THE YARNING UP! PROJECT REPORT

2013-2014

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Artwork 1

Artwork 2

Artwork 3

The feelings, thoughts, words and opinions expressed in this report are those of the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander peoples of the Bundaberg area.

Artwork by James Chapman

Artwork 1

Title: *The Teaching*

Description:

This artwork explains how an ancestral figure hovers over an initiation ceremony where teenage Aboriginal males are led into circular rocks formation (bora ring). This is an example of how ancestors pass down knowledge to elders, who provide the teaching to the younger generation.

Artwork 2

Title: *The Separation*

Description:

Explains the period of the "Stolen Generation" where the half caste Aboriginal children were taken away from their home land, culture and families. On the left hand side of the painting it represents the full blood "dark skinned" children and on the right hand side of the painting is the half caste "fair skinned" children. This is one of the most damaging events that took place in our Aboriginal history that was put in place by the government.

Artwork 3

Title: *Our Healing*

Description:

Us mob creating a solution to take a cultural approach to work together within the community as one, towards a healing in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and families with minimal mainstream involvement.

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TRADITIONAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which we work, live and breathe. We pay respect to the First Australians ~ their cultures, connections with country, kin and community and Elders both past and present.

The Yarning Up! project report is dedicated to, and owned by, the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander peoples of the Bundaberg area.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the St John's Grace Fund for recognising the value and worth of this project, and generously providing funding for its completion.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander peoples of the Bundaberg area for the generosity and support shown towards the Yarning Up! project.

We are also indebted to a number of people who assisted and supported this project throughout:

Ms C. O'Mullan, CQUniversity

Ms S. Little, Phoenix House

Ms Samantha Allen, Social Work Student

The Phoenix House Management Committee

The Phoenix House Staff Team

ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS USED

ATSIC – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – 'Peoples' was used to acknowledge that all communities will have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples residing in them who originate from diverse country.

Community – For the purpose of this report 'community' is used to represent the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander peoples of the Bundaberg area, who generously made contributions.

Culturally appropriate – "It involves firstly respect for people and their cultures...respect for their rights to uphold and strengthen their cultural values, beliefs, traditions and customs; and of their rights to develop their own institutional structures. It involves cooperative communication and an acute awareness of power relationships...it means looking for appropriate ways to develop Aboriginal people's capacity – individually and collectively – to grow to meet the challenges" (Crawshaw, 2012).

Cultural safety – "Aims to directly address the effects of colonialism ... by focusing on the level of cultural safety felt by an individual seeking care...Emphasis is placed on assisting the worker to understand processes of identity and culture, and how power imbalances can be culturally unsafe, and thus detrimental to a person's health and wellbeing" (Downing, Kowal, & Paradies, 2011).

Euro-Australians – This is the term used to describe white Euro-Australians within this report, in order to avoid the dominant assumption that anyone non-Aboriginal is ' Australian', or 'non-raced' (Walter, Taylor & Habibis, 2013).

Family violence – Family violence is used within this report in recognition that many Indigenous people have stated they prefer this term, rather than the dominant language of 'domestic violence'. In using this term however it is critical we do not forget that it is Aboriginal women who bear the brunt of this violence (Blagg, 2000).

INTRODUCTION

In providing a way forward it is constantly stressed that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people must work together to halt the violence and reverse the long-standing disadvantages suffered by Indigenous Australians

(Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence, 2000, xvii).

Phoenix House (PH) is a non-government sexual violence prevention and intervention service, based within Bundaberg, Queensland since 1995. Bundaberg is a regional area approximately 350km north of Brisbane with a population of around 97,762 people (Queensland Government, 2012). The PH mission states "Phoenix House is committed to the provision of a safe and supportive service which assists those members of our community who have been harmed, are at risk of harm, and/or are willing to address their own harmful behaviours, using a public health approach to the prevention of sexual violence" (Phoenix House, 1995).

Since 1999, PH has employed an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family support worker whose role is to facilitate access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and families to PH; the expectation is that they will then work with Euro-Australian counsellors to resolve issues related to sexual and family violence. The family support worker was employed through a 'top down' process, without extensive consultation with the Aboriginal community. In hindsight this was based on Euro-Australian workers' assumptions of what 'they' felt was needed, and professional commitment (Tesoriero, 2010), rather than the stated need of the local Aboriginal community.

PH staff and management wanted to know if this strategy was really working, but also had many more questions. What were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people worried about in relation to sexual and family violence within the Bundaberg community? What did they think needed to be done when responding to the trauma caused by this violence? What skills and knowledge are required for effective support following sexual and family violence? What services are currently available to address these issues? What are the barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in accessing these services? And finally, what gaps in training could be identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community workers to enable them to be more effective in their work?

INTRODUCTION *(cont'd)*

We were, however, also very aware that "social workers and their practices have been instruments of social control (and) participants in the process of dispossession and oppression ...where great injustices were carried out" (Bennet, 2013, p.20) against Aboriginal peoples, including the significant role in the inter-generational trauma caused to Aboriginal peoples through the legacy of the Stolen Generations (Menzies and Gilbert, 2013). It is pertinent to note here that this history of oppressive, colonialist and racist acts continues today through both government policy, and ultimately social work practice, for example, under the guise of the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007 (Cth) (NTNER) (Scrymgour, 2007).

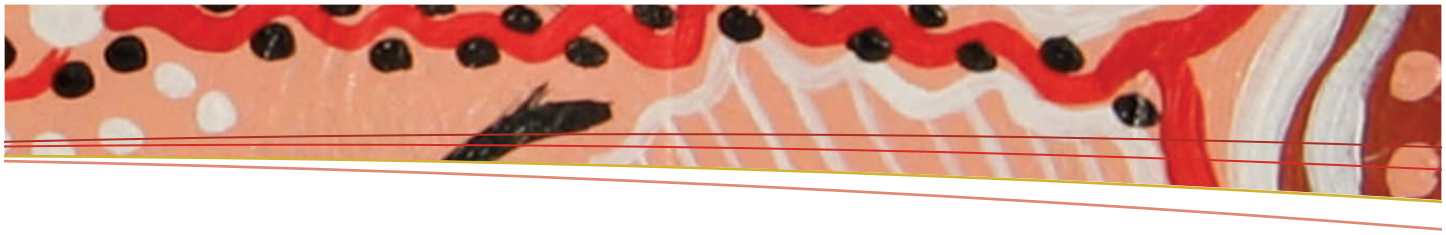
In order not to perpetuate such practice, and as a mainstream organisation working within a human rights and social justice framework, we thus wanted to ensure the construction of ethical relationships between the project workers at PH and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We closely followed the National Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003), and were guided by the six values put forward in this document. These values include:

- Spirit and Integrity
- Reciprocity
- Respect
- Equality
- Survival and protection
- Responsibility

SETTING THE CONTEXT

"Pull off the bag, examine your land... to understand your history is not an act of grand generosity but a bloody-minded necessity. The alternative is to live with a bag over your head... and baby, its dark in there" (Pascoe, 2007).

TEACHING



MY LAND, MY TRACKS: BUNDABERG AREA PRE-INVASION

Based on Ernie Grants Framework: My Land, My Tracks (Queensland Studies Authority, 2010, p.46, Northern Territory Government, 2006).

BUNDABERG PRE-INVASION

LAND

Land: Burnett River country; creeks; swampland; water holes; beaches; fire
Animals: Dingo; kangaroo; porcupine; bush wallabies; whiptail; green parrot; flying fox; ducks; ibis, pelicans; pigeons; bush turkey; frogs; turtles; dugong; fish; shell-fish
Plants: Mangroves; wattle; tea tree; gum tree; bloodwood; iron bark; paperbark; eucalypt; crows ash; Queensland ebony; yellow boxwood; blood vine; Wonga vine; waterlilies; bullrush; gumbi-gumbi

LANGUAGE

Traditional Aboriginal language
Sign language
Fire
Art

CULTURE

Food: Fish, turtles, dugong; cooking with plant foods, grubs and small lizards; hunting kangaroo, emu, porcupine, sand goanna; fruit (plums)
Fire and tool making
Traditional music and art
Traditional medicines and healing
Traditional healers
Traditional shelters - Bark Huts
Traditional law

TIME

Precontact
(Up to 1770)
Seasons and cycles

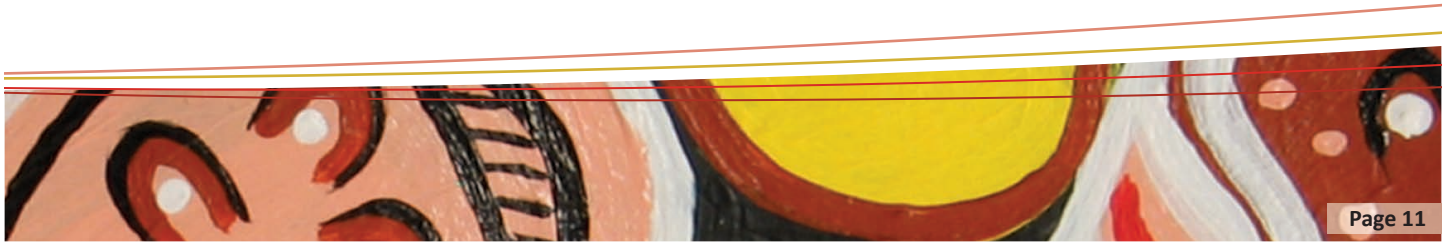
PLACE

Campsites; Bora rings; Bundaberg; the Hummock; Cedar's crossing; Mystery craters; ***Paddy's Island***; Cedars Crossing; Mon Repos

RELATIONSHIPS

Dreamtime, ancestors and spirits
Totems (Individual and Tribal)
Skin names
Tribal gatherings at the Bunya Mountains

Paddy's Island is a significant site for Aboriginal peoples, being one of a number across Australia where Aboriginal people were massacred by Euro-Australian settlers. "There can be no doubt that both The Cedar and Paddy's Island massacres happened. Precise casualties are difficult to gauge, but it seems clear they were sizeable" (Bottoms, 2013, p.26).



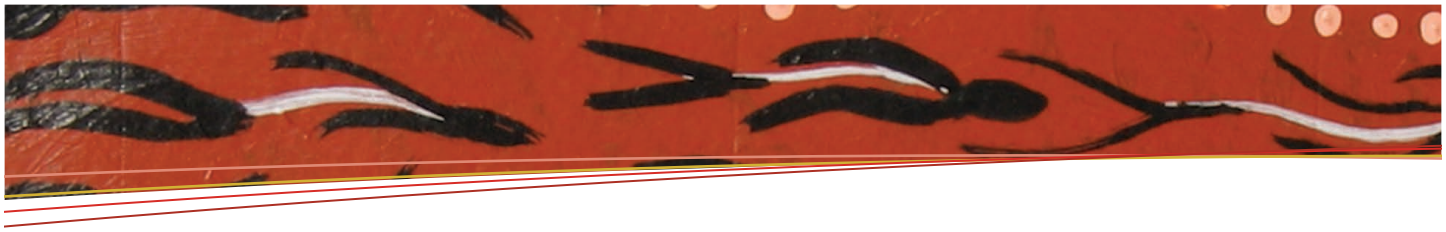
SEPARATION

THE INVASION AND COLONISATION OF ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA

Only the other day in terms of history we stole this land, stole it with murder and mayhem and about the lowest form of meanness a human being could stoop to... and we have to reconcile this matter someday, either by acknowledging the fact that we're bloody handed thieves and being proud of it or giving back what we stole, and not as in an act of charity but of downright humility.
(Herbert, cited in Briskman, 2007, p.39).

Aboriginal peoples survived in Australia for approximately 70,000 years prior to the late 1700's, relatively healthy, disease free, and enjoying a strong collective culture that attended to community, spirituality and country (Parker, 2010). Pre-invasion populations were estimated at 300,000 (Commonwealth of Australia, 1998). The invasion of Australia, and its subsequent colonisation, commenced a cultural genocide that has had a devastating impact on all aspects of the lives of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and this practice continues to this day (Briskman, 2007).

The First Peoples of Australia (Atkinson, 2002) have been subjected to over two hundred years of "displacement, been the target of genocidal policies and practices, had families destroyed through the forcible removal of children, and continue to face the stresses of living in a racist world that systematically devalues Indigenous culture and people" (Dudgeon, Wright, Paradies, Garvey & Walker, 2010, p. 38). From federation time, legislation and policies were formed across all Australian states and territories which sought to penalise, restrict, and assimilate Aboriginal peoples (Altman, 2007). These included the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Act 1909 (NSW), the South Australian Aboriginal Protection Act 1911 (SA), the Queensland Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 (QLD), and the Northern Territory Aboriginal Ordinance of 1911 (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), 1997). "The intentions underlying these punitive and restrictive laws was clear, for under the pretence of for their own good, the effects were a form of cultural genocide of Indigenous Australians, through the loss of language, family dispersion and the cessation of cultural practices" (Dudgeon et al., 2010, p. 30).



The forced removal of up to one in three Aboriginal children, in the guise of 'their own good' from their family, community, culture and lore, between 1910 and the current day, and placement within institutions, commercial enterprises, and with Euro-Australian families, has meant that few generations of Aboriginal families have not been devastated under the pretext of assimilation (HREOC, 1997). The legacy of the Stolen Generations continues today, with over one-third of all children removed still not having been reunited with their kin (Briskman, 2007). The trauma of these atrocities remains with subsequent generations.

Today, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Australia is estimated as 669,900 or 3% of the total Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). In contemporary Australia, Aboriginal peoples are at greatly increased risk of physical disorders such as cardio-vascular disease, diabetes and renal disease; life expectancy is 12 years less (males) and 10 years less (females) than for other Australians (Parker, 2010).

In terms of social and emotional wellbeing Aboriginal peoples do not fare any better (Australian Health Ministers, 2003). Zubrick et al. (2005) found in a study of Aboriginal children aged 4-17 years that 24% were rated at high risk of clinically significant emotional or behavioural difficulties, and 16% of young people aged 12-17 years had considered suicide, with 39% of these attempting to suicide. In 2005, Aboriginal peoples were twice as likely to be hospitalised for mental and behavioural disorders as other Australians; the death rate for disorders due to substance use was 14 times higher for Aboriginal males aged 35-44 years than for Euro-Australian males in that age group. (Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2005).

Disadvantage is also faced across all other social indices, for example, housing/ overcrowding, education, employment and living in absolute poverty due to basic human needs being unmet (HREOC, 1997). Aboriginal people are over-represented in criminal justice and child protection systems (Briskman, 2007). "In short, an Aborigin(al person) is much more likely than a white to be in one or more of the following states: sick, unemployed, uneducated, poor, imprisoned or dead" (Haupe, 1987, as cited in Briskman, 2007).

Racism flourishes against Aboriginal people, creating a negative impact on their well being (Priest, Paradies, Stewart, & Luke, 2011). Racism in contemporary Australia is demonstrated across a number of levels; individual, interpersonal, official, political, ideological and cultural (Dudgeon et al, 2010; Briskman, 2007). "In the Australian context, the high rates of unemployment, lower average income, high rates of arrest and imprisonment, of poor health, low education and low life expectancy are indicators of the consequences of entrenched institutionalised racism" (Dudgeon et al, 2010). Thus, it may be hidden in policy or practised overtly, and "the pain of being the target of racism leaves scars on

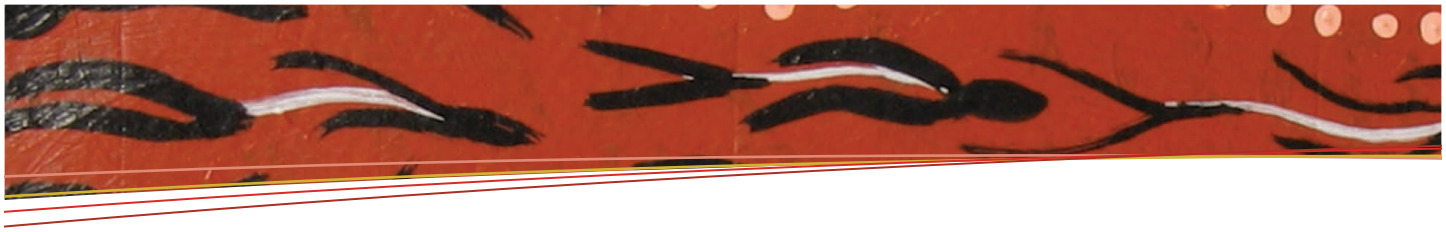
ones soul" (Holt, 1999). Racism has been recognised as a key determinant in the health and well being of Aboriginal children (Priest et al., 2011). The Priest et al. study (2011) explored the health impacts of racism on urban Aboriginal children, finding that 53% had experienced racism, resulting in poor mental and general health, and linked to depression.

> This discrimination is deeply embedded in the social, political and economic fabric... It has become systematic and institutionalised. The consequences have been enormously damaging to Indigenous peoples and it is a testament to the human spirit that Indigenous societies have survived and persisted with their claims to respect, dignity and true equality
> *(World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, 2001, p.8).*

A sense of well-being is also dependent on safety, and violence against women and children is high in Aboriginal communities (Anderson & Wild, 2007). The feminist movement first raised awareness of sexual and domestic violence against women and children in the 1970's (Rose, 1977). From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, while the sexual abuse of Aboriginal children was still not acknowledged as a separate issue, it was reported in the context of Aboriginal family violence, and was noted in some, albeit, limited literature (Bell & Nelson, 1989; Bolger, 1991; Greer & Breckenridge, 1992; Lloyd & Rogers, 1992; Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development; 1999).

There were also attempts by government to explore this 'problem' in more depth, for example, the Western Australian 'Putting the Picture Together: Inquiry into Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities, (2002)', and the Northern Territory's 'Ampe akelyernemane meke mekarle - Little children are sacred. Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, (2007)'. Bridgman and Davis (2004) caution that should a problem be difficult to define and address "it suggests policy makers are dealing with a 'wicked problem' likely to defy policy interventions" (p.56).

In Queensland, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence Report (2000) stated that "the harsh reality is that many families are now trapped in environments where deviance and atrocities have become accepted as normal behaviours and as such, form an integral part of the children's socialisation" (p.XV) . Due to the under-reporting of sexual and family violence in general it is extremely difficult to estimate the extent of this violence. Blagg (2000) noted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are almost five times more likely to be subject to violent crimes than Euro-Australian people, with this being higher still in more remote communities (Bryant & Willis, 2008).



