practical supports and multiple opportunities for collaboration and decision-making at the operational level. Some features of such an approach could include:

- Shared accountability for the preparation of and reporting on combined budgets;
- Improved awareness of available federally-funded and locally-funded services to reduce program and service overlap; and
- Funding processes and budgets being considered as a whole, rather than individual agencies, departments and services being the focal points of budget processes.

In addition, governance planning and arrangements must account for existing service providers and continue to encourage, support and incorporate, where appropriate, complementary local level service provision.

3. Which intake and referral model is best suited to Queensland?

DATSIMA supports a community-based intake model and dual referral pathway, with improved resources for reporters, including rollout of the *Queensland Child Protection Guide*. A community-based intake model that incorporates existing local level Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recognised entities and other Indigenous-controlled service providers would be a significant step to increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ownership of and meaningful participation in the child protection system.

Non-stigmatising, targeted, integrated and streamlined referral systems underpin an effective prevention and early intervention strategy. Resourcing existing non-government agencies to provide clear pathways to support services is also critical in reducing the need for costly tertiary crisis interventions.

DATSIMA notes that referral alone is often not effective. Some particularly vulnerable families will need further assistance to access services such as support in making appointments and completing forms. In these circumstances, families and young people will require assisted referrals.

There is also a need to ensure that referrals are appropriate to the circumstances of the family. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have expressed frustration at being referred to a service only to find out that the service cannot assist them. At this point some families give up on obtaining assistance, leading potentially to increased impacts on the family as a whole.

Non-government organisations (NGOs) often possess critical, on-the-ground knowledge and potentially the organisational capability to provide intake, assessment and referral services particularly in geographically isolated regions. However, in order to carry out this function NGOs need to be properly and adequately resourced. Intensive skills building and training is integral to improving the capacity of NGOs to provide intake and referral services. Partnerships with the non-government sector need to be embedded through policy development, planning, program design and service delivery. Appropriate accountability structures would also need to be established within NGOs to ensure that adequate oversight of community officers acting in an intake capacity is provided.

Chapter 4: Investigating and assessing child protection reports

5. What role should SCAN play in a reformed child protection system?

Depending on what is ultimately decided for the child protection system after the Commission of Inquiry, there may be scope for the role of SCAN to change as the roles of officers involved may change within their respective agencies. SCAN could evolve into a forum for strategic discussion of issues raised regarding coordination of program delivery, sector support and continuous workforce development and to foster sustained high level inter-agency commitment.

Additionally, SCAN could fulfil a role/process requirement of reviewing and making recommendations regarding long-term guardianship, including proposals for adoption. However, the role of SCAN teams into the future will ultimately depend on the full suite of proposals recommended by the Commission for the future of the child protection system.

6. How could we improve the system's response to frequently encountered families?

7. Is there any scope for uncooperative or repeat users of tertiary services to be compelled to attend a support program as a precondition to keeping their child at home?

With respect to the two questions above, DATSIMA supports the provision of intensive family support programs to 'frequently encountered families' in order to facilitate meaningful long-term change in families where risks and needs have been consistently identified. By adequately addressing the issues affecting 'frequently encountered families', it would be expected that the pressure on the child protection system would be reduced.

Services providing intensive family support have been shown to be particularly beneficial in reducing tertiary child protection responses. Intensive family support encompasses: assessment and case planning, parenting and skill development, counselling, anger management, financial support, mediation and referral to support services. In general, these services are delivered by non-government organisations.²

Programs for repeat users would need to run for an extended period and involve all relevant family members. The Helping Out Families (HOF) initiative, currently running in three sites (Logan, Beenleigh-Eagleby-Nerang and South Gold Coast) provides intensive support to at-

² Tilbury, C. 2012 *Intensive Family-Based Support Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families: A background paper*. SNAICC and Griffith University.

risk families in order to meet their needs and prevent their entry or re-entry to the Child Safety statutory system. The January 2013 evaluation of the HOF initiative reports that families engaging with intensive family services for more than six months were almost seven times less likely to be re-reported than those who engaged but exited after 1.5 months or less.³ A further evaluation is due in December 2013, with a final evaluation due in June 2014. Subject to the outcomes of the further evaluations, DATSIMA would be supportive of a statewide rollout of the HOF initiative, with an emphasis on place-based responses with services working together.

8. What changes, if any, should be made to the Structured Decision Making tools to ensure they work effectively?

DATSIMA supports the continued use of Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools in a reformed system that provides a broader level of support to practitioners, including:

- Increased education and training in the use of SDM tools, with emphasis on their efficacy as a guide rather than prescriptive method for decision-making;
- Access to tools or processes designed for a strength-based approach to family risk assessment, such as offered by the Signs of Safety model mentioned by the Commission in its discussion paper.

Any decision-making tool utilised should incorporate flexibility to allow consideration of the different experiences of parenting and family roles for different cultural groups. A decision-making tool which is too structured, as opposed to providing guiding principles, does not allow for this flexibility.

9. Should the department have access to an alternative response to notifications other than an investigation and assessment (for example, a differential response model)? If so, what should the alternatives be?

DATSIMA supports a differential response model, with a well-funded and resourced secondary sector and strong focus on comprehensive professional workforce development. Any model which can take into account the specific situation of families in contact or at risk of contact with the child protection system and offers a flexible response tailored to their needs warrants consideration. Government agencies should adopt a consistent approach in assessing the needs of and delivering services to families whilst ensuring that there is flexibility in the determination of the interventions required so services are tailored towards the needs of the young person or family.

³ Helping Out Families Phase 3 Outcomes Evaluation Report, January 2013, page 12. DATSIMA understands that this Report has only been published on a targeted release only, but that it has been provided to the Commission by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

Chapter 5: Working with children in care

10. At what point should the focus shift from parental rehabilitation and family preservation as the preferred goal to the placement of a child in a stable alternative arrangement?

DATSIMA believes that the best interests of the child should be paramount in any decision regarding the child's future.

The decision regarding whether it is still in the child's best interests to continue to work towards reunification, which would include reference to the need for a child to maintain cultural connections and identity, should not be made lightly and should be based on objective evidence. Given the nature of such a decision DATSIMA believes that a court should be in a position to make such an order.

13. Should adoption, or some other more permanent placement option, be more readily available to enhance placement stability for children in long-term care?

There is general agreement both in the literature and in the commentary provided by academics, researchers, experts and Indigenous leaders that the large-scale removal of Indigenous children from their families has been a major contributing factor to the experience of trauma for Indigenous people across the country. It is noted that the Commission has acknowledged these issues and the need to learn from past Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child protection practices in Chapter 7.⁴

As the Commission notes,⁵ the legacy of past removal practices is an explanation of a profound suspicion of and distrust of authorities intervening in child welfare matters by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. DATSIMA understands that modern child welfare principles and practices are vastly different from past policies and practices which have contributed so detrimentally to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies and produced many of the child welfare issues facing those communities today. However, the latter had such serious and long-lasting negative effects on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and societies that their legacy is especially poignant in the debate on child placement.

In part, this explains the profound suspicion by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of authorities intervening in child welfare matters and opposition to the permanent removal of a child for adoption, particularly if that child is to be placed in a foreign cultural setting. Removal of a child from an Indigenous family or community raises other issues in terms of notions of rights to cultural independence and self-determination.

Resistance to the notion of permanent removal of a child is likely to be exacerbated by the traditional absence of notions of adoption from Aboriginal culture. While the department understands that there are many different forms of 'adoption' which can be practised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, adoption, as it is currently defined in Australian Common Law, is an unknown institution in Aboriginal customary law. The separation of children from birth families and the absolute transfer of parental rights are 'incompatible with the basic tenets of Aboriginal society'.⁶

Bearing in mind the troubled background to past adoption practices with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland, and acknowledging that adoption is an unknown institution in Aboriginal customary law and is, in certain respects,

⁴ QCPCoI Discussion Paper, Section 7.2.5, page 180-181.

⁵ QCPCoI Discussion Paper, Section 5.2.1, Page 110.

⁶ NSW Law Reform Commission, 1994: *Review of the Adoption of Children Act 1965 (NSW)* (Discussion Paper 34, Sydney), p192.

also differently construed in Torres Strait Islander culture, DATSIMA supports the current provisions within the *Adoption Act 2009* which recognise these differences and provides inherent protection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by stating that:

(1) This Act is also to be administered under the following principles—

(a) because adoption (as provided for in this Act) is not part of Aboriginal tradition or Island custom, adoption of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child should be considered as a way of meeting the child's need for long-term stable care only if there is no better available option;

Note – “Island custom includes a customary child-rearing practice that is similar to adoption in so far as parental responsibility for a child is permanently transferred to someone other than the child's parents. This practice is sometimes referred to as either ‘customary adoption’ or ‘traditional adoption’.”

(b) it is in the best interests of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child—

- (i) to be cared for within an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community; and*
- (ii) to maintain contact with the child's community or language group; and*
- (iii) to develop and maintain a connection with the child's Aboriginal tradition or Island custom; and*
- (iv) for the child's sense of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander identity to be preserved and enhanced.⁷*

However, DATSIMA could not provide comment on how the above provisions are or have been applied in practice. Any experience of Indigenous adoption under the Act and, more particularly, the perspectives of Indigenous and other child care workers and professionals on how it could practically impact the formal adoption process, would be instructive to the Commission.

Nevertheless, it is recognised that placements in non-Indigenous out-of-home care are sometimes necessary in current circumstances. Whether permanent adoption is a preferable option for any particular child would depend on the circumstances of the case and what is determined to be in the best interests of the child. DATSIMA accepts that in any reformed model, there will be a need to provide for out-of-home care for children who have been harmed or who are at risk of being harmed. DATSIMA supports open adoption for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in cases where multiple unsuccessful attempts at parental rehabilitation and family preservation have cumulative negative effects on the wellbeing of the child and where enhanced placement stability is deemed to hold more advantages for the child than long-term guardianship.

It is reasonable to assert that there is significant risk in adoption of an Indigenous child that cultural linkages will be lost. This needs to be acknowledged and concerted attempts made to minimise the impact in this regard in cases where adoption is proposed as the best avenue for long term care. Irrespective of extenuating circumstances, the child's right to his or her cultural inheritance must continue to be an important guiding principle. This principle

⁷ *Adoption Act 2009*, Section 7.

is embodied in the Indigenous Child Placement Principle and it is vital and essential that the principle informs any approach to the adoption of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children. It is noted that the Commission has stated that they are not proposing any substantial changes to the Child Placement Principle.⁸

Another matter which should be considered by the Commission is potential financial disadvantage as a factor preventing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from adopting. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are disproportionately represented among low-income earners in Australia generally. A national study conducted in 2005 of the recruitment, assessment, training and support of Indigenous carers in Australia showed that foster carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin were also disproportionately represented among the large group of foster carers living in low-income households.⁹ The study highlighted that material disadvantages and lower health standards that characterised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples act as strong structural barriers to families providing care for children, particularly of a generalist (non-kinship) nature. This disadvantage could similarly act as a barrier to Indigenous families electing to become adoptive parents to Indigenous children in care.

