

# DoCS Research to Practice Update

A regular update for staff on the latest national and international research

Issue 23, May 2008

## Indigenous Issue

The Research-to-Practice Update has been produced as an acknowledgement of Sorry Day (26 May) and Reconciliation Week (27 May–3 June). The publications listed in this Issue highlight the availability of resources covering a diverse range of topics. It is important to acknowledge that there is a need for rigorously evaluating programs for Indigenous peoples in the fields of early intervention, out-of-home care and child protection to close our knowledge gap on the effectiveness of Indigenous-specific programs. It sends a strong message of what needs to be done to build our knowledge base about what works and what doesn't work for Indigenous peoples in early intervention, out-of-home care and child protection.

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## Research Publications – What's New!

### Early Intervention

#### Indigenous child care - leading the way

Sims, M., Saggars, S., Hutchins, T., Guilfoyle, A., Targowska, A., & Jackiewicz, S. (2008). *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 33, (1), 56-60.

The authors state that the Australian early childhood sector is not performing well when compared to what is happening in Canada. Through the leadership of Fraser Mustard, Canada has developed an integrated approach typified by early childhood and parenting centres. There is also particular mention of the developments in the Indigenous child care sector, both in Australia and Canada. The authors argue that within the sector there is an abundance of evidence of the kinds of programs and initiatives that could address the nation's concerns, and review some of the evidence. The authors also point out that there is considerable knowledge in Australia, based on Australian programmes and experience, that can be used to build a different early childhood sector with the potential to significantly impact on growing disadvantage. The article concludes with the principles or themes around which initiatives should be developed and a call to advocate for the development of such services including, for example, services supporting all young children, their families and their communities, which have the potential to make a huge impact on Australian society.

[www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/)

### Child Protection

#### Child neglect and the *Little Children Are Sacred* Report

Flaherty, N., & Goddard, C. (2008). *Children Australia*, 33, (1), 5-11.

'The Little Children Are Sacred Report' is based on the Northern Territory's Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse. The Report has received little analysis since it was released in late June 2007. Rather, the focus has been on the response by the Federal Government to the Report's findings that has dominated the debate. Despite repeated accounts of child neglect provided to the Inquiry, these accounts seemed to be viewed as the landscape in which child sexual abuse occurs, rather than a significant and urgent issue in its own right. The relegation of child neglect to the background mirrors what research elsewhere tells us about what happens to child neglect referrals—lacking the sense of immediacy and danger of child sexual abuse, they are frequently minimised or overlooked. This paper is an attempt to refocus attention on the Report itself through a lens of child neglect and suggests that in limiting the terms of reference to child sexual abuse, the Report missed the opportunity to engage with the significant issue of child neglect and the practice of child protection work in cases of child neglect. A copy of the 'Little Children Are Sacred Report' is available from

[www.nt.gov.au/dcm/inquiry/saac/](http://www.nt.gov.au/dcm/inquiry/saac/)

Contact publisher to obtain a copy of this article

[www.ozchild.org.au/](http://www.ozchild.org.au/)

## Childhood abuse and later parenting outcomes in two American Indian tribes

Libby, A. M., Orton, H. D., Beals, J., Buchwald, D., & Manson, S. M. (2008). *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 32, (2), 195-211.

The aim of the study was to examine the relationship of childhood physical and sexual abuse with reported parenting satisfaction and parenting role impairment later in life among American Indians. Participants from the Southwest and Northern Plains tribes who participated in a large-scale community-based study ( $n = 3,084$ ) were asked about traumatic events and family history; those with children were asked questions about their parenting experiences. Regression models estimated the relationships between childhood abuse and parenting satisfaction or parenting role impairment, and tested for mediation by depression or substance use disorders. The study found that the strong effects of social support and mediation of substance abuse disorders in the Northern Plains offer direct ways in which childhood victims of abuse could be helped to avoid negative attributes of parenting that could put their own children at risk. Practice implications are also discussed.

[doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2007.07.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2007.07.006)

## Reports

### Two Ways Together: Report on Indicators 2007

NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, (2008), Sydney.

This report on *Two Ways Together* indicators brings together information from the past two Censuses, and a range

of information supplied by government agencies, to provide a snapshot of how Aboriginal people in NSW are faring this century across the priority areas of health, education, economic development, justice, families and young people, culture and heritage, housing and infrastructure. The report highlights the significant differences in life expectancy and age structure between Aboriginal people and the general population of NSW. Reducing the gap in life expectancy is a major goal of both state and federal governments. Since the release of the State Plan, the Government has been working hard to improve service delivery and develop a strong evidence base from which to achieve the targets of the 13 priorities of significance to Aboriginal people within the State Plan. This report represents a significant step towards developing that evidence base. The report has been developed from data and related information supplied by a wide range of mainly NSW Government agencies. DoCS contribution to the report is outlined in Section 8: Families and young people.