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely than non-Aboriginal people to experience poly-victimisation (Higgins & McCabe, 2000). This refers to the experience of multiple, co-occurring and often ongoing forms of victimsation; child abuse, domestic and family violence, neglect, physical and sexual assault, community violence, socio-economic poverty and racism (Wood 2008). Poly-victimisation is strongly associated with chronic and complex poor health outcomes, high risk behaviours and premature death (Felitti & Anda, 2009).

Such adverse events experienced in childhood, especially abuse and trauma, can have detrimental long-term impacts on the neuroregulatory systems which mediate mental and physical health (Felitti & Anda, 2009). Research indicates that more than four adverse life experiences in childhood result in significantly higher rates of psychiatric disorders, risk taking behaviours (including alcoholism, drug-taking, smoking, unprotected sex and obesity), and developing liver disease, heart disease, chronic obstructive autoimmune disease and coronary artery disease than individuals who have lower adverse childhood experiences. These impacts are compounded when experiences of violence and abuse occur in adulthood and when the victim also experiences ongoing racism, discrimination and oppression, all of which are common for Aboriginal people (Herring et al, 2012; Funston, 2013).

Children and young people who have experienced and witnessed violence can suffer a range of psychological and behavioural problems, from mild to severe, in both the short and long term. The negative effects of violence can affect people for many years and into adulthood. Adults who were abused as children commonly experience depression. Additionally, high levels of anxiety in these adults can result in self-destructive behaviours, such as alcoholism or drug abuse, anxiety attacks, situation-specific anxiety disorders, and insomnia. Adults who have experienced violence may experience a range of feelings and reactions. They may struggle with the view society has of this crime, with possible feelings of guilt, self blame, and/or with the relationship they have with the perpetrator. Aboriginal women in particular may not speak out to enable them to access support services due to, for example, issues related to shame and social taboo (Robertson, 2000).

It is important to emphasise here that sexual and family violence occurs across all of Australian society (Greer & Breckenridge, 1992). What exacerbates the impact of such violence within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is their experience of the previously described poly-victimisation (Higgins & McCabe, 2000) and the “damaging effects imposed by colonisation and dispossession on the relationships Indigenous peoples have held with their kin, their lands and their communities” (Keel, 2004, p.3).

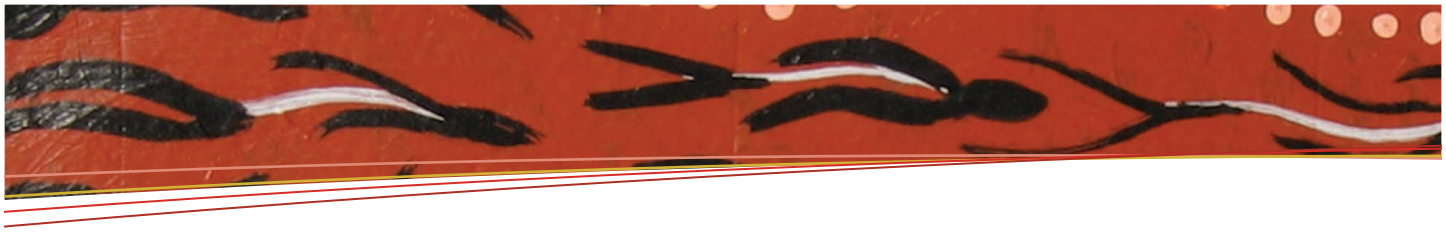
Finally, one has to ask why over the last hundred plus years government policies have failed to address these human rights issues? Although there have been some attempts towards change, for example, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology to the Aboriginal Stolen Generations in 2008, this was surely negated by that government's continuation of the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007 (Cth), and through its successor, the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Act 2012 (Cth).

Briskman (2007) discusses a continuum of government debate that ranges from land rights and sovereignty, through to a call to 'forget the past' and the mainstreaming of Australian society. Some of the criticisms levelled by Briskman of successive Australian governments are that they have:

- Failed to consult or work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, instead imposing their own policies;
- Failed to relinquish financial and decision-making power to Aboriginal communities;
- Over-reacted to any criticism levelled at Aboriginal organisations in a way they would not do with mainstream organisations (for example, the abolition of ATSIC in 2004);
- Supported the mythology about what the impact of financial compensation and land rights could have economically on such dominant industries as agriculture and mining;
- Failed to adequately fund Aboriginal services;
- Failed to recognise the basic human rights of Aboriginal people.

Significantly, government policy continues to label "the rights agenda as divisive and insulting to the current generation of non-Aboriginal Australians who cannot be held responsible for the past, (which denies) the obvious fact that since the time of European settlement in Australia white views have followed a trajectory of indifference, genocide, assimilation and now grudging recognition" (Briskman, 2007, p.130

There is much work to be done...



MY LAND, MY TRACKS: BUNDABERG AREA CONTEMPORARY

Based on Ernie Grants Framework: My Land, My Tracks (Queensland Studies Authority, 2010, p.46, Northern Territory Government, 2006).

BUNDABERG CONTEMPORARY

LAND

Land: Burnett River country; creeks; swampland; water holes; beaches; fire
Animals: Pests: Cane toads, foxes, pigs; kangaroo; porcupine; bush wallabies; whiptail; green parrot; flying fox; ducks; ibis, pelicans; pigeons; bush turkey; frogs; turtles; dugong; fish; shell-fish
Plants: Introduced species; mangroves; wattle; tea tree; gum tree; bloodwood; iron bark; paperbark; eucalypt; crows ash; Queensland ebony; yellow boxwood; blood vine; Wonga vine; waterlilies; bullrush; gumbi-gumbi

LANGUAGE

Some examples in alphabetical order:
Butchalla
Kabi Kabi
Gooreng Gooreng
South Sea Islander
Taribelang Bunda
Torres Strait Islander
Wakka Wakka
Wuli Wuli

CULTURE

Traditional cultures practiced by fewer numbers of Aboriginal people.
Traditional food.
Elders meetings
Multiculturalism.
Many religions.
Sports
'Entertainment' - pubs and clubs.
Government and non-Government organisations

TIME

Contemporary (2000 to current)
Seasons and cycles

PLACE

Bundaberg; the Hummock; Cedar's crossing; Mystery craters; Paddy's Island; Cedars crossing

RELATIONSHIPS

NAIDOC WEEK
Gidarjil - languages
Working towards reconciliation
'Closing the Gap' initiatives
Racism
Euro-Australian dominance

THE YARNING UP! PROJECT REPORT

THE YARNING UP! PROJECT REPORT

1.0 IN A NUTSHELL

The Yarning Up! project began in May 2013, and was funded by a grant from the St John's Grace Fund, Bundaberg. The project aimed to identify the key issues in relation to sexual and family violence faced by the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander communities of the Bundaberg area. Phoenix House was keen to identify the barriers that prevent Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander peoples from accessing organisations when they have been impacted by violence, and existing gaps in services and knowledge about these issues. It was hoped that this information would then lead to improved responses to assist people to heal from trauma.

The project team adhered to the National Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research, and utilised a community based participatory approach. This was achieved in Yarning Up! by the project being managed by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander project worker, who worked with the guidance of a steering committee made up of five Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander community members. Regular fortnightly meetings were held, with all decisions being made by and through the steering committee and project worker.

A total of 62 male and female members of the Bundaberg Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander community took part in the research. This was composed of 29 general community members, and 33 community workers employed in mainstream and Aboriginal community organisations. Yarns and open-ended questions (through unstructured interview or survey) were used to collect the data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. To address issues related to vigour and subjectivity, a consensus approach was used. Initial coding of themes was completed independently by the project worker and report writer, who then came together to reach a consensus. This was then audited by a qualitative researcher at CQUniversity, and finally the steering committee.

A total of eight key themes were identified within the data, each with a number of sub-themes. These themes were:

1. Social taboo and shame;
2. Issues surrounding privacy, trust and confidentiality;

3. The normalisation of sexual and family violence;
4. The impact of historical, social and structural factors;
5. Increased presentation at services;
6. A lack of culturally appropriate services;
7. A lack of knowledge, education and training about sexual and family violence;
8. The deterrents to reporting sexual and family violence.

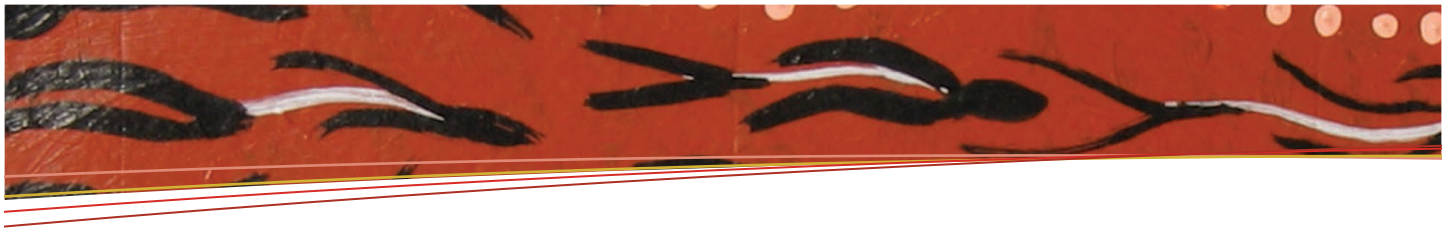
Four key recommendations were made to address these themes, each also having a number of sub-recommendations within them. The main recommendations were to strengthen community action; educate the community and the community workers; provide culturally appropriate and safe organisations and staff; and, to address the legal responses to sexual and family violence.

Two identified limitations of the project were that the use of Yarning (narrative) may not be seen as a rigorous research method and not recognised as a legitimate tool for gathering data by Western academics. The second is that whilst this research provides in-depth information which captures the stories and experiences of the Bundaberg Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and South Sea Islander community, it cannot be generalised to other populations.

It is hoped that these findings will stimulate further research in other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander settings, for example, to explore the experience of different Queensland communities, e.g., in a more urbanised community, and within a remote community. This would broaden the understanding of the impact and context of sexual and family violence across Queensland, and further demonstrate that different experiences will call for different types of interventions.

It will be valuable to examine the contribution of the report's findings in a few years time. It is critical that any programmes that are developed and implemented as a result of Yarning Up! are also evaluated, as there is a lack of evidence about the effectiveness of many programmes aiming to address violence within Aboriginal communities. Related to this is the need to develop a culturally safe measure of the impact of community programmes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Finally, the Yarning Up! project demonstrates that it is possible to work in partnership with Aboriginal communities to collect meaningful data to improve service outcomes. We recommend that similar research continues to be supported by funding agencies.



2.0 WHAT WE AIMED TO DO

The aim of the Yarning Up! project was to explore the key issues relating to sexual and family violence in the Bundaberg area, and to make recommendations to enhance service delivery to prevent, and to address the impact of, this violence.

The key objectives were:

- To work in the most ethical and culturally respectful way with the Bundaberg area Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander communities.
- To adhere to key ethical guidelines on practicing research with Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander peoples.
- To identify key issues in relation to sexual and family violence within the Bundaberg area Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander communities.
- To identify the barriers that prevent Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander peoples from accessing organisations
- To identify gaps in services for Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander peoples following sexual and/or family violence.
- To identify gaps in knowledge, and identify training that will assist in increasing the capacity of community workers to support Aboriginal communities traumatised by the impact of sexual and family violence.

3.0 HOW WE DID THE RESEARCH

3.1 Which way? White Way?

Research is viewed with suspicion by many Aboriginal people; some are tired of Euro-Australian researchers coming into their country, asking a lot of questions and leaving, with no benefits to the communities. “It is well known that Indigenous people worldwide have been over researched, with little thought given to culturally safe methods of engagement” (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010, p.37). Others see theory-driven research as being colonising practice, and most research has historically been driven from a top-down agenda, often by government (Guilfoyle, Coffin, & Maginn, 2008). In particular, research “remains an extension of the dominant culture’s base of western values, ethics and norms” (Stewart, 2009, p.2). In order to work in the most ethical and culturally sensitive way, the Yarning Up! project utilised a community based participatory approach (CBPR).

CBPR is a research approach. It is a way that the community can be involved and a researcher can share decision making and ownership of research in order to create and disseminate new knowledge that is beneficial to all (Castleden, Morgan, & Lamb, 2012). Some of the most critical elements of this approach rests upon "cross-cultural competency and sensitivity, regarding issues of respect, control, communication, non-interference and permission"(Stewart, 2009, p.18), and ensuring Aboriginal control over the research.

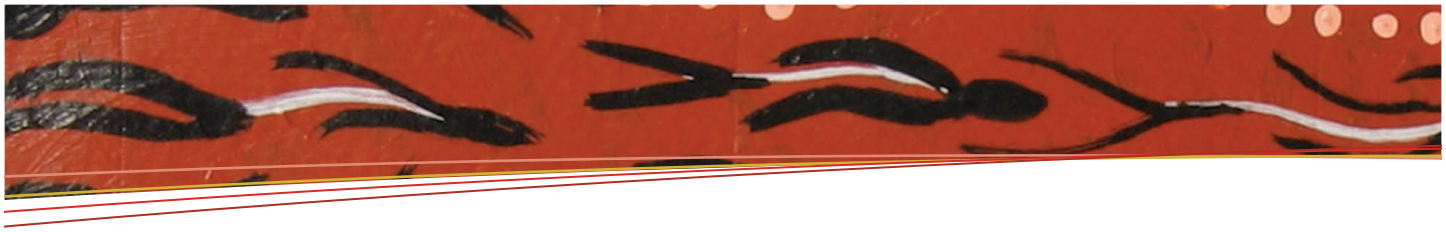
This was achieved in Yarning Up! by the project being managed by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander project worker, who worked with the guidance of a steering committee made up of five Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander community members. Regular fortnightly meetings were held, with all decisions being made by and through the steering committee and project worker. As discussed previously, PH ensured adherence to the values and ethics within a key document, the National Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research (NHMRC, 2003).

3.2 Who took part?

A total of 62 male and female members of the Bundaberg Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander community took part in the research. This was composed of 29 general community members, and 33 community workers employed in mainstream and Aboriginal community organisations. Approaches were made to all organisations who were known to employ an Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander worker, with invitations to take part in the research. With community members, requests were sent out via the Murri grapevine (see later). All of the people who responded were aged over eighteen years.

Everyone who took part in the research was invited to read through and sign the informed consent form which outlined their participation rights and ethical research practice. They were informed of:

- the purpose of the research;
- what they would be asked to do, including the amount of time likely to be required for participation;
- expected risks and benefits, including psychological and social;
- the fact that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time;
- how their confidentiality will be protected;



- verbal written information on how to gain support should anything related to the research topic cause them concern or distress.

3.3 How did we gather the information?

3.3.1 Yarns

> Yarning is conducive to an Indigenous way of doing things; its strength is in the cultural security that it creates for Indigenous people participating in research. Yarning is a process that cuts across the formality of identity as a researcher and demands the human to human interaction where both are knowers and learners in the process *(Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010 p. 2).*

Yarning, an Aboriginal cultural way of communicating, was used as a culturally safe way for the project worker to establish/strengthen her relationship with the five Aboriginal people who contributed to the research through narrative means, and as a way to gather information. Information was gathered through an open ended, unstructured interview (see appendix 1).

Yarns were recorded and transcribed, and it was ensured that all information was kept anonymous. Participants were also given the opportunity to add anything they felt was necessary to their Yarns once completed.

3.3.2 Open-ended questions through unstructured interview or survey

Direct questioning, the standard tool for social science researchers, is not considered to be a culturally appropriate method of data collection for Aboriginal people (Donovan & Spark, 1997). As such, open ended (or nondirective) questions were used to elicit Aboriginal people's unique understandings and responses to the research questions. These were made available either through an unstructured interview or through completion of an open-ended questionnaire. Two surveys were administered, one for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members (see appendix 1), and the second for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed as community workers in welfare and social services (see appendix 2).

3.4 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, which involves the identification and analysis of codes and themes (patterns) of similarity within qualitative research (Braun & Clark, 2006). It is not grounded in any particular theoretical framework and can therefore be applied across a wide range of

qualitative research approaches (Braun & Clark, 2006). In seeking to analyse data, thematic analysis can either identify the themes pertaining to a particular research question (deductive analysis) or it can identify themes that are observed across the entire data range (inductive analysis) (Braun & Clark, 2006). For the purpose of this research, inductive analysis was used "so that theories are built from the bottom up by drawing conclusions based on the data" (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997, p.520).

To address issues related to vigour and subjectivity, a consensus approach was used in the development of codes and themes from the data, as "multiple perspectives increase our approximation of the 'truth' and are more likely to be free from researcher bias" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p.7). Initial coding of themes was completed independently by the project worker and report writer, who then came together to reach a consensus. This was then audited (Liamputtong, 2010) by a qualitative researcher at CQUniversity. The final outcomes were presented to the Yarning Up! steering committee for approval.

Throughout the findings and discussions much use is made of verbatim quotations of the contributions made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The purpose of this was to use their spoken words to enable voice, to deepen understanding of the issues raised, to illustrate emerging themes, and also by way of explanation and as evidence of the research outcomes (Corden & Salisbury, 2006). The letters following each quotation notes whom it was provided by (community member - CM; community worker - CW).

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Eight key themes arose from this research and each of these themes will be discussed separately. The themes that follow are those that were observed throughout the research process and represent the ambiguity presented within the accounts and perceptions.

THEME 1

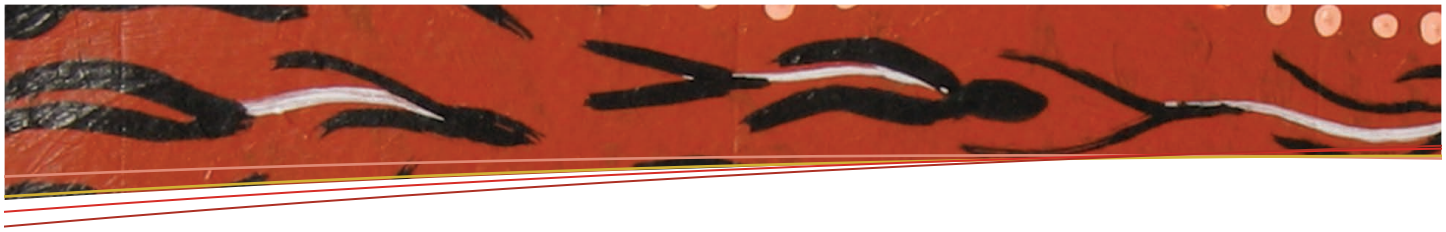
4.1 SOCIAL TABOO AND SHAME

A number of people interviewed reported the impact social taboo and shame has on a person's capacity to seek support and counselling following sexual and/or family violence. For example,

"It's being covered up by family members. It's about being shame to admit that it's happening. My worry is that someone is going to be murdered next time then it's too late to feel shame then" (CM).