The feedback received from DATSIMA's regional offices confirms that the absence of financial and practical support may act as a strong disincentive for Indigenous or kinship carers to seek to adopt an Indigenous child they are caring for because foster parents currently receive a tax-free fortnightly carer's payment, and adoptive parents receive no such entitlement. Anecdotal commentary provided to DATSIMA suggests that this may dissuade current Indigenous carers from seeking to assume permanent guardianship through adoption, and may even deter potential new carers. This could result in more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being placed in non-Indigenous adoptive situations if adoption was used as a response to permanency planning.

DATSIMA would like to see more financial and other support services for adoptive parents where adoption has been used in preference to long-term guardianship in the best interests of the child.

Permanent Adoption and Native Title

As has been demonstrated by the experience of the 'Stolen Generation' people, the separation of Indigenous persons from their families has not only prevented them from acquiring language, culture and the ability to carry out their traditional responsibilities but, in some cases, has also prevented them from establishing their genealogical links.¹⁰ The lack of such links has precluded or prejudiced some of these Stolen Generation people from successfully asserting rights under the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*.

In order to establish a native title claim, it is necessary to establish a relationship to the land. The first requirement for people seeking to re-establish their relationship with their land is establishing their biological descent, so the person must be able to trace his or her family, and the family's community of origin must also be known. The Community and Personal Histories unit within DATSIMA currently assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to find out about their families, where their families come from and how they are connected to a certain locality. Although a person is unlikely to be able to sustain a native title claim independently (and native title claims are generally collective claims), a person who is accepted into his or her community of origin may participate in a claim brought by that community. The Full Court of the Federal Court considered this in the case of *Kanak* in 1995 and concluded that:

⁸ QCPCOI Discussion paper, Section 5.2.1, page 111.

⁹ Higgins, D. J., Bromfield, L. M., & Richardson, N. (2005), *Enhancing out-of-home care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people*, Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies, National Child Protection Clearinghouse.

¹⁰ HREOC (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission), April 1997, *Bringing them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*, Commonwealth of Australia, Sydney, p178.

... native title can be enjoyed only by members of an identifiable community who are entitled to enjoy the land under the traditionally based laws and customs, as currently acknowledged and observed, of that community. Individuals may have native title rights that are protected, but these rights are dependent upon the existence of communal native title and are 'carved out' of that title. The only persons entitled to claim native title are those who can show biological descent from the indigenous people entitled to enjoy the land under the laws and customs of their own clan or group.¹¹

Aboriginal people whose family connections have been severed through adoption outside of their Indigenous community may be accepted back into Aboriginal communities, but ultimately the issue of granting this acceptance remains one for the Aboriginal clan or group to decide.¹² There may also be traditional laws and customs within the clan group which govern the acceptance of people in the community, and it is possible that a person may be refused permission to re-join a community, or refused recognition as being a member of a community, because they have not participated in the traditional and cultural activities of that community for an extended length of time.¹³ If this is the case, the disentanglement to claim as a member of a group would be a direct end result of the separation of that person from the community as a child.

Once a native title claim is successful, for example under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth), it is also entirely up to the traditional owners to decide whether they will accept a person removed from the community in childhood and permit him or her to share in the enjoyment of the land.¹⁴

This has implications with respect to the use of adoption in Queensland as a means of reducing the number of Indigenous children in out-of-home care. If Indigenous children are adopted by non-Indigenous persons or families, it needs to be recognised that unless the child's links to his or her family and community are preserved, native title rights and access to other cultural rights, privileges and obligations will be lost. DATSIMA recommends that in considering these, and all other issues, the Commission seeks the advice of relevant Indigenous community and stakeholder groups.

14. What are the potential benefits or disadvantages of the proposed multidisciplinary casework team approach?

DATSIMA supports an intensive casework model being provided to children and young people who have experienced abuse. There are benefits in having casework teams consisting of various professionals, including those aware of the child's education and health circumstances and counselling professionals, so any assistance and support can be provided in an integrated and holistic manner. Issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in contact with the system can be complex and multi-layered, requiring a multi-disciplinary approach to addressing these needs.

In any proposed multi-disciplinary casework team, there should be workers with specific knowledge and expertise in working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and peoples, so the specific cultural needs of the child can be considered as part of any case management.¹⁵

¹¹ *Kanak*, 1995: Volume 132 *Australian Law Reports* p329, cited in *Bringing them Home Report*, p179.

¹² *Bringing them Home Report*, p179.

¹³ Cited in the submission of Corrs Chambers Westgarth Lawyers to the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families, *Bringing them Home Report*, p178

¹⁴ *Bringing them Home Report*, p179

¹⁵ QCPCOI Discussion Paper, page 122

CALD cultural workers could operate in a manner similar to that proposed for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural worker,¹⁶ and provide advice to the team on working with CALD families and children, including in relation to cultural practices and engaging interpreters when people have difficulty communicating in English. Other potential roles for the CALD worker could include:

- providing assistance and advice to the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (DCCSDS) generally in relation to cultural capability, and
- engagement with the local CALD communities regarding child protection issues, expectations of parenting in the Australian context and the role of DCCSDS.

16. How could case workers be supported to implement the child placement principle in a more systematic way?

It is acknowledged that there are currently difficulties in finding enough Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers to match the number of Indigenous children in out-of-home care.

A front-end approach to addressing the issues leading to the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the system, by investing effectively in primary and secondary interventions to strengthen and empower local responses, together with broader closing the gap strategies which aim to improve outcomes for Indigenous people in a range of areas, will have medium and longer term impacts on children in the system or at risk of notification. However, there are also shorter term measures which could be pursued to enhance the numbers of Indigenous carers for children currently in the tertiary system, such as an investigation of the issues surrounding obtaining 'blue cards' in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. It is noted by DATSIMA that this issue had been raised several times with the Commission.¹⁷

The requirement for all adult members of a household to hold a current Blue Card raises privacy and other concerns for those individuals. The process is lengthy, cards need to be re-issued regularly, and there may be a perception that all past criminal convictions are taken into account, not just child-related matters. Written requests for further information from applicants required to assess blue card applications may go unanswered as they can be mistaken as evidence that an application will be or has been declined. DATSIMA acknowledges the need to screen potential carers and household members, but would like to see proactive strategies to inform and assist Indigenous communities satisfy this requirement.

The age profile of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders is another factor which could be contributing to the lack of carers. Queensland has a relatively young Indigenous population. Almost half of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queensland population is aged 0-19 years, which means that on average, there is one Indigenous adult for every child or teenager. By comparison, among non-Indigenous peoples, there are approximately three adults for every young person.¹⁸ This age profile needs to be considered, along with other systemic issues identified by the Commission, when developing responses to the lack of Indigenous carers in the child protection system.

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely than non-Indigenous Australians to face poorer health and other life outcomes, this could also be impacting on the numbers of carers available. Elderly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who may be facing health issues of their own, apply to be carers. More assistance could be offered to these carers to support them in this role. DATSIMA recommends that feedback is sought

¹⁶ QCPCol Discussion Paper, page 122

¹⁷ Noted in Footnote 58, QCPCol Discussion Paper, page 137

¹⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 3101.0 - Australian Demographic Statistics, Mar 2012 (Tables 11-12)

from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers and Indigenous non-government organisations to determine what type of support would be most beneficial for this group.

Chapter 6: Young people leaving care

18. To what extent should young people continue to be provided with support on leaving the care system?

Ideally, support should be provided until a young person is up to 25 years of age. It is noted that many other jurisdictions, including Western Australia, New South Wales, the Northern Territory, South Australia and Tasmania all have provisions which allow for support until this age, or further where applicable.¹⁹

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are more likely to experience poorer life outcomes than their non-Indigenous peers. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are more likely to be youth offenders and less likely to stay in school until year 12 and obtain qualifications.²⁰ These life outcomes are likely to be magnified for children leaving care, and have significant flow on effects into adulthood.

To ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people leaving care are effectively supported, they need to be connected with services that will assist them to transition to adulthood and independence. These may include services such as mentoring or counselling programs, assistance to continue their education and/or transition to employment and training as well as the provision of stable and adequate accommodation options. Effective transition planning should also ensure that young people are aware of and connected with supports outside of those provided by the Queensland Government, including non-government and Indigenous organisations and Australian Government assistance, such as ABSTUDY and Centrelink.

It has been acknowledged that improvements could be made to transition planning for children who are about to leave care²¹. Young people leaving the system need to feel like they are supported and able to connect with the types of support services listed above. Robust and effective transition planning, undertaken consistently and early, will assist with this.

19. In an environment of competing fiscal demands on all government agencies, how can support to young people leaving care be improved?

In supporting culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) young people to transition from care, developing connections for the young person and CALD community organisations/associations should be a key consideration.

These not-for-profit community based organisations can provide an opportunity for the young person to develop relationships and support networks. Many organisations provide social and cultural events and activities, developing a sense of belonging and community. The potential benefit of establishing these connections through the transition period is that young people will have established relationships which could assist in supporting them to greater independence.

¹⁹ QCPCoI Discussion Paper, Table 4, page 154

²⁰ Census 2011 data, available on the Office of Economic and Statistical Research's website. Information sheets are available: <http://www.oesr.qld.gov.au/products/bulletins/atsi-pop-qld-c11/atsi-pop-qld-c11.pdf> and <http://www.oesr.qld.gov.au/products/bulletins/labour-force-education-qld-atsi-c11/index.php>

²¹ QCPCoI Discussion Paper, section 6.2.1, page 148

Chapter 7: Addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

21. What would be the most efficient and cost-effective way to develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family wellbeing services across Queensland?

DATSIMA plays a key role in facilitating coordinated responses across government to key issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. Child protection is one of a range of areas where this approach is applicable.

The sharing of information between various primary and secondary services may improve the experience of clients and facilitate a better and more holistic response to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child protection issues. However, any information sharing undertaken must protect the confidentiality of clients accessing the services.

