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**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
views on research in their communities**

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Professor Robyn Penman

**footprints in time**  
The Longitudinal Study of  
Indigenous Children



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In January 2006 the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC) and the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services merged to form the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

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## Executive summary

### Footprints in Time: the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children

This study is an initiative of the Australian Government aimed at collecting longitudinal data that will help in the development of better outcomes for Indigenous children. In this study, the term ‘Indigenous’ is being used to cover all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

One of the first steps in the Footprints in Time project was to hold extensive consultations with urban, regional and remote Indigenous communities across Australia. The overriding goal of these consultations was to ensure that the research project was designed to genuinely benefit Indigenous peoples. This report is based on the minutes taken at the consultation meetings: it is a reconstruction of what was said. The aim was to capture the voices of the people consulted, talking about what concerns them in terms of their children and their communities, and the ways in which research has been conducted on them before and how it could be better in the future.

### The consultation process

Conducting consultations prior to research is important for two reasons. First, it is part of a broader movement in Western society to encourage active participation of citizens in defining and improving matters of concern to them. Second, it offers particular, and often valuable, insights into the ways in which potential research participants understand what it is at stake. Those insights from the Footprints in Time consultations are presented in Sections 2 and 3 of the report.

However, as discussed in Section 1 of the report, there are certain key issues that must be considered if the consultation is to provide valuable, insightful data:

- <sup>a</sup> The process takes considerable time and requires flexibility on the part of those organising the consultation.
- <sup>a</sup> Special care must be taken in inviting the right people, and enough people, to the consultation meetings.
- <sup>a</sup> There is a need to understand and be sensitive to the nature of the communities being consulted, especially in acknowledging their culture and their different ways of seeing.
- <sup>a</sup> There is a need to listen well, hearing the issues from the participants’ viewpoints, and to respond accordingly.

## Questions about research participation

In Section 2 of this report, Indigenous questions about research participation are discussed. These questions revolve around issues of the who, why and how of participation.

Key issues regarding the who of participation are:

- <sup>a</sup> Communities do not necessarily reflect kinship groups.
- <sup>a</sup> Indigenous families are extended, often complex and diverse in structure.
- <sup>a</sup> The mobility of families and family members, and changing carers, presents particular challenges for a longitudinal study of children.

The Indigenous peoples asked a number of questions about why they should participate in this research study. Key issues are:

- <sup>a</sup> the need for another study when we already know so much
- <sup>a</sup> the lack of trust in government agencies and fears regarding invasion of privacy and confidentiality
- <sup>a</sup> the need for some sense of ownership of the study and the data.

When talking about the how of participation, these important issues were raised:

- <sup>a</sup> the importance of working collaboratively with communities
- <sup>a</sup> using Indigenous people to help with the research.

## Questions about data

In Section 3 of this report, Indigenous questions on the nature and the quality of data are discussed. The Indigenous peoples at the meetings raised a broad range of concerns that could be a focus for a research study. Key issues included the importance of:

- <sup>a</sup> understanding the care giving environment, even down to such things as the housing in remote communities
- <sup>a</sup> recognising the role of culture, or loss of it, and the impact of local history on the families and their children
- <sup>a</sup> understanding the services available for the children, especially the appropriateness of their schooling.

Participants in the consultation meetings also raised a set of concerns about the quality and use of the data. In particular, they emphasised:

- <sup>a</sup> the need for the research to be more positive and practical in its orientation
- <sup>a</sup> the needs of the communities were best met if the data were local and qualitative

- <sup>a</sup> the importance, to them, of knowing how the data is to be used
- <sup>a</sup> the need for serious consideration of what to do about intervention or child protection if problems emerge in interviews
- <sup>a</sup> that community-based and controlled research is the best way to be responsive to the many and real concerns of Indigenous peoples.

The consultation meetings provided a range of rich insights into Indigenous understandings and needs regarding research on them and their children. These insights particularly point to the importance of doing it right for them or else, as more than one participant said, ‘why bother?’ The insights documented here also show the ways that can make it right for them.





# 1. Consulting with Indigenous communities

## 1.1 What is this about?

One of the early steps in the Footprints in Time project was to conduct a literature review to identify what we currently know about Indigenous children and to point to what may be missing in our knowledge. That literature review was the first report to come out of this project and was originally published in 2004 as *The Growing Up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*. It has since been published as FaCSIA Occasional Paper No. 15 *The 'growing up' of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children: a literature review*.

At the same time as the literature review was being conducted, community consultations were undertaken. In developing the plans for Footprints in Time, it was recognised that community involvement and acceptance of the research would be critical. As a consequence, extensive consultations with Indigenous people were conducted during the first two years of the project. In all, 23 consultation meetings were held, involving different urban, regional and remote Indigenous communities around Australia. The overriding goal of these consultations was to ensure that the design of the research reflected the interests of Indigenous peoples, communities and service providers and that the research would be done in such a way as to genuinely benefit Indigenous children and their families.

The comments and suggestions about research approaches and what is important to Indigenous communities were so extensive and rich that the Steering Committee of the Footprints in Time project recommended that they be compiled into a report. This is that report.

It needs to be noted, however, that in writing this report I have not adopted an objective, distanced stance normally associated with a research study. In the light of the criticisms by many of the participants in the consultation meetings about a conventional science stance, I felt that a distanced, dispassionate approach would have been disrespectful to them and their views. Instead, I have adopted the stance of recompiling the information in the minutes of the consultation meetings into common themes that, hopefully, capture and respect the diversity of Indigenous voices and the stories told. Throughout Sections 2 and 3 of this report, the Indigenous voices are reflected in the quotes. In contrast, the voices in Section 1 are those from the Footprints in Time team from the then Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) talking about their experiences in consulting with Indigenous people.

This report was also written to inform Indigenous policy agencies within the Australian Government about Indigenous views on research and what matters to them in order to make a better future. This report is a guide to what Indigenous people think is important to them, particularly in terms of the ways of doing research with them.

## 1.2 Why consult?

The practical benefits arising from the Footprints in Time consultation process will become apparent as we proceed through this report. However, it is also important to recognise that such consultation processes have broader moral and political import, being part of a wide scale trend in Western society to encourage the participation of citizens in matters of concern to them.

The United Nation's World Health Organization (WHO) defines this participation process thus:

A process by which people are enabled to become actively and genuinely involved in defining the issues of concern to them, in making decisions about factors that affect their lives, in formulating and implementing policies, in planning, developing and delivering services and in taking action to achieve change (WHO 1992, p. 9).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2001a & b) is also actively encouraging democratic governments around the world to encourage the participation of citizens in policy-making. The OECD differentiates three forms of engagement that includes one-way information provision, two-way consultation, and mutual, active participation. The OECD proposes that to fully engage citizens in policy making, and thus ensure good governance, government must engage citizens at all three levels.

Governments in Australia are responding to this worldwide movement for greater participation by citizens in affairs of direct concern to them. In particular, there is a growing trend in Australian government programs and policies to encourage and strengthen local participation and actively engage citizens in shaping their communities. These programs have included national initiatives such as the 'Stronger Families and Communities Strategy' (Stern 2002), and 'Good Beginnings' (2005).

Footprints in Time was designed to encourage the form of participation described above and I shall show here how the Footprints in Time team invited Indigenous communities to participate in the consultation meetings, what the community members identified as the matters of concern to them and what type of research they thought would best achieve change for them. We shall also show how the very acts of information-provision and consultation, as defined by the OECD, point directly to the need for, and value of, further active participation—the third and most direct form of engagement promoted by the OECD.

Formal partnership agreements have been developed as a mechanism for fostering active participation whether in research and/or policy matters. Such formal agreements facilitate resource sharing and decision-making between a range of different stakeholders. Some of the specific reasons for a focus on partnerships have been:

- <sup>a</sup> the need to include a broad range of people, organisations and areas of government to take action when addressing social problems

- <sup>a</sup> the failure of bureaucratic structures to deliver appropriate services and support without input from the intended recipients
- <sup>a</sup> families and communities should be active participants in making decisions about their lives
- <sup>a</sup> coordinated approaches are needed in the delivery of services (Weeks, Hoatson & Dixon 2003).

There can be no doubt that all the above reasons apply when considering research with Indigenous communities, especially research aimed at addressing social problems and improving the lives of the people involved. As discussed later in this report, the Indigenous people involved in the first round of consultations frequently recommended the value of forming partnerships and the Footprints in Time team took this notion on board. By the later consultation rounds it had become clear that the Footprints in Time: Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children had to involve:

...working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on the design content, implementation and findings from the study (Revised Consultation Paper, August 2004—see Appendix 3).

### 1.3 The Footprints in Time consultation process

#### **Time and flexibility**

One of the most important points to bear in mind when working with a participatory approach is that it takes time and requires flexibility. The OECD's model of active participation makes this point strongly by advocating that participation must:

...provide sufficient time and flexibility to allow for the emergence of new ideas and proposals by citizens, as well as mechanisms for their integration into government policy-making process (OECD 2001b, p. 11).

The government recognised this when they allocated two years for the Footprints in Time consultation process. As one of the team members said, when asked about what they had learnt from the process:

‘Planning and being patient is essential with community consultation.’

Being flexible is also important. While the Footprints in Time team did develop a detailed consultation plan, they also learnt that it was important to modify this in response to experience with the community meetings.

‘Don't go in there thinking this is how it's going to be and that is it. You really need to be flexible.’

This flexibility is evidenced in the two sets of changes the team made to the consultation paper as the consultations proceeded. Making such changes also demonstrated the team's responsiveness to the consultations and this is discussed further later in this report. (See Appendix 3 for consultation papers.)

### **Where and with whom?**

Where you consult and with whom are critical first questions to deal with before any further preparation for consultation can take place. In considering these questions for Indigenous communities, it is particularly important that the many different types of communities are taken into account.

The Footprints in Time team used two major criteria for determining the where of consultation: location and size of Indigenous population. For each state, at least one capital city venue and at least one regional/remote venue were nominated. The regional/remote venues were those with high Indigenous populations. Some further venues were included following the request of communities. In the end, 23 locations were identified and used, including the pilot consultation in the Nowra region (see Appendix 1).

In selecting the locations, additional consideration was given to those locations where the team could tap into known networks. It was mainly through these networks that participants were recruited.

‘I would like to tell others about the value of having networks. It is really important to tap into networks, as people are really busy and very sceptical about research. Personally, I found the stronger my networks the more people attended.’

Each potential participant was sent a letter inviting them to attend. The letter was sent out three to four weeks before the meeting and was then followed-up by a phone call about a week prior to the meeting. (A copy of the form letter is included at Appendix 2.)

#### *How it could have been better*

Although all meetings had sufficient participants to provide valuable information and feedback to the Footprints in Time team, some were better attended than others, and others had more service providers than community members or parents.

‘There were concerns raised by the elders group that there is a lack of parents at the community meeting and that there were far too many service providers at these meetings. There should have been more parents represented here today to speak about the study since the study is about children.’

When asked to reflect on the attendance issues, the Footprints in Time team suggested various strategies for ensuring greater participation by the right people.

‘I think we could have accessed our regional and state offices more to help with advertising and promoting the community meetings.’

‘We could have targeted our audiences better, like being able to do one-on-one meetings with the prominent people in each community to then work with them to get the people to the community meetings.’

‘Perhaps more informal talks with smaller numbers of people before holding a large meeting.’

‘Spending a bit more time—a few days at least—in the community before holding a meeting.’

‘Promoting [the study] more before we sent out the invitations and throughout the process leading up to the community meetings.’

Even though the team knew that this type of consultation process takes time, their suggestions indicate that even more time would have been better to do further preparatory work.

### **Conducting the meetings**

#### *Format*

Each meeting was held over a half-day period and included lunch. The format for the meetings was:

- <sup>a</sup> Welcome to Country provided by a local Elder
- <sup>a</sup> personal introductions by the Footprints in Time team members
- <sup>a</sup> explanation about the format of the workshop
- <sup>a</sup> a Powerpoint presentation telling the story of the project
- <sup>a</sup> general discussion about the relevance of the proposed research and the content areas
- <sup>a</sup> general discussion about design issues
- <sup>a</sup> summary of issues raised
- <sup>a</sup> explanation of how attendees will get feedback and ongoing information about the Footprints in Time study.

A consultation paper was prepared to help guide the explanation and the discussion at the meeting. If participants had not already requested a copy of the consultation paper in advance, they were given one at the meeting.

A series of fact sheets (see Appendix 4) had been created and these were available at the meetings for people who wanted more information. These fact sheets had a mixed response:

‘Depending on the locations that we were visiting, there were mixed responses—sometimes they were taken very well and people were generally interested and in some areas no-one seemed to be interested.’