"There is still silence about this issue - a taboo subject – can be shunned by family if they speak out" (CW).

"The hidden facts – they are pushed under the carpet of shame" (CM).



Social taboo can be thought of as a 'collective barrier' to talking about sexual and family violence, whereas shame acts as an 'individual barrier' to talking about, and hence seeking support, for these traumas. There is limited research that explores the impact of social taboo and shame in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people's experience of violence.

4.1.1 The influence of social taboo

Social taboo has been described as "any social prohibition or restriction that results from convention or tradition" (Palermo, 1993, p.191). Rosen (1972) states that social taboos are apart of the large and still mysterious field of the folkways. Since they surround us, we are usually as little aware of them as fish presumably are of the water in which they swim...in folkways we are dealing with the informal part of the legal code. Sometimes, indeed, they seem to have more binding power than does the formal code". (p.175).

Both men's and women's business are an integral part of a balanced Aboriginal life, and the term 'business' is used to describe the responsibilities and obligations of both men and women. In Aboriginal communities there are sanctions that deal with people who breach protocols of men's and women's business, or who share any inside information inappropriately. This may include punishment by spiritual and local lore (Queensland Studies Authority, 2010). This cultural value often creates a barrier between men and women in these communities from discussing issues around sexual health (North Coast Area Health Service, 2009), and this is one example of how social taboo may influence being able to talk about certain issues.

4.1.2 The impact of shame

Thomas Scheff (1994) described shame as the 'the master emotion'. The definition of shame is embedded in culture and language (Nathanson, 1992). In western societies shame is associated largely with having done wrong (Sharifian, 2005). It is a powerful emotion that develops as people learn the expectations and standards imposed upon them by others, and later themselves. Shame, as an emotion, can arise from a number of things, such as a violation of some role or standard, or a failure to meet expectations (Lewis, 1992).

The meaning of shame for Aboriginal peoples extends to include embarrassment resulting from situations that non-Aboriginal people may not feel discomfort about (Louth, 2012), for example, being singled out for praise - or punishment (Sharafian, 20015), speaking out in public, or talking about private business. It might also include "knowledge and emotions associated with ... the respect one has for parents, elders, sacred places" (Sharafian, 2005, p.79).

Australian Aboriginal women witness the loss of traditional Aboriginal male roles, which also prompts them to protect their men. Embedded in this is the desire to protect the community from the shame that is shared when one person fails. Shaming occurs not only through internalised racism, but through knowledge that disclosure of abuse by an Aboriginal person is likely to be taken as evidence of Aboriginal dysfunction (Herring, Spangaro, Lauw & McNamara, 2011, p. 6).

Avoiding shame is often demonstrated by a certain behaviour; for example, a person might not want to have a go at something in front of others until they know they have got it just right (Louth, 2012). Shame significantly impacts on an Aboriginal person using mainstream services, or even participating fully in wider society (Briskman, 2007).

There are a number of reasons why mainstream workers may behave in ways which increase the feelings of shame experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples accessing counselling and support services. This can range from westernised counselling practices, such as direct questioning, which may be perceived as shaming and blaming, to therapeutic frameworks such as feminism:

> Without a recognition by Migloo women of our Indigenous world, we can never meet you as we would wish, because without such a recognition you will always be speaking from a prism of white feminist values, and that world is almost inseparable, for us, from the invading society per se *(Lucashenko, 1994, p. 22).*

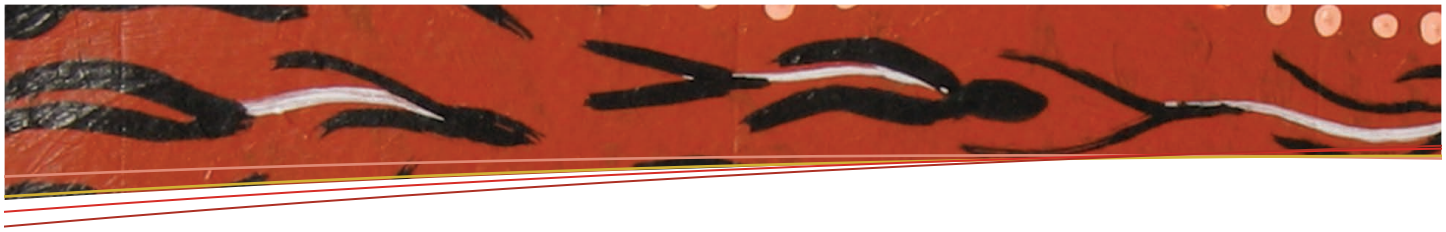
Key points:

- Social taboo and shame have a key impact upon an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person accessing support and counselling for trauma related to sexual and family violence, particularly from mainstream organisations.
- A lack of trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counsellors increases the barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as they report greater shame when discussing their trauma with Euro-Australian counsellors.
- Shame may be increased by the westernised counselling frameworks and practice of mainstream services.

THEME 2

4.2 ISSUES SURROUNDING PRIVACY, TRUST AND CONFIDENTIALITY

This theme describes how concerns related to privacy, trust, and confidentiality being breached, may lead to a reluctance by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in seeking support and counselling following sexual and family violence. For example,



"There is a lack of trust in confiding in white people and (fear of) being judged" (CM)
"There are concerns about privacy and confidentiality (Murri grapevine) – it's a barrier to accessing services, rural and small communities" (CW).
"The Murri grapevine!" (CM)

4.2.1 A lack of trust in mainstream organisations

It is widely reported that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can struggle to trust mainstream organisations, and this is discussed in detail throughout this report. This should come as no surprise, given that:

> mainstream services have been implicated, historically, in the oppression of Aboriginal people, and the continued existence of injustices operate as a barrier to Aboriginal peoples willingness to use mainstream services... there is a feeling that these services are either not intended for their use, or are actively hostile to their needs *(Briskman, 2007, p.108)*.

4.2.2 A distrust of Aboriginal workers due to the Murri grapevine

The Murri grapevine was noted as a potential barrier by the community towards accessing Aboriginal organisations and workers. The Murri grapevine is the informal communication network between Queensland Aboriginal peoples. "We believe in the power and the magic of the 'Murri Grapevine'. The Murri grapevine is an example of how we have reinvented our skill set, and combined ancient wisdom with contemporary ways of being" (Closing the Gap & General Practice Queensland, nd). Similar feedback was received in regards to Koori networks (parts of New South Wales and Victoria), with one worker stating "I have had a number of Koori women who did not want to work with a Koori worker. Issues of confidentiality was a big one for them" (Elizabeth Hoffmann House, 2004).

Key points:

- Mainstream organisations may be seen by Aboriginal people as being associated with past colonising practice, and thus as being untrustworthy.
- A significant number of people expressed concern about their confidentiality being breached through the Murri grapevine, particularly in rural communities.
- The key issue here appears to relate to 'choice' – that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples want to have the choice to be able to access Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and counsellors, and/or mainstream organisations and counsellors.

4.3 NORMALISATION OF FAMILY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

This theme describes the concerns the community raised that sexual and family violence is becoming normalised within some families and communities.

"Somewhere this cycle has to be broken in the best interest of our future generation – our children" (CM)
"Survival and resilient skills become second nature and women don't realise how controlling their partners behaviours are " (CW)
"There is generational family violence, it starts in childhood and continues on, need to empower with skills to break the cycles" (CW).

4.3.1 Sexual and family violence is now normalised

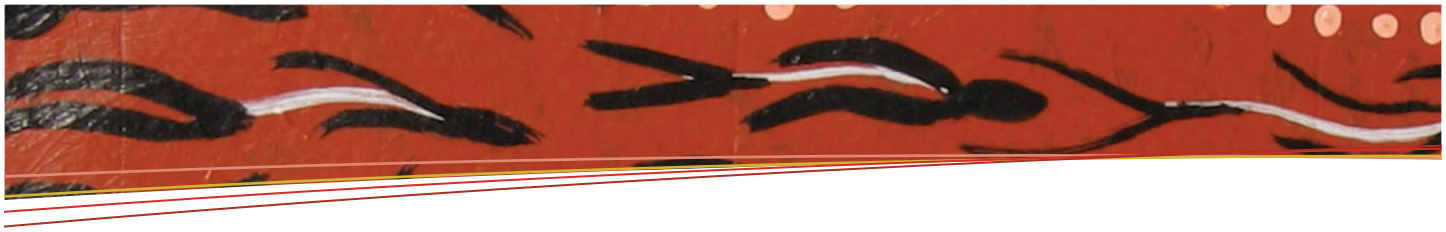
There was widespread concern from community members and workers that the normalisation of violence is a significant issue. This included feedback that:

- Young people are accepting of sexual assault as part of a dating relationship;
- Many believe that violence happens in all families and you don't need to discuss it;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children consider 'that it's just the way things are;
- People are believing violence is not a problem, that it is normal.

Other research has reported a similar theme. The most significant was that of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence who stated that "deviance and atrocities have become accepted as normal behaviour and as such, form an integral part of the children's socialisation"(2000, p.XV).

The process of normalisation can lead to cycles of intergenerational abuse, with each successive generation failing to grow up being taught how to be respectful and recognise the rights of others. "Through processes of normalisation, women, girls and boys may not see being abused and sexually exploited as wrong, rather as something they should accept and even expect" (Mulligan, cited in Willis, 2011, p.7).

Two further issues were identified by Elizabeth Hoffmann House (2004). The first reported that sexual violence was becoming normalised to the "point where both victims and perpetrators believed that it was seen to be cultural" (p.25). The second was that in comparison to such challenges as poverty, homelessness, and substance abuse, sexual violence was seen as a low priority.



It is important here to reinforce that like all communities, Aboriginal communities are diverse and that they differ in their language, culture and history (Keel, 2004). There are also differences in a community's experience of violence. For example, although sexual and family violence is vastly under-reported, an Aboriginal woman living in far northern and northern Queensland is more likely to be sexually assaulted than Aboriginal women in the rest of the state (Keel, 2004). Under-reporting makes it difficult to estimate the actual extent of sexual and family violence within the Bundaberg area.

Key points:

- Anecdotal evidence suggests that there continues to be a normalisation of sexual and family violence within some families and communities.
- For some Aboriginal families coping with violence may be a lesser priority than coping with socio-economic issues such as poverty, homelessness and racism, and which disclosure of violence may exacerbate.
- Although all Aboriginal communities share some commonalities they are also all unique and diverse in their experiences.

THEME 4

4.4 THE IMPACT OF HISTORICAL, SOCIAL AND STRUCTURAL FACTORS

This theme explored how Aboriginal families and communities continue to face a range of historical, social and structural challenges, such as the colonial invasion, genocide, assimilation, institutionalised racism and severe socio -economic deprivation, all of which have a complex relationship with violence. For example,

"The need to address multiple factors including whole of family issues such as poverty, health and substance abuse"(CW).
"Most family violence with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders occurs through alcohol and drug use" "(CM).
"The Bundaberg floods increased the rates of violence in already volatile relationships" (CW).

4.4.1 The complex relationship between colonisation and sexual and family violence

The impact of social and structural factors relates to the historical context of colonisation and Euro-Australian violence against Aboriginal peoples, which has been previously described in detail in this

report. Blagg (cited in Kell, 2004, p.8) identified the relationship between this highly complex socio-historical context and sexual and family violence within Aboriginal communities as including:

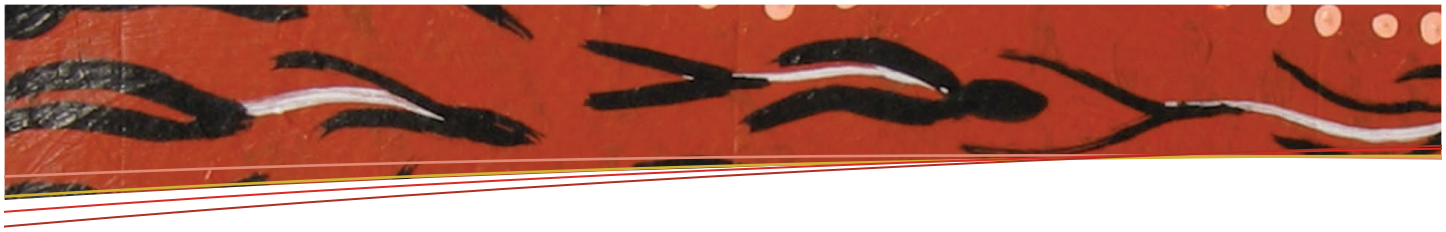
- Marginalisation and dispossession
- Loss of land and traditional culture
- Breakdown of community kinship systems and Aboriginal law;
- Entrenched poverty;
- Racism;
- Alcohol and drug abuse;
- The effects of institutionalisation and removal policies;
- The 'redundancy' of the traditional Aboriginal male role and status.

"The social conditions of Indigenous people is antithetical to some of the most basic premises of human rights. Inadequate shelter, restricted employment opportunities and low incomes are just three areas where a clear violation is evident" *(Briskman, 2007, p.42)*.

This impact is further exacerbated by the fact that Bundaberg is considered to be an area of significant socio-economic disadvantage. For example, the Socio-Economic Index of Disadvantage for Bundaberg (calculated from the 2011 census and comparing demographic indices such as income, education and unemployment) was skewed to the lowest quintile with 46.3% of residents falling in the 'most disadvantaged' category (Queensland Government, 2014). This was in comparison to Queensland as a whole, with 20% of people being within the most disadvantaged quintile (Queensland Government, 2014).

4.4.2 The Bundaberg floods

Over the past three years, the Bundaberg region has experienced significant natural disaster events that have resulted in numerous community issues. Two major floods, one resulting in the greatest flooding of the Burnett River on record, have caused major social problems for residents across the region. The 2013 Social Impact Assessment identified a number of major factors that are still impacting on families in the region today. These include emotional trauma, financial stress, isolation and hyper vigilance surrounding future rain events (Bundaberg City Council, 2013).



In the last decade, there has been an increase in natural disasters with the impact being more severe. Natural disasters often result in widespread devastation, and for individuals can result in multiple losses, including homelessness, unemployment, mental and physical health problems, loss of social support networks and loss of material items (Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2012). An increasing awareness has also grown concerning women's vulnerability to, and experiences of, violence after disasters. While there are significant challenges to measuring the prevalence of this type of violence in a disaster context, there are several studies that have indicated a substantial increase in gender-based violence after a disaster occurs, which often persists at extremely high levels for many years after the actual event (Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse 2012).

Increased stress is common after a natural disaster event, and this has been identified as being one of the main reasons for increased domestic/family violence after a significant disaster. Financial stress from a loss of income, possessions and housing, as well as a sense of losing control over everyday aspects of life (housing, employment, food, shelter, communication and support) motivates a person to seek more control over their family (Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2012). It was also found that women who were living in a violent relationship prior to the disaster often experienced violence at an increased severity after the occurrence of a disaster, as a result of being separated from family members, friends and other support systems that provided them with some level of protection. These women are also sometimes forced to rely on the offender for survival and access to services (World Health Organisation, 2005).

Key points:

- The lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to be impacted by significant socio-historical contexts, which have a complex relationship to the occurrence of sexual and family violence within Aboriginal communities.
- The Bundaberg floods of 2011 and 2013 increased stressors within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and exacerbated already violent situations.

THEME 5

4.5 INCREASED PRESENTATION AT SERVICES

This theme describes the concerns the community expressed in relation to what they perceive as an increase in the sexual and family violence being experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. For example,

"We have found that there is a significant increase in family violence in our Indigenous community" (CW).

"In relation to sexual abuse it is in our community, and family violence is on the rise" (CM).
"We are seeing an increase in referrals" (CW).

4.5.1 An increase in sexual and family violence within the community?

The community noted that sexual and family violence appears to be increasing, despite a large number of people still not disclosing, and that family violence (which may also include sexual violence) is being seen more frequently by workers than sexual violence alone. Table 1 represents the increase in numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples attending Phoenix House over the last three years. Without further research, it is not possible to state if this is related to an increase in sexual and family violence, or related to other issues, such as the community feeling more comfortable about accessing the organisation.

Table 1.

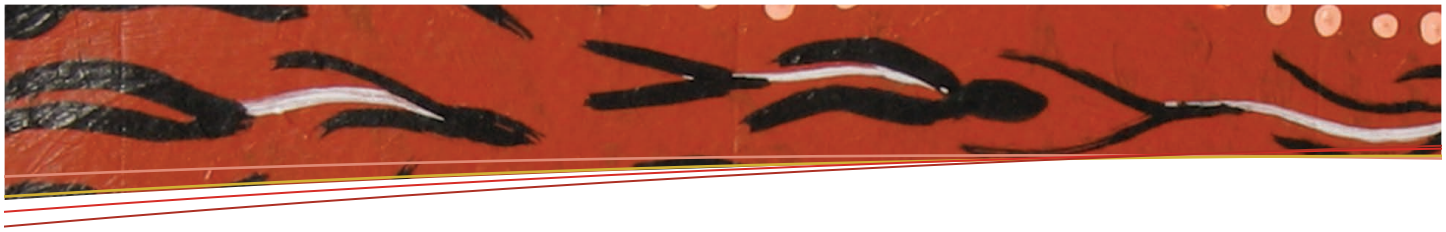
Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples accessing Phoenix House for services

YEAR	NUMBERS OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE ACCESSING PH SERVICES	AVERAGE PER MONTH
2011-2012	47	4
2012-2013	84	7
2013 – March 2014	66	8 (estimated)

An increase in sexual and family violence occurring within Aboriginal communities has been noted in numerous reports. For example:

> The Women's Task Force report paints a frightening picture of violence that is increasing not only in numbers but also in severity. Further they suggest that violence in Indigenous communities has dramatically increased in certain regions, at least since the 1980s and in many cases from the 1970s *(Memmot, Stacy, Chambers & Keys, 2001, p. 6)*

Others highlighted the difficulties in getting accurate statistical data, but noted "anecdotally, and through the extensive experience of Indigenous workers, most reported that they believed the problem was both increasing in regularity and severity. The injuries I think are getting worse. The sexual attacks are increasingly brutal" (Elizabeth Hoffman House, 2004, p.22).



Key points:

- Sexual and family violence within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Bundaberg community appears to be rising, and this is supported nationally by other research.
- Family violence is being seen by service providers more frequently than sexual violence alone.