DATSIMA considers that effective use of existing services is important, in the first instance, to achieve cost-effective service delivery. Well coordinated planning, referral and case-management are critical. While DATSIMA would favour delivery of prevention and secondary services by Indigenous specific providers, the department also understands that this is not always possible given funding and financial limitations as well as availability of appropriately qualified service personnel. Secondly, non-government service providers, both Indigenous-specific and mainstream, must be adequately resourced if they are to be expected to deliver appropriate and effective services.

It is important to recognise the diversity of social, economic and cultural circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders who live throughout the State in urban, regional and rural/remote mainland and island settings. This may present a variety of particular issues and pressures on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and their communities. Child protection responses need to take into account the range of issues that impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and recognise that a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate.

To accurately determine the adequacy and appropriateness of the current level, availability and accessibility of services, it is important that service mapping and regular evaluations are undertaken on a community-by-community basis as part of the evidence base to assess community need.

When investigating available services, it should also be noted that accessibility to services is not solely determined by availability of those services. The cultural appropriateness of the service, for example the extent to which a service provider acknowledges the cultural and linguistic diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, is a key factor in whether Indigenous people will access programs and initiatives.

The evidence base about what works to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and families is limited. This is partly due to a lack of outcomes evaluations being undertaken. It is imperative that the evidence base be built.

22. Could Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family wellbeing services be built into existing service infrastructure, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Services?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical services face significant challenges in addressing the myriad of health issues which impact on the life-expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Some of the larger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical services in Queensland may have the capacity to undertake this role. DATSIMA understands that Wuchopperen Health Service in Cairns and Townsville Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services Ltd are recognised entities.

The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), the national peak body representing over 150 Indigenous community controlled health services (or Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, ACCHS) across the country on Aboriginal health and wellbeing issues, defines primary health care as including not only the provision of medical care, but also including the provision of services such as counselling, preventative medicine, health education and promotion, rehabilitative services, antenatal and postnatal care, maternal and child care programs. A key objective of the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 2003 – 2013* is strong community controlled primary health care services that can draw on mainstream services where appropriate to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have access to the full range of services expected within a comprehensive primary health care context.

This philosophy is applicable to the child protection services. Service delivery difficulties often arise where there are a range of services available which operate in isolation of other related services and client referral pathways are not clearly defined or are cumbersome and unwieldy. This can result in service delivery gaps which may leave those who are most disadvantaged at risk of falling through the cracks in the network.

A holistic approach to address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families may reduce the incidence of clients being “bounced between services” that cater to slightly different issues, as has often been reported. Information exchange between service providers and appropriately coordinated case plans would serve to ensure that appropriate services are accessed on a case-by-case basis.

Information sharing practices would need to be addressed, in part, through policies and guidelines, and informed by existing legislation including the *Information Privacy Act 2009*, the *Community Services Act 2007* and the *Child Protection Act 1999*. Information sharing could also be facilitated through memoranda of understanding and the development of information sharing protocols.

DATSIMA recommends that the Commission consult extensively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Services and other Indigenous organisations regarding their capacity, resourcing and willingness to take on this additional service provision role.

23. How would an expanded peak body be structured and what functions should it have?

The Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak currently plays a vital role in the sector working in partnership with its member organisations to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families including to provide a collective voice to governments in relation to the safety, health and overall wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

It would not be appropriate for DATSIMA to suggest what an expanded peak body structure and function would include. However, DATSIMA strongly recommends that any such

considerations be determined in close partnership, communication and consultation with the peak body, its members and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. Further, DATSIMA would strongly advocate for increased functions and responsibilities placed on the peak body to be accompanied by appropriate levels of increased funding and other resources, including the need for a rigorous assessment of the capacity of government and non-government agencies to deliver the required services.

24. What statutory child protection functions should be included in a trial of a delegation of functions to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies?

DATSIMA supports the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recognised entities, and values the contributions that these agencies make in the child protection process. DATSIMA would endorse an ongoing commitment by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services to enhancing the role of recognised entities and their participation in key decisions made about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

The levels of capacity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled agencies throughout Queensland varies. DATSIMA cannot say what statutory child protection functions should be included in a trial of a delegation of functions to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies. However, DATSIMA considers that to be fully effective, adequate and consistent levels of funding and ongoing assistance to address capacity building needs to be provided to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child protection service agencies. Appropriate capacity building measures might include the provision of specialist training to Indigenous case workers, including advocacy training, to ensure that case workers are best able to serve the interests of their clients and to secure optimal outcomes for them.

25. What processes should be used for accrediting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies to take on statutory child protection functions and how would the quality of those services be monitored?

DATSIMA would strongly suggest that while every support must be afforded to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies to achieve accreditation, the processes must be the same as for mainstream agencies. There should be no compromise for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are entitled to the same level of services as all other Queensland children and young people regardless of the service provider.

It is noted that the Commission has considered the role of local Family Responsibilities Commissioners in restoring local authority and social norms as part of the Cape York Welfare Reform Trial (CYWR) communities of Aurukun, Coen, Mossman Gorge and Hope Vale. The Commission notes that "community conferencing is at the centre of the Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) model",²² and at the conclusion of a conference, the FRC can decide whether further action should be undertaken.

It is important to note that conferencing under the FRC does not operate in isolation, and measures, such as income management or referrals to the support system established under the Trial, can be applied as a result of attending a conference. The Commission would need to consider the applicability of this model if recommending a community conferencing scheme for child protection.

²² QCPCol Discussion paper, 7.2.4, page 178.

Chapter 8: Workforce development

26. Should child safety officers be required to hold tertiary qualifications in social work, psychology or human services?

27. Should there be an alternative Vocational Education and Training (VET) pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers to progress towards a child safety officer role to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child safety officers in the workforce? Or should this pathway be available to all workers?

28. Are there specific areas of practice where training could be improved?

Regarding the questions above, DATSIMA supports tertiary qualifications in social work, psychology or human services for people employed as child safety officers. However, these qualifications should only be preferred, not mandatory, as it should be recognised that other educational qualifications and experiences may provide employees with the necessary skills to undertake this role.

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) pathway could have potential benefits for all workers. However, the pathway should include a mandatory cultural capability component including both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural capability and CALD cultural capability.

DATSIMA supports workforce strategies designed on the premise that all agencies and organisations require minimum standard, complementary qualifications/skills/experience and an environment of continuous learning to adequately service the sector.

The issue of access to education and training opportunities in rural and remote areas is compounded by the tendency for people, once qualified, to leave their region or community to take up employment and other opportunities elsewhere. Having strong family connections within a community where family members have regular contact with the child protection system may be an issue for local recruitment and/or retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in locations with higher resourcing needs.

Added incentives for choosing a child safety career pathway should be explored and may include:

- options for tertiary students to nominate communities of choice for work placements;
- option for tertiary education costs to be offset by prior commitment to work in particular communities or areas as determined by the department/partner agencies;
- provisions for transfers and officer interchange between partner NGOs and government agencies for developmental or other reasons; and
- enhanced employee supports or entitlements that mitigate against mental and emotional fatigue.

DATSIMA considers that cultural capability is critical to the successful delivery of child safety services and supports mandatory training for all child safety staff. It is well established that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people prefer and respond to culturally capable service providers, especially those that themselves employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Any alternate pathway would need to ensure that workers are fully trained and prepared for employment in the child protection area.

Advice from DATSIMA's regions suggests that there may be a need for Family Support workers to work in partnership with Child Safety workers locally to avoid misunderstandings which can arise because of cultural and language barriers.

The cultural capability of child safety staff could be improved by providing regular professional development opportunities including through professional cultural competence training providers in a face-to-face setting. Incorporating cultural capability modules, for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, in the various degrees listed in the qualifications required for child protection workers, on page 199 of the discussion paper, would also assist in developing a culturally capable workforce.

31. In line with other jurisdictions in Australia and Closing the gap initiatives, should there be an increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment targets within Queensland's child protection sector?

The Commission's discussion paper highlights the dramatic over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system and points to rising participation in strong contrast to reduced levels in the non-Indigenous population.

The discussion paper indicates that, in June 2012, 79 staff members identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This number is approximately 5.4% of Child Safety's 1477 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff²³.

The Commission proposes that consideration be given to a ten per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment target in the first year of implementation, to 20% in years two to five and 30% after five years.²⁴ DATSIMA strongly supports an increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment targets within Queensland's child protection sector. The low employment rate of Indigenous Australians contributes to economic deprivation and a range of social problems. Increasing employment rates is key to reducing Indigenous disadvantage.²⁵ In this way, creating links with education and employment will lead to improved outcomes across other indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

If this approach is adopted there would be a significant need for a VET pathway as suggested by the Commission. Other strategies to increase Indigenous employment in the short and long term would also need to be considered to meet this target.

If targets are provided, it is important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed at all levels and stages of the system, and both in the Department and in the Non-Government sector, not just in Recognised Entity roles or in employment in any Expanded Peak.

Any employment target strategy should also be supported by mandated Cultural Capability training for all child safety officers. Given the strong preference of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for culturally capable service providers and the high growth rates of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are known to Child Safety, a targeted increase of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers to a level commensurate with the proportions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth engaged with the system may result in improvements to service delivery. It is noted that the Commission's proposed 30% employment target is roughly representative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's contact with the system.²⁶

²³ QCPCoI Discussion paper at point 8.1 p193.

²⁴ QCPCoI Discussion paper at point 8.3.7 p220.

²⁵ Gray, M, Hunter, B and Lohar, S, March 2012, *Increasing Indigenous Employment Rates*, Issues Paper No3, Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, page 1.

²⁶ The latest child protection data for the 12 months to 30 June 2012 shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people accounted for 26.6 per cent of children notified to the DCCSDS; 28.7 per cent of children subject to a substantiation; 38.1 per cent of children subject to child protection orders; and 38.4 per cent of children living away from home

The Commission's discussion paper notes that attraction and retention strategies need to be developed in view of increasing competition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in a range of professional roles. Having a culturally capable workforce, supported by ongoing mentoring and support, is considered to be critical to successful attraction and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Chapter 10: Courts and tribunals

39. What sort of expert advice should the Children's Court have access to, and in what kinds of decisions should the court be seeking advice?

The Commission's comment that "in matters involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (*sic*), families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds... magistrates may need help to understand family and parenting practices"²⁷ is noted and supported by DATSIMA. In particular, it would be beneficial for the Children's Court to have access to expert advice relating to:

- Understanding of different cultural approaches to child-rearing and family relationships for both Indigenous and CALD families,
- Understanding the importance of culture and what the impact of a decision would be on the child maintaining their cultural identity,
- Access to professional interpreters in circumstances where children and/or family members have difficulty communicating in English (including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, where English may not be a first language, and including where Aboriginal English is used), and
- Torture and trauma, particularly in relation to refugee experiences.

