



CHANGING THE WHEELS:

Child Safety Concerns in Multicultural Queensland

*An Issues Paper
for the Department of Child Safety*

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WORKING FOR A FAIR QUEENSLAND



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- Department of Child safety Queensland

Terms:

The terms culturally and linguistically diverse background (CALD), non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), migrants and refugees and multicultural are used interchangeably through this Paper.

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FOREWORD

Queensland's population is diverse with many cultures, religions, and languages. Just over 17.2% of Queensland's population in 2001 were born overseas. This diverse community includes established migrants, refugees, emerging communities, asylum seekers and temporary protection visa holders. This diversity of background underscores the different experiences of, and needs within our culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Multiculturalism as a policy promotes 'social justice and equity for disadvantaged non-English speaking communities, women and young people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) and newly arrived refugees and migrants'. (*Queensland Government Multicultural Policy 2004, p2*). The cornerstone of multiculturalism is to ensure that all Queenslanders have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities regardless of their background.

Unfortunately this is not always the case as many non-English speaking background (NESB) people experience barriers and challenges in accessing services and resources, both from government and non-government services. Similarly, many service providers for a variety of reasons may not feel adequately resourced to respond to the specific needs that migrants and refugees present, which in turn translates into practices that are not culturally competent.

This is particularly exacerbated in dealing with sensitive issues such as child protection, child abuse and child safety in CALD communities. This Paper highlights significant gaps in policy development, policy implementation and service delivery practices within child safety services.

Some key agencies within the multicultural sector collaborated to obtain a collective response to be useful primarily in policy and protocol formulation by the Department of Child Safety. This culminated in a Multicultural Child Protection Community Workshop in which over 100 people attended and contributed to the day's proceedings. Thus, concern which is also supported by literature, and findings from the Community Workshop demonstrate that child safety legislation and policies are not inclusive to CALD families.

Specific strategies have been developed to address the over-representation and historical issues relating to indigenous communities, but it appears there is no other mechanism to ensure that child safety practices are established to specifically address CALD children and families.

This is a critical and opportune time equally for the Department of Child safety and the multicultural sector, especially considering the encouraging message by the Hon Mike Reynolds, Minister for the Department of Child safety:

- *“All Child Safety service delivery staff would undergo compulsory cross cultural awareness training.”*
- *“A key focus is the development of a diversity policy which ensures that staff of the Department of Child safety represent the multicultural society which we serve.”* (Reynolds Media Release 2004).

and the words of a senior Department representative at the recent Multicultural Child Protection Workshop:

“DCHS would draw on communities to be involved as much as possible in developing such service delivery, (referring to communities of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds) especially with regard to what key resources we could use. Input and expertise would be welcomed” (Representative, Department of Child safety, September 2004)

As a result of the Community Workshop, a Multicultural Child Protection Working Group has been established. It welcomes the above invitation and offers this Issues Paper and an accompanying model for the consideration of the Department of Child Safety. The Working Party advocates for the inclusion of all the recommendations in the legislative and implementation framework.

It is the view of the Multicultural Child Protection Working Group that it is essential for the Department of Child safety to consult and work in partnership with the sector and ethnic communities. Given the complexity of the issues identified and the lack of prior acknowledgment from departments it is timely to change the wheels from a ‘fear and ignorance’ base to one of understanding and action’.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper is the outcome of various initiatives resulting from the release of the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) Report *“Protecting Children: An Inquiry Into Abuse of Children in Foster Care”* and the subsequent Blueprint for implementing the recommendations from the CMC report in January and March 2004.

It responds to the increasing concern from the multicultural sector that neither of the above mentioned reports made specific reference to culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The table on pages 12 and 13 demonstrate key community initiatives and considerable efforts made to incorporate CALD issues into the discussions and forums generated by the CMC and Blueprint processes.

This paper contains a number of key recommendations proposing important strategic directions primarily for the Department of Child safety. It is envisaged that other recommendations will also be developed for the consideration of other government departments.

It also contains a proposed *Multicultural Child Protection Model* which provides an analysis of current circumstances, both from the multicultural sector’s and the Department of Child safety’s perspective and actions to progress a culturally competent and inclusive practice.

The paper also provides background information and a summary of the range of multicultural sector initiatives to develop a CALD perspective within government and non-government processes.

This paper highlights the issues identified through the literature research and findings voiced at community initiatives, by providing the foundation for the development of the proposed model, and representing the first attempt to document these concerns in Queensland. The issues are:

- There is under representation of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in child protection notifications;
- A number of barriers exist in the reporting of child abuse;
- There is limited understanding of child protection legislation by culturally and linguistically diverse families;
- The myriad of settlement issues impact significantly on child safety in culturally and linguistically diverse communities;
- There are variations in child rearing practices and attitudes towards the victims; and
- The need for cultural sensitivity by the child safety system.

In the process of developing this paper the project team recognised that child safety within CALD families is particularly complex and sensitive. Many CALD families may be fearful of government and other services intervention, as a result of their pre-migration experiences. They often lack information and understanding of child safety legislation, which can appear that certain child rearing practices infringe the law, but without an awareness or recognition from the CALD families that they are doing so. The project team offers this paper in the hope that it will generate interest for further discussions and actions leading to inclusive practices whereby CALD families and children would be confident in accessing child safety services when required.

The project team acknowledges that the Department of Child safety and the whole of government have a difficult task ahead in terms of achieving a society free of child abuse. This is an increasing challenge especially in developing a culturally competent child safety framework.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

To establish a Multicultural Child Safety Resource Unit within the Department of Child safety and strategically employ specialist Multicultural Officers in the current zones.

Recommendation 2

To ensure the Multicultural Child Safety Resource Unit:

- Strategically develops operational multicultural policies and practices for the Department of Child safety;
- Provides input into the overall Queensland Child Protection policy and ensure its contents are consistent with the Queensland Multicultural Policy;
- Establishes accountability mechanisms such as Reference Groups and other frameworks to ensure across government representation of child safety workers, which will involve the seven zonal multicultural workers;
- Provides relevant resources (eg data, reports research) and expertise and information to ensure the Department responds at all times in a culturally competent manner;
- Works with Human Resources within the Corporate and Executive Services to establish culturally competent recruitment processes and other initiatives such as mentoring; and
- Acts as an information, resourcing, referral and dissemination base for CALD communities as well as alternative and foster care parents.

Recommendation 3

That the Department of Child safety develops sustainable and ongoing specialised training for staff on:

- cross-cultural communication
- child protection in a cross-cultural context
- cross-cultural family units and dynamics
- settlement stages including complex and high needs groups eg newly emerging communities, asylum seekers, temporary protection visa holders
- working with bi-cultural and bilingual workers
- accessing and working with interpreters and translators
- multicultural practice framework
- services and resources within the multicultural sector.

In addition it is recommended that a culturally competent diagnostic and assessment toolkit be developed in conjunction with the current assessment tool that will be uniformly used by service delivery staff.

Furthermore the Multicultural Child Protection Working Group recommends that processes be established to incorporate the expertise and cultural knowledge of ethnic communities to ensure culturally competent practices.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that the Department of Child safety develop appropriate mechanisms and policies on:

- Mandatory data collection (including language, country of origin, religion, family structure)
- Data analysis, collation and distribution of this information throughout the Department
- Creation of a database of CALD and NESB foster parents
- Develop a database of specialised and generalist services within the multicultural sector that can provide consultancy and expert advice for particularly complex cases.

