HOW DO WE GET “THERE” FROM “HERE”?

MOVING FORWARD: BUILDING CULTURALLY SAFE ORGANISATIONS

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WHERE IS “HERE” IN CP?
FACTS & FIGURES*

• Indigenous children are approximately 4% only of all children in Australia.

• They are 7.8 times more likely to be subject to substantiated reports of harm or risk of harm than non-Indigenous children

• They are 10 times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be brought into formal care

• Neglect is the primary assessed form of abuse/maltreatment in 39.7% of cases for Indigenous children in contrast to 24.9% of substantiated matters for non-Indigenous children

• Indigenous children make up 34% of all children in formal care

• Placement conforms to the preferred** placement type in only 68.8% of cases overall - varying from as few as 38.1% in NT & 45.7% in Tasmania to 74.4% in SA and 81.6% in NSW.

* “Child Protection and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children” Australian Institute of Family Studies 2013

** Aboriginal Child Placement Principles as adopted by the Council of Australian Governments, and legislated in individual states determine placement preference/prioritisation
• Is it likely that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are actually almost **eight** times more abusive of their children than other Australian families?

• Is it also likely that our children are **ten** times more in need of protective placement outside their family of origin?

• Despite both historical and more recent social changes and the resultant entrenched disadvantage, I believe the “missing link” is the cultural mismatch between policy and practice which needs to be examined and addressed.
INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE AND CHILD PROTECTION AS “WICKED PROBLEMS”

• “Locked into reactive models of service delivery and overwhelmed by the growing volume of work, child protection systems everywhere are in a state of perpetual crisis. Most current child protection systems in Australia are not effective in reducing family and community vulnerability to child abuse and neglect, and are even potentially harmful.” Wicked Problems, Rotten Outcomes & Clumsy Solutions: Children & Families in a Changing World Tim Moore Sydney 2011

• “Wicked Problems” - cause a “great disruption” to families, civil society and the normative framework of intimate relationships - they alter the nature and interplay of social and health problems and result in a growing prevalence of chronic conditions.
INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE AND CHILD PROTECTION AS “WICKED PROBLEMS”

• Said to relate to events unfolding over the past 50 years, however, in applying the same thinking to Indigenous communities in Australia this “great disruption” has been in action over the past 200 years.

• The legacy of intergenerational trauma from the interplay between historical and contemporary issues add to the “wickedness” of the problem.
Child Protection Issues

Forces affecting statutory practice

Social Environment: Including
* Media, Community & Political expectations
  * Historical reputation
* Cultural needs (of service user) vis a vis cultural competence (of service provider)

Child’s Environment:
* Right and Expectation for safety, care, nurturing, affection, security, guidance, nourishment, and shelter along with emotional, intellectual and social development opportunities

Parental Environment:
* Expectation for exercising parental responsibility/making decisions
  * Rights to privacy, to self-determination, to discipline children, to non-intervention by State

Systemic/Structural Environment:
* Legislation
* Policy/Procedures
* Resources (material & personnel)
* Research implications, including Child Death Reviews
* Organisational culture

Adapted from Tony Morrison
HOW DOES CULTURAL COMPETENCE RELATE TO THE DATA?

• the lack of congruent behaviours, attitudes and policies - a culturally unsafe environment

• current/contemporary practice seems to mirror historical regardless of policy and legislative changes

• the bedrock based on alien beliefs/attitudes to parenting styles and traditions as well as lifestyle differences

• the rate of reports, re-reports, removals and inappropriate placements dictates the lens of culture needs to be applied to assessment of need and safety, identification of response pathways available, and effective engagement of service users to participate in decision-making from the earliest stage of the process
TO GET ‘THERE’ WHAT DO WE NEED?

Lessons from health sector suggest need for:
• Model of cross-cultural work that integrates knowledge, skills and self-reflection
• Means to deal with ‘gate-keepers’
• Strategies to work with and through individual and institutional resistance
• ‘Top-down’ championing and modelling / whole-of-organisation approach
• Well-planned, budgeted and embedded support for Indigenous staff