[www.daa.nsw.gov.au/publications/](http://www.daa.nsw.gov.au/publications/)

### The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2008), Canberra.

This report presents the latest data on the health and welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as information about their socioeconomic circumstances. Wherever possible, data is provided on changes in the circumstances of Indigenous people over time, as well as on the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. While most information is presented at the national level, some data is also presented for states and territories, and by remoteness.

[www.aihw.gov.au/publications/](http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/)

### Report on government services: Indigenous compendium

Productivity Commission, (2008), Canberra.

This report provides data to enable ongoing comparisons of the efficiency and effectiveness of Commonwealth and State government services, including intra-government services. In contrast to the *Report on Government Services* with its focus on the efficiency and effectiveness of specific services, the Indigenous compendium focuses on outcomes for Indigenous people. It does not report on individual government services. The reporting framework has two tiers: 'headline' indicators for the longer term outcomes sought; and a second tier of 'strategic change indicators' that are potentially responsive to government policies and programs in the shorter term.

[www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/](http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/)

### Stories on 'growing up' from Indigenous people in the ACT metro/Queanbeyan region (Occasional Paper No. 20)

Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health (Darwin) in collaboration with the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research (Perth) and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (Canberra), 2008.

This paper presents a summary of the information collected during the department's *Footprints in Time: The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children* (LSIC) community engagement qualitative trial undertaken in the Australian Capital Territory metropolitan region and the Queanbeyan region. It is based on focus group and in-depth interviews with key informants and community members including Elders, parents, care givers, young people, prominent Indigenous organisations and government departments funding Indigenous programs.

These 'growing up stories' relate to the recollections of Indigenous people growing up healthy and strong and perceptions of how their families, communities and environment affect their children's pathways throughout life.

[www.facs.gov.au/research](http://www.facs.gov.au/research)

## Lessons learnt about strengthening Indigenous families and communities (Occasional Paper No. 19)

John Scougall, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, (2008), Canberra.

The Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2000-2004 was an Australian Government initiative funded by the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) to help build family and community capacity to deal with challenges and take advantage of opportunities. In 2002, a consortium led by CIRCLE (the Collaborative Institute for Research Consulting and Learning in Evaluation) at RMIT University was commissioned by FaCS to undertake a national evaluation of the Strategy.

This report discusses what has been learnt from the Strategy 2000-04 and about how to strengthen Indigenous families and communities. These lessons have implications for future interventions funded through the Strategy 2004-09 and through other funding initiatives and programs. The report provides insights into critical factors that explain the success of some projects and some of the frustrations experienced by others.

[www.facs.gov.au/research/op19/](http://www.facs.gov.au/research/op19/)

## Us Taken-Away Kids: commemorating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bringing Them Home Report

Office of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, (2008), Sydney.

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of the publication of the *Bringing Them Home Report*, it is fitting to look to those whose stories of removal formed the basis of the report and its recommendations. With this in mind, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission invited Indigenous peoples across Australia to share their experiences of removal, their thoughts ten years on from the Inquiry and their hopes for the future. The poetry, stories and artwork featured in *Us Taken-Away Kids* are the fruits of this invitation.

The publication begins with a chronological overview of the legislation and events which have shaped the lives of Australian Aborigines since colonisation. This is followed by three themed sections. 'Mother' and 'Journeys and Homecoming' deal with the experiences in the life journey of a stolen child. 'Reconciliation' includes non-Indigenous as well as Indigenous peoples' thoughts on moving forward, to a more inclusive vision for black and white Australia - the voices of the longest surviving continuous culture in the world, united with those of their fellow Australians.

[www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

## Social Justice Report 2007

Office of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, (2008), Sydney.

The focus of this year's report is family violence and child abuse in Indigenous communities. These issues have dominated public discussion of Indigenous affairs over the past eighteen months. This document sets out the key messages and challenges that need to be met in addressing family violence and child abuse. These messages provide the genesis of this year's Social Justice Report. Of particular interest are 19 case studies highlighting promising initiatives tackling family violence and abuse.

[www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

## Books

### Addressing Violence, Abuse and Oppression: Debates and Challenges

Fawcett, B. and Waugh, F. (Eds), (2007). London: Routledge.