Recommendation 5

That the Department of Child safety develop appropriate culturally competent training and resources and culturally appropriate community education strategies for ethnic communities in Queensland.

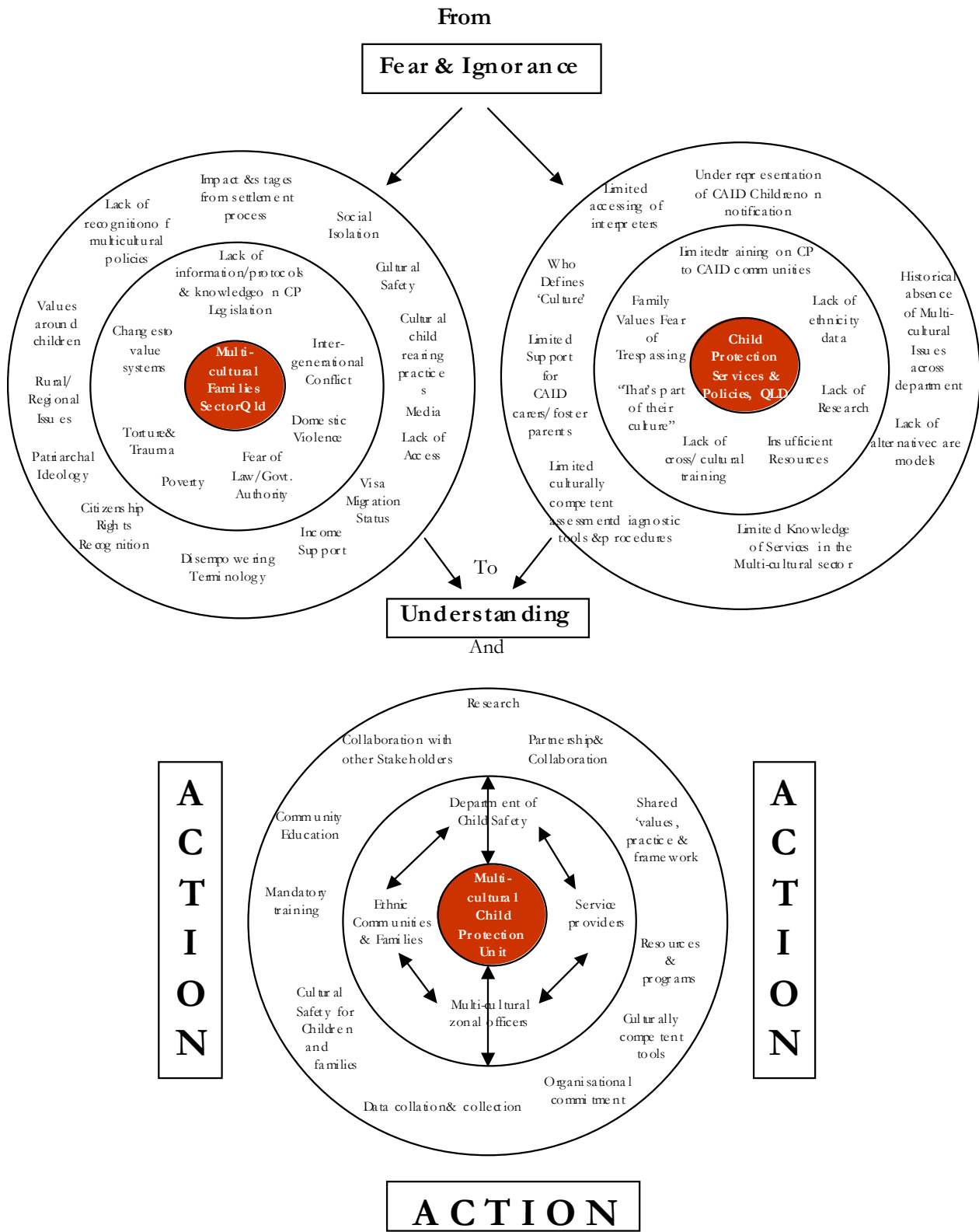
Recommendation 6

That the Department of Child safety undertakes formal research to:

- Examine the current casework model's application (including intervention and crisis management) to CALD families
- Explore alternative strategies to ensure CALD families and communities are informed, empowered and able to contribute to assisting the child and family where appropriate and
- Assess the current situation of foster parents from CALD backgrounds including recruitment practices, training, support and resources and other pertinent issues.

Note: *The Above recommendations are also captured within the Multicultural Child Protection Model*

Multi cultural Child Protection Model



BACKGROUND

This paper is the result of a collaborative effort and successful partnership between a number of stakeholders. It includes a literature review and consultations with non-government, and government services. The initiative resulted in the development of this paper began shortly after the release of the report by the Crime and Misconduct Commission *Protecting Children- An Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Foster Care* January 2004. It should be noted that numerous attempts were made by a number of multicultural agencies in the days of the Department of Families, and Department of Communities to respond to and influence discussions on child protection from a multicultural perspective. No formal recognition of or responses to this came from the Departments.

In March 2004, the Blueprint for Implementing the Recommendations for the CMC Report was published.

This Blueprint, however, had serious deficiencies in that cultural issues, the needs of ethnic families and children, and Queensland's multicultural policies were not addressed.

The multicultural sector consequently collectively responded and collaborated in initiatives to ensure the deficiencies in the Blueprint were not carried over into the framework of the new Department.

This coincided with increasing anecdotal evidence of major issues of concern pertaining to child protection which seems to be more prominent with Queensland's new and emerging communities.

In a number of forums and discussions both in Queensland and interstate child protection issues, under the umbrella of family relations and intergenerational conflict are highlighted. Many refugee families either do not know or do not understand Australian and Queensland legislation and practices around child protection.

Many refugee parents are fearful that their children have too many rights in this country and that parents are powerless to discipline them. This sense of **powerlessness** is exacerbated when government services provide social security payments to young people who could, in the parent's view encourage them to leave home. Concerns have also been raised by workers in health, education and police services.

The following key community initiatives have both coincided with the overall creation of the Department of Child safety and providing the impetus to this Paper.

DATE	COMMUNITY INITIATIVE
2003	Response to Feedback Form and Consultation Draft "Strategic Framework for Child Protection 2003-2006", from Multicultural Development Association and Centre for Multicultural and Community and Development, University of the Sunshine Coast.
January 2004	A meeting for non-government service providers to respond to CMC report convened by QCOSS and Peak Care including CALD sector representatives.
February 2004	ECCQ appointed to Peak Bodies Reference Group chaired by Peter Foster who headed the Blueprint Taskforce.
February 2004	Second meeting for non-government service providers to respond to CMC report, convened by QCOSS and Peak Care including CALD sector representatives.
February 2004	Paper by QCOSS presented to the Project Coordinators for the Blueprint report <i>"Maximising The opportunities for progressing the Well-Being of Queensland Children and Young People A Multicultural Perspective"</i> .
June 2004	University of Queensland Boilerhouse's Community Service and Research Centre, the University of Queensland Australia. Funding Application for <i>"Child Welfare and Cultural Diversity in Queensland a Preliminary Exploration"</i> .
June 2004	<p>Multicultural Families Conference, June 2004, Queensland (organised by the Centre for Multicultural and Community Development of the University of the Sunshine Coast)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - child protection key issue - Speaker from NSW Multicultural Child Protection Unit, Department of Community Services. - Workshop on Responding to Child Protection Concerns within Multicultural Families in Queensland (presented jointly by MDA and QCOSS). - Minister, Department of Communities attending the forum to speak on child protection. <p>ECCQ appointed to Child Protection Statewide Partnership Taskforce and to Advocacy and Monitoring Group.</p>

