

HOME-START AUSTRALIA



THE KEMPSEY PROJECT





Presentation Points

- A brief introduction to the Kempsey Project
- Historical Context of Indigenous Parenting - The Stolen Generations
- Why this target group?
- The Partnership between Home-Start & Many Rivers 3
- What we do and what makes our project different
- Our Volunteers
- Outcomes so far

Introduction to the “Kempsey Project”



Kempsey is a town in the Mid North Coast region of the state of New South Wales in Australia

What we call Kempsey and the Macleay Valley is Dunghutti Land



Home-Start recognises the Dunghutti people as the original inhabitants and custodians of this land.



Who do we work with in the **Kempsey Project** ?

We work with Aboriginal parents who are at risk of having their children removed from their care due to Child Protection issues in the family. Some of our client families have already had their children removed by Human Services and are working with us to have them restored into their care. There are lots of reasons why so many Aboriginal families have Child Safety issues.



- The Kempsey Project is a Pilot Project – it has been operating for almost 2 years
- Home-Start facilitates the Kempsey Project in partnership with Many Rivers Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service.
- This partnership has developed in Kempsey over the past 16 years and is an essential element in the success of the project.
- Today, Indigenous people make up 2.4% of the total Australian population – however in Kempsey 16.7% of residents are Aboriginal.

Team Leaders



Sheri Foster: Home-Start Parenting Facilitator and Volunteer Co-ordinator



Kylie Faulkner: Manager of Many Rivers Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service and a proud Dunghutti woman

Sheri and the team of volunteers provide:

- **Parenting Programs and Intensive Parenting Support.** Group Based or individual. Programs include: The Circle of Security, Black Box Parenting, Indigenous Triple P, Bringing up Great Kids, Parents Under Pressure
- **Volunteer Indigenous Parenting Support** - during parenting programs and home visits by specialised volunteers coached in Indigenous parenting practices.
- **The Thursday Group** - weekly informal gatherings (Yarn Up) for parents and children to get together to share their Indigenous family and parenting experiences, have fun and do some craft.





Kylie and the Many Rivers team provide

- **Real Relationships** - a six week program for Aboriginal people who have anger issues in their relationships where the participant learns to recognise the triggers that set the chain of action/reaction in motion.
- **My Story** - a narrative therapy program which allows the participant to find his or her strengths through verbal, written or artistic expression. The key is to allow each person to safely tell their story without fear.
- **The Cultural Healing Program** - connecting people to their cultural identity through understanding traditions, customs and practices. It explores ways to heal in a cultural context.
- **Legal Support** Includes Court Support, Parenting Orders, AVOs (Apprehended Violence Orders)



The Historical Context of Indigenous Parenting

The Australian Aboriginal culture is one of the oldest living continuous cultures in the world - it is at least 40,000 years old





It is estimated that over 750,000 Aboriginal people inhabited the island continent in 1788..

AND YET

British colonisation and subsequent Australian land laws were established on the claim that Australia was terra nullius, justifying acquisition by British occupation without treaty or payment. Terra nullius is a Latin term meaning “land belonging to no one”.



This was the first blow in a long and protracted assault (almost 250 years) on

- The Australian Aboriginal Culture
- Their spiritual connection with the land
- Their notion of community and family
- Their Aboriginal identity



For Aboriginal People - “Country is self.”

They have a profound spiritual connection to land. Aboriginal law and spirituality are intertwined with the land, the people and creation, and this forms their culture and sovereignty. ... Land is their mother, is steeped in their culture, but also gives them the responsibility to care for it.



- When Indigenous people were dispossessed of their land, they were dispossessed of a major part of their identity.
- This is a major underlying cause of many challenges Indigenous people face today.

The Stolen Generations

Between 1910-1970, many Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families as a result of various government policies. The generations of children removed under these policies became known as the Stolen Generations.





- The policies of child removal left a legacy of trauma and loss that continues to affect Indigenous communities, families and individuals today.
- Thousands of relationships were fractured and have never been able to be healed.
- The 1915 amendments to the *Aborigines Protection Act 1909* gave the NSW Aborigines Protection Board the power to **remove any Indigenous child at any time and for any reason.**
- These amendments led to thousands of Indigenous children being taken from their parents **on the basis of race alone.**



- Today, the mistrust, fear and resentment Indigenous people have for Human Services has in a sense become part of the modern Indigenous culture in Australia
- Duran and Duran (1995) suggested that historical trauma can become normalised within a culture because it becomes embedded in the collective, cultural memory of a people and is passed on by the same mechanisms through which culture, generally, is transmitted.



