



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry: Inquiry into Victoria's criminal justice system

Hearing Date: 20 September 2021

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: Adjunct Professor Aunty Muriel Bamblett, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)

1. Dr BACH Page no. 41

Question asked.

I am very interested, Aunty Muriel, in the extent to which a failure over a long period of time, a historic failure, for Victoria to invest in early intervention services, disproportionately impacts Indigenous children. I mean, that is something you have touched upon on your comments

Response:

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations funded for Early Help service through Department Families, Fairness and Housing are now funded 7%, this is still significantly disproportionate to the number of Aboriginal children in Child Protection. This is similarly the case across family violence.

VACCA would contend that current models of early intervention and prevention funding is inflexible, is conceptualised as access to early years such as child care, playgroups and maternal and child health rather than targeted at the need for trauma-informed, culturally informed, sustained and targeted early intervention work with families.

Professional social work is a western intervention, but often it is delivered by practitioners as if its methods of interventions are culturally neutral. Because of this oversight, not only do practitioners run the risk of implementing interventions that are ineffective due to a lack of cultural fit between the intervention and the targeted population, but they also miss opportunities to incorporate culturally grounded ways of helping. When the desired results are not attained, there is a tendency to blame the client rather than to assess the cultural relevance of the service delivery system. The practice of Child Welfare work requires knowledge of human development and behaviour; of social, economic, and cultural institutions; and the interaction of all these factors.

Critical to our success is that we as Aboriginal Child and Family Welfare providers be effective that we have the knowledge, skills and systems in place to deliver outcomes that are about bringing change: and as agents of change we will automatically engender opposition from our clients now should we be surprised that our clients do not want to change and will try and hold on to old ways. We must begin with the ability to utilise assessment frameworks and to match



our interventions to include the role played by Aboriginal extended family, the wider community and culture. To bring about change the worker is expected to be skilled at working with individuals, groups, and families, have access to an assessment framework that has the capacity to include the role played by Aboriginal extended family, the wider community and culture in supporting change but that is strength based and engages children, build's on parenting role particularly men's role, work with young people using strength based but also address prosocial and offending behaviours and families through the lens of family strengths, capacities, cultural heritage, extended family resources (eco-mapping, genogram, family connections).

In our view there is a significant need for improvements to the child protection system through increased resources to prevention and early intervention services, an increase in culturally attuned Aboriginal family services.