DATE	COMMUNITY INITIATIVES
June 2004	<p>Presentation by Mary Dimech, Manager NSW Multicultural Child Protection Unit, Department of Community Service.</p> <p>Audience: Departmental staff and community workers (organised by the University of Sunshine Coast and supported by Multicultural Affairs Qld and Department of Communities).</p>
July/August 2004	<p>Meetings between ECCQ, MDA, QCOSS and University of Sunshine Coast to lead a community response.</p> <p>Meetings with Multicultural Affairs Qld.</p>
September 2004	Multicultural Child Protection Workshop.
October 2004	Establishment of the Multicultural Child Protection Working Party.
November 2004	Collation of responses, obtaining feedback and continuation of Issues Paper including Multicultural Child Protection Workshop notes transcribed by the Department of Child Safety.
December/January 2005	<p>Response to Phase Three Legislation 3 options coordinated by ECCQ with feedback papers distributed to Working Party and formal feedback submitted on Working Party's behalf by ECCQ.</p> <p>QCOSS response including a multicultural perspective was also added.</p>
February 2005	Dr Robin Sullivan, Director General, Department of Child safety accepts invitation to meet with the Multicultural Child Protection Working Party, and receive the Issue Paper and Recommendations.

While there were insufficient resources or time to actively engage with all ethnic communities and regional services, the above processes have ensured that the recommendations and issues have been canvassed widely across the multicultural sector.

THE ISSUES

The provision of a safe and secure family environment is instrumental in helping young people to fulfil their potential and independence. While the majority of families succeed in providing such environments, official notifications of child abuse and neglect have increased over the last decade (Crime and Misconduct Commission, 2004). The protection of children and young people is a key priority, reflected in the universal adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by Australia in 1990. It is important therefore, that issues are adequately addressed, to ensure children are appropriately cared for (Scull, 2004).

In Queensland, child protection issues have come to the fore following the January 2004 publication of the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) report; *Protecting children: An enquiry into abuse of children in foster care*. This report documents an independent public inquiry into the abuse of children in foster care, an inquiry initiated last year in response to concerns that the current government child protection system was failing the children it was designed to assist.

The Queensland Government responded to this report by committing to adopt all recommendations made by the CMC. In the Blueprint, the Director of the Child Protection Implementation Unit states; *“a new and adequately resourced Department of Child safety with improved practice and accountability standards will be established to focus exclusively on the needs of children at risk from harm, neglect or abuse. The Blueprint recommends an implementation strategy to create the new department, and provides staged programs of work to progress reforms over the next three years”* (Forster 2004).

Despite the extensive scope of the CMC report, and the subsequent Blueprint for the implementation of its recommendations, **no reference is made of the needs, achievements or challenges in relation to children and families from CALD backgrounds.**

Specific attention is given to issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, and the Blueprint highlights a range of issues relating to the need for culturally appropriate approaches and services for indigenous families. However, the analysis of cultural diversity and its relationship with child welfare goes no further than this.

While the literature in this area is extremely limited, anecdotal evidence from service providers suggests there are child welfare concerns within CALD communities which are currently addressed by a system using a mono-cultural framework (Scull, 2004). It is not only in Australia but also overseas that little empirical research in this area has been done; for example, it has been acknowledged in the UK that the *“limited research into*

the experience and needs of black and minority ethnic children fails to support a true evidence base for policy or practice” (Welbourne 2002).

In Queensland, little empirical data exists and cultural diversity has not even been highlighted as an issue in a major inquiry such as the CMC’s. This lack of recognition, and of evidence, is significant, and reflects an urgent need to consider this issue in Queensland, to ensure rigorous research is available to inform policy and practice (Scull, 2004).

Under representation of children from CALD backgrounds in child protection notifications

A child protection review in South Australia (Government of South Australia, 2003) considered the under representation of children from NESB in the child protection system and youth at risk services. The report asserts that the possible causes of this are:

- CALD families have migrated to improve the life chances of their children and therefore have strong protective relationships and high attachments with their children. Alternatively,
- CALD children are ‘invisible’ in child protection systems, possibly because:
 - They do not come into contact with services because of fears about services, especially Government services, particularly where families may have fled oppressive regimes;
 - They have limited awareness of or access to these services;
 - Service providers do not necessarily have the skills to pick up children’s protective needs in these families;
 - Services, particularly cultural services, coming into contact with these families, may be more reluctant to report child abuse concerns either because of fears about how these families may be treated by mainstream services or the impact this might have on the service’s relationship with the wider community.

Yet, there is evidence that there are serious child protection concerns that should be attended to, judging by the findings of the NSW report *Fatal Assault of Children and Young People*. Almost one-third, 28% of the 60 young people who died as a result of assault were from CALD backgrounds. The majority of victims in the family breakdown and parental mental illness categories were children from CALD backgrounds (NSW Child Death Review Team, 2002).

Additional findings and feedback from the Multicultural Families Conference, June 2004, Queensland, June 2004, Queensland and the Multicultural Child Protection Workshop include:

- Limited knowledge and expertise in working with families from CALD backgrounds. This is particularly pertinent in situations of domestic violence or torture and trauma. These 'at risk' factors are exacerbated even further by the lack of knowledge of legislation, and poor understanding of acceptable behaviours within the Australian context by the CALD families.

Furthermore there are no practical culturally competent tools in assessing child protection issues for CALD families. The lack of data collection, collation, policies, procedures and utilising specialist services contributes to existing under representation of children from CALD backgrounds in child protection notifications.

- Current service agreements and contracts between the funding body and service providers do not reflect any special considerations, which may need to be implemented when working with this target group. An example of this is the limited budget made available for interpreters, bilingual material and outreach services.
- Lack of research and data (eg. notifications) on child protection in ethnic families in Queensland.
- Some communities have limited contact with service providers due to insufficient information or negative experiences stemming from culturally inappropriate responses.
- Limited partnerships between mainstream agencies and ethno-specific communities and agencies within the multicultural sector. There is also a lack of resources, knowledge and the initiative to coordinate the development of sustainable and trusting relationships.
- Under-representation of CALD children is also a consequence of different perceptions of responsibility CALD parents can have. An example of this is where older children supervise younger siblings while parents are at work. The Department's view may be that this could place a child at risk, yet it is a common practice for many CALD families. Most of these families are also ignorant of the ramifications of their actions, as they do not know the meanings and parameters of child protection terminology and legislation.
- Child safety legislation and information is not sufficiently addressed in the initial settlement period ie within the general Welcome Package or information sessions held by some generalist agencies.
- There are insufficient bilingual or liaison positions within Child Safety to act as a link between child safety agencies and multicultural agencies and communities.
- Some CALD communities such as TPV holders and asylum seekers may not disclose any child safety concerns due to their tenuous migration status.

1. Some Child Safety officers and workers in other agencies may be reticent to report or act on child safety concerns, due to not wanting to appear insensitive to culture.

