

CULTURE, CONNECTION AND CARE: THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONAL JUSTICE CAPITAL FOR ENHANCING THE WELLBEING OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE

Sharynne Hamilton, Larissa Jones, Millie Penny, Charmaine Pell, Sarah Maslen, Carol Michie, Raewyn Mutch, Melissa O'Donnell, Carrington Shepherd, Brad Farrant

BACKGROUND AND WHAT WE DID

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are placed in the care of non-Indigenous foster families. This can cause disconnection from family, language, customs and protocols, culture and Country.

We conducted focus groups with staff working in three mainstream out-of-home care (OOHC) organisations in Perth.

We explored the data from the focus groups to establish the cultural assets and resources that are made available to non-Indigenous foster carers providing care for children, as well as the institutional elements that either inhibit or facilitate cultural connection.

KEY FINDINGS

- Recovery from the trauma of colonial child removal practices should be central to child protection policy development.
- Often, there were no cultural plans, and the information agencies are provided with in cultural support plans by the Western Australian government’s child protection services is scant, incomplete, and often not culturally accurate or relevant.
- Forums that support relationships and information sharing are absent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Include Aboriginal voices when ascertaining information about children’s kin, family, culture and connection.

Bring together Elders and community knowledge-holders for informing the culturally secure care of Aboriginal children.

Facilitate and maintain regular cultural knowledge sharing forums where Aboriginal Practice Leaders from the Department of Communities and OOHC agency leaders regularly come together with community Elders, Aboriginal community knowledge-holders and ACCOs from across Western Australia.