THEME 6

4.6 LACK OF CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SERVICES

This theme describes a number of gaps observed in the delivery of culturally appropriate services within the Bundaberg area. For example,

"It's hard to identify if there is culturally appropriate support or assistance in mainstream services. They need a wholistic approach to the problem – therapy is only one component"(CW)."Things are done the white way"(CM).
"There are no Aboriginal counsellors, especially male counsellors"(CW).
"No culturally appropriate safe place. We need a safe house or shelter for Aboriginal women" (CM)

4.6.1 Bundaberg mainstream organisations may lack a culturally safe practice

Mainstream services contribute to being inaccessible for Aboriginal peoples through demonstrating a lack of understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander ways and meanings. This will result in "inappropriate, insensitive and disrespectful practices that present a barrier to the utilisation of mainstream services" (Briskman, 2007, p.92). Facing racism on a daily basis will cause Aboriginal people to be suspicious and fearful of such services.

Significant fears are related to the legacy of the Stolen Generations, to the removal of children as Aboriginal peoples are assessed as being:

> Wanting as parents and statutory intervention occurring as a result, (which) remain real risks to Aboriginal people. Understanding non- attendance as provoked by fear, explains events that are often used as evidence of Aboriginal people's incompetence. These include school absenteeism; late presentation for antenatal care; and 'non compliance' with health providers' advice *(Herring, Spangaro, Lauw & McNamara, 2012, p.7).*

It is not enough for mainstream services to be culturally competent. "Evidence of systematic racism towards Aboriginal people in education, welfare, public housing, and the criminal justice system ... pointed to the need for a focus on non-Aboriginal service providers in closing the gap. (and) has led to

the emergence of the ‘‘cultural competence’’ frame” (Herring, Spangaro, Lauw & McNamara, 2011, p. 2). A cultural competence framework has been criticised as being tokenistic, recognising ‘whiteness’ as being the norm by which everything else is referenced to, and lacks an analysis of power differentials (Herring, Spangaro, Lauw, & McNamara, 2011). Most significantly it fails to address the legacy of trauma experienced from the colonisation of this country, nor does it address the “daily racism (avoidable and unfair phenomenon leading to inequalities in power, resources, and opportunities across racial or ethnic groups) experienced by Aboriginal peoples” (Herring, Spangaro, Lauw & McNamara, 2011, p.2).

4.6.2 A lack of trained Aboriginal counsellors

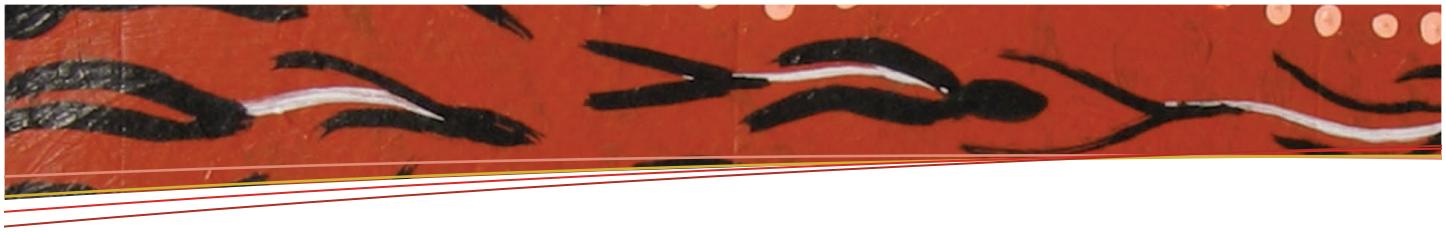
It was noted that there is a lack of trained Aboriginal counsellors (in contrast to support workers) within Bundaberg, and in particular the need for male counsellors for men’s business, as described at 4.1.1. This highlights the importance of both male and females being able to see service providers of the same gender.

Previous studies have indicated a desire for “Indigenous counsellors for Indigenous people who understand culturally appropriate counselling” (Victim Assist Queensland, 2013, p.7), and highlight that Aboriginal people can feel intimidated by people in authority, especially Euro-Australians (Greer & Breckenridge, 1992). There are significant difficulties however, in the expectation that Aboriginal workers are able to respond to the inter-generational grief and trauma that they themselves may also be experiencing; “the chronic trauma and unresolved grief across generations...historical unresolved grief contributes to the current social pathology, originating from the loss of lives, land and vital aspects of native culture promulgated by the European conquest” (Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, p.56).

4.6.3 A lack of a culturally safe place for women and children

A number of women expressed concern about the lack of a culturally appropriate refuge and/or safe place for Aboriginal women and their children to access following family violence. EDON Place was established in Bundaberg in 1978 as a mainstream domestic violence refuge, and continues to provide a safe and supportive environment for women and children who have experienced domestic violence. However, due to the perceived focus and delivery of many mainstream domestic violence organisations, Aboriginal women are often reluctant to access them (Cripps & Davis, 2012).

Responses to family violence are often seen to focus largely on policing, prosecution and punishment, and involve multiple agencies that have heavy workloads and minimal time. These organisations may also lack the cultural safety required when working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait



Islander contexts, and are unfamiliar with the issues that are confronting Aboriginal families across Australia (Cripps & Davis, 2012). However, whilst it is well-established that Aboriginal women are less likely to approach mainstream services to assist with family violence, some may actually prefer a mainstream service for safety and privacy reasons, so effectively this again appears to be about that being available for women and children.

4.6.4 A gap in the provision of an Aboriginal court support worker

The community highlighted a gap in the provision of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander court support worker to help navigate court systems, and to provide follow up counselling for the trauma of accessing such systems. EDON Place provides a mainstream court support worker in the Bundaberg, Childers and Gayndah Magistrates Courts. The EDON Place website provides information about the supports provided (http://www.edonplace.org.au/services.html)

For example:

- information about Legislation;
- information about court procedures;
- assistance to apply for a new order or to vary or revoke the conditions on an existing order;
- pre court meeting and orientation;
- support in the safe waiting room and in the court room;
- post court debriefing and information;
- safety planning;
- referral to other agencies.

However, it was noted by the community that there had never been an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander court support worker available within the Bundaberg court system to assist the community.

Key points:

- If mainstream organisations provide counselling and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, it should be a culturally appropriate, competent and safe service.
- There is an extreme shortage of trained female and males Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counsellors across all Bundaberg organisations.

- Aboriginal counsellors should be provided with the support and resources they require to heal from their own trauma, before they can be expected to help others heal.
- There is a need for a culturally appropriate safe place managed and operated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women for Aboriginal women and their children to access following family violence.
- There is a need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander court support workers who can also provide follow up support following family violence.

THEME 7

4.7 A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ABOUT SEXUAL AND FAMILY VIOLENCE WITHIN THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY

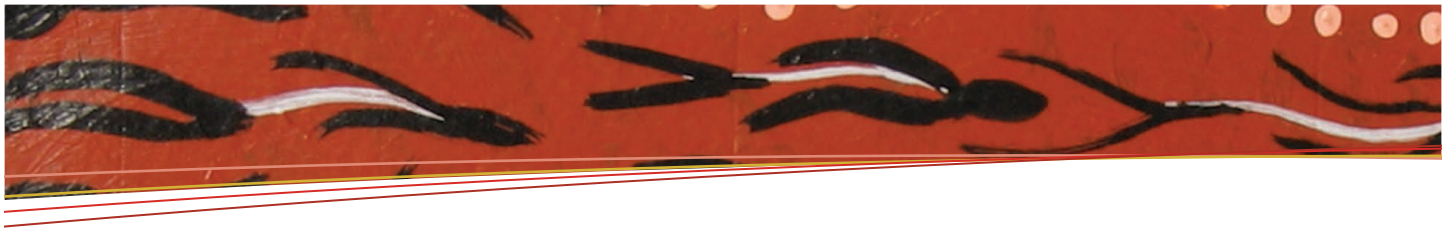
This theme describes both a lack of knowledge across the Aboriginal community about issues related to sexual and family violence, and a lack of training opportunities for Aboriginal community workers. For example:

"Community think of physical abuse when discussing family violence, don't realise there are other forms" (CW).
"Education is needed for all of the community in this area"(CM).
"There is nothing in the schools for our kids about any of this – that's just about Aboriginal issues" (CM).
"We want training across all these areas for Aboriginal workers, and for mainstream workers training to understand Aboriginal culture" (CW).
"We need training full stop" (CW).
"There is a need to employ Indigenous staff who are skilled up to reduce cultural barriers that our families face when engaging with services that are not culturally appropriate" (CW).
"We need trained black male workers who understand Aboriginal families". (CM).

The research highlighted two key areas:

4.7.1 A lack of knowledge about sexual and family violence across the community

This included:



- People not knowing what constitutes, and the dynamics of, sexual and family violence;
- The community being unaware of what services are available when they need support;
- Community members are unaware of their legal rights and the legal system;
- That there is a lack of culturally relevant education and prevention programmes about sexual and family violence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people;
- That there is a lack of education for Aboriginal males about healthy relationships.

A number of studies have identified similar themes. These ranged from a lack of a clear understanding about what behaviours are actually abusive, to being unaware that rape in marriage and relationships is a crime, to not being aware of their basic human rights (Willis, 2011).

Cripps (2004, p.71) also highlighted the difficulties Aboriginal communities faced in using westernised language; "it is not an Indigenous way to be able to use words like this (family violence, domestic violence, sexual assault) to describe our experiences". Cripps (2004) referred to this as the 'language of minimisation', and suggested it related to a desire to protect families, and it may prevent shaming.

4.7.2 A lack of nationally accredited training for community workers

It was identified that:

- It is very difficult to access quality training in rural areas;
- Queensland is limited in what training is available specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in this speciality;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community workers will benefit from learning skills in counselling, and also in their use of self, for example, patience, trustworthiness, empathy, compassion, and being non-judgemental.

Of the 33 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers who participated in the research project:

- 42% stated they had not received any training about sexual and family violence specifically relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community workers;
- 18% reported they had received external mainstream training (PH training x 5, Family Planning Queensland training x 3, AVERT Training x 3, mediation training x 1, mental health training x2);
- 9% reported that they used resources for self- education;

- 3% stated they had received 'in-house' training;
- 3% reported being guided by their Christian beliefs.

This replicates the experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community workers at Phoenix House, who had to travel inter-state to New South Wales (NSW) in order to access nationally accredited training through the Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV).

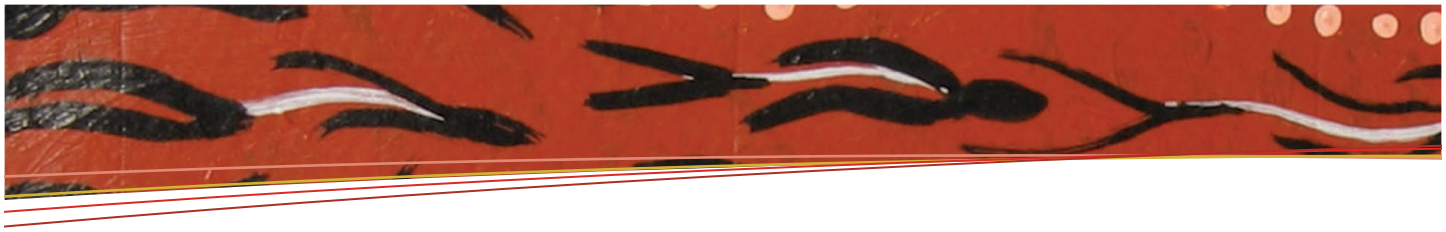
Research has identified that high quality counselling intervention can mediate the short and long term impacts of violence and abuse. The need to establish an Aboriginal workforce that is skilled in providing culturally safe and trauma informed counselling has been identified by NSW Health and the NSW Ombudsman (2006 & 2012). It has also been identified in the report by the Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Taskforce Breaking the Silence: Creating the Future (2006), and the Wood Inquiry Report (2008), which recommended the importance of qualified Aboriginal family health counsellors. It is therefore imperative that such training is available within the Bundaberg area in order to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to heal from trauma.

As described earlier, Aboriginal counsellors are also dealing with their own trauma history. ECAV Director, Laura McNamara (personal communication, March 20, 2014) highlights:

> Firstly, we find Aboriginal community members and workers have enormous trauma histories, experience current racism and discrimination and are also very frightened of the educational context - particularly given the history. We therefore have to address all of those issues in an ongoing and comprehensive way. So the way I see it - Aboriginal workers are traumatised workers, from traumatised families, working with traumatised communities. The issues are poorly recognised at the main stream level.

Key points:

- There is a need for the Aboriginal community to receive education about a range of issues related to sexual and family violence.
- There is a significant gap in the availability of nationally accredited training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community support workers to assist them to respond to and support people who have been traumatised by sexual and family violence.
- Any training provided has to support workers in healing from their own experiences of trauma.



THEME 8

4.8 DETERRENTS TO REPORTING SEXUAL AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

This theme describes the personal and justice system barriers the community identified were faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples when deciding if they should report sexual and family violence, and highlights how significant these barriers are. For example:

> ***"More people are doing it – because they know others are getting away with it so why can't they? You report them and they still get away with it- offenders are not charged. These people need to be exposed and then charged. Banishment should be bought in" (CM).***
> ***"We previously were able to talk with the PLO – since their sackings we have lost a very important contact" (CM).***
> ***"The police intervention is poor-they are very judgemental" (CM).***

A number of issues were raised in relation to deterrents within the community to reporting sexual and family violence. These included:

4.8.1 General barriers to reporting sexual and family violence

Some of the deterrents to reporting sexual and family violence are identified by all community members towards reporting, and these are outlined in Table 2.

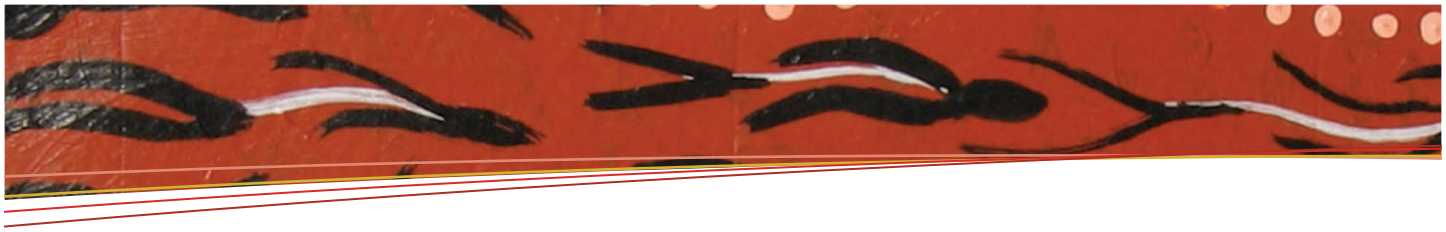
Table 2

General barriers to reporting sexual and family violence (Willis, 2011)

Personal barriers	Justice system related barriers
Not seen as serious enough to report	Police would not or could not do anything
Not considered a 'real' crime, or unaware it is a crime (eg: knowledge related to consent)	Police would not think it serious enough, or want to be bothered with the incident
Dealt with it themselves	Fear of not being believed by the police
Seen as a 'private', personal matter	Fear of hostile treatment by police
Shame and embarrassment; shyness about discussing sexual issues	Fear/dislike/lack of trust of police or the legal process
Don't want family/community to know	Lack of evidence that the assault occurred
Fear of reprisal by abuser	Did not know how to report
Blaming self for the assault	Secondary trauma experienced through the response of the legal system
Wanting to protect offender, relationship, children	Lack of awareness of, or access to, setrvices
Attitudes and beliefs about sexual and domestic violence	Few reported cases ever go to trial, and even fewer convictions are recorded
Relationship to offender (resulting in retaliation, loss)	

4.8.2 Additional barriers faced by the community

Rates of non-disclosure by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people appear to be much higher than for other Australian communities. For example, studies state that approximately 90% of Aboriginal women do not report violence against them (Robertson, 2000), with similar figures for child sexual abuse. Under-reporting by Aboriginal people is strongly related to the historical, social and cultural factors already discussed, to their experience of poly-victimisation (Higgins & McCabe, 2000), and to the justice system itself.



The community stated that there is a fear of repercussions from reporting violence; “a fear of further violence and ‘payback’, or culturally related violent retribution were the most commonly cited reasons for women not reporting violent victimisation” (Willis, 2011,p.4). This is increased when the abuser is a partner or relative. Reprisals can also include being banished from communities, which increases the risk of homelessness and poverty.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a fear and distrust of the police, justice system and government organisations, and are much more likely to seek support from family members, elders and health services following violence (Willis, 2011). Australian colonialist history exacerbates these fears through generations of children being forcibly removed from their families (HREOC, 1997) and outcomes for Aboriginal males who are incarcerated. In some communities a death in custody would be regarded as the fault of the victim who reported (Fitzgerald, cited in Willis, 2011).

Both the Yarning Up! data and other research highlights the potential for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to receive negative responses across the justice system. In particular they felt the police lacked culturally competent and sensitive practice. It was also commented they are seen as being slow to respond, failing to investigate and breach, and at times are ‘victim-blaming’ and judgemental. In more Traditional communities, language may be a barrier (Willis, 2011). A number of people commented on the lack of Police Liaison Officers (PLO), which they felt helped to improve communication and trust.

If charges are laid and a case actually goes to trial, this experience increases trauma for women and children: In addition to the many barriers women often faced in terms of giving their evidence in court, Aboriginal women would further suffer the discriminatory practices of a criminal justice system that was: racist; often ignorant of Indigenous culture; and that disproportionately questioned their credibility, their alcohol and drug use, and their sexual behaviour. (Keel, 2004, p.8).

Finally, some of the themes already discussed within this report, such as shame and social taboo; issues surrounding privacy, trust and confidentiality; the normalisation of family and sexual violence; and, a lack of knowledge and education about sexual and family violence (including navigating the legal system) all significantly act as deterrents to reporting sexual and family violence.

Key points:

- There are multiple barriers facing all of Australian society in reporting sexual and family violence.
- These barriers are increased if you are an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person.
- The Police have a key role to play in enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to feel safe in reporting sexual and family violence.

HEALING

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Four key recommendations were made, each having a number of sub-recommendations within them.

5.1 STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY ACTION

"We need Elders as mentors, role models" (CM).
" Bystanders need to take a stand – not ignoring or tolerating DV in their community"
"Better consultation and negotiation with the Indigenous community when dealing with DV. What does the community want to see happen?" (CW).
"We need Indigenous White Ribbon Ambassadors" (CW).