I am the child of a stolen child

By Amanda Fotheringham

13 Feb 2018

- It's been 50 years since my mother, aged three, was stolen from the arms of her mother in the north-west NSW town of Bourke.
- It's been 50 years, but that moment has reverberated through the decades, and I live with its consequences every day.



Bill Simon's story:

“I saw her
hammering her
fists into the
road”

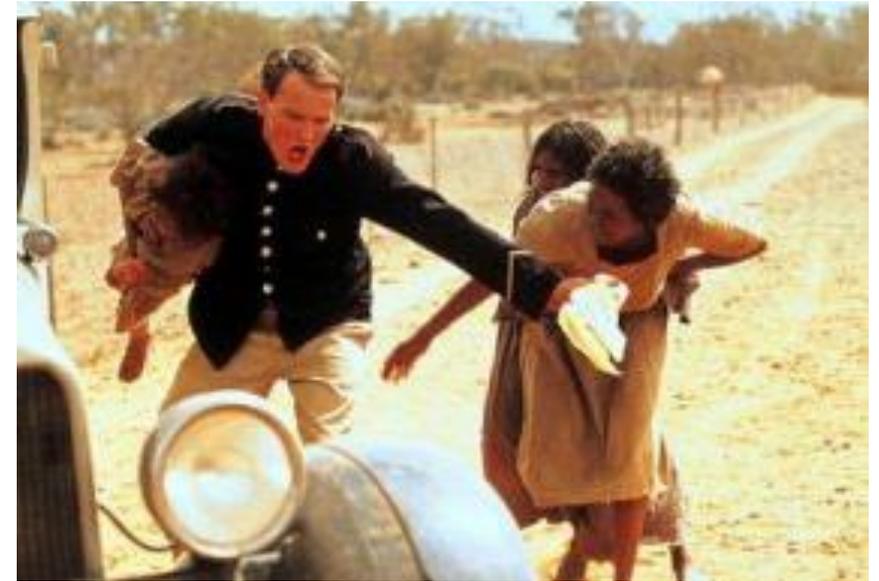


Photo – courtesy of “The Rabbit Proof Fence”



Imagine if your children were stolen in this way

- **No Consultation**

- **No Consent**

- **No Control**



So with
“Child in Mind”
we chose this target
group.



- Many of the Stolen Generations never experienced living in a healthy family situation, and never learned parenting skills. In some instances, this has resulted in generations of children raised in state care.
- Today Aboriginal children are over-represented in the child protection system, including in out-of-home (OOHC) care. In 2017 Indigenous children were 10.2 times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be removed from their parents by Human Services and placed in ‘care’.

Data comparing rates of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care compared to non-Indigenous children - as at 30 June 2017

State/Territory	Indigenous (per 1,000 children)	Non-Indigenous (per 1,000 children)	Rate ratio Indigenous/Non-Indigenous
NSW	72.8	6.7	10.8
Vic	95.9	6.0	15.9
Qld	41.7	4.8	8.7
WA	61.4	3.4	17.9
SA	69.7	6.4	10.8
Tas	29.1	8.5	3.4
ACT	90.1	6.5	13.9
NT	35.4	3.1	11.6
Total Population	58.7	5.8	10.2



These figures indicate that Aboriginal families aren't being supported effectively so that children can be safely cared for at home or returned home when they have been removed.



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Issues facing families in the project.

- **60.4% of families** report having a history of drug and/or alcohol misuse or gambling problems.
- **66.4% of families** report having a history of family violence.
- **55.2% of families** report having mental health issues.

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- **87.5% of families** indicate that they are effected by socio-economic disadvantage or social exclusion.
 - Australian Bureau of Statistic figures show that in 2017 Indigenous Australians accounted for around 28 percent of Australia's prison population



**What do we do that is
different ?**



Points of Difference

- We work in partnership with an Indigenous service
- We integrate Indigenous practices into our programs
- We are based in three principles – consultation, consent and control
- We don't work to timeframes
- We provide volunteer mentors who are an intimate connection and practice partner in this challenging part of their Indigenous parenting role



Point of Difference 1 - Working in Partnership

- In modern Aboriginal communities there is a great deal of fear and mistrust of non Aboriginal services.
- Working in partnership with an Indigenous service affords Home-Start a privileged position in the support system for Indigenous families and communities.
This is a position of TRUST.