Barriers to reporting of child abuse

The following barriers to reporting of child abuse in ethnic communities have been identified:

- Lack of information provided on child abuse standards and laws in Australia;
- Fear of authorities (in particular police) due to experiences in their countries of origin resulting in distrust of officialdom;
- The importance of the family reputation in relation to identity and acceptance by their community can prevent disclosure of abuse;
- Women from patriarchal cultures fear reprimand from their husbands if they disclose child abuse; and
- Fear that children may be taken away (Giglio, 1997).

Additional findings and feedback from the Multicultural Families Conference, June 2004, Queensland and the Multicultural Child Protection Workshop include:

- A high percentage of CALD refugee families experience poverty which is often associated with low self esteem, limited educational background, language and literacy issues, migration status, housing and employment issues. Families will access services to address these issues so the initial relationship, particularly in the first six months, between service providers and CALD families is established by advocating on such basic needs such as accommodation, English classes, and health related issues. It is only later that other issues such as mental illness, domestic violence, child protection will surface. This is further exacerbated by existing social inequities such as shortage of public housing. In this context it is highly unlikely that child safety issues will be reported as the relationships are evolved around addressing basic needs.
- Many of these families are quite vulnerable, lack community infrastructure, struggle with settlement issues and are therefore fearful of engaging with the broader community on sensitive issues such as child protection. Perceptions range from feeling 'unsafe', to 'not wanting to make the situation worse' to the stigma of disclosing or revealing private family subjects.

"The fear is much more than that children may be taken away – it is that children will be lost and destroyed in a system that is out of control – that fear is not only with family but also with some of us who work in the agencies – we have no reason to feel that children entering such a system will be taken care of any better than they are with their families"

(Multicultural community agency)

- The disadvantages these families and communities experience is exacerbated by such barriers as the lack of understanding from the wider community on settlement and refugee issues; lack of cross-cultural training by service providers staff and lack of opportunities for workers to develop relationships with these families, thus contributing to skill development for workers.

Some CALD families are socially and geographically isolated from their own and wider community which can lead to a 'cover-up' of child abuse. As one community worker says: "The less they are accessing services, the less contact they have with other families, the more able they are to maintain family secrets."

- **CALD background families' understanding of child protection**

Families with a CALD background generally have limited understanding of the concept of child protection. A submission from the Adelaide Central Community Health Service to a South Australian review (Government of South Australia, 2003) stated that:

"Child protection is made according to the value base of the dominant culture...Particularly the new arrivals in Australia do not understand the values underpinning child protection...in fact, the concepts around 'child protection' are quite alien to a number of families and CALD communities."

The need to improve understanding of new arrivals and emerging communities about children's rights and child protection, including legal requirements, was a major concern raised in submissions to the South Australian review. The report concludes that in view of the diversity of the communities in terms of language proficiency, socio-economic background and immigration and settlement experience, the provision of information needs to be part of a structured program that involves the communities concerned (Government of South Australia, 2003).

Additional Findings and Feedback from the Multicultural Families Conference, June 2004, Queensland and the Multicultural Child Protection Workshop include:

"No culture condones child abuse - the concept and definition needs to be explored and unpacked"

- This quote captures some critical aspects that influence the understanding or lack of understanding of child protection concepts among some CALD families. The expressed need for child protection definitions and concepts to be unpacked and explored suggest the lack of a broad range of strategies for dissemination of information about child protection legislation, procedures and definitions within child protection service delivery and legal systems focussing on CALD communities. There is a need for a range of communication strategies other than sole reliance on translated material to ensure that understanding and comprehension by CALD communities is achieved.

This is specially so as perception and understanding of the child protection terminology may be culturally bound and experiential and likely to reflect differences between individual and collective cultures. Hence, CALD families may strongly feel they have primary and sole responsibility for the protection of their children and therefore may perceive child protection from a service delivery or legislative framework as intrusion. The concept of an institutional and legislative framework creates significant fear, misunderstanding and confusion, in particularly where these concepts did not exist in their homeland.

- The lack of direct participation and input from CALD communities in the development of child safety frameworks contributes to lack of awareness and understanding. The historical culture of lack of transparency in decision making at different levels of government, particularly in relation to CALD families is a hurdle.
- Another issue affecting the understanding or lack of understanding of child safety within CALD families is that children of CALD backgrounds may absorb the culture of children's 'rights' and knowledge of child safety legislation sooner than their parents, contributing to the parents feelings of disempowerment and diminished authority.

Settlement Issues

Migration can be a very difficult time, with migrants experiencing insecurity regarding finances, employment, housing and a lack of traditional support mechanisms such as family and friends, racism or misunderstandings due to cultural differences. Children may be called to interpret or translate for their parents, even with highly sensitive or important information (Giglio, 1997). Parents from other cultures may face stresses including language difficulties, having no family in Australia to help with caring for their children and being isolated from other forms of help in the community (Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services, 1996). The welfare of children in changing cultural contexts is considered to be particularly important, largely due to a number of stresses associated with a family's resettlement in a new cultural environment (Roer Strier 2001).

Research indicates that families with limited English proficiency fare less well in settling in Australia as measured by socio-economic status, health and wellbeing (Weston, 1996). Lack of access to child care (formal and informal) or insufficient knowledge about community services combined with a lack of information about alternative forms of disciplining children and parenting guidance, compounds these problems (Giglio, 1997). Cultural differences can also lead to intergenerational conflict as young people raised in Australia frequently reject the traditional cultural values of their parents (Giglio, 1997). See Yeo et al (2001) assert that powerlessness against perceived institutional racism, anger, frustration, self recrimination and loathing are often associated with child abuse.

Women from CALD backgrounds who have married an Australian citizen may have few supports within Australia and therefore may face extreme isolation (Government of South Australia, 2003).

Additional findings and feedback from the Multicultural Families Conference, June 2004, Queensland and the Multicultural Child Protection Workshop include:

- Most settlement issues affecting child protection within CALD families are closely linked with current experiences of poverty and previous experiences of torture and trauma. A significant number of CALD families' experience financial disadvantage and are dependent on the income support systems of government. Lack of recognition of previous work experience and qualifications, language barriers, mental health and migration status, as well as housing and health needs add to the increasing financial, emotional, psychological, social and spiritual pressures experienced by CALD families during settlement.
- Experiences of racism and discrimination also negatively impact CALD families heightening feelings of isolation and ability to connect and network. This is especially so at times of international crisis like September 11, or when very negative media portrayal of asylum seekers and refugees is negative and aggressive, such as the coverage of 'boat' arrivals (TAMPA, children overboard, etc)
- The isolation experienced by CALD communities is not only social (due to loss of extended family and friends networks) or geographical, it also relates to access, understanding and knowledge of information and legislation in particular child protection legislation.
- Another issue impacting on the settlement process relevant to child safety practices is that many CALD families come from a collective culture, which when added to their refugee experiences leads families to be fearful of wider community's expectations and pressures placed on them. These families fear the public airing of private issues such as child rearing, especially if they are unfamiliar with the new society, cultural and institutional practices.
- Within mainstream service provision there is a general lack of understanding and awareness about the specific needs of CALD families and "*assuming too much or too little about CALD communities*" as stated by one of the group participants at the Child Protection Workshop, is a risk.
- Definitions of family within the Australian society may add to the pressures experienced by CALD families, as their definition of family may differ. The lack of extended family networks and security compounds this predicament.
- Some women who marry Australian men are denied basic knowledge on Australian legislation, services, resources and information. This is particularly so where domestic violence is present and children are at risk of or subjected to child abuse. This is exacerbated where social isolation exists as there is greater potential to conceal abuse issues.