Everyone working in health and social care is at one point or another confronted by violent behaviour and its consequences. This book provides a broad overview of violence in relation to a range of groups and areas that involve human service professionals. Adopting an international perspective, this book looks at the ways in which violence, abuse and oppression can be clearly associated with power imbalances which are often gendered and which are covertly or overtly manifested at a range of levels including the interpersonal as well as the organizational and the political. Of particular interest is *Chapter 5: Recognising the trauma surrounding Aboriginal family violence*. In this chapter, it is argued that in order to

understand this violence and abuse and to develop appropriate responses, it is imperative to locate the current violence within the context of the historical and traumatic experiences endured by Aboriginal people as a result of unjust and oppressive state policies and practices. This is illustrated using the example of the child welfare policies and practices of NSW, examining both their implementation over time and their traumatic legacies from colonisation to the present day.

A copy of the book can be ordered through the publisher at <http://www.routledge.com/>

### **Indigenous Social Work around the World: Towards Culturally Relevant Education and Practice**

Gray, M., Coates, J. and Yellow Bird, M. (Eds), (2008). USA: Ashgate Publishing.

How can mainstream Western social work help advance and, in turn, learn from Indigenous practice? For the first time, this volume brings together prominent international scholars involved in both western and Indigenous social work to discuss some of the most significant global trends and issues relating to Indigenous and cross-cultural practice. The contributors discuss and share ways in which 'Indigenization' is shaping professional social work practice and education, and examine ways in which social work can better address diversity in international exchanges and address cross-cultural issues within and between countries. Key theoretical, methodological and service issues and challenges in the 'Indigenization' of social work are reviewed, including the way in which adaptation can lead to more effective practices

within Indigenous communities and emerging economies, as well as provide greater insight into cross-cultural understanding and practice.

A copy of the book can be ordered through the publisher at <http://www.ashgate.com/>

### **Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies**

Denzin, N.K., Lincoln, Y.S. and Tuhiwai Smith, L. (Eds), (2008). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

The Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies is the only handbook to make connections regarding many of the perspectives of the new critical theorists and emerging indigenous methodologies.

Built on the foundation of the landmark *SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, the Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies extends beyond the investigation of qualitative inquiry itself to explore the Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices that inform research, policy, politics, and social justice. The editors explore in depth some of the newer formulations of critical theories and many Indigenous perspectives, and seek to make transparent the linkages between the two. This Handbook serves as a guide to help Western researchers understand the new and reconfigured territories they might wish to explore.

A copy of the book can be ordered through the publisher at <http://www.sagepub.com/>

## Useful Websites

### **Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care Secretariat (NSW) Inc. (AbSec)**

AbSec is a not-for-profit incorporated community organisation. It is primarily funded by the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS), and is recognised as the peak NSW Aboriginal organisation to provide child protection and out-of-home care policy and advice.

[www.absec.org.au](http://www.absec.org.au)

### **Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), Victoria**

SNAICC is the national non government peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

[www.snaicc.asn.au/](http://www.snaicc.asn.au/)

### **The Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA), Queensland**

FAIRA is an indigenous rights organisation concerned with human rights issues as they affect the Indigenous Peoples of Australia and elsewhere in the world. FAIRA endeavours to promote the practical use of studies and research under the control of Indigenous Peoples to pursue rights and equality, rejecting the tendency to study Indigenous Peoples from academic or pretentious perspectives.

<http://www.faira.org.au/>

# DoCS Research to Practice Update

## NSW Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council

The Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council (AJAC) was established in 1993. AJAC is comprised of Aboriginal community members whose role is to provide advice to the New South Wales Government on law and justice issues affecting Aboriginal people in this state. AJAC is funded by the NSW Attorney General's Department, the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice, NSW Police and the NSW Department of Corrective Services.

[www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/ajac](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/ajac)

## Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia is an independent, not-for-profit organisation established in 2000 by the former Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. It is the peak national organisation building and promoting reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians for the wellbeing of the nation.

Its Board of Directors comprises Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who are respected leaders in their fields and share a determination to do what it takes to build reconciliation in Australia.

[www.reconciliationaustralia.org](http://www.reconciliationaustralia.org)

## Research to practice

*The Research to Practice Program provides an essential link between the latest research and DoCS staff.*

*As part of this important initiative, the Research to Practice Update encompasses a broad range of research publications and resources to reflect the diversity of DoCS staff.*

*If you have any comments or suggestions about how we could improve this Update to make it more useful or relevant to your work, please email the Research to Practice Team at:*

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