#### *Important features that worked well*

The Welcome to Country was an important part of the meeting. As one team member described it:

‘It worked well as it showed people we had done our research before entering the areas and that we showed respect. Also that we were aware of the cultural appropriateness required for each of the regions/areas.’

The personal introductions by each of the team members present also were well received.

‘The personal stories from the team members to begin with was kind of an ice breaker. It would also give us an opportunity to promote [the study] on a more

personal note and to show that we were interested in what we were presenting about.’

‘Personally I think telling people that I have three small children and care about their development and outcomes gave us something in common.’

Using a small group format for larger meetings also worked well.

‘Breaking into small groups worked well in the larger meetings as it encouraged people to talk.’

And having Indigenous presenters was very important.

‘Having Indigenous presenters worked well as participants preferred talking with other Indigenous people.’

‘I think it is really important to show that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people work in partnership. We always tried to have an Indigenous officer with a non-Indigenous officer for the community consultations.’

Finally, it was observed that having lunch available really helped to get people talking more informally and promoted relationship building.

‘People would stay around and chat and people became more open and began asking questions away from the formal presentation. This is also where relationship building began and we started to make contacts within each of the regions.’

#### *Listening and being responsive*

The team members realised it was really important to encourage all participants to talk, and to listen carefully to what they had to say.

‘We made sure that we encouraged people to talk up and to tell us how it should be done. We made sure that they knew it was their opportunity to be heard. Giving them feedback after each meeting was valuable as they could see we did listen.’

Listening well and being responsive to what you hear go hand-in-hand. Because they did listen well, the team members found that as the meetings progressed they were able to refine them so they worked even better.

‘Over time, the community meetings took better shape. At first, we asked too many questions and really had too much on the agenda for the time we had.’

Feedback from earlier meetings resulted in a change to the way in which the project was described, and its name. At the beginning, it was referred to simply as the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC) but, following community suggestion to have a slogan, a new name was developed and tested with communities. The name ‘Footprints in Time’ was the outcome. Changes were also made to the consultation papers used to promote discussion at the meetings (see Appendix 3). Different ways of talking were used that reflected the concerns of the communities—for example, talking about partnerships—and refinements were made to further reflect community requirements.

### Valuable observations

When reflecting on their experiences in the community meetings, the team members made a number of valuable observations that they thought should be shared. They were particularly struck by:

‘The willingness of the people within the communities wanting to make a difference for the children and their future kids and their willingness to tell us their stories, their personal stories about how they grew up.’

‘All these people have put their trust in me to ensure that they are heard and that they are given opportunities to be heard. They want it done, they can see the value in it, but they don’t want just anyone to do it.’

‘That all the meetings were different and the range of reactions went from the very enthusiastic to the completely opposed.’

The latter point is important. In the next parts of this report the range of reactions will become more obvious. But it is important to note that there were two sides to the responses to Footprints in Time. Some people were in favour of it and some were not. The reasons for both will also be discussed later in this report.

## 1.4 Recording and using the information

Consulting with community members and asking for their views and opinions brings with it a concomitant obligation to do something with the information obtained. Indeed, the literature on participation processes identifies the obligation to use participants’ input and to account for how it was used as an important feature of all consultation and participation processes (for example, OECD 2001a & b; Cuthill 2001).

In recognition of this, the Footprints in Time team kept minutes of all community meetings. These minutes served a number of important purposes. First, they were sent to all participants at the meetings and thus acted as feedback showing, at the same time, that the voices of the participants had been heard. Second, these minutes also proved to be invaluable in guiding development of the study and in refining it further to suit the needs of Indigenous communities. Finally, the minutes acted as the data for this report. This report, in turn, partially fulfills the obligation to use participants’ input and to account for its use.

For this report, the minutes were subjected to a thematic analysis. Two major themes were identified reflecting, in part, the structure of the meetings: a) issues of participation—the who, why and how; and b) issues of data—what the participants thought we needed to know and how they thought the data were best gathered. These two major themes are reflected in Sections 2 and 3 of this report, respectively.

Throughout the analysis, comments from urban meetings were kept separate from those at regional/remote locations to identify any differences. In reporting the findings in Section 2 and 3, where differences were identified, they are noted. It is also important to note that the quotes throughout Sections 2 and 3 represent

**all** the different opinions and comments across every community. They are not a selection of interesting, useful or typical comments; rather they represent the full range of comments.



## 2. Questions about participation from an Indigenous viewpoint

### 2.1 Who participates?

The Indigenous population presents special challenges to researchers, especially to non-Indigenous researchers unfamiliar with their culture. The question of who participates in research on Indigenous issues is neither simple nor straightforward. Indigenous peoples' understandings of selves, families and communities are in stark contrast to Anglo-Australian ones. Moreover, the special characteristics of Indigenous families and communities involve additional challenges in selecting or inviting people to participate in research.

In analysing the minutes from the 23 community meetings for the Footprints in Time study, participant responses to the question of participation were initially kept separate for urban and regional/remote communities. However, all communities expressed the same basic set of concerns to do with the particularities of Indigenous notions of family and community. There were no obvious differences between urban, regional and remote communities.

#### **What is a community?**

This question was asked by participants in every one of the 23 meetings as to what was meant by the notion of community in the Footprints in Time project. Underlying this question is a complex set of issues regarding the definition of the participating group. Is it a community, a clan, a tribe or a kinship group?

For many, regardless of location, the answer was:

'You should define by clan rather than community.'

'Needs to be clan based—need to track across state boundaries.'

'The study needs to be sensitive to family groupings.'

'In Central Australia, people's sense of community is not just based on a physical location but kinship ties, language and so on.'

'Select regions—not communities—where they have common kinship and languages.'

On the other hand, it must also be recognised that there has been a great dislocation of many Indigenous people and so quite a number of contemporary communities include people from different regions and kin groups. Nevertheless, these communities are still real in the sense of shared resources and services. In recognition of this, it was suggested that it was important to:

'Include communities that are made up of many people that may not traditionally be from that area—that is, may not have extended family nearby.'

At the least, it is necessary to recognise that sometimes community groups may be the same as kinship groups and sometimes not. Where the two are not the same,

the focus on one or the other will depend on the nature of the concern. Community groups may be the appropriate focus when looking at services and use of physical community resources, whereas kinship groups may be the more appropriate focus when looking at other cultural/social resources.

### **What is a family?**

In the main, this question was asked by participants in order to challenge the Anglo-Australian idea of a family, especially its nuclear form. Many of the participants had had past experience of inappropriate survey questions regarding families and wanted to make sure that the Footprints in Time study reflected the lived experience of Indigenous peoples.

In the main, Indigenous families are extended, complex and mobile. They are also quite diverse in structure and, in more recent times, reflect the consequences of often less than desirable societal changes, particularly the absence of fathers:

‘How will family be defined? Often it is just mums here and it would be good to see the impact of not having a father.’

‘Need to acknowledge the diversity of families and the members of those families. We need to make sure that there is some ability to make certain that the role of men and fathers in communities, families and children’s lives needs to be included.’

The need to consider the implications of children from ‘mixed’ relationships was also raised in urban meetings:

‘Consider not all families are Aboriginal but a mixture of Aboriginal and other.’

### **Special characteristics of the population**

#### *Mobility*

Mobility is a common feature of Indigenous living. It reflects traditional practices of living extendedly but it also reflects a response to poverty and lack of adequate housing.

In community meetings across urban and regional/remote communities the importance of taking account of mobility was emphasised.

‘In practice, the study may need to follow families to many different locations.’

‘Need to take account of mobility of community.’

While mobility is a feature of all communities, regardless of remoteness, remote communities have an extra dimension driving their mobility:

‘There are problems with transitions during seasons—you need to understand these movements, including the movement to outstations and homelands.’

Mobility is as common with children as it is with adults and the children do not necessarily move with the same carers all the time; indeed, they may move with no carers.

‘Tracking the children will be very difficult—need the community to help with following the kids.’

### *Multiple carers*

The practice of moving amongst extended families, along with the various stresses families experience in Indigenous communities, means that the children are far more likely to have multiple and/or changing carers. It also means that they may have no family carers at all.

These are the types of concerns that the communities raised:

‘Who will be interviewed about the children? How will you deal with multiple carers?’

‘How widely will consents for inclusion be sought? Will extended family views be considered?’

‘How will the researchers deal with changes in caregivers?’

‘Ensure that children in care are in the survey, as well as those who are homeless. There are a lot of Koori kids in care at the moment.’

### *Differences*

Throughout the consultation meetings, the different peoples kept on emphasising their differences.

The issue was summed up in the minutes for one meeting by:

‘How can you get data from a sample of communities when they are all so different from each other? A number of people felt that one community cannot represent another as NT [Northern Territory] communities are all so different that it is no good just picking some communities to represent all NT communities.’

This notion that all communities are so different that none are representative poses a particular challenge to research that wants to summarise or average across communities. On the other hand, research that respects the differences and considers ranges of responses rather than averages may well be more appropriate.

‘The study will need to acknowledge differences in Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal practices, cultural, environmental and history issues.’

Problems arising from differences within communities, and the concomitant politics, were also raised:

‘For example, there are 23 different language groups in [x region] alone. And there are up to four different tribes/families who claim this area. You need to be careful.’

‘Need to acknowledge family politics within communities... if there seems to be more of one family involved the other family will not support the project and will not participate.’

There would seem to be a need for very careful negotiation of who will be involved in the research project and who will not.

‘[You need a] broad discussion on the sensitivities of always using the “same communities”. For example, [x region] already receives a lot of assistance and engagement with government programs, funding and projects. How do we make sure that there is an equitable inclusion of all Indigenous communities or regions reflected in the project?’

This last question offers a particular challenge to researchers. In part, it can be dealt with in the negotiation process that is contained in any proper community-based research program. Features of this negotiation will be discussed in the section entitled ‘How to participate?’.

## 2.2 Why participate?

Research requires consensual participation. In the consultations with Indigenous communities it was quite clear that the agreement to participate was an essential prerequisite to the study beginning and to it being successful.

‘Community must first accept and agree to study before planning how the study will be designed.’

‘FaCS needs to win the people’s confidence to be successful with the LSIC [Footprints in Time] study.’

However, in the consultations for the Footprints in Time study, it became clear that gaining consent and winning confidence is neither easy nor straightforward. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are, as one community expressed it, ‘the most researched people in the world’. Whether this is verifiably so, or not, does not matter. The fact is that that is how Indigenous people perceive the situation, and they have developed many concerns and mistrusts as a consequence of their past research history. These mistrusts and concerns must be addressed before consent will be given.

On the other hand, despite the multitude of concerns arising from past research history, the potential value of research was not rejected. Indeed, many participants at the meetings thought the proposed Footprints in Time study could be very important for them and their children, provided it was conducted correctly and was aimed to help them—not some government department.

As with the preceding analysis, I initially kept urban and regional/remote communities separate and, again, I could detect no noticeable differences in the types of concerns expressed by the different geographical communities. However, it was clear that the urban communities had more to say and expressed this in stronger, and more negative, ways than the regional/remote communities.

### **Why do we need this study?**

#### *We already know so much*

As noted above, Indigenous communities feel they have been studied over and over again, with very little benefit to them. They need to be convinced that any new research will actually make a difference to their lives.

‘How will this research benefit Aboriginal communities? We already know this stuff. Why will this survey make a difference?’

‘Why do we need this study? We already know what the problems are.’

‘Why do we need this survey? This kind of information is already around. OATSIH [the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health] are already collecting data for their health surveys now. Why spend these funds to repeat a process that is being done Australia wide within different organisations?’

What research has been done already on Indigenous children and their families is summarised in *The ‘growing up’ of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children: a literature review* (Penman 2006). Other studies and data collection programs are also described in the fact sheets in Appendix 4. From the information in Penman (2006) and the fact sheets there can be little doubt that Indigenous people are justified in asking questions such as those quoted above. Why indeed do we need to do yet another study when so much has already been studied?

At the same time as the need for yet another study was questioned, it was also recognised that further research of a more practical kind might be useful. This was a recurring theme in the community consultation meetings and will be discussed in more detail in Section 3 of this report.

#### *Money better spent in other ways*

Some of the communities felt very strongly that the money projected for the longitudinal study would be much better spent in other ways.

‘The money should be spent improving services in the community, instead of spending money on researching children.’

‘Government needs to put funds into programs for children now instead of focusing on researching for better outcomes.’

#### **A question of trust**

Perhaps the strongest sentiment that ran through all community meetings was a sense of mistrust—mistrust of ‘the government’ and of anybody from ‘the government’. In particular, the communities do not trust the government and its representatives to be respectful of, and sensitive to, Indigenous matters, let alone be concerned with genuinely helping Indigenous peoples.

#### *Protecting families and children from the government*

Many people said they would not let their children or themselves get involved with the Footprints in Time study because of past experiences with government departments.