Recommendations were made for:

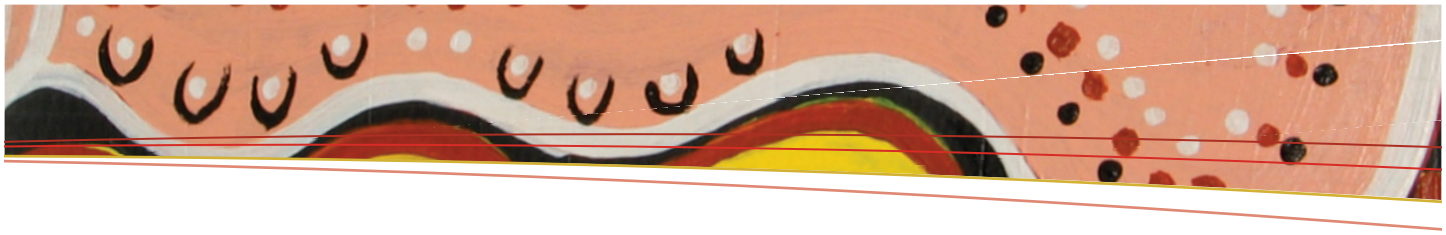
5.1.1 An Indigenous Community Development Model

Aboriginal peoples are working hard to address violence within their communities, and the answer to these issues lies within the communities themselves. Burchill, Higgins, Ramsamy and Taylor (2006) define an Aboriginal community development model as "working with communities to help them identify workable solutions to the problems they have identified (and) supporting the local people to progress these solutions to their own problems" (p.52).

However, as they also remark "Indigenous people in Australia have participated in community development for thousands of years, yet they have been forced to adapt to a non-Indigenous community development model for several decades" (Burchill et al., p.51). Ife (2002) warns that community development has played a part in the "oppression, domination, colonialism, racism, and the imposition of Western cultural values and traditions at the expense of those of Indigenous people" (p.183). Thus, although community development has been noted as an effective strategy in working with Aboriginal communities, (Biven, 2000; Ife, 2002) it can also increase structural inequalities and power differentials between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members (Smith, 2002).

Higgens (2010) reinforces that Aboriginal peoples are highly capable of finding solutions to their problems. Key principles of an Indigenous approach to community development include:

- Community empowerment (local knowledge and cultural appropriateness);
- Indigenous leadership;
- Trust;



- Flexibility;
- Leverage
- Sustainability

(p.6).

One interesting software tool for Aboriginal communities to assess their current level of community wellbeing, and develop goals to improve this, is the Aboriginal Community Wellbeing Toolkit (Office of Environment and Heritage, 2012). See http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nswcultureheritage/WellbeingToolkit.htm

This provides a highly structured way for a community to consider a broad range of social, economic, environmental, cultural, governance and service delivery issues that are critical for Aboriginal community wellbeing.

The Toolkit guides Aboriginal communities step-by-step through three stages:

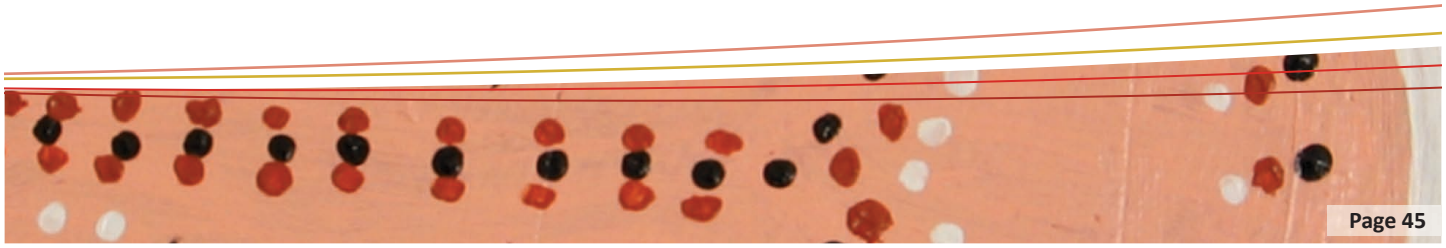
1. Assessment - understanding the community's strengths, services available and needs by working through a detailed self-assessment
2. Preparing for negotiation - setting goals and priorities
3. Planning together - working with service providers and other partners to strengthen the community's wellbeing.

The Toolkit provides a report at the end of each stage, and these reports can than become the basis for developing a community action plan (Office of Environment and Heritage, 2012).

The Toolkit allows communities to record important discussions and stories in their own words. It focuses on strengths, and preserves a strong sense of cultural identity and access to Country. Most critically, it allows the community to determine what is right for them Office of Environment and Heritage, 2012).

5.1.2 Improved consultations by mainstream organisations with the Aboriginal community

It was recommended that mainstream organisations improve the way they consult and negotiate with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, particularly in regards to responding to family violence within the Bundaberg community. Hunt (2013, p.2) highlighted the barriers to such consultation and negotiation as:



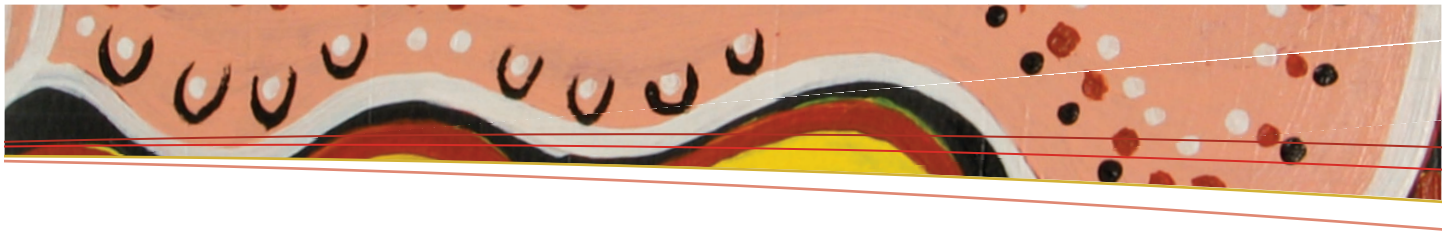
- Staff operating on assumptions about the Indigenous community, its membership, its governance, and who can represent its views which are not accurate;
- Failing to recognise the diversity within any Indigenous community;
- Staff treating Indigenous people as 'one stakeholder among many' rather than as recognised traditional owners of country;
- Expecting Indigenous people to function in western bureaucratic forms and style, and favouring western over Indigenous knowledge;
- Racism embedded in Institutions.

Hunt (2013, p. 9) then went on to describe what has been shown to improve outcomes in consultation. This includes:

- A willingness to share risks and to foster innovation and flexibility;
- Strong, respectful and honest personal relationships;
- Shared vision, basic principles and foundations, especially respect for the Indigenous clients of programmes;
- Partnerships based on respect for Indigenous control and decision making and on priorities set by Indigenous people;
- Responsiveness to Indigenous needs and local decision making within a policy framework of human rights and respect for self determination;
- Building on culture, history, Indigenous aspirations and understandings, and the detailed knowledge of the Indigenous community;
- Using a strengths-based development approach, which built on and helped to develop the capacities of Indigenous people;
- Long time frames in partnerships in order to develop trust.

5.1.3 Increased networking between Aboriginal community workers

It was identified by the Yarning Up! data that there was a need for stronger networking between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community workers within Bundaberg. Partly due to this feedback, Savana Little, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family support worker at PH has initiated the re-forming of the Murri Network. At the time of writing this report three meetings have been held.



"It is hoped that the Murri Network will be a way forward in strengthening our community together as one to tackle the issues which our Aboriginal Torres Strait & South Sea Islander people may face on a day to day basis" (Little, personal communication, March 25, 2014).

Key points:

- Aboriginal communities can identify workable solutions to the problems they have identified within their communities, and can develop solutions to these, using an Indigenous Community Development Model.
- Mainstream organisations have the capacity to improve the way they consult and negotiate with the Bundaberg Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, particularly in regards to responding to family violence.
- Stronger networking between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community workers will improve outcomes for Bundaberg Aboriginal families and the Aboriginal community.

5.2 EDUCATE THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY AND EDUCATE THE COMMUNITY WORKERS

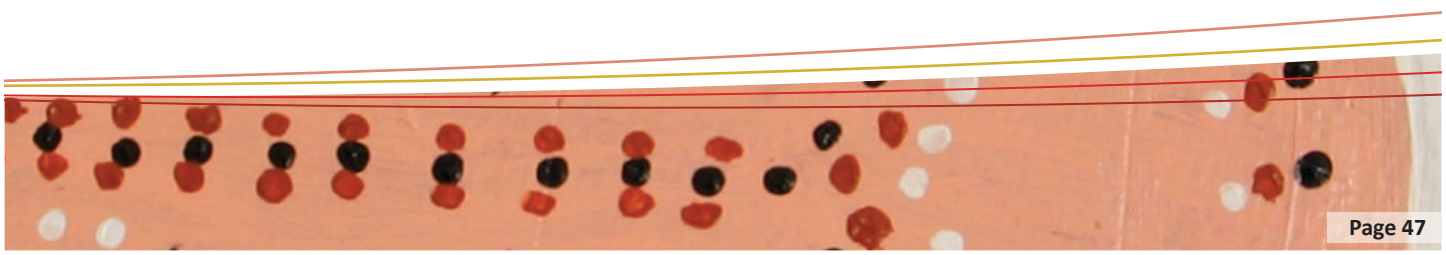
"We need education programmes based on cultural lore" (CW).
"School education about healthy relationships – about respect for people + culture + WOMEN" (CW).
"We want training across all these areas for Aboriginal workers, and for mainstream workers training to understand Aboriginal culture" (CW).

Recommendations were to provide:

5.2.1 Community education about sexual and family violence

Recommendations made in regards to community education included:

- Elders to be involved in the provision of all education and training programmes;
- Traditional culture is to be a core component within all education and training;
- Culturally appropriate education programmes are to be made available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people;
- Culturally appropriate bystander education programmes should be provided;
- Education should be provided across all the spectrums of prevention (primary, secondary and tertiary) and should use a variety of mediums, for example, media and printed.



The data highlighted the necessity to carefully audit what culturally safe community education is currently available in the Bundaberg community across all organisations, to identify gaps, and develop a calendar for community education events. The newly reformed Murri Network may be ideally placed to complete this work.

Locally, for example, PH is able to provide the 'Bringing in the Bystander' (BITB) sexual violence primary prevention programme (Banyard, Plante, & Moynihan, 2004) aimed at increasing, among potential bystanders and third-person witnesses, pro-social attitudes and behaviours toward and awareness of risky behaviours and precursors to sexual victimisation. It also aims to increase empathy and awareness of the problems experienced by those victimised by sexual and intimate partner violence. This programme can be adapted for the Aboriginal community context within Bundaberg.

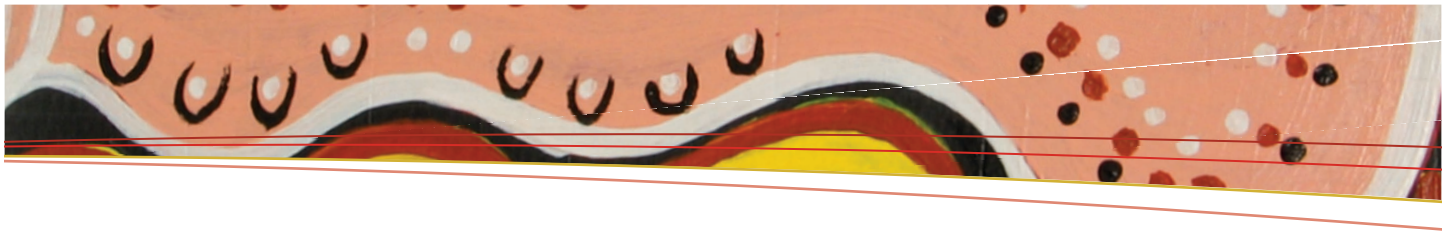
There are numerous examples of innovative programmes being provided elsewhere, for example, 'Walkabout Learning' was created in partnership by the Awabakal Aboriginal Medical Service, Hunter Health's Aboriginal Health Team and the Hunter Centre for Health. This aims to build community awareness of the issues of family violence and its links with alcohol and drug use. Resources including practical guide books have been developed, service directories, and an interactive touch screen computer kiosk, housed in the waiting room of the Awabakal Aboriginal Medical Service for clients and their families to access (Stanley, Kovacs, Tomison, & Cripps, 2002).

The Australian Institute of Family Studies has also begun to identify Aboriginal promising practices (https://apps.aifs.gov.au/ipppregister/projects/list) in this area.

5.2.2 Training and Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Workers

Specifically, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community workers wanted training in the following areas:

1. Cultural lore, protocol and procedure.
2. Child sexual abuse.
3. Sexual assault.
4. Family violence.
5. Sexual harassment.
6. Effective strategies for responding to sexual and family violence.



7. Mental health and the impact of trauma.

8. Sexual health.

Similarly to the recommendations made at 5.2.1, there is a requirement to audit what culturally safe community worker training is available in the Bundaberg community from local organisations, to identify gaps, and develop a calendar for community worker education. Given that the Murri Network is composed of representatives from a number of key mainstream and Indigenous organisations, then this may also be something of interest to them.

A PH submission is currently sitting with Victim Assist Queensland under the 'Building Capacity 2014' funding round for ECAV to provide a number of nationally accredited training units for Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community workers. Further information about their range of excellent training courses provided specifically for Aboriginal workers, with a focus on culturally safety, can be found at http://www.ecav.health.nsw.gov.au/vocational-education-training/

Key points:

- There are a number of Bundaberg community organisations who may be well placed to provide both culturally safe education and training programmes for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
- There is a need to carefully audit what culturally safe community education and training is currently available in the Bundaberg community across all organisations, to identify gaps, and develop a calendar for community education events.
- The newly reformed Murri Network is composed of workers from a number of key mainstream and Indigenous organisations, and thus may be well placed to complete this.

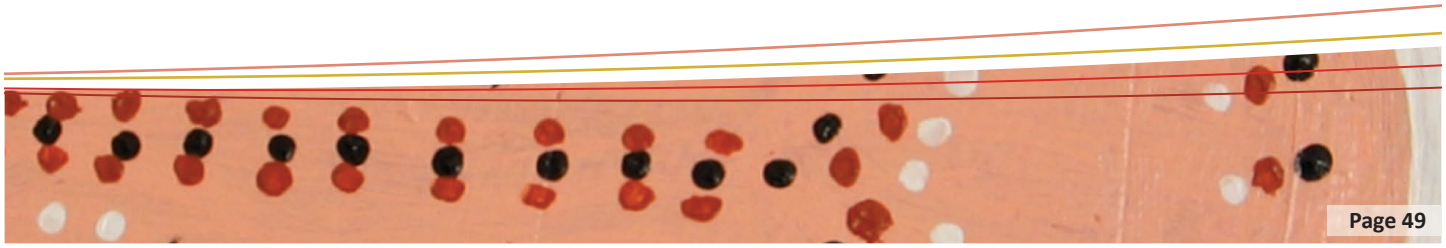
5.3 PROVIDE CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE AND SAFE ORGANISATIONS AND STAFF

"There is a need to employ Indigenous staff to reduce cultural barriers that our families face when engaging with services that are not culturally appropriate" (CW).
"We need black male counsellors who understand Aboriginal families". (CM).
"DV programmes for offenders in the region based on cultural lore" (CW).

Recommendations included:

5.3.1 Mainstream organisations to provide culturally safe services

It is critical that mainstream organisations audit and address how culturally appropriate, safe and accessible their services are for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There are a number of



tools available to guide this process, for example, the Cultural Awareness Self-Assessment Toolkit (ACT Council of Social Services, 2011).

Before attempting to work with Aboriginal peoples, Euro-Australian workers need to develop cultural awareness, competence, safety and proficiency (Downing, Kowal & Paradies, 2011). This needs to be framed within a holistic understanding of Aboriginal land, language and culture, placed within the time, relationships and places that an Aboriginal community is connected to:

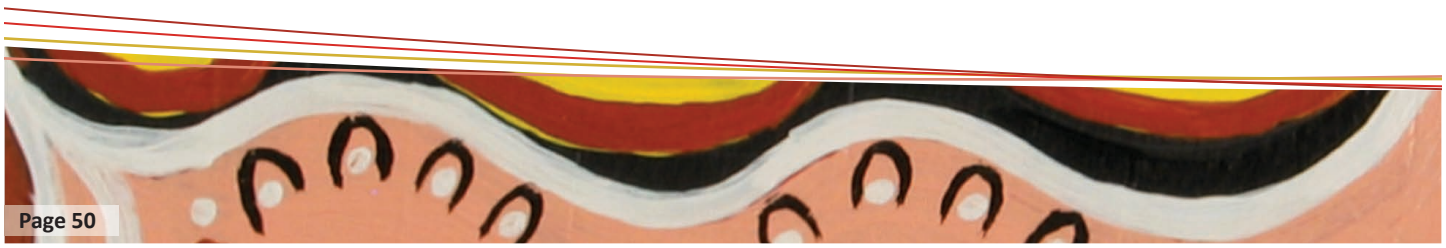
> It is important to 'stand under' more than to understand. This is a stance which involves giving up the power of dominance, together with a preparedness to relinquish one's own cultural ways of making meaning, and to learn to value new ones. It involves acceptance of, and engaging with, uncertainty and discomfort *(Quinn, 2003, p.89)*.

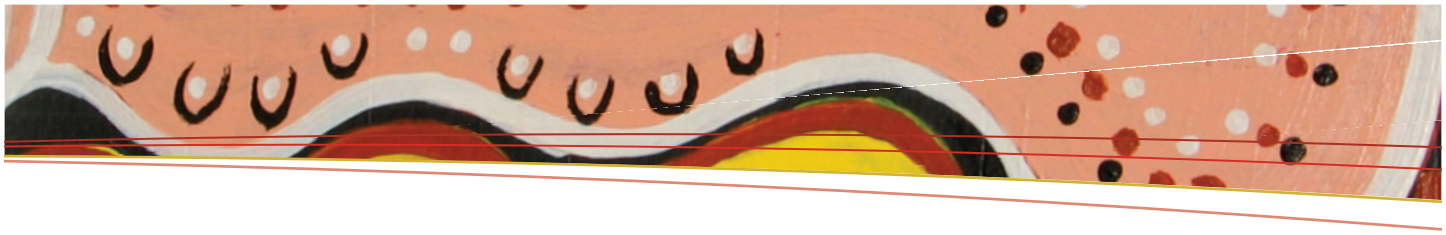
Euro-Australian organisations need to take responsibility in training their workers to develop these skills, as well as addressing and challenging their own white privilege and internalised racism. "White is not questioned as it is the standard against which everything else is measured. Whiteness is invisible... it is tantamount to ignoring power...a 'colour blind' worker reproduces racist practice" (Briskman, 2007, p.26).