It is critical to note here that settlement issues, while significant, can be used to diffuse issues of child safety. As one community worker expresses: "The danger is that settlement issues could be used as an excuse for parent's mistreatment of children. While it is important to recognise the compounding settlement factors, they can not be seen as a reason or excuse to condone child abuse. Workers need the skills to make this distinction."

Variations in child rearing practices and attitudes towards victims

There are variations in child rearing practices, with certain practices being a cultural norm in a particular ethnic community, but considered child abuse in Australia (Giglio, 1997). To provide such information, the Ethnic Child Care Development Unit produced a *Child Rearing Practices Kit* in 1992. Giglio (1997) asserts that taking these factors into account when resolving child abuse issues will assist all parties involved. In some cases, it may be appropriate to involve the extended family in counselling as often the extended family has a very important role in the care of children (Giglio, 1997).

A study of attitudes towards victims of child sexual abuse (Rodriguez & Twaite, 1999) found that some ethnic groups may stigmatise victims more than other groups and that clinicians should therefore routinely assess the culturally related attitudes of a victim's family towards the victim and the perpetrator.

Additional findings and feedback from the Multicultural Families Conference, June 2004, Queensland and the Multicultural Child Protection Workshop include:

- Inter-generational and intra-familial conflict has been highlighted in numerous forums. This is an issue that may be directly associated with the changing roles within a family – the roles of women, men, youth and children are exposed to change, thus creating tremendous pressure within family relationships. These tensions may be exacerbated when emphasis is placed on individual rights, such as the rights of the child or the woman, particularly if the family comes from a collective culture value. Some patriarchal ideologies may significantly impact and contribute to domestic violence consequently affecting child-rearing practices.
- The cultural shock experienced by families is often associated with fear of undergoing further loss hence comments such as "*women or children have too many rights in Australia*" illustrate the perceived threats experienced by CALD families.

This can lead to protective behaviours that impinge individual rights. This is worsened when there is a lack of cultural competency of child safety service providers.

Generally current casework practice models do not respect nor utilises the strengths of the child rearing practices of CALD communities again contributing to the problem by alienating the child yet increasing parents sense of

vulnerability and powerlessness. Similarly, the concepts used within the child safety service delivery such as 'suspected abuse' and 'child neglect' are often ignored or not understood by CALD communities. Furthermore perceptions such as child safety equates to 'no discipline' highlights the differences in understandings and values.

- Intervention by child safety workers is often negated or compromised due to limited professional competency in discerning and assessing the safety of the child vs the safety of the cultural norms of the family vs child protection legislation. Child safety workers have been known to express sentiments such as "*That's part of their culture*" and "*We shouldn't intervene*".

"On one side you see many CALD families that have no knowledge that some of their child rearing practices go against the child protection law, and on the other side child protection workers are fearful of stepping in and intervening. This is a no win situation for anyone, from the workers to the children to the families."

This can impact a willingness to change and increase the chances of misunderstanding, as some cultural practices can be perceived as child abuse from the service providers' perspective yet culture should not be a shield for abuse in CALD communities.

The need for cultural sensitivity

Children and young people's cultural identity may vary from their parents depending on their length of time in Australia in their formative years. These separate experiences and identity should not be regarded as subordinate to those of their parents but need to be carefully incorporated and separately addressed in early intervention programs. Programs need to acknowledge the different knowledge bases about parenting which may exist (Government of South Australia, 2003).

It is important for professionals in the child safety system to have experience with and expertise in working with people from CALD backgrounds. As the Adelaide Central Community Health Service submitted to the South Australian review:

"If they have no understanding of the culture, they will have no beginning point for successful communication." (Government of South Australia, 2003)

The British literature indicates that:

- Of children under 16 children of minority ethnic origin are over-represented comprising 17% of children in care against 13% generally.
- Newly arrived ethnic families are likely to find the child protection system and court system confusing, anxiety-provoking and alienating unless strenuous efforts are made to help them.
- Needing to communicate through an interpreter adds to their disadvantage.

- Concerns were raised about ethnic families experiencing discrimination and disadvantage in child protection and court systems.
- Serious questions were raised about access to justice for parents whose first language is not English due to a range of problems with the use or non-use of interpreters.
- Some examples of excellent practice were also documented.
- The research points to the need for cultural sensitivity by all who work in child protection and recommends the use of workers from ethnic backgrounds.
(Thoburn, Chand and Procter, 2003)

Out of a literature review of cultural diversity and child protection in England, Brophy (2003) calls for a 'cultural lens' to be applied to all aspects of child protection intervention.

Research from the United States highlights the disproportionate number of low income and cultural minority families represented in the child abuse and neglect caseloads managed by the child welfare system in the United States. Hughes (1987) argues that:

- By persistently failing to acknowledge the importance of children's ethnic identities and their cultural traditions, child protection agencies and workers have been disproportionately destructive of the family integrity of cultural minorities;
- Child protection agencies and workers have consistently failed to attack and to change the root cause of child maltreatment - poverty.

Culture and gender issues need to be considered in relation to the use of interpreters. Interpreters from the same culture may be needed where conflict exists in their home region. It may be important that the interpreter's gender match that of the client (Giglio, 1997). Added complexity occurs when an adult or child from a CALD background also has a mental illness or disability.

While culturally sensitive practice is required, a submission from the Office of Youth to the South Australian review highlighted the danger of compromising a child or young person's safety due to worker confusion over what constitutes acceptable cultural practices or because there is a lack of culturally sensitive support or intervention (Government of South Australia, 2003).

Additional findings and feedback from the Multicultural Families Conference, June 2004, Queensland and the Multicultural Child Protection Workshop Include:

- The insufficient or limited partnership between the child safety services, community service providers in child safety and CALD communities was highlighted as a barrier to a better understanding of child safety legislation. This lack or limited understanding applies equally to CALD communities and workers in the multicultural sector. There is a need for cultural sensitivity to address this gap in information and training delivery for CALD communities and for child safety services to engage with CALD communities and workers and build trust and understanding through an inclusive practice framework.

- The lack of representation from CALD communities within accountability and reporting mechanisms should be addressed through, for example CALD reference and advisory groups.
- It is well known that in many cultures the concept of individual identity and needs is not separated from that of the family or community. This entails, a culturally competent and sensitive workforce capable of managing differences in terms of child rearing practices and experiences while maintaining the paramount principle of the child's best interest.

CONCLUSION

In concluding this issue paper, a number of themes have consistently emerged which demonstrate the necessity for the Department of Child safety to actively engage and act on the issues and recommendations. Significant themes include:

- The importance of directly engaging with CALD communities to ensure they are active participants of the overall strategic direction and work of the Department of Child safety and whole of government approach;
- The urgency of ensuring culturally competent practices and a framework for CALD families and children, within this framework the foundational principles should be inclusiveness and cultural safety;
- The presented issues by CALD families and workers (both child protection workers and those within the multicultural sector) corroborates the need for a holistic, collaborative and strategic approach to ensure best practice and;
- The need for designating sustainable resources and programs to ensure that children and families of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are seen, heard and represented at all decision making levels within the system.