‘They would not allow themselves or their children to participate in the study due to issues concerning trust with exposing children to surveys. The history of the past is still affecting today’s generation of trusting government departments.’

‘Would not participate because of fear of children being taken away—a carry over from the Stolen Generation’ [see HREOC 1997].

‘The issue of trust from government agencies is a major concern for families... fear of Stolen Generation happening again.’

### *Privacy and confidentiality*

Many questions were asked about issues of privacy and confidentiality of data. Some of the questions seemed to be asked because of concerns about government interference.

‘What are the legal issues surrounding mandatory reporting by government agencies? What will be the consequences for giving information on abuse?’

Other questions about privacy seemed to be driven more by broader concerns of data confidentiality, especially about sensitive issues.

‘What are the privacy protections for disclosing sensitive information to researchers?’

‘There are issues of confidentiality, national privacy principles, privacy protection for children.’

‘There are problems living in small communities.’

‘There are concerns about breach of confidentiality.’

It was clear from the meetings that just making assertions that the data will be treated confidentially is not enough. The researchers need to convince the communities that this will be so.

‘Confidentiality and developing rapport with individuals, communities and families is going to be very difficult and will need to be handled sensitively.’

‘Community is worried about the privacy and confidentiality... due to past experiences [with other data collectors]. There is no trust and they [data collectors] don’t understand the cultural aspects of Indigenous communities or individuals.’

### *That funding will continue*

Communities were also sceptical about the continuation of funding over the long term. They have had sufficient experience with funding cuts to services and other programs with a change of government or just a change of policy that they wanted assurances that the funding would continue.

‘What is the guarantee that this study will continue to be funded? What will happen if the funding gets cut?’

‘What about the funding... will it run out after a new government, after four years?’

### **Matters of motivation**

#### *What do the kids/families get out of it?*

When you consider that Indigenous people feel overresearched with little real benefit for them, and have had negative past experience of involvement with government departments and of misuse of research data, it makes sense that they need to be convinced that something positive will come of the research.

‘What are you going to use to sell this to communities and families? Like what are they going to get out of it?’

‘There is nothing that you are offering them. It’s just another statistical exercise.’

Some general suggestions were made as to how to ‘sell’ this to the communities.

‘The only way to make this work is to promote the opportunities for communities. What are they?’

‘You need to sell the benefits to the communities. At each stage feedback the results to get commitment to the next step.’

‘People need to feel they will get something out of this sooner than seven years.’

‘Continuous feedback is essential—some suggested even monthly.’

Others offered more specific comments about the need for incentives and what ones might work.

‘Need incentives to participate in the study.’

‘Need incentives for families—food vouchers, baskets, scholarships, profile albums.’

On the other hand, it is important not to offer incentives that belittle the effort of participation and the worth of the participant.

‘We find it offensive that there is no offering of assistance for the children who will be in the study. Small toys and cups are inappropriate... Aboriginal people are sick of having these things happen without benefit for himself or herself or community.’

### *Acceptance and ownership*

Indigenous people and communities would be more accepting of research on them if they had a sense of ownership of the data or some control over it. Given their sense of mistrust of government, and past experiences of data misuse, the need for some control over data is understandable.

‘How are you going to deal with the suspicion of government departments and their ownership of the data?’

Providing control of the data to the communities would be a major motivator for gaining their acceptance of the research study.

‘These families need to feel that they have a sense of ownership to the information and their participation in the survey.’

‘Will the community have ownership of the information once the data is collected?’

‘Who will own the data and how fast will the information be relayed back to the community?’

## 2.3 How to participate?

Consulting with Indigenous communities before research commences is critical, as this report shows. But that is only the first round of involvement. More is needed.

From the minutes of the community consultation meetings, and from other reports on the best methods of undertaking research in Indigenous communities, it would seem imperative that the communities are involved at all stages and in all aspects of the research. Without genuine and continuing community involvement, the research project simply will not work.

### **Working collaboratively**

Genuine participation by Indigenous communities requires researchers and communities to work together mutually. This means that, minimally, all participants—researchers and community members alike—are committed, and able, to make contributions to the research process. In particular, they need to be able to contribute to the joint development of the methods by which the information is collected and potential changes brought about. In the community meetings, several features of this collaborative process were discussed and these are described below.

#### *Forming ongoing relationships*

The need for the collaboration to be ongoing, over the life of the research project, was emphasised.

‘There needs to be an ongoing relationship and engagement with Indigenous communities and families throughout the trial. It is not enough to see them once or even twice a year. You need someone who is going to be there all the time.’

‘Engage communities by being involved... with regular visits, feedback, attending community events.’

In order to form these ongoing relationships, it was pointed out that trust and respect must be developed. You cannot work collaboratively without trusting and respecting the others involved.

‘[It’s] very important to remember that trust has to be made then the confidentiality upheld, then this will lead to respect.’

‘Develop community trust first and maintain that trust for the period of the study.’

‘Respect both women and men’s business.’

‘You will only ever be able to form partnerships when you have adequately informed the community and sold it to them.’

#### *Working with existing community structures*

It was also suggested that collaboration could best be achieved by working with existing community structures.

‘Provide funding to Aboriginal organisations that will support the families in the community who wish to participate.’

‘Aboriginal Land Councils should be involved in choosing researchers.’

‘Use existing links and networks—people who already work in a similar way.’

‘For support and building partnerships it is best to go through the schools, Education Department and Health.’

‘Use existing partnerships then network from those basic partnerships.’

‘Work with Elders or see Elders first within a community—involve them in the whole process.’

‘Use existing community-based councils, management boards that are made up of families from the communities.’



But it would be well to bear in mind this word of caution:

‘It is important to get the right people in the community, not just the so-called important people.’

### **Using Indigenous researchers/liaison officers**

#### *Indigenous involvement*

Every community meeting strongly stated that Indigenous people must be involved in the research data collection, not only because they would understand the issues more, but also because of the participants’ fear of government personnel.

‘Must be an Indigenous interviewer.’

‘Must be culturally appropriate.’

‘Need grassroots person with communication skills, language and cultural understanding.’

‘Must be an Indigenous interviewer due to lack of trust that Indigenous families have already with government departments.’

One valuable offshoot of having Indigenous involvement was noted:

‘We should be trying to improve the career opportunities for Indigenous people within their communities.’

However, recommendations as to the type of Indigenous involvement varied, suggesting that different methods may be appropriate for different research issues and different communities.

‘Have ATSI community liaison officers—could be Aboriginal Education workers—who need to know the community and its needs and must be accepted by them.’

‘Mature women need to do the interviews, especially on issues concerning child abuse.’

‘Have community people who are accompanied by the researcher.’

‘Get liaison officers as a shared resource with existing agencies/organisations within communities and potentially use these agencies and/or their services to conduct surveys.’

#### *Potential difficulties*

The above suggestions all recommend the use of various people from the community. However, it was also recognised that there could be potential problems with this.

‘If from the community could be difficult due to personal business... concerns raised about confidentiality.’

‘Use Indigenous workers trained by FaCS who live out of state and are unknown to me because there is less chance of breach of confidentiality.’

‘If using local person there are issues of confidentiality, gender business, and culture.’

‘May need more than one community liaison officer if they come from a particular family that another family group in the community won’t talk to.’

It was also suggested that the Indigenous community liaison officer would need to be supported, in order to do the research work properly.

‘The Indigenous workers need to be supported in their community work—need to deal with potential tension between employer and community.’

‘Need support networks for the community liaison officers and training as an ongoing arrangement.’

## **Research participants**

### *Selecting participants*

I have already discussed general concerns related to Indigenous definitions of families and communities. Some more specific issues to do with selecting research participants are noted below:

‘Need to look at how to engage more community members from inception of the project.’

‘Number of kids in study needs to be large enough so that kids aren’t identifiable or picked out as lucky to be in the study or getting something that other kids are not—it is not culturally appropriate to be individually identified.’

‘Make linkages with existing databases within the communities. There are quite a number of reports/surveys that have already been conducted in a community and it may be easier to use existing systems like community health centre databases.’

### *Where to talk?*

The most frequently mentioned phrase used in the discussion of where it would be best to conduct the interview was at a ‘safe place’. From the comments quoted below, this notion of safety seems to be in terms of safe from overhearing or interference.

‘Interviews should take place somewhere they feel is a safe place.’

‘Interviews should be in an external environment—community centres, library, land councils, parks, and so on. They were chosen due to being friendly, comfortable and safe environments, and private.’

‘For some it will feel comfortable in the home and for others it could be a threat. One way will not fit all circumstances. Majority believe it will be more appropriate at community centres, medical centres, child care centres, park and playgroup.’

### *Being flexible*

The need for flexibility was raised in relation to a range of issues to do with participation, particularly about where interviews take place. This flexibility is an important requirement when you consider the mobility of communities and the people in them.

‘This study needs to be very flexible and able to change just as fast as changes in communities.’

‘Needs to be flexible by both interviewer and interviewees. Decision [about interview location] should be made when they turn up at the house.’

### 3. Questions about data from an Indigenous viewpoint

#### 3.1 What do they want to know about?

In the last section, I discussed issues of concern to Indigenous people about the best ways of participating in a research study like Footprints in Time. Here I want to discuss what the communities had to say about the nature of the data collected in such research, especially in terms of its practical use. Although, in doing so, it is important to recognise that the type of data gathered is a function of the method of inquiry used to gather the data and, as such, some of the issues raised in Section 2 overlap with those discussed in Section 3. There is particular overlap to do with use and control of data and with certain methods of participation.

In the community meetings, the Indigenous participants raised a number of issues that concerned them about their children and the care giving environment of the children. A detailed breakdown of these concerns is given in Penman (2006). What we know about these concerns from the literature is also described in that report.

Here I wish to highlight some specific and oft repeated concerns, and some that may reflect the impact of different geographic locations. The major import of doing this is to show all too clearly that Indigenous people are fully aware of the bleak and often appalling circumstances of the lives of far too many of their children, as well as the myriad of factors that can contribute to those circumstances.

#### **The care giving environment**

The need to understand what services are available in any particular community, and the extent of their usefulness, was mentioned by urban and regional/remote communities.

‘What is the effectiveness/harmfulness of existing services?’

‘Identify barriers encountered when accessing services.’

But housing was a special feature of the remote communities’ concerns:

‘Will LSIC [Footprints in Time] be looking at the housing issues, such as overcrowding, style and ownership?’

‘Housing is probably the biggest issue here... what is the relationship of these issues to how kids grow up and develop?’

The breakdown in family structure, dysfunctional dynamics and other issues arising from a history of colonisation, deprivation and trauma was also a frequently mentioned concern.

‘What is the impact on children who have family members being processed through the justice system?’

‘Study the father—does the father have involvement in the child? How would this affect the development of the child?’

‘The amounts of domestic violence that occurs in this community and how this affects the child and their capacity to learn.’

‘What is the impact of being looked after by the grandparents?’

‘What are the parenting skills, especially of young teenage mothers?’

On the other hand, these genuine and broad ranging concerns about family and community breakdown need to be tempered with the recognition that the family/community breakdown is not universal.

‘It’s important to recognise or acknowledge what many families believe to be valuable family values and the effect that this has on the children versus the families who don’t have strong family values.’

### **Culture and history**

The different groups raised a series of questions regarding the impact, and loss, of Indigenous culture on Indigenous children.

‘Questions needed about culture and loss of it.’

‘[Look at] the impact of western society on Torres Strait Islander culture.’

‘Remember the need to evaluate strong culture and spirituality.’

For regional and remote peoples there was also a particular concern about the impact of a return to culture, in the form of returning to traditional lands.

‘Will FaCS look at the impact of families returning back to their traditional land after years of separation?’

‘Will FaCS be studying children/families that are currently living on stations that are back in homelands after being sent away from there many years ago?’

And for urban communities there were other specific concerns to do with culture.

‘[What are the] issues of cultural identity, especially urban?’

‘What are the problems associated with having a high Indigenous population area [in the city]?’

In contrast, all communities were concerned about the impact of racism on the children.

‘Is there racism in the town that can affect the child going off track?’

‘There should be questions included in the survey on racism issues and sexism within communities, schools, towns, regional areas and major cities.’

Both urban and regional communities expressed concern about the impact on children of having multicultural parents.

‘Be sure to include Aboriginal kids who have a non-Indigenous parent. This is particularly important for children whose parents have split up and may have limited access to their culture and are using mainstream services.’

But I think the most significant observation made at more than one community meeting was the importance of knowing the local history and accounting for its impact on the children and their families.

‘A historical picture of the family and community needs to be taken. What is the family history and the context of which the child is born into? It is very important to take this into consideration.’

It is important to take the history into account because it helps significantly in understanding the poor and often problem-laden living conditions of the children and their families.