41. What, if any, changes should be made to the family group meeting process to ensure that it is an effective mechanism for encouraging children, young people and families to participate in decision-making?

Chapter 7 proposes legislative changes to delegate the coordination and facilitation of family group meetings for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to suitably accredited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family wellbeing services. The provision of culturally responsive and supportive family group meetings is important and will assist with families engaging in decision-making. It is likely that community organisations may be able to assist with some other issues identified by the Commission, including with language difficulties and communication norms, the attendance of appropriate extended family members at family group meetings and the seemingly 'non-independence' of the meeting convener²⁸. However, if the facilitation of these meetings is to be delegated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations, they need to be adequately resourced and trained to undertake this role successfully. DATSIMA also suggests that the Commission undertake consultation with Indigenous community organisations in relation to expanding their role in this way.

For family group meeting situations involving families from a CALD background consideration should also be given to:

(3,255 of 8,482). Available from: <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety/about-us/our-performance>. Accessed 7 March 2013.

²⁷ QCPCoI Discussion Paper, 10.2.3, page 260.

²⁸ QCPCoI Discussion Paper, section 10.2.6, pages 264 and 265.

- Use of professional interpreters in circumstances where children and/or family members have difficulty communicating in English,
- Cultural capability training for meeting conveners including developing an understanding of the refugee experience, and
- Inclusion of a cultural support person, for example for families from refugee backgrounds who may feel more comfortable with a settlement caseworker to support them during the process.

42. What, if any, changes should be made to court-ordered conferences to ensure that this is an effective mechanism for discussing possible settlement in child protection litigation?

43. What, if any, changes should be made to the compulsory conference process to ensure that it is an effective dispute resolution process in the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal proceedings?

Regarding the above questions, the *Queensland Government Language Services Policy* aims to enhance access to interpreters and translated information for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to enable equitable access to the full range of services. These strategies include the engagement of professional interpreters in circumstances where people experience difficulties communicating in English, the provision of multilingual information and the training of staff in how to work with interpreters.

In circumstances, such as court-ordered conferences, where clients have difficulty communicating in English, the use of professional interpreters should be mandatory.

Chapter 12: Conclusion

47. What other changes might improve the effectiveness of Queensland's child protection system?

DATSIMA welcomes the Commission's intent to further consider the particular needs of children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds as identified in Chapter 12 of the discussion paper.

In November 2012 the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland released a report entitled *'What's working?'* in the practice of service provision to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This research project used the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020* as a basis to argue for effective practices amongst family and child services working with people from CALD backgrounds. Twenty-five individuals were interviewed in a two-phase process to identify best practice "tips" of how to work with people from CALD backgrounds. Out of these interviews, 244 tips were categorised under 21 themes. Consistent to all interviews was the importance of client-worker relationships. Following on from this, more than half of the themes were relationship related. Many of the themes support and reiterate previous practice guides, however personal experience and personality traits were also highlighted as pivotal to a worker's ability to be effective.

A copy of the report has been provided as Attachment 1 for the Commission's information. Multicultural Affairs Queensland, DATSIMA can provide further information if required.



Ethnic Communities

Council of Queensland

'What's working?' in the practice of service provision to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

November 2012



ECCQ and the researcher would like to acknowledge the significant contribution of the research participants in this study. Thank you for sharing your time, experience and insights.

Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland

'What's working?' in the practice of service provision to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

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Abstract

Previous research regarding best practice for workers engaging with people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds has resulted in the development of numerous practice guides. This research sought to build on these guides to further examine *what is working* within real life practice. The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 places emphasis on primary intervention as the best model for child protection. This research project uses this framework as a basis to argue for effective practices amongst family and child services working with people from CALD backgrounds. Twenty-five individuals were interviewed in a two-phase process to identify best practice "tips" of how to work with people from CALD backgrounds. Out of these interviews 244 tips were categorised under 21 themes. Consistent to all interviews was the importance of client-worker relationships. Following on from this, more than half of the themes were relationship related. Many of the themes support and reiterate previous practice guides however personal experience and personality traits were also highlighted as pivotal to a worker's ability to be effective.

Background

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 identified that the most effective way to ensure a child's safety and wellbeing was to support families by building strength and capacity in communities and families throughout Australia. The *Child Protection Act 1999* (Qld) includes family support as an underpinning principle of administration and purpose of the Act. The preferred way of ensuring a child's safety and wellbeing is through supporting the child's family (s.5B(c)). Therefore it is in the best interest of the child that families receive timely and appropriate access to family and child services. *Inverting the Pyramid*¹ proposes a public health model conceptual approach to child protection. The model has three intervention stages. The first stage is the primary or universal intervention, which looks at building resources and targeting social factors that lead to child maltreatment. The second stage is the secondary or targeted intervention with vulnerable families where a child is at risk of maltreatment. With the tertiary or statutory intervention being mobilised when maltreatment has already occurred. Based on the models of both the National Framework and *Inverting the Pyramid*, this research project aims to identify methods to strengthen the primary or universal intervention for families and children for families from CALD backgrounds.

Purpose

The limitations and issues of services catering for people from CALD backgrounds are well documented. The approach of this research project, in contrast, aims to identify what individuals and organisations are currently doing that 'works'. What is it that is working in practice with people from CALD backgrounds? With this knowledge of what works, what "tips" can be developed to help other practitioners in their work to ensure best practice? The results from this research project may in fact support and reiterate the importance of current practices and identify current culturally responsive service models as a key to good practice. Alternatively, there may be other factors contributing to effective practice that are currently being overlooked. With the knowledge gained from this project, organisations and individuals working with people from CALD backgrounds will be able to use the information to ensure best practice when working with clients from CALD backgrounds. Through access to effective universal primary intervention services the system can alleviate the requirement for statutory services to become involved with families.

¹ Allen Consulting Group. (2009). *Inverting the pyramid: Enhancing systems for protecting children*. Canberra: Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth



Literature review

Australia's population has been diversifying at a large rate over the past 40 years. Between 2000 and 2010, over 1.2 million migrants arrived in Australia, leading to a steady increase in Australia's migration program over the past 10 years (Dept. of Immigration, 2012). Due to these increases, there has been a focus on research regarding the CALD community, as larger numbers of refugees and migrants reside in cities and towns. In order to ensure that community organisations and governments are working effectively with this group of people, researchers and policy makers are developing good practice guides and practice frameworks for workers engaging with people from a CALD background. These practice guides and frameworks are aimed at different levels of practice, ranging from policy statements, to guides concerning direct client practice.

One example of a guide by the Queensland Government was the 2007 document, *Engaging Queenslanders: An introduction to working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities*. This document provided ten tips of how workers can better engage with CALD communities.

Similarly, the NSW Government Department for Human Services and Community Services released practice notes entitled: *Culturally appropriate service provision for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children and families in the New South Wales (NSW) child protection system (CPS)* in 2011. This document highlighted: some of the challenges facing the CALD community; the ways in which workers can practice cultural sensitivity; and awareness and the implications for practice.

Two further examples of practice guides for working with CALD families involved with the child protection system, were the NSW Department of Community Services, *Good Practice Guide: Working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people and communities* (2005) and the Queensland Department of Child Safety's Practice Paper; *Working with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds* (2010). Both of these reports were primarily focused on workers within the tertiary end of the child protection system. These reports are extensive in their detail and offer practical recommendations for workers on how to approach their practice with CALD families.

A review of all of these practice documents has found that there are consistent themes throughout the literature including: culturally appropriate communication; the importance of utilising interpreters; cultural knowledge; the employment of people from diverse backgrounds; having an awareness of refugee and migrant experiences; interacting with communities; having and giving knowledge on other appropriate services and how to use them; respecting diversity; and the importance of being aware of the workers own preconceptions and biases. All these themes are essentially the building blocks of working relationships.

While it is anticipated that these themes will emerge throughout this research, one key theme that is largely missing from earlier literature in this field is the focus on the importance of building relationships between workers and clients from a CALD background. Furthermore, a notable absence in these documents, is information regarding the linkages between the practice recommendations and these personal relationships.

Peakcare Queensland's 2010 document, which was done in collaboration with ECCQ, *Culture Matters* by Mettler, concludes on the fundamental importance of relationships and how these are linked to the emotional response of community members. In addition, the author found that positive relationship-building between individuals and organisations could repair past hurt and build solid and open relationships.

Using this as a foundation for research, this report will build on the practice recommendations made in earlier reports, to offer a more detailed and thorough understanding of how these recommendation and practice manuals are mutually influenced by the relationship.

Interviews with research participants will seek to identify the qualities and "what works" in practice that builds effective relationships and this information will be compared to previous literature in this field.



Method and Framework

In order to gather evidence regarding the most effective ways workers can engage with people from a CALD background, this research involved a two-phase process. In the first phase, the researcher undertook short, semi-structured interviews with workers who work directly with people from a CALD background in settlement services, refugee and migrant support organisations throughout South East Queensland ($n=9$). These workers were identified from their previous involvement with ECCQ and contacts were recruited via email to participate in the research. Interviews in this first phase of the research involved a general discussion about the organisation in which they work, as well as asking them to identify and recommend individuals and organisations in South East Queensland that work effectively with people from CALD backgrounds. From those interviews, there were 13 programs or organisations and 25 individuals identified as examples of best practice for working with clients from CALD backgrounds.

The second phase of this research project involved contacting all the people that had been recommended by those in the first phase. Out of 25 workers recommended during the first phase, 14 people were interviewed in the second phase. The remaining recommended workers were either unavailable for interviews or un-contactable. On three occasions two people from the same organisation were recommended and interviewed together, however for the purpose of analysis, they were counted separately as they provided individual comments.

Interviews were conducted at a time and location, chosen by the research participant, during September and October 2012. These in-depth, semi structured interviews ranged from 30 to 60 minutes in length and 12 of the 14 research participants consented to the interview being recorded with a digital voice recorder. Written notes were taken by the researcher in the interview where consent to record was not provided. All research participants were informed that the interviews were confidential, that all data would be de-identified and that no identifying information would be used in the final report.

The interviews conducted within phase 2 utilised an *Appreciative Inquiry (AI)* framework to determine *positive deviance*; that is, seeking out what it is that is working for some organisations and individuals. While AI seeks to “generate new knowledge that expands the realm of the possible, and help members of an organisation envision a collectively desired future²”, a positive deviance approach acknowledges that “(1) Solutions to seemingly intractable problems already exist, (2) they have been discovered by members of the community itself, and (3) these innovators have succeeded even though they share the same constraints and barriers as others³”. Both AI and positive deviance suit the *Participant Action Research* model employed as the foundation of this research project. In a practical sense, this involved positioning the research participant as an “expert”, and building the interview content around their experience, observations and self-reflections. In turn, these insights were discussed at consequent interviews in order to determine if these were common factors among other people recommended for their success at engaging with the CALD community.