The multicultural sector has collaborated and collectively voiced their experiences and concerns on child protection issues for multicultural families. The contents of this Issue Paper have primarily been developed for the Department of Child safety Queensland. However given the numerous and inter-related nature of the issues and their complexities it is strongly recommended that actions and responsibilities extends to other services such as health, education, police and justice, and Commonwealth Departments.

It is envisaged by the Multicultural Child Protection Working Party that this document is the catalyst and base for ongoing discussions and collaboration with all stakeholders to ensure a culturally competent child protection practice.

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ATTACHMENT 1

Child Protection and Cultural Diversity in Queensland

A Feedback Paper

(The following issues are from a Draft Discussion Paper written by Multicultural Development Association. The questions have been constructed to obtain feedback to guide both the Community workshop and overall recommendations for the Issue Paper.)

The Issues

Issue 1. Under representation of children from CALD backgrounds in child protection notifications
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A child protection review in South Australia (Government of South Australia, 2003) considered the under representation of children from non-English speaking backgrounds in the child protection system and youth at risk services. The report asserts that the possible causes of this are:

- CALD families have migrated to improve the life chances of their children and therefore have strong protective relationships and high attachments with their children. Alternatively,
- CALD children are 'invisible' in child protection systems, possibly because:
 - They do not come into contact with services because of fears about services, especially Government services, particularly where families may have fled oppressive regimes;
 - They have limited awareness of or access to these services;
 - Service providers do not necessarily have the skills to pick up children's protective needs in these families;
 - Services, particularly cultural services, coming into contact with these families, may be more reluctant to report child abuse concerns either because of fears about how these families may be treated by mainstream services or the impact this might have on the service's relationship with the wider community.

Yet, there is evidence that there are serious child protection concerns that should be attended to, judging by the findings of the NSW report *Fatal Assault of Children and Young People*. 28% of the 60 young people who died as a result of assault were from CALD backgrounds. The majority of victims in the family breakdown and parental mental

illness categories were children from CALD backgrounds (NSW Child Death Review Team, 2002).

Questions:

a) Has this been your experience as a worker/service provider?

Yes No

Comments:

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b) What mechanisms do you/your agency use to support and address child protection issues where identified?

Referrals If yes, where?

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Support If yes, what type of support?

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Provide information on:

- Current legislation and practices
- Appropriate services
- Parenting courses

- Counselling options
- Other (Please list),

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c) What are your views/opinions as to how the Department of Communities and Department of Child Safety can ensure that children/families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are effectively represented within the system?

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Issue 2. Barriers to reporting of child abuse
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The following barriers to reporting of child abuse in ethnic communities have been identified:

- Lack of information provided on child abuse standards and laws in Australia;
- Fear of authorities due to experiences in their country of origin resulting in distrust of the state child protection department;
- The importance of the maintenance of the 'family name' in relation to identity and acceptance by their community prevents people from disclosing abuse;
- Women from patriarchal cultures fear reprimand from their husbands if they disclose child abuse; and
- Fear that children may be taken away (Giglio, 1997).

Questions:

d) Are there any additional barriers that you wish to add?

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e) What are some suggestions/strategies in addressing these barriers?
eg. Employment of bilingual caseworkers.

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Issue 3. CALD background families’ understanding of child protection

CALD background families’ understanding of the concept of child protection may be limited. A submission from the Adelaide Central Community Health Service to a South Australian review (Government of South Australia, 2003) stated that:

“Child protection is made according to the value base of the dominant culture...Particularly the new arrivals in Australia do not understand the values underpinning child protection...in fact, the concepts around ‘child protection’ are quite alien to a number of families and CALD communities.”

The need to improve understanding of new arrivals and emerging communities about children’s rights and child protection, including legal requirements, was a major concern raised in submissions to the South Australian review. The report concludes that in view of the diversity of the communities in terms of language proficiency, socio-economic background and immigration and settlement experience, the provision of information needs to be part of a structured program that involves the communities concerned (Government of South Australia, 2003).

Questions:

a) Do you agree with these statements?

Yes No

Comments:

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b) As a worker, do you feel that the current child protection terminology is reflective of a multicultural society?

Yes No

Comments:

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c) What strategies would improve the understanding of child protection legislation in Queensland for culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?

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Issue 4. Settlement Issues

Migration can be a very difficult time, with migrants experiencing insecurity regarding finances, employment and housing, a lack of traditional support mechanisms such as family and friends, racism or misunderstandings due to cultural differences. Children may be called upon as interpreters and translators for their parents, even with highly sensitive or important information (Giglio, 1997). Parents from other cultures may face stresses including language difficulties, having no family in Australia to help with caring for their children and being isolated from other forms of help in the community (Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services, 1996). The welfare of children in changing cultural contexts is considered to be particularly important, largely due to a number of stressors associated with a family’s resettlement in a new cultural environment (Roer Strier 2001).

Research indicates that families with limited English proficiency fare less well in settling in Australia by reason of socio-economic status, health and wellbeing (Weston, 1996). Lack of access to child care (formal and informal) or insufficient knowledge about community services, in combination with a lack of information about alternative forms of disciplining children and parenting guidance, compounds these problems (Giglio, 1997). Cultural differences can also lead to intergenerational conflict as young people raised in Australia frequently reject the traditional cultural values of their parents (Giglio, 1997). See Yeo et al (2001) assert that powerlessness against perceived institutional racism, anger, frustration, self recrimination and loathing are often associated with child abuse.

Women from CALD backgrounds who have married an Australian citizen may have few supports within Australia and therefore may face extreme isolation (Government of South Australia, 2003).

Questions:

- a) Are you aware of any other settlement issue which can increase culturally and linguistically diverse families vulnerability around child protection issues?

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b) Please list any ideas/suggestions on how these issues can be addressed.

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Issue 5. Variations in child rearing practices and attitudes towards victims

There are variations in child rearing practices, with certain practices being a cultural norm in a particular ethnic community, but considered child abuse in Australia (Giglio, 1997). To provide such information, the Ethnic Child Care Development Unit produced a *Child Rearing Practices Kit* in 1992. Giglio (1997) asserts that taking these factors into account when resolving child abuse issues will assist all parties involved. In some cases, it may be appropriate to involve the extended family in counselling as often the extended family has a very important role in the care of children (Giglio, 1997).

A study of attitudes towards victims of child sexual abuse (Rodriguez & Twaite, 1999) found that some ethnic groups may stigmatise victims more than other groups and that clinicians should therefore routinely assess the culturally related attitudes of a victim's family towards the victim and the perpetrator.

a) What cultural practices/beliefs/concepts have you observed that can create conflict/confusion/misunderstanding in Australia on child rearing practices?
Eg. Different views of discipline

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b) What would some strategies for government and community agencies to increase their understanding of child rearing practices in a cross-cultural context?

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c) Additional comments:

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Issue 6. The need for cultural sensitivity

Children and young people’s cultural identity may vary from their parents depending on their length of time in Australia in their formative years. These separate experiences and identity should not be regarded as subordinate to those of their parents but need to be carefully incorporated and separately addresses in early intervention programs. Programs need to acknowledge the different knowledge bases about parenting which may exist (Government of South Australia, 2003).