‘Linking historical impact on community to the results of the study [is important] because without it people can make bad judgments. There has got to be a historical component.’

### **About the children**

All communities were concerned in various ways about the services available for Indigenous children and the effect of these services, or lack of them, on the children’s growing up.

‘What children are suffering from a lack of services in their communities?’

‘What role does government play in terms of child outcomes?’

‘What are the types of early childhood services used and the varying differences and if the child benefits?’

All communities were particularly concerned about the education of Indigenous children. They asked a number of questions about the schooling provided and the appropriateness of it for Indigenous children. These are important issues and they are discussed at length in Penman (2006).

‘Will FaCS look at the school environment? Are the children being educated in an appropriate environment and is there a good support system in place at these institutions?’

‘What is the influence of Aboriginal Studies on children and their attitudes?’

‘Is our own culture and language being taught at schools?’

‘Education here is very poor. The levels of education are minimised and there are low expectations of capabilities/capacity... teachers ignore children/students.’

‘What are the incentives for children to attend schools?’

They also asked questions about the role of the family and how the family can provide support for education.

‘What is the importance placed on education by parents, grandparents?’

‘What support is given to encourage [the child] to go further?’

‘How do parents react to what the child is doing at school?’

‘It’s not only about education it’s about personal development. Some kids are getting that support at home and how do we support those families?’

Urban, regional and remote communities raised questions about various issues to do with children and their relationships with kin and culture.

‘How do the kids see culture—relevance and importance?’

‘Why aren’t the youth of Indigenous communities engaging with the older members/elders?’

‘What do children learn from the variety of their family members?’

Both urban and regional communities raised questions about care and foster placements for Indigenous children.

[‘What are the] outcomes of Indigenous care placements versus non-Indigenous?’

Regional and remote communities expressed concern about a number of health/nutrition issues.

[‘Need to know about] knowledge about healthy food and accessing healthy food.’

‘Understanding getting good food and growth—there is misinformation about when to introduce food.’

Other questions were raised about the need to look at the impact of troubled families/communities.

‘Information is needed on the effects of sexual abuse towards children, to find ways of overcoming such trauma, to help eradicate this “spite” in communities, to raise this as an awareness issue.’

‘What is the relationship between child protection orders and criminal trajectory?’

Interestingly, both regional and remote communities raised the issue of technology.

‘FaCS should be looking at how much access Indigenous children have to technology.’

[‘FaCS should] study the effects of TV games, videos ‘cause these are bad influences on kids.

And, finally, a number of different meetings asked questions of a more general, but still very important, nature:

‘What are the warning signs/signals of poor outcomes and what are the preventive measures?’

‘Do any interventions/services make a difference?’

### 3.2 Nature of the data

The issues and questions described above indicate the range of concerns Indigenous communities have about their children and the families and communities in which the children grow up. They are some of the things that Indigenous people think should be studied to help improve the growing up of Indigenous children.

But even though there is information available on many of the concerns raised above, many participants at the meetings commented that the type of information that is available is either not all that useful or simply has not been used at all. They called for different ways of gathering the data so that information obtained could be far more useful to them.

### Need for the positives

The communities called for good questions of a positive, helpful and productive nature when asked how the Footprints in Time study could help them:

*'We need to move forward.'*

*'We need to know how good work (as defined by the communities) can be sustained.'*

*'Need a positive focus on what is working well.'*

*'This study should highlight the positives and the strengths as well as the problems.'*

*'Look at questions that promote the positives.'*

*'Need to look for best practice—concern that the study may be too much like a deficit model.'*

*'Questions should be more positive—it should be healthier, more positive and stronger.'*

Penman (2006) shows it is clear that not enough of these positive questions have been asked in the literature on Indigenous children and their families. So much of the work is problem focused and simply documents the negatives. Too little of the research data looks at what works well and how it could work better in the future. The people consulted in the meetings wanted to know far more of what works well.

In the community consultations, many different types of positive questions were suggested. Here I have taken key community questions, presented below in italics, and then built on them further to show how this form of positive exploration can work. I am particularly drawing on a research approach called Appreciative Inquiry (for example, Hammond & Royal 1998) that emphasises the importance of appreciating the positive in participants' contributions and exploring ways in which they can do more of the positive things to go on to better futures.

*Within the survey would like recognition of Indigenous survival, resilience, strength and potential.*

<sup>a</sup> What are important sources of strength that help being resilient?

<sup>a</sup> How have they managed so well?

<sup>a</sup> What might help them manage even better?

*How can we make the children feel valued and dare to dream?*

<sup>a</sup> What would being valued look like or how would it be expressed?

<sup>a</sup> What would help to show how the children are valued?

<sup>a</sup> How could we support their daring?

*What can we do to give the children the best start in life?*

<sup>a</sup> What would count as a best start?

<sup>a</sup> What would help in bringing this about?

- <sup>a</sup> What might help even further?

*How can we make a real growing between the peoples themselves and say that we can be responsible for the future of our children ourselves?*

- <sup>a</sup> What can we do now that shows responsibility for the children's futures?
- <sup>a</sup> How can we do more of it?

*The issue of how good work, as defined by the community, can be sustained needs to be the core part of the research.*

- <sup>a</sup> What is working well now?
- <sup>a</sup> What makes it good for the community?
- <sup>a</sup> How could it be made even better?
- <sup>a</sup> What might be needed to help make it better?

*We need... any information we can get for making our life better in the future*

- <sup>a</sup> What would a better life look like?
- <sup>a</sup> What could help you get there?

### **Need for a practical focus**

The above questions focus on the positive and the appreciative in order to generate practical information for improving participants' lives. In the later community consultations, participants were directly asked about other practical information that would be useful for them. They had a lot to say about the type of practical information they needed and why.

### *Policy development*

The communities identified a role for the information at a general policy level.

'As a service provider, get access to the information to lobby for further policy development program outcomes.'

'Highlight the complexities of working with Indigenous communities and their links to tradition/culture... the significance of recognising individual Indigenous groups and tribes.'

'To help government agencies understand the issues Indigenous children face and help develop culturally appropriate policies for Indigenous people.'

'We believe the study can help decision-makers provide policy for alcohol restrictions.'

### *Services*

Urban, regional and remote communities all saw the value of information to support various types of service provision and to bring about improvements.

'Study needs to identify service and resource needs and assist service providers to understand Indigenous priorities.'

'Argument base for change... an ability to use the data to provide an evidence base... to improve services.'



‘Ability to map trends of funding and de-funding of services to Indigenous communities and the impact of this on families and communities.’

‘We need to know how to provide/make accessible services to the broader Aboriginal community and change/alter/extend services to families who require child care services.’

‘We need information that will help redirect health services in the future and information that would get services more money.’

‘Ability to inform teachers and affect their ability to work with Indigenous children.’

### *Community programs*

The communities also identified information needs to help with community programs.

‘Ability to utilise results in developing business plans and promoting developments and successes within the communities.’

‘Increasing accountability of delivery of programs and strategies to Indigenous communities.’

‘To “tailor make” programs/projects specific to Indigenous children and communities.’

### *Children and families*

More specifically still, the communities wanted to know what would help make their children’s lives better.

‘What are the things that are in place that make a difference in the quality of children lives?’

‘What support is needed for mothers to raise their children?’

‘What does the data say for early intervention?’

### **Need for local, qualitative data**

Some of the participants felt that questions asked for statistical purposes could never accurately reflect the lived experience or the diversity of communities and their needs:

‘It’s just another statistical exercise.’

Many of those consulted would much prefer to participate in studies that generated qualitative data, not quantitative. As one participant at a meeting put it:

‘Public servants always want surveys when qualitative research is the best data for understanding the social and cultural aspects of kids’ lives.’

In order to find the positives, to find what works in different communities, some participants suggested the need to focus on the specifics, on the practical experience of life within families and communities. This is where things matter to them.

‘Need local data, not just national data, if wanting to develop baseline indicators for health and wellbeing.’

Even though many participants called for local, qualitative data, Indigenous communities generally recognise the need to satisfy ‘white’/bureaucratic requirements as well as their own and have taken on board the idea of ‘both ways learning’. This is an expression, and an approach, used in the Warrki Jarrinjaku project (2002) documenting Aboriginal child rearing practices. But the major point of it is that they believe the cultures and modes of understanding of Indigenous peoples need to be respected along with non-Indigenous ways.

‘Need to have research from true Blackfella’s [perspective] and not “tick-a-boxes”.’

### **Need to consider interventions**

In undertaking inquiries of the nature proposed in the Footprints in Time study, and given the troubles in many Indigenous communities, it is inevitable that problems will be raised and help requested. In the community meetings, three different types of potential problems were raised.

‘At present child sexual abuse is a huge problem. What happens if this abuse is identified within the house? How will this be handled? How much authority do you [FaCS] have?’

‘The study may trigger emotionally charged reactions. Therefore there needs to be support available to assist participants.’

‘Will the children have check-ups every year? If there are any problems, who will intervene?’

These questions directly raise the need to consider whether, and on what grounds, a research team will intervene. They also point to the need to consider how the intervention will be undertaken and how it will be documented.

## **3.3 Use and control of the data**

### **Use of the data**

It is all well and good gathering information along the lines suggested above, but, as many participants went on to query, how is the data going to be used? There were a number of different concerns expressed about the use of the data from the study. Some of these concerns were general.

‘Who’s going to see/have this information?’

‘Who has access to the information and at what time frame will it be available?’

‘Suspicious of motives for how the information collected will be used.’

Other questions were asked about whether the data were actually going to be used to help communities or not.

‘How will the use of the data make a difference?’

‘How will the findings be used? Will anything be done about the findings either positive or negative?’

‘Who is accountable for the outcomes? We need to know now what will be the physical outcomes for our children and community.’

Yet other concerns reflect bad experiences in the past with use of research data either by media, government departments or others.

‘Concern about what the media would do with the data. The media have a way of changing and manipulating data for their own benefit. What protection is there against this?’

‘There has been frequent abuse and misuse of data collated on Indigenous communities.’

‘[Need to] link historical impacts on community to results of study, because without it people can make bad judgements.’

‘Some people thought that by participating they would be judged and feel intimidated as if they were being watched.’

‘There is fear and suspicion of the study. Who will be doing it and why and will they be judged or will it be biased?’

The last part of the comment above is interesting. There was frequent mention of bias in many other comments. In some instances, it seemed as if they may have been referring to scientific bias. However, in most instances it was more likely the Indigenous people were referring to ‘whitefella’ bias or prejudice.

Unfortunately, not only were there concerns about the non-Indigenous response to the data, but also about how Indigenous communities themselves would respond and how the people in them would be seen.

‘With the information collected and produced, in many cases the women are blamed for the issues and problems surrounding children.’

‘Once this information is published it could damage a lot of communities.’

‘Results can go against parents and communities.’

‘Who will stand up for the outcome and us?’

### **Community involvement**

In Section 2, it was noted that Indigenous people would be more accepting of research if they had a sense of ownership of the data or some control over it.

‘These families need to feel that they have a sense of ownership to the information and their participation in the survey.’

Having control, at least over parts of the research method and data collected, is seen as an important element in the success of the research project. When the community is involved and has a say in the research done about them and for them, then the mistrust arising from inappropriate data use of the past is mitigated. And, in turn, this community involvement also ensures that the communities benefit directly:

‘More chance of success if community takes control (ownership).’

‘The important factor is that when the decision-making is left up to someone else and they have not been involved in playing a part in the decision-making process and stuff... and when the decision-making does come from the community itself they’re making the decisions and that makes a difference.’

‘Should be done by Indigenous people and monitored by Indigenous people.’

In essence, what many of the comments called for, or implied, was an action, or participatory, research approach to the study of Indigenous concerns:

‘We need on the ground research that feeds back into communities and actions.’

‘Will there be an action research component?’

‘We need action outcomes that will provide services to meet deficiencies [in the community].’

The Footprints in Time team have addressed this call for continuing participation and involvement in the project by working in partnerships with communities.