Following each interview, the recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Quantitative demographic information collected was analysed in excel and the qualitative information was analysed using thematic analysis. Triangulation⁴ was later performed by two employees of the researching organisation, ECCQ. These workers triangulated de-identified data and any coding issues that arose were discussed at length until consensus had been reached regarding the coding. This process is widely used in social science research and aims to overcome any intrinsic biases that come from this method of research. Following the triangulation of themes, the researcher identified and categorised the data according to themes and “key tips” provided by research participants for working with CALD people. This information will form the basis of this research paper and inform the recommendations made.

² Cooperrider, D.L. Whitney, D., & Stavros, J. (2008). *The Appreciative Inquiry Handbook: For Leaders of Change*, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

³ Pascale, R., Sternin, J., & Sternin, M. (2010). *The Power of Positive Deviance: How Unlikely Innovators Solve the World's Toughest Problems in Leadership for the common good*. Harvard Business Press, Boston.

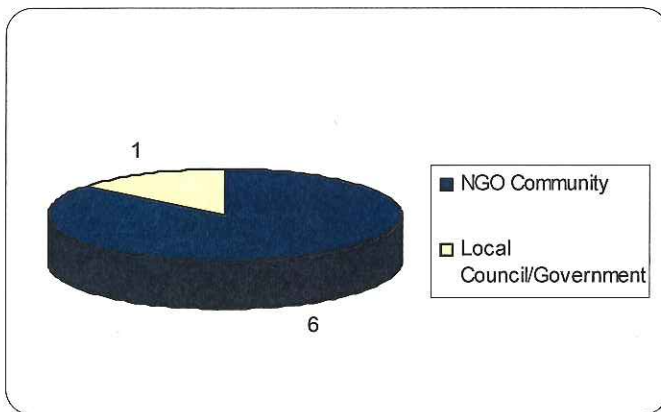
⁴ Denzin, N. (2006). *Sociological Methods: A Sourcebook*. Chicago: Aldine Transaction

Participant involvement

Phase 1

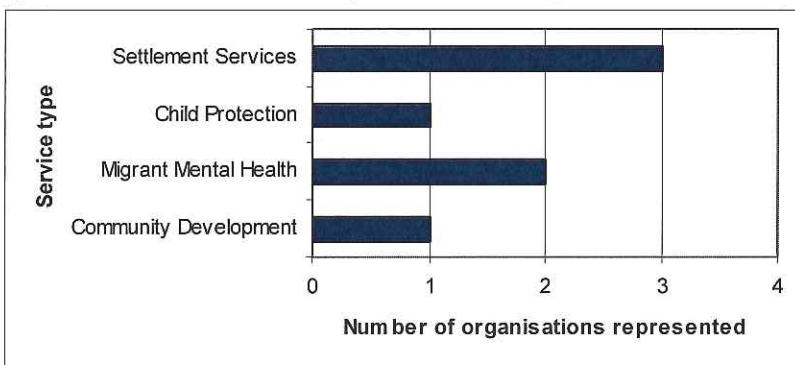
Phase 1 involved nine interviewees from a total of seven organisations. The majority of the organisations were non Government community organisations with only one organisation being a large State Government department.

Figure 1 - Phase 1 participant organisation type



The primary services of the seven Phase 1 organisations are distributed as follows:

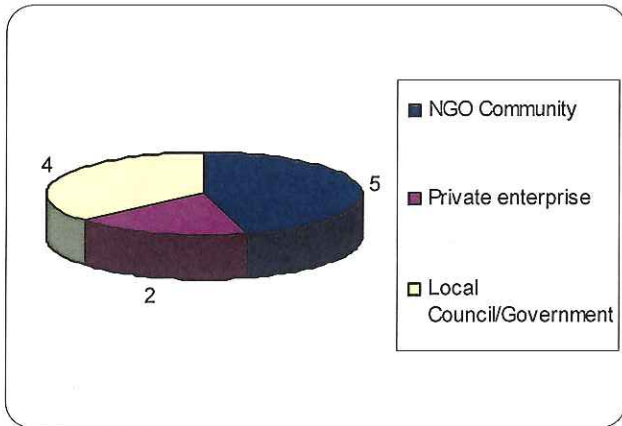
Figure 2 - Phase 1 participant organisation service type



Phase 2

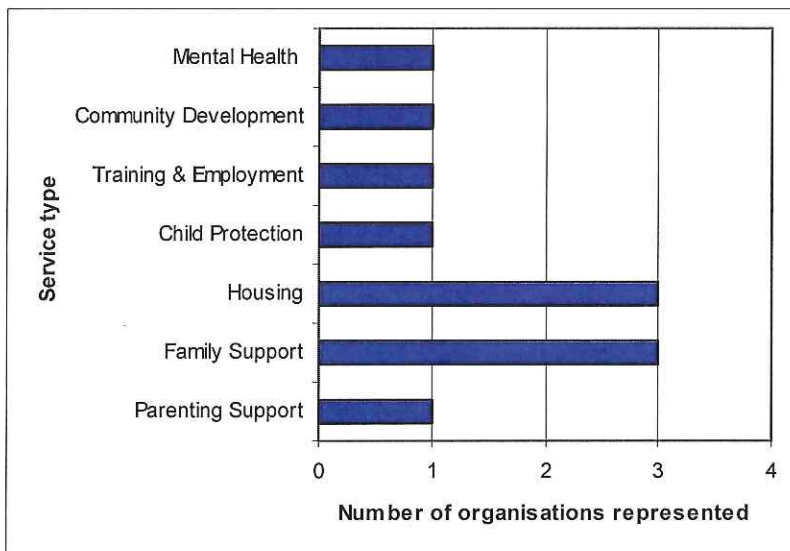
The recommended 14 individual practitioners and programs were from a varied organisational background ranging from Government to Private enterprises. The distribution of the total 11 organisations is as follows:

Figure 3 - Phase 2 participant organisation type



The recommended practitioners and programs were from a more varied service orientation than Phase 1 and encompassed services ranging from mental health to community development.

Figure 4 - Phase 2 participant organisation service type



In total, 8 of the 11 interviewees' organisations or programs were not CALD specific with three being specifically targeted to CALD clients.

Of the 14 interviewees, six were from CALD backgrounds with eight not. Half of the interviewees spoke languages other than English.

Data findings

Participant statements of “tips” as to what was working in practice with people from CALD backgrounds were analysed and sorted into 21 categories. The tips were sorted in triangulation with a total of 244 tips identified.

Tips were classified within the following Themes:

Figure 5 - Total mention of Themes

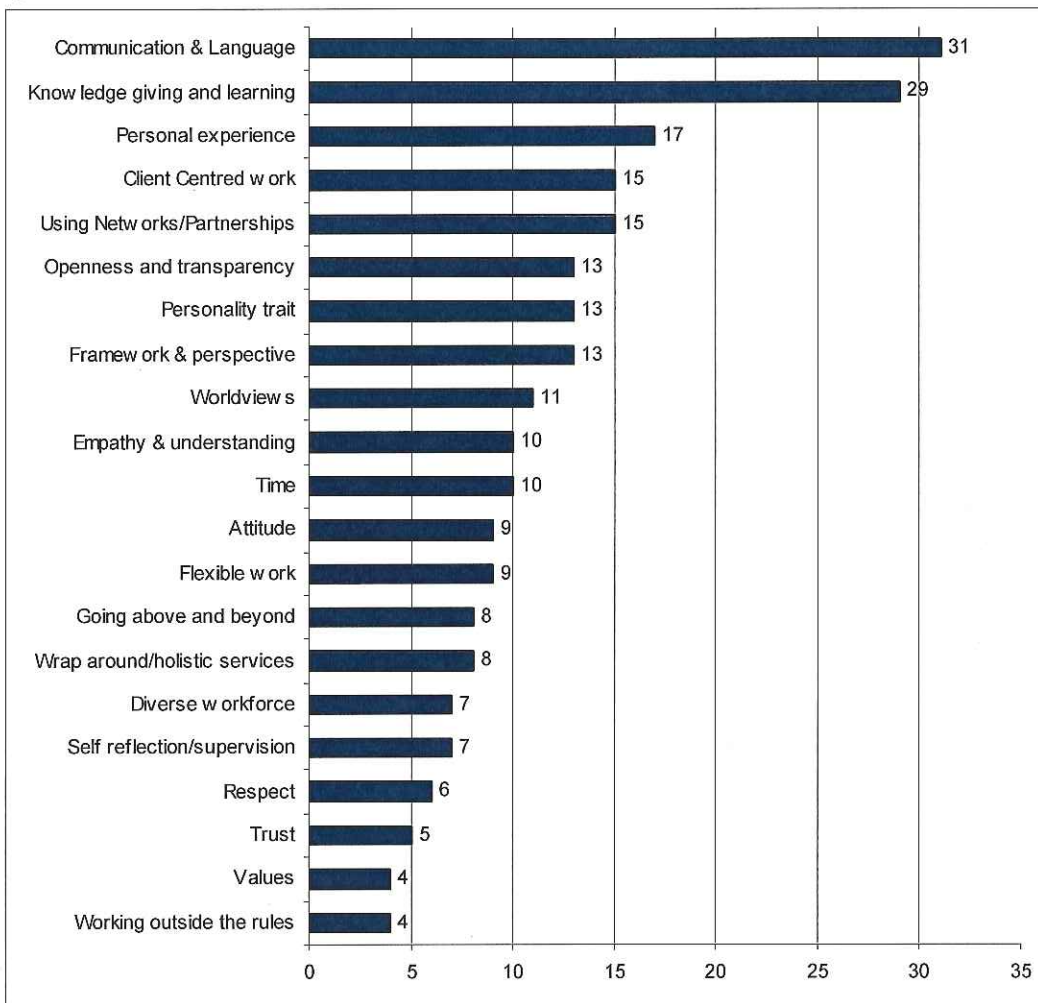
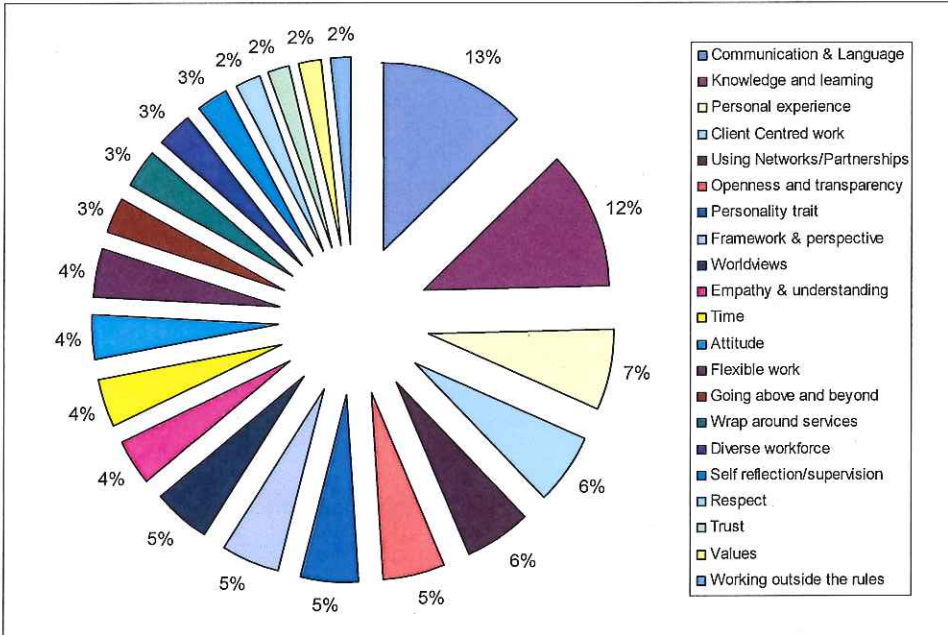
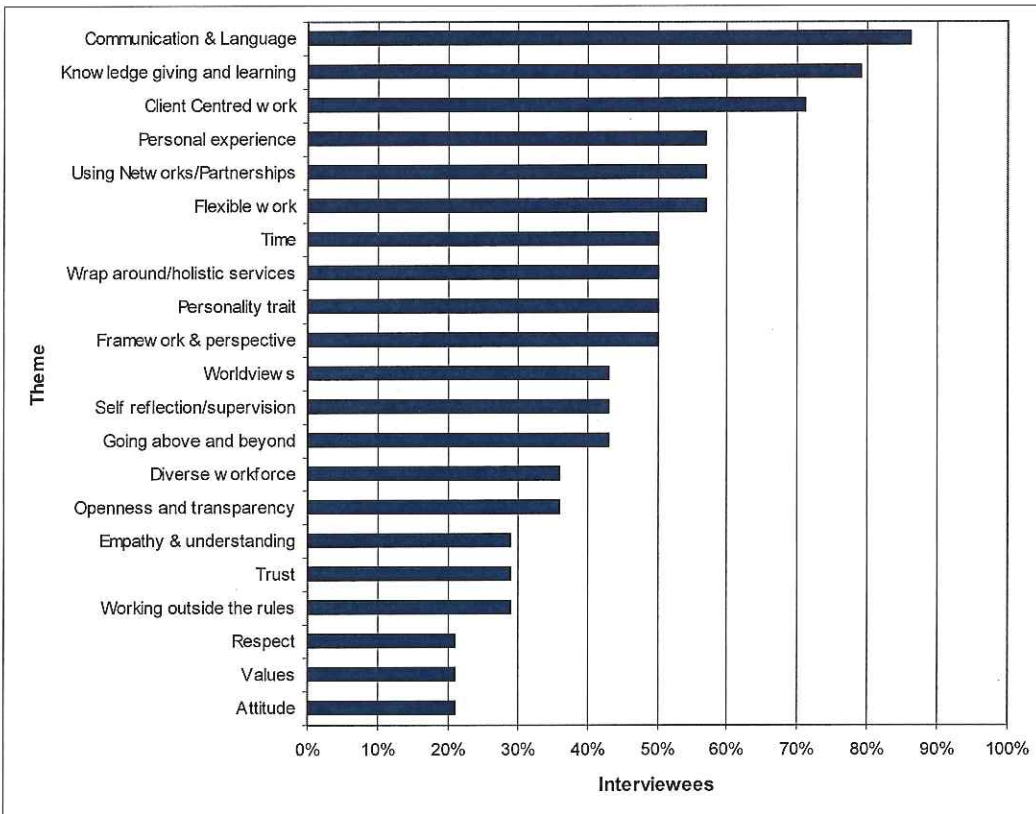


Figure 6 - Percentage representation of Theme mentions



The number of interviewees mentioning tips within the themes are distributed in the following way:

Figure 7 - Percentage of Interviewees mentioning Themes





RELATIONSHIPS

"To me it comes down to the relationship - you have to be able to build that relationship and trust with a family or you are going nowhere". Participant, Government organisation

During the thematic analysis, the theme of Relationships was not identified as a distinctive item that tips could align to. In effect, the majority of tips and themes are related to the practice of relationship building. They can be interpreted as suggestions in how workers can build effective working relationships to benefit clients. Thirteen of the fourteen interviewees distinctly stated the centrality of relationships within their work. They identified that relationships were at the core of their work. The only interviewee who did not directly state this idea was part of a group interview and indicated their agreement to this notion.

The following table lists example phrases from the interviewees on relationships within their work.

Match workers to clients so they can have a good relationship
Workers can work up to 2 years (with a client) so they really build a relationship, that's important.
Nothing works without having a proper relationship - it's the start point to any intervention.
It all comes down to relationship.
Need to build trust for that relationship.
Genuinely care for clients and maintain relationships with whole family.
We almost build too much of a relationship.
You build relationships through building trust and understanding.
In simple lay terms it's just building relationships.
A lot of our work hinges on communication and relationship.
This work is all about relationships.
I think workers at (name of organisation), in their practice, value relationships at the most important thing.
To me it comes down to the relationship - you have to be able to build that relationship and trust with a family or you are going nowhere.



Themes and their tips

Theme 1 – COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

Communication and language was the most extensively discussed theme. It encompassed tips such as the use of interpreters, how to use interpreters and communicating with people who have English as a second language. Several interviewees mentioned the tip of learning and attempting the use of a client's language as well as being patient to let people talk and making sure to listen and not rush people.

"Let people speak. It doesn't matter whether they know English as their third language, let them speak. Find a way to engage people into speaking about what they really feel about it. It doesn't matter what level of English, let them feel a part of it because once you've got them included in that conversation they begin to feel proud that you acknowledge their opinion. It doesn't matter how big or small it is". Participant, private sector

The following quote discusses the consequence of learning key words of your client's language group.

"It breaks down the barriers, because people actually find it amusing. I think some of that is not only because they think it's funny, but they respect because you have tried, even if you get it wrong. But people love it, you can see like this look on their face: they are really pleased because you're just having a go. I think that speaks volumes". Participant, NGO

COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE TIPS

- Understand the impact of language barriers and how this can disadvantage people in their daily lives
- Always listen first when going into a new situation
- Let people speak, regardless of their English language level
- Don't under-assume or over-assume language ability
- Use stories to relate to clients and find common ground or experiences
- Use interpreters if required and wanted by the client
- Learn the different processes of using Interpreters
- Train interpreters in your intervention method and framework
- Learn a few key words of a client's language
- Use personal touch if appropriate
- Be aware of your non-verbal communication
- Ask questions sensitively, try not to interrogate
- Use demonstration to ensure your key messages are getting across
- Give succinct and relevant information at pertinent times
- Use other forms of communication to compliment written and spoken words. For example, pictures, film or MP3 files.
- Translate resources into other languages not only to help others understand but to demonstrate acceptance of diversity

Theme 2 - ATTITUDE

A workers attitude and approach was mentioned as being a key to successful engagement. Having a sense of fun was the most frequently identified attitude along with being authentic. Attitude was commonly mentioned alongside the personality of the worker. There were competing opinions by workers on whether being genuine and authentic was an intrinsic personality trait or something that could be developed.



"People may not be able to speak our language or read it, but they like fun". Participant, NGO

ATTITUDE TIPS

- Use a sense of fun in your work with people and don't take things too seriously-work with perspective
- Possess and demonstrate passion for your work
- Be genuine and authentic in your work with others

Theme 3 - CLIENT CENTRED WORK

Workers identified that working from a client's perspective was a core part of their practice framework. It focused around ensuring to work from the client's needs rather than that of the worker's. Additionally it was determined that clients are experts in their own life and therefore the ownership needs to be given to clients. This in effect allows workers to walk "with" their client rather than "on behalf" of their client.

"It's really directed by what young (people) are telling us, what their expertise and knowledge might be for themselves, as opposed to assuming that we're bringing that (knowledge) to that interaction". Participant, NGO

CLIENT CENTRED TIPS

- Find ways to reduce paperwork so you can focus on the client and the interventions
- Use assessments as opportunities to identify how you can adapt and modify programs to suit clients' needs because one size does not fit all
- Focus on what the client truly needs rather than a worker's agenda
- Give ownership and control for the intervention to your client
- Remember that clients are experts of their own lives
- Walk hand in hand with your client, their family and community

Theme 4 - DIVERSE WORKFORCE

The diversity of a worker's workplace positively influenced their work. Having diversity visible, in effect, demonstrated not only a stated principle of diversity but also putting principle into practice. A diverse workforce was identified as most helpful when purposefully engaged. Support and information could be shared between workers from different cultures to help provide a solid knowledge base for all of an organisation and generate interest-taking in other cultures.

"I think culturally, internally, we try to create a place where diversity is encouraged. And it might not just be cultural diversity, or like ethnic diversity, but a diverse range of views within the framework that we set. I think that that is a factor. And I do think that that actually translates into direct practice". Participant, NGO



The following quote demonstrates the support a worker feels if provided access to a knowledge expert within their organisation.

"We have (worker's name)... as the multicultural worker who takes the fear away for me when working with CALD families. She gives me the information and therefore the confidence to engage with these families". Participant, Government organisation

Access to peer workers also assists work with people from CALD backgrounds.

DIVERSE WORKFORCE TIPS

- Employ people from CALD backgrounds where possible and ensure a visibly diverse workforce
- Use people from CALD background communities as peer workers
- Have a CALD subject matter expert who other staff can access with help in their interventions

Theme 5 – EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING

In their work, the workers identified the need to have empathy and understanding for their client. There is the need to relate to them as people and imagine what it is like to be in their position in order to understand their situation. This in turn leads to less assumption and judgement of people from CALD backgrounds.

On discussing how he chooses to see and understand their clients, one worker stated:

"This is human-type behaviour, not client-like behaviour. When we can see ourselves in families, when I can empathise in a way, then I'm hopefully more respectful, and engaging and non-judgemental with them". Participant, Government organisation

Another worker identifies how they try to understand what it is like to be living in a new country.