It is important for professionals within the child protection system to have experience and expertise working with people from CALD backgrounds. As the Adelaide Central Community Health Service submitted to the South Australian review:

“If they have no understanding of the culture, they will have no beginning point for successful communication.” (Government of South Australia, 2003)

The British literature indicates that:

- Of children under 16, children of minority ethnic origin are over-represented compared to other children in care (comprising 17% of children in care while only 13% of children).

- Newly arrived ethnic families are likely to find the child protection system and court system confusing, anxiety-provoking and alienating unless strenuous efforts are made to help them through.
- Needing to communicate through an interpreter adds to their disadvantage.
- Concerns were raised about ethnic families experiencing discrimination and disadvantage in child protection and court systems.
- Serious questions were raised about access to justice for parents whose first language is not English due to a range of problems with the use or non-use of interpreters.
- Some examples of excellent practice were also documented.
- The research points to the need for cultural sensitivity by all who work in child protection and recommends the use of workers from ethnic backgrounds.
(Thoburn, Chand and Procter, 2003)

Out of a literature review of cultural diversity and child protection in England, Brophy (2003) calls for a 'cultural lens' to be applied to all aspects of child protection intervention.

Research from the United States highlights the disproportionate number of low income and cultural minority families represented in the child abuse and neglect caseloads managed by the child welfare system in the United States. Hughes (1987) argues that:

- By persistently failing to acknowledge the importance of children's ethnic identities and their cultural traditions, child protection agencies and workers have been disproportionately destructive of the family integrity of cultural minorities;
- Child protection agencies and workers have consistently failed to attack and to change the root cause of child maltreatment - poverty.

Culture and gender issues need to be considered in relation to the use of interpreters. Interpreters from the same culture may be needed where conflict exists in their home region. It may be important that the interpreter's gender match that of the client (Giglio, 1997). Added complexity occurs when an adult or child from a CALD background also has a mental illness or disability.

While culturally sensitive practice is required, a submission from the Office of Youth to the South Australian review highlighted the danger of compromising a child or young person's safety due to worker confusion over what constitutes acceptable cultural practices or because there is a lack of culturally sensitive support or intervention (Government of South Australia, 2003).

Questions:

- a) What mechanisms would improve the understanding of culturally and linguistically diverse families experience?

Community agencies

Government

- b) Are you aware of any programs/initiatives/events etc which have demonstrated cultural inclusiveness and sensitivity in attracting culturally and linguistically diverse families participation.

Please list:

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- c) What is needed to ensure ongoing culturally and linguistically diverse families participation within the wider community? Eg ongoing culturally inclusive sports programs.

Others:

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Optional Information

Name of Agency:

Type of agency:

Location in Queensland:

Thank you

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ATTACHMENT 2

Multicultural Child Protection Forum and Feedback Strategies

The following strategies are the responses from community workers and representatives to the community feedback paper (Attachment 1), the Multicultural Families – Investing in the Nations Future Conference, June 2004, and the Multicultural Child Protection Workshop September 2004.

Issue 1. Under representation of children from CALD backgrounds in child protection notifications.

Question

What are your views/opinions as to how the Department of Communities and Department of Child safety can ensure that children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are effectively represented within the system?

Responses

- Engage by consulting multicultural agencies/organizations/key leaders/individuals in decision-making process
- Invite to come to forums/information sessions organized by the Department
- To have CALD people sitting on Committee/Boards in the Department that involve child safety
- Update/inform multicultural agencies on relevant information
- Organise visitation to multicultural agencies/ethnic communities key leaders or organizations
- To design promotional materials that are inclusive of multicultural children from multicultural families
- Ensure that polices are appropriately reflecting in practice via:
 - training
 - exposure to leaders of CALD communities
 - employment of professional staff of CALD backgrounds
 - adopting a model of practice that is inclusive of and has clear pathways to ensuring CALD clientele are heard, promoting use of TIS and Qld Language Services Policy

- Strengthen internal staff awareness (in DOCS) and improve practices on working with families from culturally diverse backgrounds. Educate the communities and provide information to families on services and resources available
- Information printed in other languages
- Develop a booklet in other languages on how to navigate the system, processes, legislation and what to do and to whom to go should “nothing happen.”
- Creating a Multicultural Department within Child Safety Department to focus on child safety issues within the multicultural communities
- Build relationships with and utilise church leaders for some communities eg Samoan
- Employ bilingual workers who have an understanding of cultural practices in relation to child rearing
- The Departments need to be more responsive and proactive. They are already printing some of their information in languages other than English- this is very helpful. However, in general there is not much of a sense that the Department is ‘available’ and they are difficult to contact and to talk with- through pressure of work, no doubt, but it gives the impression that they are not interested.
- Give more funding to specific CALD projects – this would assist them in learning about CALD populations and in developing trust and awareness amongst these communities. As workers with CALD communities, the Department is not an agency which we would think of immediately in terms of asking for assistance. If workers with CALD do not have a relationship with the Dept then it is unlikely that the clients will
- There needs to be a much more ‘outward’ rather than ‘inward’ policy within the Dept. They are not at all approachable and trying to get them involved in Reference committee’s etc, is very hard. That goes for Commonwealth FACS as well as State. (Example provided but not printed for this Attachment)
- Consistent and appropriate use of professional interpreters
- Supporting women particularly victims of domestic violence to seek support, information and clarification of their situations.

Issue 2. Barriers to reporting of child abuse

What are some suggestions/strategies in addressing these barriers?

Responses:

- Highly trained bilingual caseworkers who are highly culturally aware, with good moral and work ethics, and professionalism
- Having good policies/practices by relevant departments/agencies
- Training in use of TIS
- Information to workers
- Monitoring, mentoring and support to workers to encourage and facilitate access pathways
- Review panels created to ensure cultural and linguistic protocols are followed

- Bilingual caseworkers trained to navigate the different areas of child protection eg. Reporting to police, Discussions with appropriate multicultural support services
- Community Education
- Multicultural Training of workers
- Advocacy for equality among children
- Bilingual caseworkers need to learn the cultures
- Speak the languages people can understand – need to know the different levels in communities in regards to respect eg reverend, chiefs, ladies
- Either before families enter Australia or on arrival, families need education on the legal system in Australia, the expectation that women and children may be treated or raised differently than in their country of origin. There needs to be discussion of cultural practices and see where these fit in the context of accepted child rearing practices and treatment of women in Australia. This is not to take away the culture but to understand the differences. There needs to be cultural diversity at the political and policy making level to have understanding of this diversity in the formulation of legislation and policy
- Certainly the perception of our agency is that the Department is not staffed by workers with the time or the understanding to work with CALD clients. This may be completely inaccurate but the perception is there. So of course bilingual caseworkers would be an improvement. **But**, the Department must understand that workers in such a system become insensitive to the general community and we believe that this is where the breakdown often occurs – the Department is a monolithic institution where caseworkers very quickly lose contact with or become desensitised to communities. Again, this may be an unfair representation but certainly this has happened in the past. The most important thing the Department can do is make contact with the community an ongoing and important goal
- Policies are disseminated to counter and front line staff in relation to the use of interpreters
- Broader understanding of domestic and sexual violence in the assessment process, in particular in the NESB experience
- Cross-cultural training
- Supervision of staff with a person who has an understanding of cross-cultural issues and/or domestic and family violence.

Issue 3. CALD background families understanding of child protection
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What strategies would improve the understanding of child protection legislation in Queensland for culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?