## Appendixes

## 1. Regions in which consultations took place

### *In New South Wales/Australian Capital Territory*

- <sup>a</sup> Alexandria
- <sup>a</sup> Nowra
- <sup>a</sup> Dubbo
- <sup>a</sup> Mildura
- <sup>a</sup> Mt Druitt
- <sup>a</sup> Canberra

### *In Queensland*

- <sup>a</sup> Cherbourg
- <sup>a</sup> Cairns
- <sup>a</sup> Brisbane (2)

### *In the Torres Strait*

- <sup>a</sup> Thursday Island (2)

### *In the Northern Territory*

- <sup>a</sup> Yulara
- <sup>a</sup> Nhulunbuy
- <sup>a</sup> Alice Springs
- <sup>a</sup> Darwin

### *In Western Australia*

- <sup>a</sup> Kalgoorlie
- <sup>a</sup> Perth

### *In South Australia*

- <sup>a</sup> Port Augusta
- <sup>a</sup> Adelaide

### *In Victoria*

- <sup>a</sup> Thornbury

### *In Tasmania*

- <sup>a</sup> Hobart
- <sup>a</sup> Launceston

## 2. Letter of invitation

### RE: CONSULTATIONS—LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN (LSIC)

Dear «Salutation» «Last\_Name» «SirMadam»

I would like to invite you or your representative to one of the following LSIC Workshops to be held:

<b>Nhulunbuy</b>	<b>Darwin</b>
<b>Monday 20 October 2003</b>	<b>Tuesday 21 October 2003</b>
<b>10.00am–2.00pm</b>	<b>10.00am–2.00pm</b>
<b>Nhulunbuy Training Centre</b>	<b>Mirambeena Resort</b>
<b>Chesterfield Circuit</b>	<b>64 Cavenagh Street</b>
<b>Nhulunbuy NT 0881</b>	<b>DARWIN NT 0801</b>

We will be holding further workshops in Alice Springs and Yulara in early 2004. If you would prefer to attend either of these, please contact us so that you will receive notification of dates.

The study will focus on the links between early childhood experiences and later life outcomes for Indigenous children. Following children over time will help us to identify what helps children grow up strong and achieve positive outcomes.

If you would like to know more about the study before the workshop, you can contact «contact person» or «contact person) on «phone number» for an information paper.

We will provide tea, coffee and lunch on the day. Due to catering requirements, please call «contact person and number» and advise if you are able to join us for either workshop.

I do hope that you are able to come to the workshop and welcome your involvement.



Andrew Whitecross  
Assistant Secretary  
Strategic Policy & Knowledge  
10 October 2003

### 3. Consultation documents



# Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children

Summary of the Consultation Paper  
September 2003

Prepared by Longitudinal Surveys Section  
Strategic Policy and Knowledge Branch  
Family and Community Services (FaCS)

*Email: [LSIC@facs.gov.au](mailto:LSIC@facs.gov.au)*

## 1.0 What is a Longitudinal Study?

A Longitudinal Study is where ‘pictures in time’ are taken and a ‘story’ is written telling us how kids develop and grow. It is a study that returns to the same children over time and can show how kids can grow up strong.

This is the first time this has been done across Australia and it is to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and government departments gain a better understanding on children’s health, education, family relationships and child care.

The study will span remote, regional and urban Indigenous communities. Around 1,000 of the children in the study will be chosen from remote areas. We expect to study two age groups over time; 2,000 babies aged less than 12 months and 2,000 four to five year-olds.

## 2.0 Reasons for the Study

Some people may argue that we already know how disadvantaged Indigenous children are and the last thing Indigenous people need is another survey. We do know, generally, some of the risk factors faced by Indigenous children. But we do not know how these factors change over time. What influences the pathways children take? How do these pathways impact on a child’s outcomes? Why is it that some children do well despite high risk factors? What can we do to assist children onto more positive pathways?

Before the study starts and in recognition of the importance of community involvement and acceptance of Indigenous research, there will be two years of working with Indigenous people, communities and organisations to ensure that the design of the study reflects their interests and is done in a way that benefits Indigenous children and their families.

This study is about Indigenous children and their future. In partnership with Indigenous communities, government will be able to help guide where further work is most needed. It is proposed that the study will provide a better insight into how a child’s early years affect how they mature and develop.

## 3.0 What does everyone want from this study?

Some of the desired outcomes for the study could be:

- <sup>a</sup> to understand how well Indigenous children are doing, looking at the pathways to good and poor outcomes and the things that influence change in Indigenous children’s pathways
- <sup>a</sup> to help service providers understand the effects of the Stolen Generation, importance of language and extended family on the development of Indigenous children

- <sup>a</sup> build better relationships with communities
- <sup>a</sup> to help with policy development and service provision in relation to Indigenous children's health and wellbeing
- <sup>a</sup> build community capacities that deliver sustained and continuing improvements in the health and wellbeing of Indigenous children and families
- <sup>a</sup> commitment to processes for addressing Indigenous disadvantage
- <sup>a</sup> to be able to compare Indigenous children and the general population of children.

#### 4.0 Design Issues

Some of the design issues are:

- <sup>a</sup> how to reflect cultural sensitivity and diversity
- <sup>a</sup> how should Indigenous communities be engaged in the study?
- <sup>a</sup> what is the variety of ways in which survey results can be fed back into the communities?
- <sup>a</sup> how can this data be used to benefit the communities?
- <sup>a</sup> how to build strong relationships and trust within the communities
- <sup>a</sup> how to engage communities and encourage participation of Indigenous children in the study
- <sup>a</sup> how to understand Indigenous children within their family/community
- <sup>a</sup> who should provide information on the child (that is, parents, aunts, grandmothers, carers, and teachers)?
- <sup>a</sup> how to protect confidentiality of all people involved in the care of the child (for example, extended family/carers)
- <sup>a</sup> how will the study be done (personal interviews, life histories, structured interviews and so on)?
- <sup>a</sup> to what extent should survey measures differ to the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children project (indicators of social competence, readiness to learn and so on)?
- <sup>a</sup> how should the stages between a 'child' becoming an 'adult' be viewed in the overall design of the research?

#### 5.0 Proposed Research Questions

The study will address the following *six broad questions*:

1. How well are Australian Indigenous children doing in terms of their health, social skills, learning and behaviour?

2. What are the pathways children take to positive or poor outcomes and what are the early indicators of these pathways?
3. How are child outcomes linked with their wider circumstances and environment (for example, family and community)?
4. What helps maintain an effective pathway, or change one that is not promising?
5. How is a child's potential maximised to achieve positive outcomes for children, their families and society?
6. What role can the government play in achieving these outcomes?

### **Need more details:**

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# **Footprints in Time**

## **THE LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN**

Revised Consultation Paper  
March 2004

*Email: [LSIC@fac.gov.au](mailto:LSIC@fac.gov.au)*

## 1.0 What is a Longitudinal Study?

A Longitudinal Study is where ‘pictures in time’ are taken to develop a ‘story’ to see how children develop and grow. A longitudinal study is a study that returns to the same children over time and can begin to answer questions about how children can grow up strong. This is the first time a study like this has been done across Australia. This study will only include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across Australia. This will help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities, service providers and government departments gain a better understanding on Indigenous children’s health, culture, education, housing, and family relationships and how these affect the way a child grows up.

## 2.0 Community meetings

Before the study starts and in recognition of the importance of community involvement and acceptance of Indigenous research, there will be two years of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities, service providers and organisations to ensure that the design of the study reflects their interests and is done in a way that benefits Indigenous children and their families. The community meetings began in August 2003 and will be ongoing. The study and community meetings will span remote, regional and urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Around 1,000 of the children in the study will be chosen from remote areas. At this stage we expect to study two age groups over time; 2,000 babies aged less than 12 months and 2,000 four to five year-olds. This may change due to the feedback we are getting from the community meetings. The first findings from the study are expected to be released in late 2007.

## 3.0 Reasons for the study

This study is about Indigenous children and their future. In partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, governments will be able to help guide where further work is most needed. It is proposed that the study will provide a better insight into how a child’s early years affect how they mature and develop.

Some people may argue that we already know how disadvantaged Indigenous children are and the last thing Indigenous people need is another survey. However, we do not have enough data to support our knowledge; this study will give us the data that we need. We do know, generally, some of the risk factors faced by Indigenous children. But we do not know how these factors change over time. What influences the pathways children take? How do these pathways impact on a child’s outcomes? Why is it that some children do well despite high risk factors? What can we do to assist children onto more positive pathways? This study will provide the evidence base for improving Indigenous children’s outcomes.

#### 4.0 What we think we should learn from this study and how it can be used:

*What do indigenous children need to have the best start in life to grow up strong?*

- <sup>a</sup> To provide the data for communities, governments and service providers to design, apply for funds and implement early intervention programs to support young children and their families to have the best start in life.

*What helps indigenous children to stay on track or get them to become healthier, more positive and stronger?*

- <sup>a</sup> To provide the data for communities, governments and service providers to design and apply for funds for culturally appropriate childcare, health centres, preschools, sports and education programs.

*The importance of family, extended family and community in the early years of life and when growing up.*

- <sup>a</sup> To provide the data for communities, governments and service providers to design and apply for funds for programs to support parents and other carers, like: health services, parenting and education programs, housing and prevention programs.

*The difference between how indigenous children are raised compared to children of other cultural backgrounds.*

- <sup>a</sup> To show the governments and service providers the importance of and difference in Indigenous cultures compared to other cultures. To get people to acknowledge this in policy and service provision.

**In order to answer the 4 main questions, data would be collected on the following:**

**Culture:** Language, Elders, child rearing, the effects of the Stolen Generation, participation in activities, law, dance, story telling, art, social knowledge and spirituality. The connection to land/sea and movement between communities.

**Health:** Pregnancy, birth, age of birth mother and father, illness, medical services, doctors, immunisation, transport, stress, mental health, medical conditions, diabetes, kidney disease, substance use, diets, hearing, eyesight, sleep patterns, accidents and the cultural appropriateness of services.

**Childcare:** Availability, culturally appropriate, used, or not used, how often, Indigenous carers and non-Indigenous carers.

**Education:** Early learning skills, educational levels, bullying and racism. Access to and experience in playgroups, preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary schools, before and after school care and appropriateness of school programs. Access and interaction with: books, television, media and computers.

**Families:** Extended family, fathers, grandparents, siblings, uncles and aunt's community, parents' work, income, health and how they were raised as a child, out

of home care, violence, discipline, death, grief, child abuse, mixed heritage, family movements and contact.

**Community:** The history of the community, governance, community controlled services, community and government partnerships, leadership and spirituality. What is available within the community—housing, infrastructure and services including the type, access and responsiveness to needs. The effects of seasonal changes, land claims and access to food and technology.

**Child development and wellbeing:** Behaviour, growth, social skills, decision making skills, communication skills—written and verbal.

## 5.0 Design of the study

The study will use a community-based design. This will involve working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on the design, content, implementation and findings from the study. A representative group of communities in urban, regional, rural and remote areas across Australia will be identified in late 2004. Partnerships with these communities will be built to enable their participation in the study over the long term. The details of the design will be finalised after further consultations with communities, but may include:

- <sup>a</sup> collecting common data across all communities, as well as some specific data that is of interest to the individual community
- <sup>a</sup> identifying services within communities and the impact of these services on children's outcomes
- <sup>a</sup> collecting some data on the communities' history and cultural influences
- <sup>a</sup> following children from communities over time even if they move between communities
- <sup>a</sup> employing local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community liaison officers to provide the key connections between the researchers and the community
- <sup>a</sup> training and employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interviewers to collect the data
- <sup>a</sup> giving the findings from the study back to communities in a variety of formats.

*The LSIC Steering Committee (chaired by Professor Mick Dodson) comprises many Indigenous leaders, policy makers and researchers, and will oversee all aspects of the study.*



# **Footprints in Time**

## **THE LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN**

Revised Consultation Paper  
August 2004

Prepared by Longitudinal Surveys Section  
Strategic Policy and Knowledge Branch  
Family and Community Services (FaCS)

*Email: [LSIC@facs.gov.au](mailto:LSIC@facs.gov.au)*

## What is a Longitudinal Study?

A Longitudinal Study is where ‘pictures in time’ are taken to develop a ‘story’ to see how children develop and grow. A longitudinal study is a study that returns to the same children over time and can begin to answer questions about how children can grow up strong. This is the first time a study like this has been done across Australia. This study will only include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across Australia. This will help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities, service providers and government departments gain a better understanding on Indigenous children’s health, culture, education, housing, and family relationships and how these affect the way a child grows up.

## What is Footprints in Time: LSIC about?

Footprints in Time: LSIC is about understanding why some children do better over time than others, and how children can be supported to grow up strong and resilient.

It is about collecting and sharing information on what helps make children resilient. Resilience is the ability for children to do well despite disadvantage. Just because a child grows up in an adverse or disadvantaged environment does not mean that they won’t do well in life—risk is not destiny.

Resilient children will mean different things to different people across Australia. The information collected in Footprints in Time: LSIC on what ‘resilient’ and ‘strong’ means will be determined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Footprints in Time: LSIC will provide information to children, families and communities, as well as service providers and governments, to help children have the best start in life and the best support as they grow up.

Getting the best outcomes for children—whether that is good health, being able to learn at school, or getting a good job—requires understanding all the factors that influence their lives as they grow up, such as their family, their communities, their culture, and their use of services. The information collected in LSIC, and how that information is used and presented, will be determined in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

## What Footprints in Time: LSIC is NOT about

Footprints in Time: LSIC is NOT about assessing the outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children against outcomes for non-Indigenous children or a western framework of how well children are doing.