It is a recommendation that mainstream organisations provide specific and ongoing training about white privilege, power imbalance and identity to their Euro-Australian workers alongside cultural awareness training. This is a collective responsibility and it should not be the expectation that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will solely address these issues 'for' Euro-Australian workers.

Mainstream organisations can also improve their responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who access their services, by taking the lead from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community workers who:

- Have a genuine understanding of, and immersion within, the diverse Aboriginal community within which they work;
- Adhere to local protocols and traditions;
- Understand how a collective way of being (a family and community orientation) impacts on a person's capacity to report violence;
- Take a whole-of-life view of health; this refers to attending to the physical, social, emotional, spiritual and cultural well being of the whole of community. It is a wholistic view which includes the cyclic concept of life and death;





- Is guided by the self-determination of Aboriginal communities; solutions will be found in and by communities;
- Work in partnership, based on collaboration rather than competition, between services.

(New South Wales Department of Health, 2011).

- Understand inter-generational trauma and it's triggers (Victim Assist, 2013).
- Provide trauma informed services and trauma specific care (Atkinson, 2013).
- Work the Murri Way! For example, being flexible with appointments; assisting with access issues (eg: transport); going with the flow and taking as much time as the person requires rather than the '50 minute' counselling session; making connections; having a family member present in counselling sessions; utilising narratives; and above all, "having a yarn, a joke and a cup of tea" (Lynn et al, 1998, p.22).

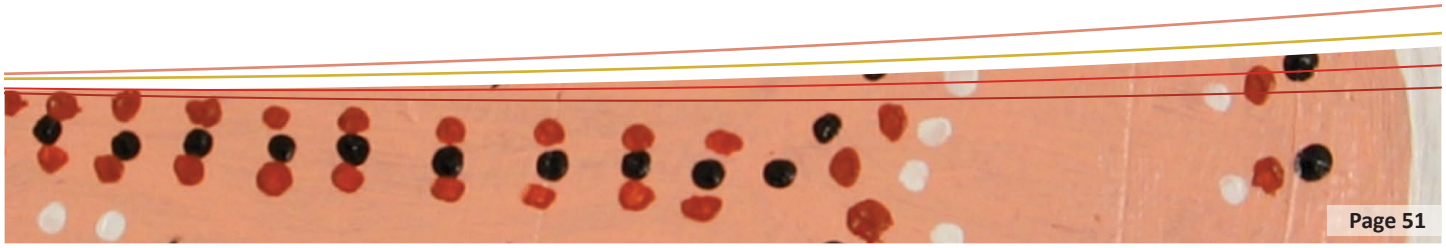
Finally, a key way that organisations can become more accessible is through having visual cultural references such as art work, posters, leaflets, and artefacts displayed. If this is genuine, rather than tokenistic, it can signify "a potential respectful relationship, demonstrating at least an awareness of Aboriginal culture and the significance of stories that artwork tell" (Mc-Bain-Rigg & Veitch, 2011, p.73). However, having such material displays will achieve little if the attitudes and practice of workers within mainstream organisations remains unchanged.

Through committing to this recommendation:

Although the history of social (and community) work with Indigenous peoples is filled with paternalistic and racist response, this need not be the case. Skilled and knowledgeable workers are uniquely positioned to provide an honourable approach to social (and community) work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues, communities and individuals, and build our nation together *(Menzies & Gilbert, 2013, p.69)*.

5.3.2 To employ both female and male Aboriginal counsellors within mainstream and Indigenous organisations.

This was a significant recommendation by the community, and it was stressed the need was for qualified female and males counsellors, (as distinct from community support workers), in both mainstream and Indigenous organisations. The significance of men and women's business has been previously discussed.



Employing a sole Aboriginal worker to facilitate access for Aboriginal families is often used by mainstream organisations in an attempt to improve access for the community (Herring, Spangaro, Lauw & McNamara, 2011). "Aboriginal staff are often left in untenable situations. Typically, they are asked to represent the worldview of all Aboriginal cultures, despite the diversity of the 150 existing Aboriginal language groups" (Herring, Spangaro, Lauw & McNamara, 2011, p. 7). A sole Aboriginal worker within an organisation cannot be expected to perform in a role without culturally safe training and education, and to work in an environment that is highly supportive, and cautious.

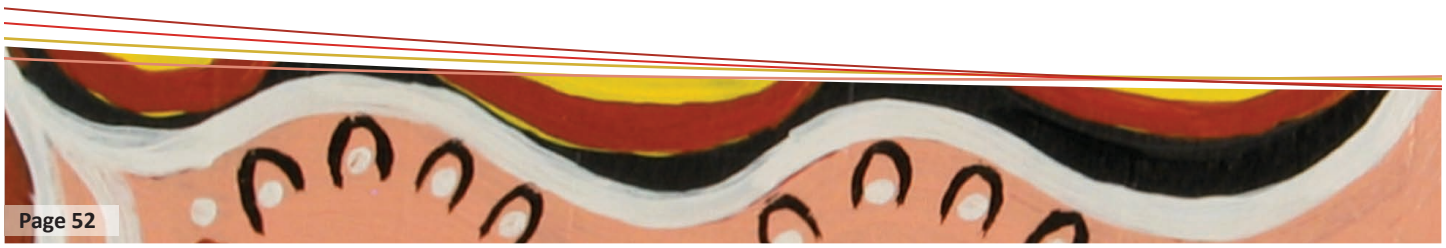
Bundaberg is very fortunate in that it has a large non-government organisation, the IWC, which employs 90 staff, with 70% being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. The IWC offers a wide range of community support services (see attachment 3). Like any organisation, however, it cannot be expected to provide support across the entire spectrum of challenges a community may face.

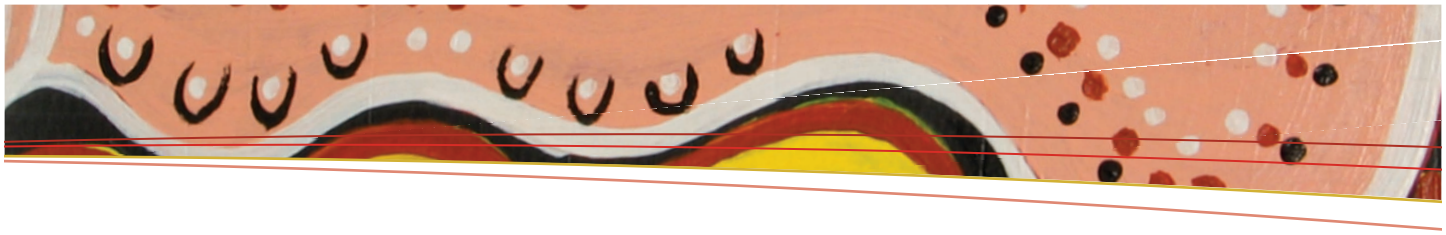
5.3.3 A safe house for Aboriginal women and children

Safe houses are a viable and culturally appropriate alternative to domestic violence refuges for Aboriginal women who have been victims of family violence. These are often community-controlled organisations, established especially to provide safe accommodation and access to culturally appropriate resources for Aboriginal women experiencing family violence. The support of men in the community is a crucial part of the success of safe houses, as well as the support of law enforcement. Extensive literature has supported the view that community-based initiatives aimed at reducing violence, where the community itself has a degree of ownership over its establishment, development and operation are the most likely to be successful (Cripps & Davis, 2012).

There are numerous examples across Australia of Aboriginal Safe Houses for women and children. The Yuendumo Safe House, Northern Territory, is characteristic of such a service. Founded by Aboriginal women, for Yapa and Kardyia women, in the 1970's to address increasing violence in the community, the centre is an enduring example of success. It is valued by members of the community as a community owned and conceived solution to violence (Cripps & Davis, 2012).

Another successful model is the Mudgin-Gal Women's Centre, which began in 1992, when members of the South Sydney Women's Centre made the decision to incorporate. Today, it remains the only Women's Centre run by and for Aboriginal women in New South Wales, and one of only a handful nationally (Mudgin-Gal, nd). The Centre provides a number of programmes for Aboriginal women and children impacted by violence:





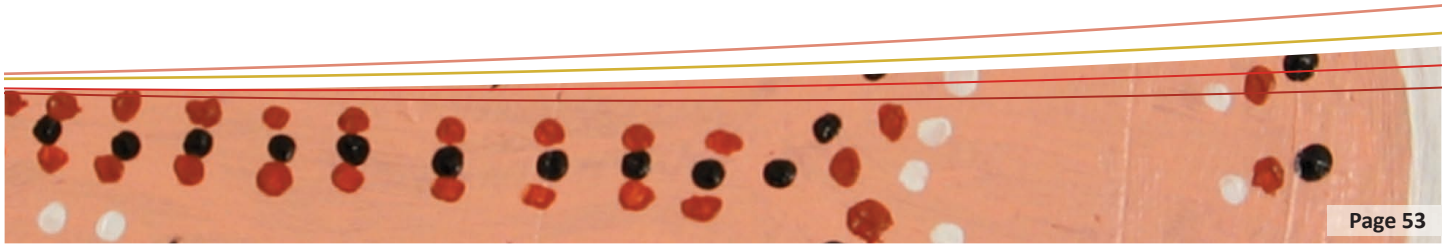
- **Drop in.** Women are able to drop in for a yarn, access laundry, kitchen and showering facilities, request information and referrals to specialist healthcare, legal and accommodation support services.
- **Family support.** Mudgin-Gal is a base for a qualified family support worker who can support women and children in need.
- **Black Out Violence.** Mudgin-Gal's groundbreaking work to address family violence has gained national recognition. Its 'Black Out Violence' campaign won the Violence Against Women Prevention Award in 2004 and has since been rolled out – with help from Mudgin-Gal trainers and ambassadors to communities in regional NSW.
- **Healthy Family Circle.** This is a group of programmes aimed at helping key women in the community to develop a wide range of mentoring and leadership skills. These women in turn promote their skills and values among their own families and peers.
- **Inner City Domestic Violence Action Group.** Mudgin-Gal is the auspicing body for Sydney's major metropolitan anti-domestic violence group, which comprises members of some 15 other inner city organisations. It sources and trains volunteers for court support, promotes education, awareness and local support and training workshops for both women and men.
- **Marrickville houses.** Two inner-city houses administered by Mudgin-Gal provide low rental and emergency accommodation for women and families in urgent need of housing. In July 2006, the purchase of a larger, neighbouring property for Mudgin-Gal was organised through the Indigenous Land Corporation.

(Mudgin-Gal, nd., p. 4).

There are thus a number of models which could be successfully adapted for the Bundaberg context, and have the potential to vastly improve outcomes for Aboriginal women and children within the Bundaberg area whose lives have been impacted by family violence.

5.3.4 Culturally safe programmes for Aboriginal males

There were a number of recommendations for culturally safe programmes to be established for Aboriginal males which addressed educating about, and preventing violence, as well as responding to men who were behaving violently. Aboriginal men and women have stated that they place greater value in strategies that aim to change violent men's behaviours while also endeavouring to maintain family and



community relationships (Keel, 2014), in contrast to the more individualised responses provided by Euro-Australian organisations.

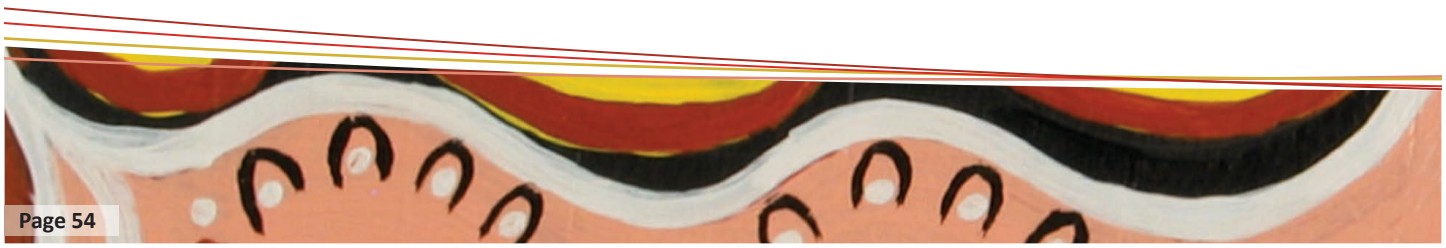
Blagg (cited in Keel, 2004, p.9) highlighted that this would be an approach that included:

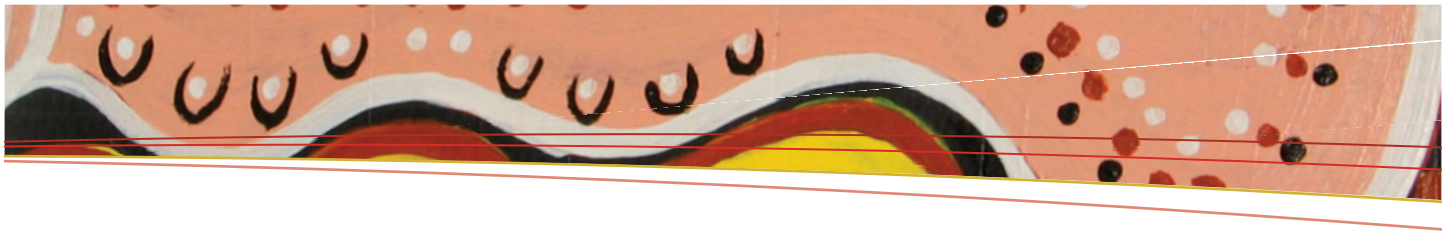
- Being tailored to the needs of a specific locality;
- Being based on community development principles of empowerment;
- Linking to initiatives on health, alcohol abuse and similar problems in a holistic manner;
- Employing local people where possible;
- Respecting traditional law and customs as appropriate;
- Employing a multi-disciplinary approach;
- Focussing on partnerships between agencies and community groups;
- Adding value to existing community structures where possible;
- Distinguishing between women's and men's business and their roles in addressing violence.

There have been a wide number of programmes developed which focus upon intergenerational issues such as father-son relationships and mentoring of Aboriginal youth by Elder figures; projects aimed at supporting young Aboriginal fathers; the creation of men's "cooling off" places; family violence perpetrator programmes including those which target men who have been convicted of committing offences of violence (some try to change male/community attitudes towards violence and others focus specifically on individuals); establishing domestic and family violence outreach services targeted at men; and, organising men's healing camps and/or healing journeys (Blagg 1999; Atkinson 2002; Menmott et al 2002; Cunneen 2002, p.245).

An example of one innovative programme in Woorabinda, Queensland, combined sporting activity, with football players being told they would not be able to play if they were violent off-field towards women. The Wadja Warriors were also involved in various initiatives such as education programmes and the establishment of men's groups. During that time (2000) breaches of domestic violence orders decreased by two thirds.

Mandatory programmes for Aboriginal males who have been charged with violent offences are discussed in detail in section 5.4.4.





Key points:

- Mainstream organisations need to take a lead responsibility for training Euro-Australian workers about culturally safe practice.
- Qualified male and female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counsellors can be employed within both Indigenous and mainstream organisations. They should be well trained and highly supported.
- There is an urgent need for a culturally relevant Family Violence Safe House that is ran by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.
- Programmes are needed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, to prevent and address violence, based upon traditional values and lore, delivered by Elders and qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers

5.4 ADDRESS LEGAL RESPONSES TO SEXUAL AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

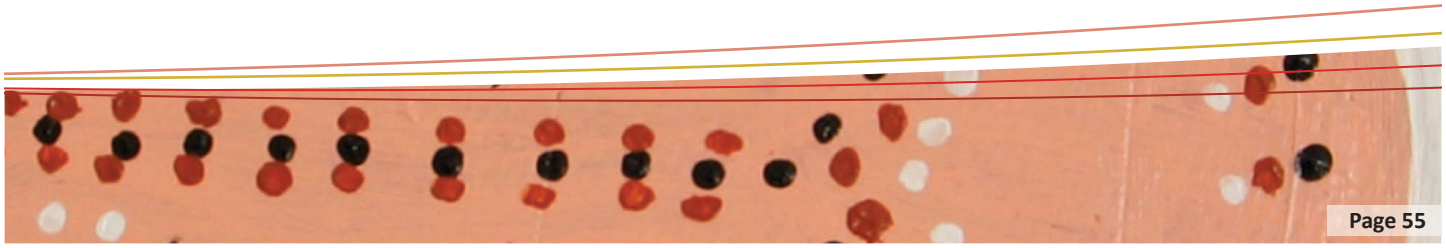
"Police training on culture to provide better responses for all these issues" (CW).
"What we need is Indigenous workers on call who go through the whole process with the women who have been forced to go through this and their innocent children, of the legal sideof it. The court orders, so they are aware of their own legal rights as victims" (CM).
"Cultural lore to be used in Bundaberg courtrooms (inclusion)" (CW).

Recommendations included:

5.4.1 Improved training and education for the Police Service

There was a strong emphasis throughout Yarning Up! of the necessity for the Bundaberg police to receive cultural awareness, competence and safety training. "Training should be ongoing and include working in and with local communities, involve facilitators representing the diversity of groups both within and across Indigenous communities, and include the experience of people such as police liaison officers" (FVPLS, cited in Willis, 2011, p.9).

The National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework (2013) highlights several good practices that the Queensland Police Service (QPS) have initiated, including the Indigenous Community/Police Consultative Groups (ICPCGs). Local consultative forums are formed to develop better relationships between the QPS and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. They aim to involve a cross section of the community, recognised local support groups, the Officer in Charge and other specialist police to allow an



informal exchange of information regarding a range of issues. These forums enable potential problems to be resolved early, before they escalate (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013).

However, in discussion with Michael Maat, Queensland Police Cultural Support Unit (personal communication, March 25, 2014), some initial strategies were suggested. These were:

- A police representative be invited to a community meeting to discuss issues of concern; this could be facilitated by the Police Liaison Officer (PLO), and should be someone of a Sergeant rank or above. If successful these meetings could then occur on a more regular basis, for example, quarterly.
- During orientation for first year constables Elders are welcomed to provide an introduction to local protocols, the local community, it's culture and traditions.
- A Community Specific Package (CSP) could be developed that provided similar information as above, in the form of a written guide. Generic CSP's are available as a guideline to producing one for a specific community.