"I'm always mindful of things like that someone's who new to the country and lives on the other side of town they don't know and has a baby, that catching public transport for them might be difficult and new, so we'll support them in that practical sense". Participant, NGO

EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING TIPS

- Relate to clients as people - remember that we are all human
- Try to imagine what it is like to be in a new country with a different culture
- Understand a client's perceptions of Australian systems and structures and that these may be different to your own
- Use narrative and conversation to help understand a client's behaviour, situation and view
- Try to understand a person rather than judge or assume you know



Theme 6 – FLEXIBLE WORK

Flexibility in all areas of work was identified as required when working with people from CALD backgrounds. Flexibility in how services are accessed, flexibility in time and flexibility in the support and role you play with a client.

"Well we are not only [occupation], we are electricians, we are plumbers, we are counsellors, [worker name] gives them instructions and shows them how to clean and using different products, how to maintain a garden in a sense of the Western world". Participant, Private sector

FLEXIBLE WORK TIPS

- Ensure there is flexible access to services such as outreach
- Be flexible with your time when engaging clients
- Don't be rigid in the role you have
- Be flexible to work not only with individuals but their families and communities
- Be flexible in the way you engage clients - and try different ways if one method does not work

Theme 7 – FRAMEWORK AND PERSPECTIVES

Successful components of frameworks were identified as being strengths-based, social justice and holding diversity or multiculturalism as a core perspective. It was found that worker's believed a common organisational framework to operate under, assisted them in their work. The framework needed to be promoted organisation-wide.

"You need to make sure working with CALD families is core business not a side program - these are the same skills you use with everyone". Participant, Government organisation

One worker specified the need to look at creating a space between the two cultures that are meeting, or the culture of the worker and client.

"I believe in third cultural space which means you take the western society and you take the cultural society and you blend". Participant, Private sector

FRAMEWORK TIPS

- All frameworks at all levels need to include diversity
- Ensure your organisation has a culture that promotes multiculturalism and diversity
- Workers need to have a common framework to work from
- Include social justice and strengths-based practice within your framework
- Walk the talk and practice what you preach
- See the big picture
- Look for similarities rather than differences with your clients
- See beyond two cultures - there is a third space
- Business needs to make diversity and working with CALD families part of core business



Theme 8 – GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND

Nearly half of the workers articulated the need to “go above and beyond” their specified roles or responsibilities in order to work effectively. The definition of “above and beyond” covered several areas. Some workers did additional voluntary work within the communities of their clients and attended significant events. Others felt it was required to bend the rules in regards to things such as service provision focus.

“We are a tertiary services so usually require a referral however we have been known to take self referrals when someone really needs our help”. Interviewee 13

It was also noted, as the following quote demonstrates, that working within community services requires going outside of your role.

“I was told that a community job is not for everyone, so that’s true. Sometimes we just do things outside of the job”. Participant, Private sector

GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND TIPS

- Advocate for your clients if workers are not performing
- Make the working environment family and child friendly and welcoming
- Bend the referral rules if required
- Be involved in voluntary work within the communities you work with
- Attend cultural events to connect with the community you work with and share information
- Be prepared to do work outside the job description
- Be prepared to go above and beyond the funding agreement services based on client need

Theme 9 - KNOWLEDGE TO LEARN AND KNOWLEDGE TO GIVE

The theme of knowledge and learning, pertains both to the knowledge a worker is required to possess and the knowledge the worker needs to be able to provide. Additionally there were tips on how this knowledge needs to be delivered.

Knowledge on culture and a client’s community; knowledge of cultural perspectives; and knowledge of the client’s family are all required of the worker. Some participants identified that there is a need to be able to teach Australian systems and processes to people from CALD backgrounds and deliver this information in a timely and concise manner.

*“A big area is the area of education; understanding money; the process of real estate; and the laws within them are just one example”.
Participant, Private sector*

Ways to acquire this knowledge includes learning from a client, as this quote mentions:

“I have been lucky enough to learn a lot more than what I can impart. Some days I just sit there and go WOW why didn’t I think of that?!”. Participant, Local government organisation



On a systemic level, there is also the need to provide information to Australian mainstream culture on diversity.

"It's also translating other cultures for the Australians (mainstream population) as well. It might be a simple case of saying do you know in this culture they do this? Because as professionals we might easily jump into a set of conclusions or be judgemental about a particular family, person or culture but then when we turn back and talk about some of the backgrounds or some of the cultural practices it might be an eye opener for the other person who we are talking to as well".

Participant, NGO

KNOWLEDGE TIPS

- Management need to have understanding of the organisation's client base and their true needs
- Understand that your client may have a cultural perspective of your services
- Develop knowledge on your client's culture and community prior to engagement
- Understand the hierarchical nature of some communities and its effect on communication and engagement
- Try to learn a brand new skill so you can understand what it is like to learn something new
- Listen to and learn from your clients
- Acquire information about the client's family as this will help in your engagement and understanding of the person
- Help your client understand and interpret Australian systems
- Help mainstream society understand other cultures and perspectives
- Give timely and accurate information
- Do not provide too much information at once

Theme 10 – OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY

Working with openness and transparency was identified as a requirement for work. Openness between the worker and client was discussed as well as an openness from the organisation. An organisation being open to staff feedback was clearly represented by the following quote:

"Workers are able to provide feedback to head office through different methods.....our organisation has been creative in how they receive this common feedback and what they do with this feedback". **Participant, NGO**

Transparency about the services provided by the worker as well as openly setting boundaries was another area of work.

"When I have meetings with people- we have network meetings- I say I am available usually during work hours. Night-time – please don't call me then, that is my time with my husband. Saturdays are fine but no Sundays. I have to have at least one full day not to think about work at all. Most people are very good and they understand that, they have their own lives you know".

Participant, Local government organisation

Workers also felt that sharing and being open about yourself helped in their work.



OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY TIPS

- Take time to clarify your service and its purpose
- Be open and honest about gaps in services and systems
- Clearly define the boundaries of the working relationship
- Organisations need to be open to worker feedback to improve systems
- Encourage client feedback of your work and the service and system
- Be willing and open to learn from mistakes and conflict
- Share relevant information about yourself and your experiences with your clients

Theme 11 - PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

More than 50% of the workers noted that their personal experience was one of the reasons for their good practice.

"It's about my own personal experience and where I come from is a huge thing. I think it gives me a better understanding of how to relate to particular people... I have experienced oppression and being oppressed at some point of time in my life, so I think I do have that understanding".

Participant, NGO

The personal experiences workers mentioned were: being from a particular background as their clients; having lived through similar experiences; having travelled and experienced different cultures; or even having friends from different backgrounds.

Additionally work experience with people from a CALD background was grounds for continuing good practice examples.

"I think you need to be experienced. I don't mean that you need to be my age, but you have to have that ten years of core, CALD background experience".

Participant, Government organisation

Practice knowledge was held in high regard by several participants as this quote exemplifies:

"I think I learnt earlier in life that there is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. It all comes when you have lived and practiced that knowledge and know it to be true. So when I deliver, I always, I believe in delivering to the heart not to the head".

Participant, Private sector

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE TIPS

- Understand that your personal experience and background can help with client work
- Gain experience of different cultures e.g. travel and friendships
- Share your experiences of experiencing new cultures with your clients to help give information and interpretation on the Australia system
- Have experience in working with people from CALD backgrounds
- Value and use your practice wisdom



Theme 12 – PERSONALITY TRAITS

Half of the workers identified that the reason they believe they were identified as examples of good practice was due to the fact that they were ‘people’ people. Personality also played a part in how some programs matched workers to clients to ensure a successful working arrangement and therefore faster intervention.

“I’m just a people’s person. It’s something natural sometimes. If you are a people’s person, it would be quite easy to work in this job”.

Participant, NGO

Having a personal acceptance and enjoyment of diversity was a personality trait identified as helpful to practice:

“I guess I am who I am. It comes down to my passion for diversity. I really love that we live in a diverse country, and I’d like to think that we can all flourish in our own ways, instead of just being one way”. **Participant, NGO**

Matching workers and clients through personality traits was another tip utilised by several of the workers’ programs.

PERSONALITY TRAIT TIPS

- Match worker personalities to client personalities to aid the working relationship
- Be an open minded person
- Employ people who exhibit the characteristics of a “people person”
- Be able to think on your feet and respond in appropriate ways
- Have a passion for diversity

Theme 13 – RESPECT

Demonstrating respect through several means was a common theme that was often linked with other themes such as Knowledge and Learning, Time, Attitude, Respect and Values.

“It’s about taking that step back and not, coming and overpowering, but actually sit and listen to what the person has to say”. **Participant, NGO**

RESPECT TIPS

- Take time for your client and use time to demonstrate respect
- Develop cultural knowledge so you do not inadvertently disrespect a culture or person
- Show respect by listening and not overpowering a client
- Use culturally appropriate interventions
- Be respectful of different gendered practices



Theme 14 – SELF REFLECTION

Workers identified self-reflection and self-awareness as a core element to their development as workers. This in turn affected their effectiveness in working with people from CALD backgrounds.

“We’re not saying that you need to change in any way, just be a little self aware of yourself and that we all are different and we can coexist”. Participant, NGO

Some of the workers' organisations utilised group supervision and embedded reflective work in their frameworks. Other organisations created a culture where openness about worker challenges could be discussed.

“If you feel supported in your team and can be open and honest about your struggles you can be willing to change, and accept when you are wrong and learn”. Participant, Government organisation

SELF REFLECTION TIPS

- Provide supportive team environments and create an environment for staff to feel safe in their work
- Use group supervision to support workers and help self-reflective practice
- Practice self-awareness in your work and connect life experiences to help understand situations client's are experiencing

Theme 15 – TIME

The fact that work done with people from CALD backgrounds requires more time in several areas was noted by many workers. They identified that often it was twice the amount of time required, depending on language expertise and complexity of issues.

The following quote raises the fact that workers may need to be flexible with their time:

“You can't work to the clock, if you say I need to meet you at this time on this date, it doesn't always work, so you need to be a little bit flexible around that”. Participant, NGO

TIME TIPS

- Allow for up to twice the amount of time for sessions with people from CALD backgrounds depending on need and language requirements
- Be flexible around arranged meeting times
- Adapt your programs for longer sessions
- Take the time to assess the true needs of your client
- Do not put time restrictions on your engagement and be prepared for long term support requirements



Theme 16 – TRUST

Trust at the core of the relationship meant that it was a pervasive theme. Gaining trust was a key theme linked to all the other themes.