Footprints in Time: LSIC is NOT about producing statistical analyses in isolation. It is about understanding the actual, lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, their families and communities.

The study is NOT just about exploring the negative aspects of children's lives. It is NOT about saying this many children have this illness, or this many children live in poor housing, or this many children lived with parents who are addicted to drugs. We know you are already aware of these things.

Instead, Footprints in Time: LSIC is about producing information that captures and explores the positive side of children growing up. What works? What do we need to do to make things different? What's the way forward?

## Community meetings

Before the study starts and in recognition of the importance of community involvement and acceptance of Indigenous research, there will be two years of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities, service providers and organisations to ensure that the design of the study reflects their interests and is done in a way that benefits Indigenous children and their families.

Since August 2003, the LSIC team has visited every capital city in Australia and at least one regional/remote area in each State and Territory (see Attachment A for list of areas visited). Community consultations will continue in areas that are involved in trialling Footprints in Time: LSIC, and with communities that are eventually asked to participate in the study.

## Reasons for the Study

This study is about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their future. In partnership with Indigenous communities, governments will be able to help guide where further work is most needed. It is proposed that the study will provide a better insight into how a child's early years affect how they mature and develop.

Some people may argue that we already know how disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are and the last thing Indigenous people need is another survey. However, we do not have enough data to support our knowledge: this study will give us the data that we need. We do know, generally, some of the risk factors faced by Indigenous children. But we do not know how these factors change over time. What influences the pathways children take? How do these pathways impact on a child's outcomes? Why is it that some children do well despite high risk factors? What can we do to assist children onto more positive pathways? This study will provide the evidence base for improving Indigenous children's outcomes.

## What we think we should learn from Footprints in Time: LSIC

- <sup>a</sup> What do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children need to have the best start in life to grow up strong?

- <sup>a</sup> What helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to stay on track or get them to become healthier, more positive and stronger?
- <sup>a</sup> What is the importance of family, extended family and community in the early years of life and when growing up?
- <sup>a</sup> What is the difference between how Indigenous children are raised compared to children of other cultural backgrounds?
- <sup>a</sup> How can services and other types of support make a difference to the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children?

Attachment B provides more detail on the types of questions that Footprints in Time: LSIC information could be used to answer.

Footprints in Time: LSIC could provide a range of data about the child, their parents/carers, their family and their community. For example, characteristics of their parent/s, their extended family, their child care and school experiences, their community characteristics and cultural history.

Significant events in the child's life could also be collected, like illness, birth of a sibling, death in the family, parental separation, as these can boost or lower their developmental progress.

Exactly what type of information is collected in Footprints in Time: LSIC will be discussed and negotiated with the communities participating in the study. These are some examples of what could be included:

**Culture:** Language, Elders, child rearing, the effects of the Stolen Generation, participation in activities, law, dance, story telling, art, social knowledge and spirituality, the connection to land/sea and movement between communities.

**Health:** Pregnancy, birth, age of birth mother and father, illness, medical services, doctors, immunisation, transport, stress, mental health, medical conditions, diabetes, kidney disease, substance use, diets, hearing, eyesight, sleep patterns, accidents and the cultural appropriateness of services.

**Childcare:** Availability, culturally appropriate, used, or not used, how often, Indigenous carers and non-Indigenous carers.

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**Families:** Extended family, fathers, grandparents, siblings, uncles and aunt's community, parents' work, income, health and how they were raised as a child, out of home care, violence, discipline, death, grief, child abuse, mixed heritage, family movements and contact.

**Community:** The history of the community, governance, community controlled services, community and government partnerships, leadership and spirituality.

What is available within the community—housing, infrastructure and services including the type, access and responsiveness to needs. The effects of seasonal changes, land claims and access to food and technology.

**Child development and wellbeing:** Behaviour, growth, social skills, decision making skills, communication skills—written and verbal.

## How could the information from Footprints in Time: LSIC be used?

We hope that the data from Footprints in Time: LSIC will be used by Indigenous communities, governments and service providers to design, apply for funds and implement early intervention programs to support young children and their families to have the best start in life and as they grow up, like culturally appropriate childcare, health centres, preschools, sports and education programs.

It could also be used to show governments and service providers the importance of and difference in Indigenous cultures compared to other cultures—to get people to acknowledge this in their policy and service provision.

## Research Assumptions

The research assumptions are things that we presume to be true about doing a study like Footprints in Time: LSIC. These assumptions are:

- <sup>a</sup> The things that influence, and the way they influence, the development and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and non-Indigenous children will be different.
- <sup>a</sup> The definition of the strengths and resilience of children as they grow up will vary.
- <sup>a</sup> The characteristics of children at age 8 may have an important influence on their later life (age 8 is used as the funding for the study is only expected for 4 years after the first collection of data).

## Research Questions

The research questions are the things that we think we may find out from Footprints in Time: LSIC. Identifying these questions at the start of the study will help us design the study. The research questions for Footprints in Time: LSIC are:

- <sup>a</sup> Individual, family, school, services and community characteristics may influence pathways of child development and wellbeing in different and interrelated ways.
- <sup>a</sup> Availability, use and accessibility, nature and delivery (including cultural appropriateness) of schools and services may influence pathways for child development and wellbeing.

- <sup>a</sup> Interaction between community characteristics and the mode and style of service delivery may influence pathways for child development and wellbeing. The first years of life may influence later outcomes.
- <sup>a</sup> Differing patterns of influence on children may exist between urban, regional, rural and remote areas.
- <sup>a</sup> Differing patterns of influence and outcomes may exist for children who move between communities/housing/families/primary carer and children who stay in the same communities/housing/families/ primary carer over time.

## Design of the study

The study will use a community-based design. This will involve working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on the design, content, implementation and findings from the study. A representative group of communities in urban, regional, rural and remote areas across Australia will be identified in late 2004. Partnerships with these communities will be built to enable their participation in the study over the long term. The details of the design will be finalised after further consultations with communities, but may include:

- <sup>a</sup> collecting common data across all communities, as well as some specific data that is of interest to the individual community
- <sup>a</sup> identifying services within communities and the impact of these services on children's outcomes
- <sup>a</sup> collecting some data on the communities' history and cultural influences
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- <sup>a</sup> employing local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community liaison officers to provide the key connections between the researchers and the community
- <sup>a</sup> training and employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interviewers to collect the data
- <sup>a</sup> giving the findings from the study back to communities in a variety of formats.

The LSIC Steering Committee (chaired by Professor Mick Dodson) comprises many Indigenous leaders, policy makers and researchers, and will oversee all aspects of the study.

## Footprints in Time: LSIC trials

Before we commence this study, we need to test the community-based model to see if it works. The results of the trials of Footprints in Time: LSIC would be used to finalise the design of the study and help FaCS finalise the costing of the study. The objective of the trials would be to:

### **1. Test the proposed community engagement strategy**

A key aspect of the study is to engage the cooperation and participation of the chosen communities in LSIC. While the community engagement strategy would need to be tailored for each individual community, there are a number of common objectives and tasks in the strategy. These include providing information to communities on the purpose of the study, what is in it for them if they chose to participate, their involvement in determining some of the content and influencing other parts of the proposed content, how the data will be useful to them, how the study will be conducted, the role of the Community Liaison Officers/interviewers, and how they will be able to get access to the study's findings and influence the interpretation of these findings.

### **2. Test the development of research agreements and protocols with the community**

At the community level, research agreements and protocols will need to be developed with each community involved in LSIC to govern their participation in the study. These agreements will need to include getting ethics approval for the implementation of LSIC in the community, and the establishment of privacy protocols. They will also include governance arrangements for community input and control of the study content, and methods for interpreting and disseminating the research findings. It will also involve the development of protocols for obtaining individual consent for participating in LSIC and informing participants about how their personal information will be used and why it is being collected (as per the Privacy Act). The protocols will also need to cover any incentives or gifts provided to the community or individuals for being involved in LSIC.

### **3. Test the development of publicity material targeted to the community**

Publicity material about LSIC, including pamphlets, posters, presentations, story boards, videos, can be prepared and tested specifically for the community in ways that are culturally appropriate.

### **4. Undertake focus groups in the communities to help determine and influence the study design and content**

Focus groups with various members of the pilot communities (such as elders, parents, young people, service providers) would be held as part of the process for informing the development of the content of Footprints in Time: LSIC. Stories of growing up and the key areas of interest to communities and parents would be recorded in reports that would be given back to communities as a resource as well as being used by the LSIC team and the LSIC committees to develop the content. Focus groups would also be held to collect information on the history and cultural aspects of the community, which will help in refining the design of LSIC to make it appropriate for the community as well as feeding into the content design. FaCS could engage researchers with strong connections to the community to undertake these focus groups and write up the results. This would provide opportunities

for Indigenous researchers to be involved in LSIC and increase the connections between the academic community and the LSIC communities.

**5. Test the process for recruiting and training Community Liaison Officers and interviewers for the pilot test**

This will test the market for these positions, and involve the development and testing of selection criteria and duty statements for the Community Liaison Officers and interviewers, their employment conditions, and developing a training and capacity building program for the officers.

**6. Test the development of questionnaires and databases**

This may include testing of computer assisted personal interviewing software as well as pen and paper questionnaires. Databases will need to be developed and tested to help the LSIC team manage the pilot testing process. The databases will include demographic and service information on each community, details of contacts made in the communities (such as meetings, focus groups, presentations), monitoring of progress with ethics clearance, reports from the Community Liaison Officers and interviewers, and a system for tracking participating families over time.

**7. Test the strategy for recruiting families with children to participate in LSIC**

This will enable FaCS and communities to determine the best methods for finding the families, such as the Community Liaison Officers identifying families or use of lists of families held by service providers or the community.

**Further information**

Further information about Footprints in Time: The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children can be found at: [facs.gov.au/internet/facsnet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/indigenous-lsic](http://facs.gov.au/internet/facsnet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/indigenous-lsic)

You can download the study's newsletters from this website and get contact details for the study team.



## Attachment A

### Community meetings held:

<b>Month</b>	<b>Place</b>
September 2003	Nowra NSW
October 2003	Darwin & Nhulunbuy NT
November 2003	Cairns & Thursday Island QLD
November 2003	Nhulunbuy NT
December 2003	Canberra ACT
February 2004	Dubbo NSW
February 2004	Brisbane & Cherbourg QLD
February 2004	Rooty Hill & Alexandria NSW
March 2004	Thursday Island QLD
April 2004	Alice Springs & Yulara NT
April 2004	Adelaide & Port Augusta SA
May 2004	Hobart, Launceston & Burnie TAS
June 2004	Melbourne & Mildura VIC
June 2004	Perth & Kalgoorlie WA

## Attachment B

### Why have a longitudinal study?

- <sup>a</sup> Footprints in Time: LSIC will be different to other surveys because it will follow children as they grow up. It will enable us to examine stability and change over time in children's outcomes and the factors influencing these outcomes. For example, how do behavioural difficulties and strengths show different signs at different ages? How far can later things in a child's life be predicted by earlier events?
- <sup>a</sup> By establishing the time ordering of events, Footprints in Time: LSIC data will help establish how these factors are related to each other. Understanding children's development over time will also shed light on why some children who are exposed to adverse conditions will still do well, and when interventions, like services or family/community support, would be most effective.

### Some of the questions that the LSIC data could be used to examine include:

- <sup>a</sup> How does the size and composition of the child's family (immediate and extended) influence their health (major chronic diseases, mental health, presence of a disability, rate of injuries), social and emotional development, school readiness, literacy/numeracy, cultural awareness, cognitive development, behaviour and temperament?
  - *How are these things influenced by the number of people in their household, relationship of those people to the child, role of those people in the child's development, presence of mother, father, siblings, grandparents, other relatives, visitors, experience of parental separation, family dissolution and change, extent and contact with non-resident parents/family?*
- <sup>a</sup> How do parental relationships and parenting style impact on a child's outcomes over time?
  - *What happens when a child is exposed to positive/negative parenting styles, exposed to parental/family tension, exposed to different types of discipline? What happens when a child's family copes in different ways in times of stress, or when their parents participate in the child's early learning (reading, story telling) and social/cultural development?*
- <sup>a</sup> How are child outcomes (health, social and emotional development, school readiness, literacy/numeracy, cultural awareness, cognitive development, behaviour and temperament) affected by their parents/families characteristics?
  - *Such as their parent/family's health (major chronic diseases, mental health, disability, addiction), their parent/family's labour force status, their parent/family's income and their use of traditional languages?*

- <sup>a</sup> How are a child's outcomes affected by their antenatal history?