5.4.2 Increased access to Police Liaison Officers

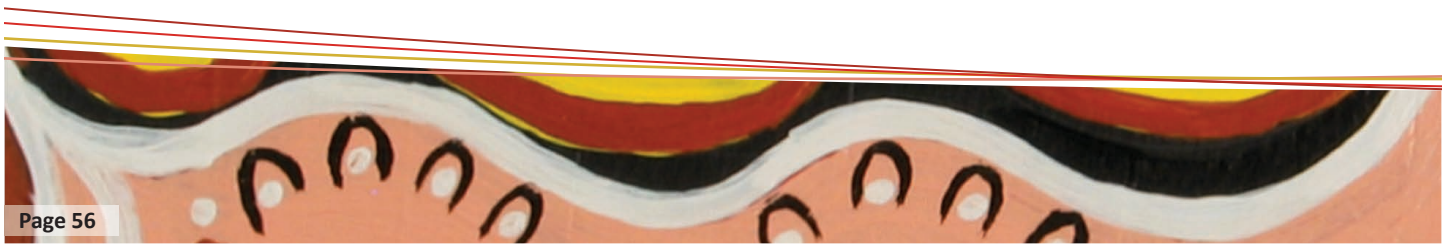
The worth of the Police Liaison Officers (PLO) role was highly acknowledged. At the time of the data collection there were no PLOs employed in the Bundaberg area. It was noted that the PLO position is highly regarded by the community, and the current position (one local PLO) is not considered to be adequate to fulfil the need, and it was recommended this number should increase.

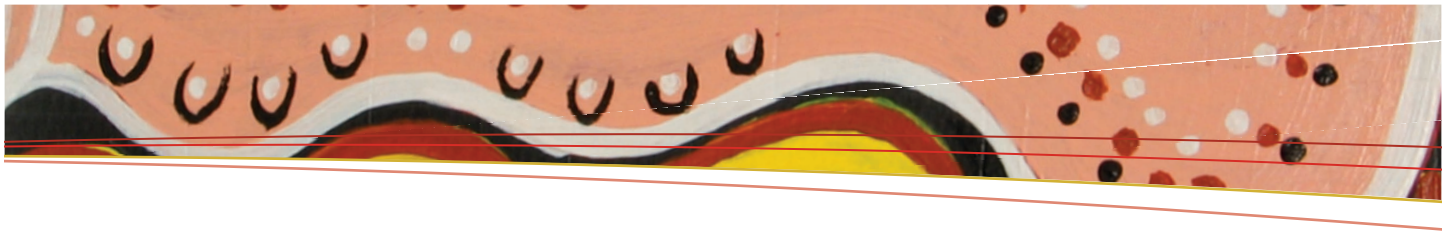
The PLO is employed by the Queensland Police Service to:

> Establish and maintain a positive rapport between culturally specific communities and the Queensland Police Service... to promote trust and understanding through their liaison role by assisting the community and police to reduce and prevent crime... divert people from the criminal justice system... advise and educate police officers on culture and cultural issues...and improve community knowledge of law and order issues and policing services (Queensland Police Service, 2013).

5.4.3 Trained Aboriginal court support workers

The lack of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female court support worker is noted as a significant gap, and there is an urgent need for this to be filled. Currently a small number of organisations provide telephone information and support for Aboriginal women experiencing family





violence, such as the Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service, and the mainstream Women's Legal Service Queensland, both based in Brisbane. As discussed previously EDON Place is the mainstream domestic violence service for Bundaberg, but currently does not employ an Aboriginal court support worker.

The main role of an Aboriginal court support worker is to provide information and support about the court process and family violence for Aboriginal people and families. They also provide information about how to keep families safe from further family violence, direct people to other support services in the community, and help people to understand what is happening in court (Magistrates Court of Victoria, 2011).

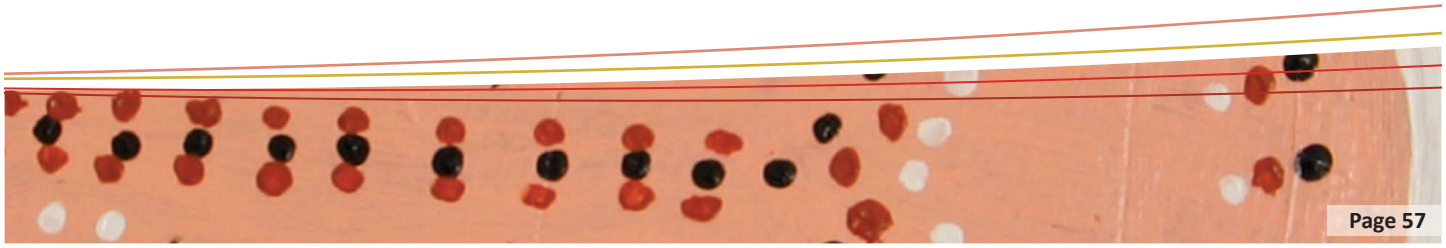
5.4.4 Develop Indigenous responses to the crimes of sexual and family violence

It was emphasised within the Yarning Up! data collection that there was a need for justice system responses for offenders that were based on cultural lore. There have been a number of mandatory programmes developed within Australia which attempt to address the crimes of child sexual assault and family violence with Aboriginal offenders. Typically, westernised responses have often been extensively inappropriate, and not culturally safe, for Aboriginal men.

The involvement of members of Aboriginal communities in sentencing urban Aboriginal offenders was introduced in South Australia in 1999, after consultation with community groups. Courts have since emerged in Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales, which operate under different models so as to adapt to differing local conditions (Marchetti & Daly 2004). The emergence of Aboriginal urban courts occurred for numerous reasons including addressing the over-representation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system, increasing participation of Aboriginal people in the justice system as court staff or advisors, and as recognition of the need for partnerships between state governments and Aboriginal organisations in the hope to build a better justice system for Aboriginal people (Marchetti & Daly 2004).

While Aboriginal courts over Australia are experimental and fluid, they all focus on communication, Indigenous knowledge, social control and appropriate penalties. This facilitates better trust and understanding of the courts decisions, as there is an opportunity for the offender to be involved and have a say. Greater attention to the reasons and contexts for the offending behaviour, paired with Indigenous friendly procedures and Aboriginal justice workers makes the experience of court less alienating for Aboriginal male offenders (Marchetti & Daly 2004).

Of a number of further models that were examined as part of the Yarning Up! project, one in particular appeared highly relevant. Like Aboriginal communities in Australia, Hollow Water, a village



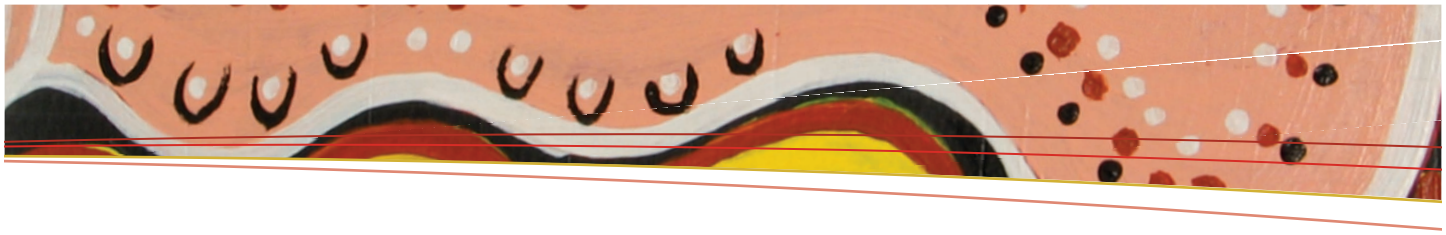
located in Canada, was facing great challenges, as violence, fuelled by alcohol and drugs, was considered a normal part of life (Cripps & McGlade 2008). The justice system in Canada was considered to be ineffective, due to incarceration being used as the main punishment for offenders. In 1984, recognising the limitations of the justice system, the community came together to discuss the violence and dysfunction occurring in Hollow Water, and over many meetings began to develop the Community Holistic Circle Healing (CHCH) model.

The CHCH model is a thirteen step process that is put in action after a sexual assault disclosure is made, and involves a CHCH team member, a representative from the child and family services department and the police. Once it is determined that the abuse has taken place, the offender is confronted and charged (Cripps & McGlade 2008). Only those that plead guilty are accepted into the programme. The healing programme requires participation in a three to five year journey that ends in restitution and reconciliation.

The CHCH programme operates under the traditional culture of the village, where offenders are able to learn about being honest with themselves about their offending, and the impact it had upon both the person they harmed, and upon the broader community (Cripps & McGlade 2008). The model is holistic, aimed at healing whole of community, as well as the intergenerational trauma that resulted from colonisation, dispossession and cultural dislocation. The programme also addresses factors that contribute to stresses of everyday life including unemployment, racism, substance addictions and health issues (Cripps & McGlade 2008). The CHCH has had such a positive impact on the people of Hollow Water that being without it, life was described as 'utter chaos' (Cripps & McGlade 2008).

While recognition must be made to the many positive outcomes from Hollow Water, there are also some limitations. The CHCH and other similar models are often orientated towards the offenders, while victims are pressured to forgive, which can be detrimental to their overall wellbeing (Cripps & McGlade 2008). Secondly, the model appears to be influenced by Christian concepts and not consistent with traditional Aboriginal culture where punishment for sexual assault was often very severe.

Although there are critiques to this model, there are still components that can be adopted within Bundaberg that involve tradition and healing for victims. These may include Aboriginal practices, Elders, and alternative therapies that combine historical and cultural education. Consciousness raising about the effects of colonisation and sexual and family violence, combined with modern, culturally safe therapies are key strategies (Cripps & McGlade 2008). Protecting victims and restricting offender movement should remain a priority. Cunneen (2002) also recommends that any responses to offenders should focus upon addressing excessive alcohol consumption.



Key points:

- Improving consultation and providing Police with ongoing cultural safety information and training will improve their response towards traumatised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and may increase the communities capacity to report sexual and family violence.
- The Police Liaison Officer role is an essential position within the Bundaberg community, and more positions are required.
- The community identify an urgent need for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander court support worker to assist them to navigate the legal process, and who can provide follow up support, following family violence.
- There is a need to develop alternative justice system responses to the westernised models of responding to the crimes of sexual and family violence, within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

6.0 HOW COULD IT HAVE BEEN DONE DIFFERENTLY?

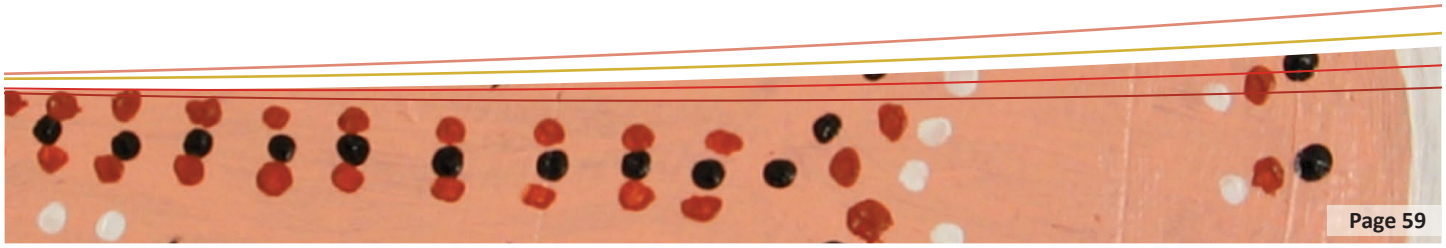
6.1 Limitations of the research

Yarning (narrative) may pose several limitations in academia's eyes. A number of academics argue it is "not a 'bona fide' research method and not recognised as a legitimate tool for gathering data by Western academia" (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). Bessarab (2010) believes this may be due to what is considered a lack of clarity, credibility, and rigour. However, "stories are important for groups who have been oppressed and marginalised, for they are a means of reclaiming knowledge about experiences that dominant groups have taken over or interpreted within prevalent frameworks of knowing" (Briskman, 2007, p.155).

Whilst this research provides in-depth information which captures the stories and experiences of the Bundaberg Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and South Sea Islander community, a limitation of the research is that it cannot be generalised to other populations.

6.2 Suggestions for further research

All of our findings are formative and merit further exploration. It is hoped that these findings will also stimulate further research in other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander settings. It will be valuable to examine the contribution of the report's findings in a few years time. This can be through a qualitative methodology as used in Yarning Up!, and also quantitatively in terms of people seeking



help, referrals, court appearances, and so forth. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches provide complementary information and have the potential to offer a better insight into community issues and experiences if conducted in a participatory way.

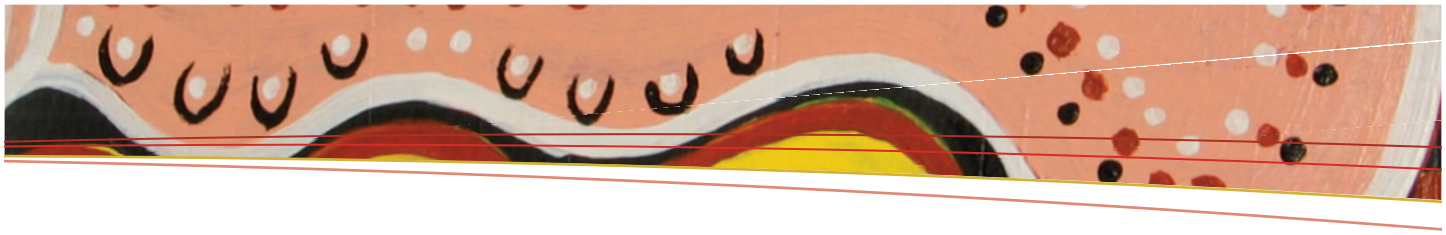
It is critical that any programmes that are now developed and implemented as a result of Yarning Up! are also evaluated, as there is a lack of evidence about the effectiveness of many programmes aiming to address violence within Aboriginal communities. As Cripps and Davis (2012, p.6) remark, communities are "working hard, often despite immense odds, to tackle the problem of violence" and yet there is a dearth of publications about this work (Day, Francisco & Jones, 2013).

Related to the above suggestions, as well as to the Yarning Up! data collection tool, is the need to develop a culturally safe measure of the impact of community programmes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

> There appear to be relatively few valid, reliable and culturally safe measures available to evaluators to monitor changes over time on key issues (such as perceptions of safety in the community, levels of social and emotional wellbeing, community engagement, personal sense of empowerment or efficacy, and family strength) *(Day, Francisco, & Jones, 2013, p.16*).

A project similar to the 'Yarning Up' research could also be undertaken to explore the experience of different Queensland communities, e.g., a much more urbanised community, such as Brisbane, and a more remote community, such as around Weipa. This would broaden the understanding of the impact and context of sexual and family violence across Queensland, and further demonstrate that different experiences will call for different types of interventions.

Finally, our experience demonstrates that it is possible to work in partnership with Aboriginal communities to collect meaningful data to improve service outcomes. We recommend that similar research continues to be supported by funding agencies.



7.0 A PERSONAL REFLECTION BY THE REPORT WRITER

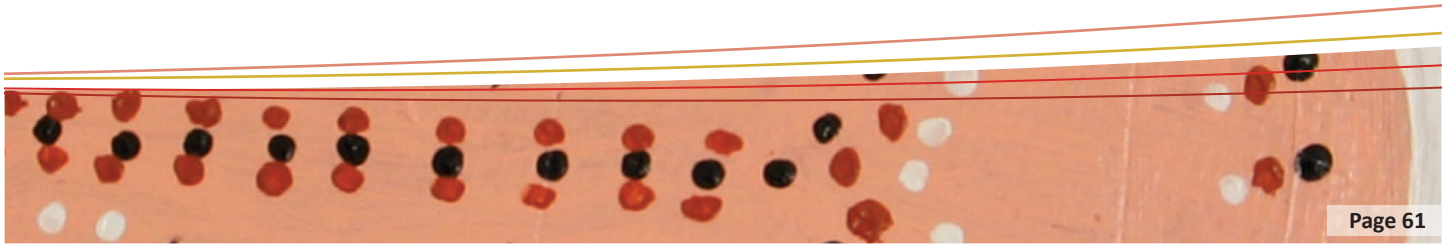
> We failed to ask – how would I feel if this was done to Me? As a consequence we failed to see that what we were doing degraded all of us" *(Briskman, 2007, p.143).*

As a Euro-Australian woman, I am deeply honoured that the Yarning Up! steering committee allowed me to write this project report. In doing so, I am not attempting to speak for the Bundaberg Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander community. To do so would make me no different to the colonisers who invaded this country. I hope I have managed to convey the ideas of the community, and through providing further evidence from other's research, have added to its potential.

Phoenix House will use the Yarning Up! feedback provided by the community to ensure a more culturally safe organisation. We will use it as evidence to lobby for identified gaps that need to be addressed by government, and to make funding applications for some of the priority areas identified, for example, training and education initiatives, and to improve counselling and support responses.

Similarly, other mainstream organisations can also use the report to be guided in what the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and South Sea Islander community want in Bundaberg in responding to sexual and family violence, rather than what mainstream organisations believe is needed. My hope is that the Yarning Up! project report does not become yet another piece of research that identifies the many gaps, barriers and challenges that Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander peoples face every day, but then is relegated to the bottom shelf of offices to gather dust.

Ultimately, the Yarning Up! project report belongs to the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and South Sea Islander community of the Bundaberg area, and "never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has" (Mead, nd).