Responses:

- Information in different languages and employment of bilingual caseworkers or project workers who are highly culturally trained with good attributes. The quality of character we bring to the workplace is very crucial as this will be the passport for building trust and confidence, which will provide quality, effective and responsive service delivery.
- Implementation of Language Services Policy
- Cultural Diversity Training to Departmental and organizational staff
- Employment of bilingual staff
- Developing and implementing policies that insist on use of bilingual caseworkers
- Education programs that use model of bilingual group processes that are used in other areas eg. Health education
- To work across all age groups eg. Children at schools, parents at English classes, community organizations etc. If possible cross fertilisation occurs leading to more knowledge about other cultures
- Education as part of a strategy to socialise people coming from CALD
- CALD representation at high level decision making bodies
- More education/information and ways to make that information accessible to people
- Education – provided to both parents and children
- Role modelling of accepted practices by people of their own cultural background
- Greater and sustained dissemination of information in different languages.

Issue 4. Settlement Issues

Please list any ideas/suggestions on how settlement issues can be addressed?

Responses:

- Education programs prior to marriage for CALD people
- Extended families concept should be encouraged to Australian born parents and children alike
- Education programs for Australian men who are perpetrators of Domestic Violence
- Multicultural programs/service providers should be the strong advocates as a starting point within their community
- Review of multicultural policy to be more inclusive of multicultural child safety
- Health Department and Schools should be seen as supportive, and engaged and consulted in all multicultural matters within one's community
- Huge influx of budgets across government and not government services in ensuring adequate support to workers, and clientele
- Training and ongoing support
- Education on the issues throughout schools communities and parent groups
- Settlement Officers within Centrelink take on a more prominent role and train officers in other centres. Identified workers within other Departments.

- Education through workshops with bilingual workers and communities using settlement organizations as a lynch-pin
- Settling in groups from the same background
- Provision of intense education to newly settled groups

Issue 5. Variations in child rearing practices and attitudes towards victims

What would some strategies be for government and community agencies to increase their understanding of child rearing practices in a cross-cultural context?

Responses:

- Information about the good old moral values that still be employed in everything we do nowadays
- To act as role models – government workers and citizens
- Revive the many old ways we do that are still appropriate to practice nowadays
- More projects and support groups to reinforce positive cultural practices by organizing activities within one's community
- Improve and strengthen Australian family way of life
- Men to stop violence and to educate them how to balance their power, control and fear.
- Establish opportunities for an equitable exchange of information on child rearing practices in diverse cultures in a non judgemental atmosphere, and small groups discussion
- Consultation with CALD communities
- Discussion and development of mutual understanding of cultural differences and similarities
- Education of elders within communities, some “elders” are the ministers of religion
- Becoming part of an already existing community partnerships or forming their own partnerships whilst engaging community
- Culture back home should be contextualised and modified to fit into new changes
- Training and teaching parents the Government law and policies, and may be well accepted if taught in their mother tongue
- Discuss with church leaders and community leaders what the community needs to know
- Conducting focus groups with parents and children for the purpose of learning about the culture. This is a process that has to be done very sensitively – parents can quickly believe that their skills are not understood or diminished by ‘officials’ and feel insulted that they are being told how to bring up their children – this can be another disempowering process at a stage in their adult lives when the migration process is in itself disempowering for them.

Issue 6. The need for cultural sensitivity

Are you aware of any programs/initiatives/events etc, which have demonstrated cultural inclusiveness and sensitivity in attracting culturally and linguistically diverse families participation?

Responses:

1. Parenting group – Happy Families
2. Cross-cultural Parents of Teenagers
3. Multicultural Family and Community Building Project
4. Multicultural Families Support Program
5. Multicultural Women’s Project
6. Community Responsive Training Programs (Literacy and Numeracy)
7. Adult Learner’s Week
8. ESL Literacy and Numeracy
9. Harmony Day
10. Bayside Sudanese Network
11. Building Bridges project
12. Opening Doors project
13. As a Minister of the Church we have seminars for couples every Saturday morning. At those seminars we discuss all issues about families, even child protection, not only from our cultural view and biblical view, but from our new adopted country’s view.

Question

What is needed to ensure ongoing culturally and linguistically diverse families participation within the wider community eg. Ongoing culturally inclusive sports programs?

Responses:

- Informing Parent committee of schools of family presence – perhaps suggesting introduction to parent groups and one support person to encourage participation
- Public education
- Invitations to representatives of communities to speak to community groups in mainstream
- Opportunities for people from ‘dominant’ culture to engage in discourse and listen to people of CALD and to exchange understanding – small groups interactions have been successful in the past
- Ongoing multicultural and families programs/initiatives/projects throughout Queensland and regional areas. Like multicultural festivals, cultural arts and workshops, multicultural child protection week, ongoing refugee week celebration, Harmony Day, cultural demonstration, folk dancing and health and sports related activities

- Education about what is happening within the geographical environment that children and young people can access
- An efficient transport system
- Ongoing training for parents to adjust and to adapt to new changes and to understand the Australian law
- Ongoing support for pastors (give them information) as they preach this message to the community
- Voluntarism is a new concept to many cultures but it is something that should be explored and encourage much more in the school system. Mothers and fathers assisting in their child's classroom can be excellent way for the whole family to become more aware of mainstream practices and standards and to promote confidence within the CALD family. Schools need to be encourage to take the initiative in encouraging parent participation.

ATTACHMENT 3

Child Protection in a National Context

Non-English speaking background communities have been identified as a section of the community requiring specific programs to prevent child abuse and neglect. A national audit has examined the level of programs targeting specific population groups. Nationally, New South Wales leads the way, with 13% of programs targeting ethnic communities, followed by Victoria with 11%, Queensland had 6% of targeted programs and the Northern Territory trailed with 4% (National Child Protection Clearinghouse, 2000).

The Proposed Plan of Action for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect of Children from NESB was produced as part of the National Prevention Strategy for Child Abuse and Neglect. It states:

“Information about child abuse and neglect, and how it can be prevented, is needed by parents, community leaders and other people of influence, and people working with NESB communities, such as grant in aid workers (now settlement workers), community health workers, child care workers and teachers” (Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services, 1996).

This document includes strategies targeting the pre-migration level, for new parents from NESB (eg. At hospital ante and post-natal classes), and cross cultural training for workers in mainstream services.

Giglio (1997) argues for regular parenting workshops for ethnic communities and information campaigns targeting ethnic communities, using ethnic media and high profile community figures as role models. Some resources have been developed such as a child protection resource kit (audio tapes and a video) developed for the Arabic community by the Australian Arabic Welfare Council in New South Wales (National Child Protection Clearinghouse Newsletter, Spring 1997). A Victorian program entitled Parenting between Cultures was independently evaluated and proved to be effective at fostering an understanding of the impact of culture on parenting, knowledge of the school system, non-physical disciplinary methods and child abuse laws (Kayrooz and Blunt, 2000).

The difficulty for the child protection professional working in a multicultural society is to protect children from maltreatment whilst avoiding the undermining of parental authority and without compromising the child's safety and welfare (See Yeo, Farate, Ang, Watts, Giglio, Volpe & Hall, 2001). See Yeo et al (2001) examined Chinese, Indian and Western child rearing practices and concluded that culturally responsive forms of treatment would result in greater utilisation of services and positive treatment outcomes.