  - *Such as their mother's physical and mental health during and after pregnancy, their mother's smoking/drinking during pregnancy, the child's birth weight, whether it was a pre-term birth, whether there was stress at birth, the age at which the child stopped breastfeeding, the age solid foods introduced, the rate of immunisation?*
- <sup>a</sup> How are child outcomes affected by their environment?

  - *The child's housing conditions/overcrowding, access to healthy food, exposure to violence and social disruption?*
- <sup>a</sup> How are child outcomes affected by the child and their family's social and cultural connectedness to their community over time?

  - *Their involvement in the community, cultural history with the community, adoption of community norms and cultural expectations, the child's participation in sport/cultural activities, child's exposure to TV/media/computers/books?*
- <sup>a</sup> What impact does childcare (formal and informal) have on child outcomes?

  - *Such as the age they entered childcare, the type of care used, the number of different types of childcare used, their relationship to carer, their involvement in culturally appropriate childcare programs, the qualifications of child carer.*
- <sup>a</sup> What impact does the child's experience with school have on their outcomes over time?

  - *Their participation in preschool and culturally appropriate early learning activities, their ease of transition to school, the support and participation of parents/family in school, the encouragement of parents/family in school attendance, parental/family support for homework, their exposure to racism and bullying, the type of school attended?*
- <sup>a</sup> What is the impact of the use of mainstream and community controlled services (family support, health, playgroups) on child outcomes?

  - *Access to child and parental/family services, take up of these services, effectiveness of these services?*

## 4. Fact sheets

### FACT SHEET 1

#### Early Years of Indigenous Kids' Development and Wellbeing

- <sup>a</sup> Given young age structure of Indigenous population, disadvantages faced by young people have potential to increase disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians over the next decades and on.<sup>1</sup>
- <sup>a</sup> Many factors influence Indigenous kids' outcomes:
  - 1. **Risk factors** include: low birth weight, low income, poor housing, and lack of community support networks.
  - 2. **Protective factors** include: easy temperament, attachment to family, and positive social networks.
- <sup>a</sup> Indigenous children remain significantly underrepresented in early childhood services, including all forms of Australian Government funded childcare, and overrepresented in state based systems of child protection. They continue to have some of the poorest outcomes among Australian children, including high infant mortality, low birth weight babies, and poor school retention.<sup>2</sup>
- <sup>a</sup> At present Indigenous children are:<sup>3</sup>
  - three times less likely to access early childhood education services
  - six times more likely to be in the care and protection system
  - twenty-five per cent in care are not with Indigenous family carers.

1 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) 2003, *Redressing Indigenous disadvantage*.

2 Our Future Generations: National Indigenous Child Welfare and Development Seminar 2003; see also *The Black Grapevine: Aboriginal Activism and the Stolen Generations*, 2003.

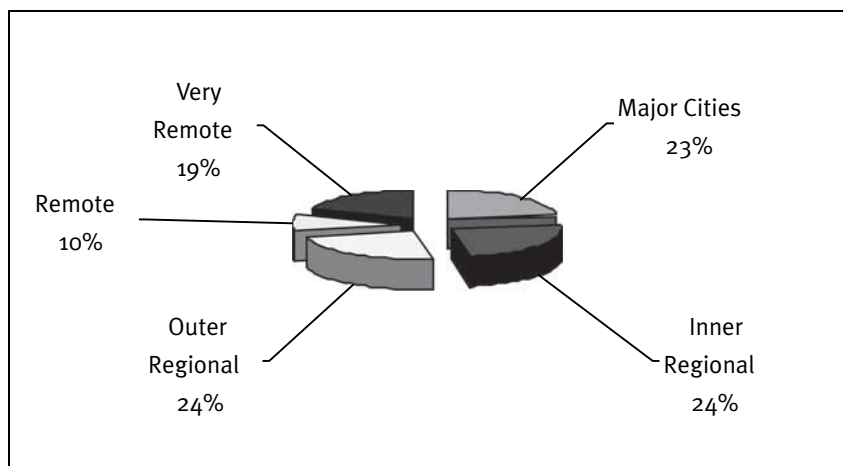
3 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIWH) 1997, *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

## FACT SHEET 2

### Indigenous Kids' Outcomes

- <sup>a</sup> The census in the year 2000 shows that the health and welfare of Indigenous children is significantly less than that of non-Indigenous children in Australia.
- <sup>a</sup> Indigenous Australians' standard of health is the same as that of the non-Indigenous population in the year 1910. Life expectancy is 20 years less than for other Australians.<sup>1</sup>
- <sup>a</sup> Many of the excessively high levels of health problems create learning and development problems for Indigenous children. For example, one-third of primary school age children in remote Northern Territory communities were found to be unable to hear their teachers in class.<sup>2</sup> ABS reports indicate that in 1999 the proportion of low birth weight babies born to Indigenous mothers was 12.4 per cent compared to 6.2 per cent of non-Indigenous mothers.<sup>3</sup>
- <sup>a</sup> Children are at risk of high levels of morbidity and mortality and are more likely not to have access to community health and welfare services. Within rural and remote communities there are excessively high health and poverty problems.

### Where Indigenous Kids are Located in Australia<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Child Protection Australia, 2000–01.

<sup>2</sup> *The Health and Welfare of Territorians*, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, 1997.

<sup>4</sup> *1996 Census of Population and Housing—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*.

## Indigenous Kids Compared to All Kids in Australia

<b>Placement of Indigenous children with non-Indigenous foster parents<sup>5</sup></b>	Despite the introduction of the Child Placement Principle approximately 22 per cent of Indigenous children were removed from families and placed with non-Indigenous carers. <sup>6</sup>
<b>Life expectancy at birth</b>	Life expectancy at birth in 1997–99: Indigenous: males 56 years/females 63 years; Non Indigenous: males 76 years/females 82 years Similar to life expectancy for non-Indigenous males in 1901–10 and females in 1920–22.
<b>Pre school education</b>	Between 1995 and 1999 access to pre school education for Indigenous kids declined compared to increases for all other kids.
<b>Early school leaving</b>	Indigenous people are more likely to leave school early. One-third have left school by age of 15 or younger compared to 15 per cent for all young people.
<b>Unemployment rates</b>	Unemployment rate is higher for Indigenous people (17.6 per cent) than for whole Australian population (7.3 per cent). Employment rate is lower at 44 per cent compared to 59 per cent. Unemployment rate highest for Indigenous people aged 15–19 years (50 per cent); and is also high for 20–24 year-olds (46 per cent).
<b>Nature of employment</b>	26 per cent of Indigenous people in employment are employed in CDEP, a work for the dole scheme provided through ATSI.
<b>Annual household income</b>	20 per cent of Indigenous households had an annual household income of less than \$16,000 per annum / 40 per cent had household incomes of between \$16,000 and \$40,000.
<b>Homelessness</b>	Indigenous people comprise 14 per cent of all clients under Supported Accommodation Assistance Program. Indigenous families were 20 times more likely to be homeless than non-Indigenous families.
<b>Unaffordable and overcrowded housing</b>	Of the 17 per cent of all Australians living in unaffordable and/or overcrowded housing, 38 per cent of Indigenous households were living in this condition.
<b>Law and justice</b>	Indigenous children and young people are 21.3 times more likely to be incarcerated than non-Indigenous children and young people. Repeat offences increase the chance of youth suicide which is three times the average death rate for all Australians <sup>7</sup> .
<b>Rate of relationship breakdown</b>	High levels of child abuse, family violence and excessive alcohol results in dramatic effects on physical and mental health of individual, families and communities. <sup>8</sup>

5 All data taken from *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, unless stated otherwise.

6 Child Protection Australia 2001.

7 The Rio Tinto Aboriginal Child Health Initiative: a Community Business Partnership.

8 Gordon Inquiry 2002.

## FACT SHEET 3

### Where We Have Been – Past Research on Indigenous Children

A number of Australian studies have been conducted to gain a better understanding on Indigenous kids' health, education, family relationships and child care. They offer a useful guide where further work is most needed to give Indigenous kids the best start in life.

- <sup>a</sup> The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (WAACHS), developed through the TVW Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, offers a model for the study of the health and wellbeing of Indigenous children. This survey required extensive planning and community consultation. A key advantage of this type of research is that it covered the whole population of Indigenous kids in WA. This meant that urban, regional, and remote regions were all surveyed. The WA Aboriginal Child Health Survey was and remains a highly ambitious undertaking and is recognised nationally and internationally.
- <sup>a</sup> A number of other Australian surveys exist: all offering a guide where further work is most needed to give kids the best start in life.
  - The National Health Survey has an Indigenous component.
  - The Indigenous General survey provides an overview of the health and wellbeing of Indigenous communities.
  - A number of birth cohort studies have been undertaken: *'Investing in our children: What we know and don't know about the costs and benefits of early childhood intervention'*<sup>1</sup>; *'Growth and morbidity in children in the Aboriginal Birth Cohort Study: the urban–remote differential'*<sup>2</sup>; *'An Australian Aboriginal birth cohort: a unique resource for life course study of an Indigenous population: a study protocol'*<sup>3</sup>, and *'Bibbulunbg Gnarnep'*<sup>4</sup>, all of which identify the health issues facing Indigenous kids.

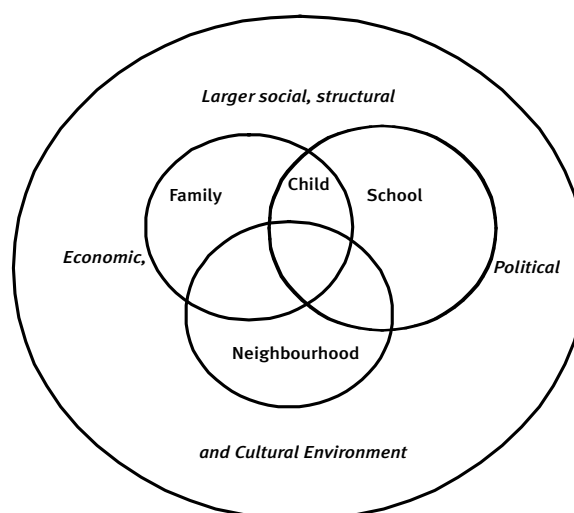
- 1 Karoly, LA, Greenwood, PW, Everingham, SS, Hoube, J, Kilburn, MR, Rydell, CP, Sanders, M & Chiesa, J 1988, *Investing in our children: What we know and don't know about the costs and benefits of early childhood intervention*, Santa Monica, Rand.
- 2 Mackerras, DEM, Reid, A, Sayers, SM, Singh, GR, Bucens, IK & Flynn, KA 2003, 'Growth and morbidity in children in the Aboriginal Birth Cohort Study: the urban–remote differential', *MJA*, Vol. 178, 20 January, pp. 56–60.
- 3 Sayers, SM, Mackerras, D, Singh, G, Bucens, I, Flynn, K & Reid, A 2003, 'An Australian Aboriginal birth cohort: a unique resource for life course study of an Indigenous population. A study protocol', *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, Vol. 3, Sept 5, 2003.
- 4 The 'Solid Kid' study funded by the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research.

## FACT SHEET 4

### Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children (LSAC)

- <sup>a</sup> Funded through Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services' *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy*. LSAC intends to survey two age groups over time; 5,000 babies aged under 12 months and 5,000 four to five year-olds. It is currently in its dress rehearsal phase.
- <sup>a</sup> LSAC intends to
  1. Inform government policy in areas concerning young children, specifically child care, early childhood education and schooling, parenting and family relationships, and health.
  2. Identify opportunities for early intervention and prevention strategies.
  3. Provide comprehensive, national longitudinal data.
- <sup>a</sup> Estimated around 350 Indigenous children will be sampled in LSAC—representing just under four per cent of the total population of Australian children. Indigenous children will be represented in LSAC in the same percentage as the general population.
- <sup>a</sup> LSAC offers useful comparative template for LSIC.

Conceptual framework for LSAC based upon model of ecological contexts shaping child's pathways. The model depicts how the family, school and neighbourhood impact upon a child's early years which is situated within a wider social, economic, political and cultural setting (see diagram below).