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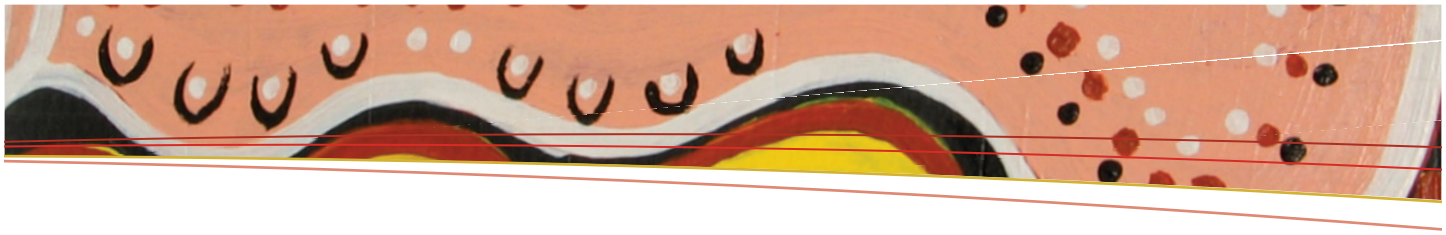

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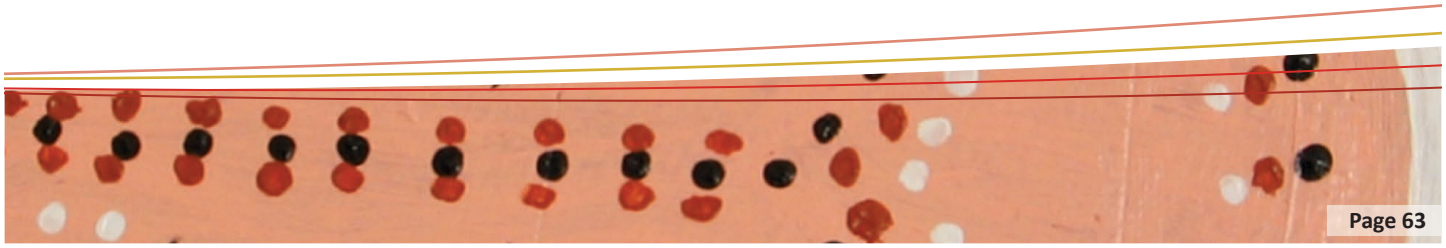

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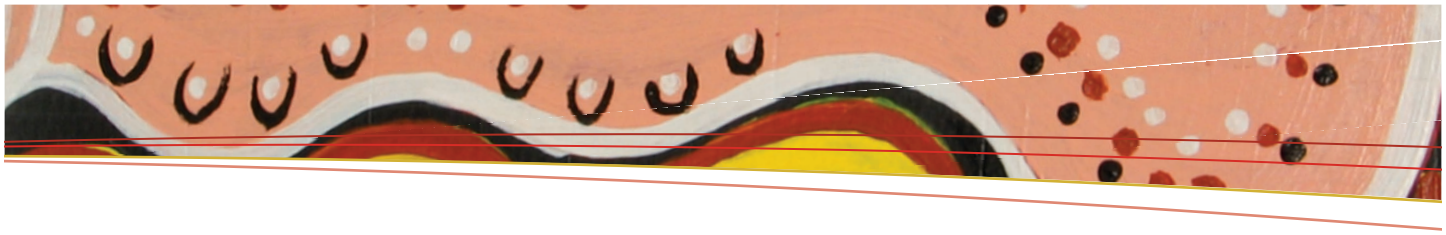

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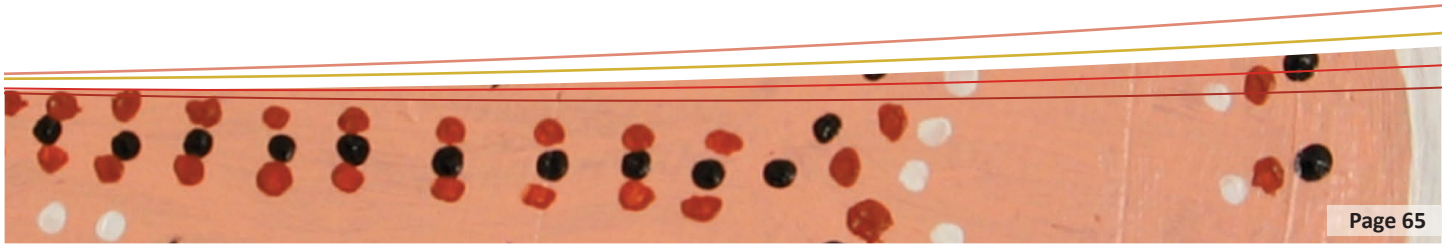

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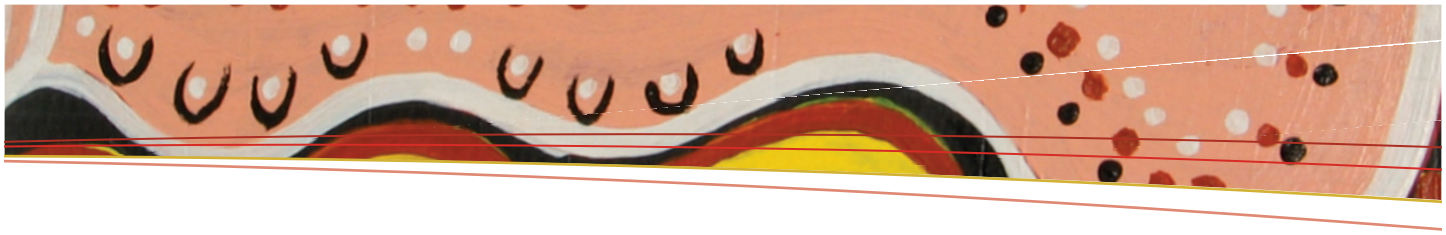

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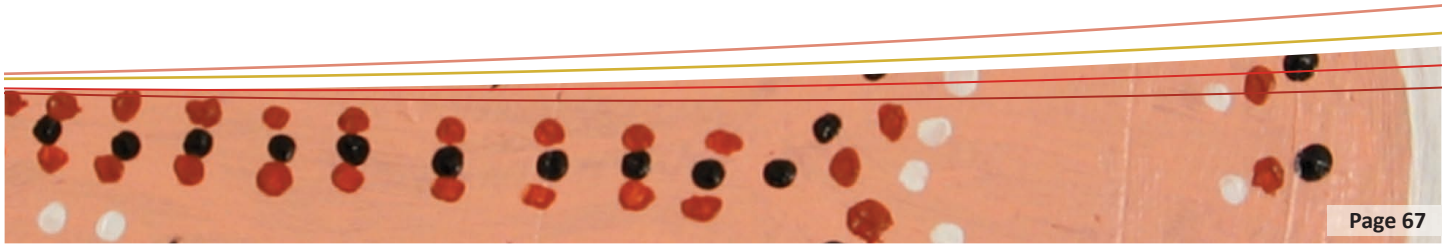


THE YARNING UP STEERING COMMITTEE

My name is **James Chapman**. I am a descendent of the Wakka Wakka and Wulli Wulli people. I spent my early years in Eidsvold and now live in Bundaberg. I work for the IWC Child and Family Support Service as a Family Support Worker. I am an Aboriginal artist and interested in the history and culture of Aboriginal people.

My name is **Bruce Little**. I was born in Rockhampton, and am a Djakunda man. My father was from Djakunda country in South West Burnett in Queensland. My mother was a South Sea Islander.

My name is **Lavina Little**. I was born in Eidsvold, and am a Wulli Wulli woman. My father was from Wakka Wakka country in North Burnett in Queensland. My mother was from Wulli Wulli country North West of the Burnett in Queensland

My name is **Georgina Tanner**. I am a descendent of the Bundjalung (northern new South Wales) people and South Sea Islander people. I was born in Rockhampton, but have spent all my live in Bundaberg.

My name is **Coral Walker**. I am also a descendent of the Bundjalung (northern New South Wales) people and South Sea Islander people. I was born in and live in Bundaberg, and I work as an Indigenous Health Worker.

THE YARNING UP PROJECT WORKER

My name is **Barbara Blair**. I was born in Rockhampton, and am a Djakunda woman. My father was from Djakunda country in South West Burnett in Queensland. My mother was a South Sea Islander.

THE YARNING UP REPORT WRITER

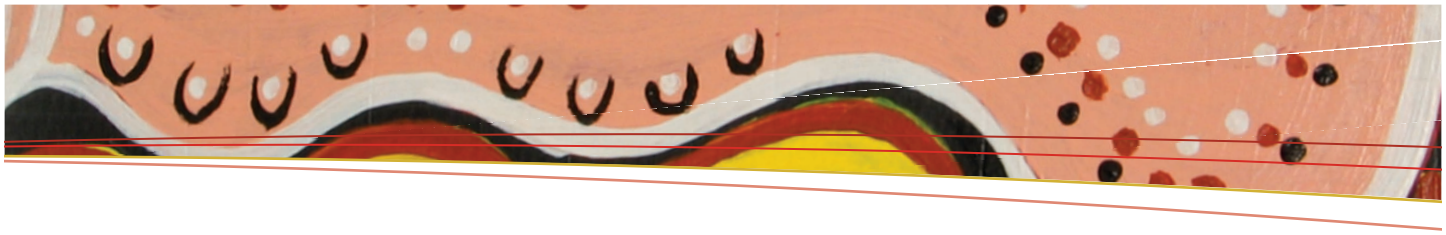
My name is **Kathy Prentice**. I was born in England, in a small country town called Brigg, in North Lincolnshire. My father was from the next county,a Yorkshire man. My mother was born in, and still lives in Lincolnshire.

Appendix 1

'YARNING UP' COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

1. What do you worry about in regards to Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault/Sexual Abuse in your community?

2. What do you think needs to be done about this?



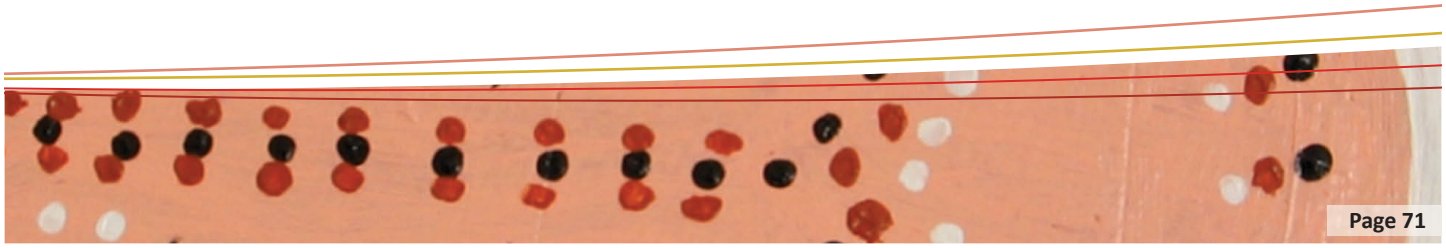
Appendix 2

'YARNING UP' SURVEY

FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY WORKERS

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the 'Yarning Up' survey. If there is not enough space for your answer please feel free to continue on the blank sheet attached.

1. What issues have you identified in the community in relation to sexual and family violence?
2. What are the main issues you face in your work around sexual and family violence?
3. What skills do you think are required for effective work in relation to sexual and family violence?
4. What resources are available for you to address some of the issues related to sexual and family violence in Bundaberg?
5. Have there been any strategies/ideas that have worked for you in addressing some of the issues related to sexual and family violence in Bundaberg? Particular relationships or networks that you have established?
6. What training do you receive to support you in your work around sexual and family violence?
7. If you could have further training, what would you want the training to cover?
8. Have you heard of Phoenix House? YES/NO
9. Have you referred any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to Phoenix House? YES/NO
10. What are some of the barriers that prevent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from accessing mainstream services?
11. Any other comments?



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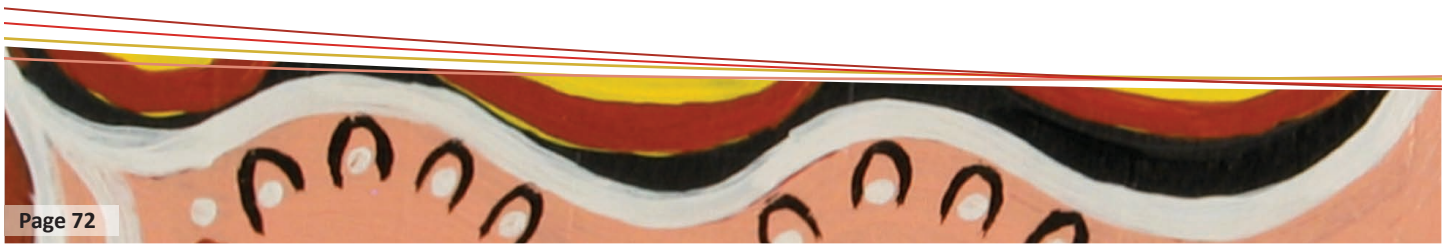

IWC RANGE OF PROGRAMMES

Medical Centre

Our Medical Centre is a combined preventative, primary health and community care service complete with General Practitioners. We also provide education for general well being and health intervention strategies aimed at improving the health outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged within our community, inclusive of all.

Our mission is to provide the highest standard of patient care whilst incorporating an holistic approach toward diagnosis and management of illness. We are committed to promoting health, wellbeing and disease prevent to all patients. Whilst we actively engage in initiatives aimed at Closing the Gap Scheme for Indigenous Australians we do not discriminate in the provision of excellent care.

YAD (Youth Alcohol and Drug Program

Fulfilling a need with the community, IWC's Youth Alcohol and Drug Treatment program (YAD) has the principle objective to engage and support young people in identifying and treating problematic drug and alcohol use. In the addition, the program aims to assist individuals in understanding the addictive process, by creating knowledge and awareness of substance abuse.

Young persons are supported, encouraged and assisted to develop skills which address their specific needs and the achievement of their goals.

The program provides support for individuals, their families and the wider youth community, individual counselling, focused group sessions, case management, and brief interventions for part of the process.

MDCT (Multi Disciplinary Care Team)

The MDCT consists of a range of health professional working in the areas of Child and Maternal, Dental and Oral and medical Services, working together to support the region's diverse needs in contract to a 'one size fits all'..

Child and maternal – Provides a range of primary and early intervention initiatives aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (0-18) and their families. Child Health Workers undertake health assessments, hearing and health check screenings (with IWC's registered nurses) and also promote nutrition and physical activity, injury prevention, immunisation, positive parenting, antenatal/ postnatal support and social/emotional development. Health Workers also partner with the region's schools to identify child health needs.

Dental and Oral – The IWC dental Clinic has now provided services to more than 1600 clients from all over the Bundaberg region and including clients travelling from the Fraser Coast and North Burnett areas. The difference IWC makes is that 'we provide a holistic service where by the client leaves being dentally fit, not requiring further treatment for some time'. A full range of services is available including HICAPS Health Fund Connect, eftpos facilities and after hours emergency contact.

Medical Services – Providing quality health care to the wider integrated community through initiatives such as bulk billing and access to multidisciplinary and allied health services. IWC Medical Centre provides the community with critical access to specialists such as an Endocrinologist (Diabetes) and Respiratory Physician (lung disorders, sleep apnoea) and also offers quit smoking support. A range of information is available to take home for the client covering such topics as asthma, breastfeeding, drugs, diabetes, cold and flu's, fever in children, men's health issues, ear infections, personal hygiene, soft tissue injury, suture care etc.

CQ Indigenous Regional Sport and Recreation

The Indigenous Sport and Rec program provides funding assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members with the overall aim of increasing their active participation in sporting and physical activity activities. Financial assistance is provided to individuals up to $1000, teams/groups up to $2000 and up to $5000 for organisations. The program funding is available to participants located across the Central QLD region.

IWC Sport and Rec may be able to assist through the following:

- Purchasing appropriate safety sporting equipment eg, head gear, mouth guards, shin pads, suitable footwear
- Assisting with travel and accommodation costs to attend sporting / physical activity events.
- Assist with finances to attend coaching / training clinics eg referee, umpire, tournaments.

Families Program

As part of the more holistic and transformational approach, the program aims to teach strategies which enable individuals / families to identify underlying problem areas in family relationships. This program allows clients to gain valuable life skills knowledge and awareness, strengthens the capacity of families and individuals to deal with family problems and concerns, ultimately resulting in more positive family relationships.

Available through extended client support is the provision of hard copy information, advice and education sessions which cover topics related to parenting, child development, health and wellbeing including mental health.

The Families Program provides interactive and non-intensive services to individuals and families requesting assistance who have a range of needs, including:

- Parenting
- Child Development
- Relationships
- Wellbeing – Depression, anxiety, stress management, self esteem, post natal depression, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Pain Management

The IWC Families Program is unable to accept referrals for clients needing assistance with:

- Grief and loss
- Alcohol and drug dependence
- Crisis situations, eg, clients at risk of suicide.

Child and Family Support Program

The Child and Family Support Program (CFS) is an early intervention / prevention service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (unborn to 18 years of age) and parents / carers. The program covers the Wide Bay and South Burnett Regions and has offices in Bundaberg and Murgon.

The Program's goal is to support families identified as in need of assistance, or 'at risk' of entering the Child Protection System. In order to fulfil this mission, The CFS team assists families to cultivate life skills which serve to:

- Enhance the quality of life for children and parents / carers
- Decrease the percentage of integrated children who are placed into care.
- Build positive relationships between children and parents / carers.

Fraser Coast

- A role of advocacy to liaise with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients in the Fraser Coast region.
- Referring clients to all Government and Non Government Organisations
- Chronic Disease Assessments
- Access to all other IWC Programs
- Antenatal care
- Post-natal care
- Chronic Disease management
- Pediatric Services
- Child Health
- Mental Health
- Maternal Health
- Dental
- Transport
- To improve the overall wellbeing of Indigenous health by the caring of all clients to help Close the Gap

North Burnett

IWC North Burnett employs a number of staff committed to positive outcomes when assisting you with your health and wellbeing. With four (4) Health Workers (one specialising in children's health), an Administration Assistant and four HACC Workers, our dedicated staff facilitate and provide a range of services and primary health care education, from how to clean ears safely and effectively, to oral hygiene and packing nutritious healthy school lunches. To manage and assist the staff with clinical decisions there is a Registered Nurse / Manager on staff.

HACC and Disability Services (Home and Community Care)

IWC's HACC (Home and Community Care) and Disability Services, supports and empowers individuals through offering supportive assistance services to members of the integrated aged and or disabled community. This IWC Service primarily provides support to eligible individuals within the Bundaberg and surrounding regions, so that such people can remain living independently in their own homes for as long as possible ensuring quality of life of such individuals. This support system reduces the risk of premature admission to residential aged care, and as a consequence, reduces the health burden on the general community.

The varied services provided are dependent on individual needs, and are ultimately aimed at enhancing the life quality of the aged community. Following eligibility assessment, and once the level of service required has been established, clients are able to access assistance in such areas as:

- Domestic Assistance
- Home Maintenance
- Social Support
- Allied Health
- Centre Based Day Respite
- Transport
- In Home Respite

Referrals to the HACC and Disability Service are accepted from: individuals, carers, community organisations, medical practitioners, other health professionals, hospital and ACAT with clients required to be 18+ years.

Contact the number below.

The Roads Ahead ~ "Walking the Talk"

The dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities that is currently concentrated on implementing initiatives and strategies aimed at providing a future for women, children and men in rural, remote and urban communities free from family violence, must now be matched by a genuine commitment to act ~ by all levels of government, non-Indigenous services and the wider community. For them, the time has come for the various forums, reports, and policy initiatives to finally "walk the talk" where Indigenous family violence is concerned

(Keel, 2004, p.19).

THE YARNING UP! PROJECT REPORT

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THE ST JOHN'S GRACE FUND

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Teaching

Separation

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