Point of Difference 2 - Integrating Indigenous Practices

The Kempsey Project acknowledges

- the cultural differences in child-rearing practices
- and that Aboriginal family structures and approaches to raising children can be a source of cultural strength and child protection and not, in themselves, a source of dysfunction



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Initially Our Ethical Dilemma was that,

- By providing parenting programs such as Circle of Security and Bringing Up Great Kids are we in fact perpetuating the principle of

“If it’s not the white way it’s not the right way”.

- If we acknowledge the value and importance of Indigenous parenting customs, how do we reconcile our practices of measuring parental competence against “white parenting” standards.



In the Kempsey Project we are aware of and integrate Aboriginal child rearing practices into our work.

This helps children and families know and trust that we recognise and value their important cultural practices.



We recognise and value differences such as:

In Aboriginal culture the extended family plays a crucial role in raising children.

“Child rearing ... is literally a family and community concern and is not confined solely to the parents of the child”

Unlike the wider Australian society, the whole Aboriginal community contribute to raising the child, giving mutual assistance and support to the parents



The mother is the main carer for the child, but aunts, uncles, cousins and older siblings share the responsibilities for caring and raising the child as well.

In some communities the mother's sisters or the father's brothers are also called 'mum' and 'dad'.



To honour the Indigenous practice of collective support in child rearing we consult with clients around who might be their partners or family of support in the challenging parental journey they face.

These people will be involved and invested right from the start.



The collective of support for each client includes
(where possible) people such as:

- Both parents
- Partners
- Relative such as sisters, brothers, aunts/uncles,
grandmother/father
- Close friends or neighbours
- A volunteer

Point of Difference 3 - Three Fundamental Principles

- Consultation
- Consent
- Control





Consultation

- We talk about parenting and their relationship with their children.
- We talk about whether parenting is fun.
- We talk about how they would like family life to be.
- We talk about how we will all work together
- We make a verbal treaty to recognise and honour their cultural parenting practices

Consent

- All stake holders agree to commit to the treaty and to respect cultural differences



Control

The parent has control over and selection of:

- the parenting program or programs
- the membership of their collective support group
- the pace at which they learn
- the level of Indigenous cultural influence on their parenting
- how much of their own story they share

We continually review consultation and consent during their participation in the project.



Point of Difference 4 - We don't set deadlines

Parenting programs are usually facilitated for a few hours a week over a period of 6 to 10 weeks.

We don't limit the time of our support for families. We continue to work with families until they feel fully confident, capable and comfortable in parenting their children in a safe and culturally appropriate way.



Point of Difference 5 - Volunteer Mentors

- We have a small unit of 6 specifically trained volunteers.
- All undergo an initial training program. (12 hours)
- The remainder of their training is completed along side the parents they are linked with.
- Volunteers attend all parenting sessions and consultation meetings with the parent



Volunteers walk alongside each family in their Indigenous parenting journey.

Volunteers offer:

- Regular home visits
- Practical help with the children
- Practical help with household tasks
- Transport to appointments or family activities
- Emotional support
- Company at social outings
- Encouragement
- A listening ear
- Fun and laughter



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Some outcomes so far:

- 23 families were referred to the project
- 3 families left the project before completing any of the programs.
- Within the remaining 20 families the following outcomes apply:

Number of children at risk of being removed from parental care.	Number of children who remained in the care of their parents.	Number of children who were removed from parental care.
15	12	3

Number of children removed from parental care prior to participation in the Kempsey Project.	Number of children restored to parental care during participation in the Kempsey Project	Number of children with parents still working toward restoration.
37	22	15



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Outcomes for Volunteers - Feedback

“I thought I was going to give, but I’ve received so much. I’ve learned so much. It’s opened my world to new experiences and new ways of thinking.”

“I’ve found my own parenting and grandparenting style has changed.”

“It’s changed my understanding of what’s truly important to children.”

“It has helped to heal my own historical pain and has been good for my soul”

“I feel a greater sense of belonging”



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