Source: Zubrick, SR., Williams, AA., and Silburn, SR. (2000)  
*Indicators of Social and Family Functioning*, Department of Family and Community Services



## FACT SHEET 5

### Indigenous families are different...

- <sup>a</sup> 2.4% of the Australian population identify as Indigenous.
- <sup>a</sup> 13% of Indigenous families have four or more children compared with 5% for the total population of families.
- <sup>a</sup> 40% of the Indigenous population is aged less than 14 years—more than twice the rate for the total population.
- <sup>a</sup> Indigenous family structures are different, for example:
  - more likely to be sole parent households (30% compared with 14% for the total population)
  - more likely to live in households containing two or more families (6.2%, compared with 1.2% of all households)
  - 6.29% of the Aboriginal population and 3.24% of the Torres Strait Islander population receive Parenting Payment Support compared to 2.11% for the non-Indigenous population
  - 2.04% of the Aboriginal population and 1.34% of the Torres Strait Islander population receive Parenting Payment Partnered compared to 0.98% for the non-Indigenous population
  - fertility rates are higher than the general population—the teenage fertility rate is almost 4 times greater than the overall rate.
- <sup>a</sup> 64.7% of Indigenous Family Tax Benefit customers have family incomes less than \$20,000 compared to 30.03% for the non-Indigenous population.
- <sup>a</sup> on average, Family Tax Benefit represents 32.4% of Indigenous families' income.
- <sup>a</sup> the Indigenous population has poorer health outcomes, for example:
  - infant mortality is 3 times greater;
  - double likelihood for babies to have low birth weight (13% compared to 6.7%);
  - more likely to be overweight and obese.
- <sup>a</sup> poorer childhood health shows up in adult status, for example:
  - 12 times more likely to die from diabetes
  - higher hospitalisation rate for asthma
  - higher levels of many mental and behavioural disorders
  - higher levels of nutritional and metabolic diseases.
- <sup>a</sup> educational outcomes for the Indigenous population are poorer, for example:
  - only 26% reached minimum reading levels in year 3, compared to 92.5% of all students, and 62% in year 5 compared to 89.6%
  - 86% continued until Year 10, compared with 94% of all students
  - 36% completed year 12, compared with 73% non-Indigenous.

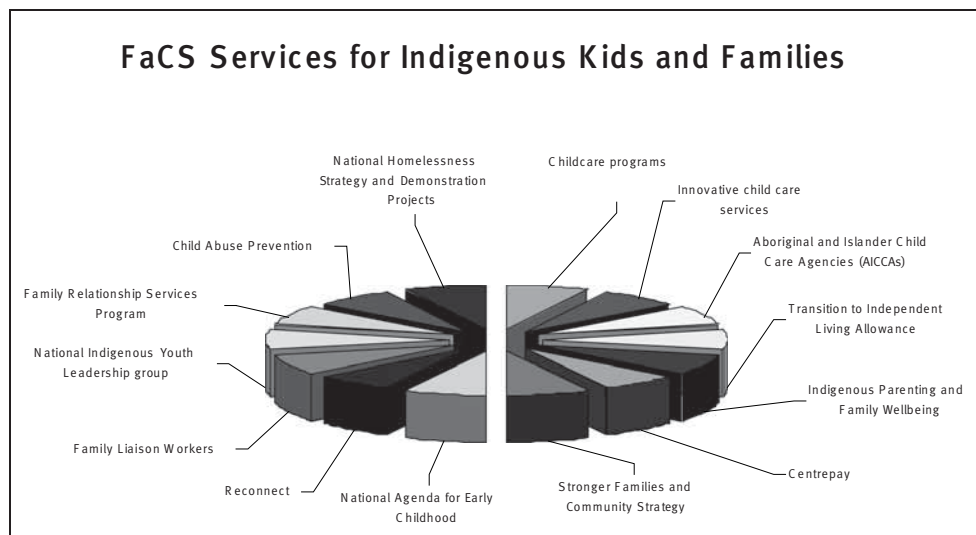
## FACT SHEET 6

### What is happening for Indigenous kids under FaCS' portfolio

FaCS is committed to improving access to services, helping Indigenous people address a range of pressing issues and to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous social indicators.

FaCS's total estimated expenditure on Indigenous specific programs, services and projects for 2002–2003 is \$213.2 million, including \$48.6 million for Centrelink's Indigenous Services.

In relation to Indigenous kids, their families and communities, FaCS administers a number of Indigenous-specific programs:



### **Child Care Programs: 36 services, 9 in urban areas**

- <sup>a</sup> Care offered for pre-school and school aged children includes long day care, playgroups, outside school hours care, school holiday care and cultural programs.
- <sup>a</sup> Culturally appropriate and flexible child care services for Indigenous families and on-site crèches.
- <sup>a</sup> Located in all States and Territories, many on remote Indigenous communities.
- <sup>a</sup> Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) provide flexible childcare services to meet the social and developmental needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- <sup>a</sup> 70% of staff of MACS are of Indigenous background.

### **Innovative child care services**

- <sup>a</sup> 2002 childcare census indicates 12,600 Indigenous children attended formal child care.
- <sup>a</sup> Flexible and innovative models of child care are available to meet the needs of families living in rural and regional communities.
- <sup>a</sup> Provide a mix of child care services that are best suited to meet the communities' needs e.g. flexible long day care, outside school hours care, occasional care, mobile services, on-farm care, multi-sited child care services and overnight care.
- <sup>a</sup> These programs are additional to formal child care.

### **Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies (AICCA) \$3.4 million funding**

- <sup>a</sup> For up to 16 Aboriginal and Islander Child Care services.
- <sup>a</sup> Services are involved with the placement/fostering of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and related family welfare matters.
- <sup>a</sup> Targets Indigenous families.
- <sup>a</sup> Services are located in all States and Territories in Australia, except Tasmania and the ACT.

### **Transition to Independent Living Allowance**

- <sup>a</sup> Provides a one-off payment to assist young people with costs associated with the transition to independent living (this is significant giving the numbers of Indigenous children in out-of-home care).

### **Indigenous Parenting and Family Wellbeing: \$1.7 million per annum**

The aims of this initiative include:

- <sup>a</sup> Recognise and promote the importance of strong families among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

- <sup>a</sup> Increase understanding, knowledge and skills about parenting and family wellbeing to build strong family life and communities for the future.
- <sup>a</sup> Indigenous Parenting and Family Wellbeing (IP&FW) is one of the programs established in response to *Bringing Them Home, the report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*.
- <sup>a</sup> Program targets Indigenous families.

### **Centrepay**

- <sup>a</sup> Indigenous specific deduction types include: Indigenous short-term Hostel accommodation (159 deductions at June 2003); Indigenous Housing Loans (29); Food Provision (819); and Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (9,609).
- <sup>a</sup> Centrepay is a voluntary automatic deduction facility for payments made directly from the customer's Centrelink benefit.
- <sup>a</sup> Helps customers ensure payments are made and reduces arrears.

### **Stronger Families and Community Strategy: \$240 million over 4 years**

- <sup>a</sup> \$20 million specifically for Indigenous communities.
- <sup>a</sup> 85% of Indigenous projects are in rural and remote areas.
- <sup>a</sup> Currently over 160 individual projects have been funded under the Strategy that specifically target Indigenous peoples.
- <sup>a</sup> SFCS supports a range of projects that have been developed by Indigenous communities in partnership with a variety of stakeholders with an emphasis on early intervention and prevention approaches.
- <sup>a</sup> Projects are identified locally and developed locally to suit the needs and requirements of the Indigenous community.
- <sup>a</sup> These projects address a broad range of locally identified issues, primarily covering:
  - leadership within Indigenous communities
  - building relationships and family support
  - parenting and playgroups
  - support for Indigenous youth, culture and sporting events
  - health
  - building community
  - support for men.

**National Agenda for Early Childhood: \$10 million**

- <sup>a</sup> \$1.2 million given to establishing 21 capital projects targeted at remote Indigenous child care services.
- <sup>a</sup> The National Agenda for Early Childhood aims to provide children with the best possible start in life.
- <sup>a</sup> Has the needs of Indigenous children as a high priority.
- <sup>a</sup> Will deliver a range of early childhood initiatives across all States and Territories.

**Reconnect**

- <sup>a</sup> Assists 7,000 young people and 5,000 families each year.
- <sup>a</sup> A community based early intervention and support program for young people aged 12 to 18 years who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness.
- <sup>a</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access to Reconnect services is around 11% of the total national figure.

**Family Liaison Workers**

- <sup>a</sup> The Youth Activity Services program includes a specific family component, the Family Liaison Worker (FLW) program.
- <sup>a</sup> This program supports young people and their families by helping them deal with issues affecting their wellbeing as a family, through positive professional and practical support and guidance.
- <sup>a</sup> There are twelve Indigenous specific YAS/FLW services located in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with most of these services in rural and remote areas.

**National Indigenous Youth leadership Group**

Aim is to provide opportunities for young Indigenous Australians to:

- <sup>a</sup> share their experiences and perspectives
- <sup>a</sup> empower Indigenous young people in their communities
- <sup>a</sup> promote positive images of young Indigenous people
- <sup>a</sup> develop leadership skills.

**Family Relationship Services Program**

- <sup>a</sup> Community organisations provide family relationships services to men, women and children across Australia using education, mediation, therapy, skills training and counselling.
- <sup>a</sup> Children's Contact Services, Specialised Family Violence Services, Contact Orders Program and Men's Line Australia are also funded under the FRSP.

- <sup>a</sup> Many elements of the FRSP directly or indirectly impact on Indigenous families.
- <sup>a</sup> There are approximately 100 organisations funded in all States and Territories.

#### **Child Abuse Prevention: Funding of \$5.8 million over 2 years**

- <sup>a</sup> For child abuse prevention, improved parenting and building stronger families.
- <sup>a</sup> A key focus being meeting special needs of families in rural and remote areas, Indigenous families and those from multi-cultural backgrounds.
- <sup>a</sup> There are 5 Indigenous-specific projects with funding of \$700,000.
- <sup>a</sup> The program, in part, targets Indigenous families.
- <sup>a</sup> The Program is currently under review—35 organisations are receiving interim funding pending the outcome of the review.
- <sup>a</sup> CAP operates in all States and Territories.

#### **National Homelessness Strategy Demonstration Projects**

- <sup>a</sup> National Homelessness Strategy Demonstration Projects trial new ways to prevent or respond to homelessness, providing evidence and responding to emerging issues.
- <sup>a</sup> Developing a strategic direction to prevent Indigenous homelessness is a priority area under the Strategy.
- <sup>a</sup> A number of Indigenous specific action research projects have been undertaken, including:
  - *Waarvah*: an Indigenous specific project to produce resources that assist prevention of homelessness among young people in Wide Bay.
  - *Moving Out of Homelessness*: a 15 month study involving 50 families looking at reasons for homelessness and successful responses to support homeless people.
  - *Homelessness And Parenting Program Initiative (HAPPI)*: using an action research framework which supports parents and develops positive parenting skills.
  - *National Analysis of Strategies used to Respond to Indigenous Itinerants*: a project to complete a national overview of local strategies being used to address the needs of Indigenous homeless and itinerant people.
  - *Transitional Lifestyle Project*: using an action research framework, this program supports traditional living Aboriginal families moving to metropolitan areas to prevent homelessness.
  - *Indigenous Safe-houses Pilot*: 12 months research into the future directions of safe-houses for women and children in remote Aboriginal communities.
  - National Indigenous Homelessness Forum.

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## Occasional Papers

1. *Income support and related statistics: a ten-year compendium, 1989–99*  
Kim Bond and Jie Wang (January 2001)
2. *Low fertility: a discussion paper*  
Alison Barnes (February 2001)
3. *The identification and analysis of indicators of community strength and outcomes*  
Alan Black and Phillip Hughes (June 2001)
4. *Hardship in Australia: an analysis of financial stress indicators in the 1998–99 Australian Bureau of Statistics Household Expenditure Survey*  
J Rob Bray (December 2001)
5. *Welfare Reform Pilots: characteristics and participation patterns of three disadvantaged groups*  
Chris Carlile, Michael Fuery, Carole Heyworth, Mary Ivec, Kerry Marshall and Marie Newey (June 2002)
6. *The Australian system of social protection—an overview* (second edition)  
Peter Whiteford and Gregory Angenent (June 2002)
7. *Income support customers: a statistical overview 2001*  
Corporate Information and Mapping Services, Strategic Policy and Knowledge Branch, Family and Community Services (March 2003)
8. *Inquiry into long-term strategies to address the ageing of the Australian population over the next 40 years*  
Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services submission to the 2003 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Ageing (October 2003)
9. *Inquiry into poverty and financial hardship*  
Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee (October 2003)
10. *Families of prisoners: literature review on issues and difficulties*  
Rosemary Woodward (September 2003)
11. *Inquiries into retirement and superannuation*  
Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services submissions to the Senate Select Committee on Superannuation (December 2003)
12. *A compendium of legislative changes in social security 1908–1982*  
(June 2006)
13. *A compendium of legislative changes in social security 1983–2000*  
*Part 1 1983–1993, Part 2 1994–2000*  
Bob Daprè (June 2006)

14. *Evaluation of Fixing Houses for Better Health Projects 2, 3 and 4*  
SGS Economics & Planning in conjunction with Tallegalla Consultants Pty Ltd  
(August 2006)
15. *The 'growing up' of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children: a literature review*  
Professor Robyn Penman (September 2006)