“And we sat down and had a coffee ceremony. That sets up the foundation for the trust and there is a lack of trust- that’s normal because of their background and what they have experienced“.
Participant, Government organisation

TRUST TIPS

- Participate in cultural or family practices to help build trust
- Follow through on what you say you will do
- Focus on building trust and relationships

Theme 17 – USING NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS

More than half of the workers identified using networks and partnerships frequently in their work. They built networks to help with work.

“I couldn’t do this job on my own. I have so many partners. I think I am one of the best people in building partners and networks. It’s one way of me getting the job done otherwise I would be at it 24-7“. **Participant, Local government organisation**

They used these networks or “cultural brokers” to help access communities:

“When you are thinking of doing something cultural when you are non-cultural, take someone with you and make sure that they are respected in their community. Or have someone be able to explain it in a way that the group can understand it. Then once they can see that you are with this particular person, their guard will go down.....It’s about going in with the right person having that cultural perspective“. **Participant, Private sector**

Some workers also suggested building capacity across communities by joining several networks:

“Get parents involved in a project, they will attract other parents- they’re like people magnets“. **Participant, NGO**

NETWORK AND PARTNERSHIP TIPS

- Build partners and networks to help with your work
- Join networks and working parties and attend meetings
- Use your networks to find out required information – e.g. consult with multicultural workers from other agencies
- Work with other services to organise the services being delivered to a client to avoid over-consultation
- Use community knowledge and expertise
- Identify champions or key people in the communities to help with work and engagement
- Use a community member as a cultural broker to introduce you into the community
- Hold events for the communities you are working with
- Find, approach and use a mentor to learn
- Share caseloads and work in teams so that client's can access any worker



Theme 18 - VALUES

The research participants identified that values underpin the work being done in this sector. Several workers identified that the work they do was value based:

"It's a very personal set of skills, and someone's that read about a social justice framework in a textbook, isn't going to answer the question in the same way as someone who just brings that set of values as a part of who they are in the same way". Participant, NGO

The personal values of a worker are important but must not over-ride a client's:

"So I guess it's trying not to let my values over-ride, another persons' values. And I think it just comes down to trying to find similarities". Participant, NGO

As well as the clients and workers values, there are those of the organisation. These values influence the work being done:

"I think the value base underpinning our base at (organisation name) translates to workers having an understanding of structural factors around disadvantage opposed to individual factors. I think that makes a difference". Participant, NGO

VALUES TIPS

- Respect your client's core values
- Identify and articulate your organisation's core values to workers
- Acknowledge this is value based work

Theme 19 - WORKING OUTSIDE THE RULES AND BEING CREATIVE

Working outside the rules and being creative is closely linked to the earlier section of "Going above and beyond". The key item of difference is this theme involves an element of risk or risk taking.

"We're not probably doing (the program) to the book like that we should, but for us and for them, we feel that we're helping them, because if we don't do what we do, then how are they going to support their children with their education". Participant, NGO

Looking towards technology and its use was identified as a way to counteract the increasing amount of paperwork required by workers to process:

"There is regular review of processes and then it's about streamlining process so that it can make things better. So there is trailing new systems and gadgets that occurs - using technology as a source of eliminating a lot of that paperwork". Participant, NGO



WORKING OUTSIDE THE RULES TIPS

- Have confidence to take risk to change programs to suit client needs
- Look at ways to streamline the tasks which are not working directly towards clients' intervention using new technology
- Take risks to work creatively if certain ways are not working
- Use different methods to advertise referral options and service availability such as Facebook

Theme 20 – WORLDVIEWS

Workers discussed the notion of Worldviews: The requirement of understanding your own personal worldview, acknowledgement of the dominance of the western worldview and the acceptance of alternative worldviews.

“The most basic thing is, is understanding that there are other worldviews. The western worldview is not the be all and end all. No it's not. You take Indigenous Australian cultures for example, their worldview is circular it's not linear there's not a beginning and an end, everything is in motion. A lot of other ethnic cultures are like that”. **Participant, Local government organisation**

While understanding these worldviews it is important to:

“Understanding the individual verse group dynamics as well – from a western worldview, individuals are paramount. It's all about me, it's all about the individual, its all about what I can do and what I cant do were as with a lot of ethnic groups it's the group which is the focus, it's the group which works together and moves together”. **Participant, Local government organisation**

Personal worldviews need to incorporate diversity according to this worker's statement:

“You need a worldview that is comfortable with and able to sit with difference”. **Participant, Government organisation**

“Even if a child is Australian, they do have a culture. That's what I believe in that's what our organisation believes in. That sort of attitude towards working with people and cultural support is one of the reasons why we are so passionate when we talk about working with (workers) from different cultural backgrounds and recruiting (workers) from different cultural backgrounds”. **Participant, NGO**

WORLDVIEW TIPS

- Have an awareness of your own worldview and what influences you
- A workers worldview needs to acknowledge, integrate and accept difference
- Be aware of the western worldview and that there are differing worldviews
- Understand individualist and collectivist worldviews
- Understand everyone has a culture and this affects their identity



Theme 21 – WRAP AROUND AND INTEGRATED SERVICES

Access to wrap around services provided to clients was mentioned by more than half the workers. Despite the work being focused in one area, many of the workers in programs worked holistically with their clients.

“And say that there are problems at home or they become homeless, we’ve got a homeless program here where we can support them, or food vouchers, counselling, educational programs”. Participant, NGO

WRAP AROUND SERVICE TIPS

- The organisation needs to work within a holistic services framework
- Provide integrated holistic services and assistance
- Provide access to additional wrap around resources/services, not only your core service area



Discussion

Based on the analysis of the demographic data of interviewee participants, it can be determined that service type and organisation type does not necessarily influence whether good practice can be performed. The recommended workers were spread across private, non-government and government organisations and come from various services areas. Similarly, whether a worker speaks another language is not influential per se and despite not speaking the same language or a language other than English, workers can engage effectively with clients. Therefore the tips can be utilised across different organisations, sectors and localities.

The tips that emerged from the research and their subsequent themes are congruent with and support the practice literature reviewed. Themes such as cultural knowledge, using interpreters, being flexible, allowing more time and working with empathy are all reflected within the participants' responses. A significant number of the 244 tips are general ideas that have been acknowledged in good practice guides currently available to workers.

Communication and language, knowledge giving and learning, client-centred work, trust, respect, empathy, understanding, openness and transparency are characteristics essential to interpersonal and general counselling skills. This research highlighted that these interpersonal skills were evident among the workers recommended for their practice with CALD communities. It was their utilisation of these skills, which contributed to their ability to create lasting effective working relationships with clients.

The relationship between worker and client was not the only important connection. Participants highlighted the need to build and utilise networks and partnerships in their work. In addition to strong external connections, the internal working environment including management, was pivotal to the workers ability to perform.

In order for the worker to engage meaningfully with their clients, they were able to practice their personal values and engage their own worldviews. Some workers identified clear frameworks they adhered to with many workers identifying a unified organisational working framework. Part of this organisational framework included space for and encouragement of self-reflection and supervision, acknowledgement of diversity through policies and procedures and the employment of a diverse workforce. Those participants who were most successful with their engagement acknowledged the importance of flexibility in their practice and being allowed to work "outside the rules" or creatively. These workers also stated that their client's benefited from having access to wrap around holistic services within their organisations.

This research also sought to understand what elements of effective practice if any, are not currently documented in literature. Two key elements identified by participants in this study were personal experience and personal traits or characteristics. For many workers, both personal and work experiences were mentioned as precursors to effective practice. For example, some workers spoke of their time living overseas in non-English speaking countries, living in foreign cultures and the difficulties they experienced navigating new environments. Their personal experiences were then transferred successfully into work practices and the ability to empathise with the challenges facing new migrants and refugees. These themes could be argued to be congruent to emotional intelligence.

A number of research participants also talked about themselves as being "people persons"; as having a general interest in others and interacting with other people to learn more about their lives and experiences. These workers were also more likely to prioritise personal relationships through going above and beyond their duties to assist a client. Being a "people person", these participants also valued their networks and partnerships at all levels.

While this research has highlighted a number of skills and personal attributes that workers hold that make them effective engaging with people from CALD backgrounds it is important to note that workers will move from a continuum from novice to expert throughout their careers. It is therefore imperative that new professionals are supported and guided through their work and that these tips are a part of a professional development rather than pre-requisites to working in this sector. Some attributes such as personal experience might hasten a workers ability to move from novice to expert however it should be noted that participants in this study had worked an average of nine years with people from CALD backgrounds.



The following implications from the research are:

Worker

- This research has found that practice guides offer good advice on how to work with people from CALD backgrounds and are beneficial resources for workers
- Choose an organisation which reflects your personal and professional values and worldviews as they impact on your effectiveness as a worker
- Transfer your personal experience and background knowledge into practice wisdom through self-reflection and understanding for people's situations.
- Find creative ways to work alongside the restrictions placed upon you by funding contracts/environments

Organisation

- Provide an open and supportive environment for workers in order to ensure they can make mistakes and continue to learn and develop their practice
- Acknowledge that workers may need to go above and beyond for their clients and this may mean that they require flexible working hours and may need to reschedule meetings etc at the last minute
- Identify ways your organisation can work most effectively with restrictive contracts, policies and procedures. For example try and take the burden off your workers around reporting through removing duplication and amalgamating several reporting requirements into one database
- Take time to understand the real needs of your clients and what workers need to assist them
- Provide appropriate opportunities for workers to self reflect and undertake professional supervision and development within working hours
- When hiring, consider questions to potential employees around their frameworks, worldviews and personal traits and experiences.

Policy makers & funding bodies

- Recognise this work is primarily relational and that qualitative outcomes have as much weight as quantitative outcomes.
- Ensure contracts support qualitative outcomes as strongly as quantitative outcomes. These outcomes could be communicated through items such as case studies where workers can reflect on the strength of relationships built with clients.
- Provide flexibility on funding arrangements to allow organisations to meet clients' specific needs
- Ensure contracts include sufficient funds for in depth program evaluations
- Provide sufficient funding for workers to formally attend relevant network meetings and to build partnerships to support their relationships with clients
- Provide sufficient funding and reporting structures to capture the supervision for workers who work with people from CALD backgrounds.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations in the process of this research. Firstly the number of themes and tips listed are by no means conclusive and exhaustive. Secondly, phase one interviewees were selected because of their involvement with the researching organisation and therefore may not be representative of the wider sector. Finally, the recommendation of other practitioners may stem from practitioners biases of what they consider good practice rather than what is good practice from a client's perspective. Therefore future research would benefit from focusing on client's perspectives of whom they consider effective workers.



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