



Family Services
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Mr Jonathan Curtis
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Australian Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee
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Re: Inquiry into the Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Bill 2005

Dear Mr Curtis,

In reply to your letter containing Questions on Notice from the Committee's public hearing in Canberra on Friday 3 March, FSA does not believe that the second question (regarding the percentage of assaults on mediation staff by clients that are reported to the authorities) was a question that arose during our appearance and is not a question that we can readily answer.

In relation to the first question (regarding articulated descriptors of models that are substantially different the general model of delivery), Ms Jennie Hannan from Anglicare WA has provided a description of the Kimberly Sexual Abuse Counselling and Education Service that is operating in Western Australia. This description is provided below.

Given the limited time available, we have not canvassed our membership to identify additional models that might be of interest to the Committee, but we would happy to do so on request.

The committee may also be interested in a recent paper produced by Catholic Welfare Australia into rural and remote service delivery in the Family Relationship Service Program 'Lessons from the Field'.

Yours truly,

Samantha Page
National Manager Member Services
Family Services Australia

14 March 2006

A Service Delivery Model for Participation and Outreach into Aboriginal Communities

Preamble

In 2001 Anglicare WA was funded by the Department for Health and Aging to provide a comprehensive sexual abuse counselling and education service to towns and communities in the Kimberley region in NW Western Australia. Whilst a number of Government Departments had regular visiting programmes to these communities- primarily Health and Welfare based, this new service was developed to work closely with communities assisting them to develop information packages and provide support and “yarning” that would assist them to deal with the many cases of sexual abuse currently present in the Kimberley.

Anglicare WA was keen not to just move into communities with preconceived ideas about what they needed but to work alongside communities to assist them in developing and implementing their own ideas whilst providing specialist information and counselling (yarning) assistance as required. This model has proved highly successful.

Main Tenants of the Service Delivery Model

- To be respectful of Aboriginal Culture and Ways of Working
- To be seen as a part of the community
- To work alongside communities in identifying their own needs
- To have service providers in key towns
- Provide clinical input and Information as required and requested
- To visit communities and outlying towns regularly

Being Respectful of Aboriginal Culture and Ways of Working

This programme has spent the last five years developing close relationships with the elders in communities in order to gain the trust of those in communities. It is necessary in the NW to be “invited” into some communities and to significant cultural events. Local workers on the ground and our Aboriginal Services Manager had been networking and yarning for a long time with communities before these invitations were forthcoming to be involved in community consultations, education sessions and local cultural activities eg. Women’s bush camps.

This highlights the importance in these regions of using existing providers with local knowledge and connections with communities to provide services if services are to be up and running relatively quickly otherwise it may literally take years for

these relationships to be developed and for services to be able to provide interventions outside the larger towns.

Being Seen As a Part of the Community

Part of the “Aboriginal Ways” is being a part of the community rather than just a visitor to that community to provide a particular service. Aboriginal communities are wholistic when looking at needs and the spiritual and cultural dimensions of one’s being cannot be seen as separate from other needs eg. health or relationship. To work alongside communities means therefore you must be a part of communities and participate where appropriate in community events.

Working Alongside Communities in Identifying their own Needs

Once accepted by Communities including elders, more yarning then needs to take place over a period of time about the needs and methods by which identified needs can be met. This does take considerable time and the service delivery model developed for each community does vary and can change over time. This requires staff and government to be patient and flexible about how services are delivered on the ground.

Having Service Providers in Key Towns

This service has workers based in 3 towns in the Kimberley, Kununurra, Broome and Derby. These sites provide a focus for the administration of the service and also rooms in which “mainstream” confidential counselling can also be provided. These locations enable outreach to both the West and East Kimberley relatively easily and a focus for other service providers who may require information and/or training in the area of sexual abuse.

Provide Clinical Input and Information as Required and Requested

For the communities the current programme provides in terms of service delivery mix a combination of informal and formal yarning with groups and individuals in the communities, the provision of information about sexual abuse and it’s affects via community education activities set up by the communities themselves with programme workers presenting. Participation in community activities such as bush meetings, fishing expeditions, where information is provided in a community context in a more informal way are a part of service provision.

Visiting Communities and Outlying Towns Regularly

This programme provides visiting to outlying towns in both the East and West Kimberley. This visiting in the West Kimberley is done via 4 wheel drive with workers from other programmes and/or departments when possible for safety reasons. On outreach, workers travel with satellite phones also for safety reasons. Currently due to limited funding these trips are only made every 6 weeks which is not ideal for communities. Trips are also restricted in the wet season due to impassable roads.

Trips every three weeks would be more beneficial for both relationship building and service delivery provision. Should more funding be available another full time worker in each location would enable more frequent trips to be undertaken.

In the East Kimberley visiting is done by both vehicle and light plane to outlying communities, the later being quite expensive even when the costs of flights is shared by other programmes and departments. For those communities where plane trips are the only way into communities, visits are restricted to every 8 weeks which is far from ideal. Again an increase in funding would enable extra staff and more frequent visits which again would be more beneficial to communities.

Current staffing

This programme is currently funded for approx 250,000 per annum and this covers staffing of just under 3 FTE (including administration support). It is enabling some town service provision and the visiting to communities outlined above and the provision of some infrastructure- rent etc. Infrastructure costs are high in the North West, particularly rent.

In Summary

Whilst this model has it's limitations given restrictions on funding it should be noted that it has been highly successful despite these restrictions in interfacing with both town people in the NW and the local Aboriginal communities who have worked with the service to meet individual community needs.

For a FRC to work well I believe a similar model of both town and community service provision would be necessary, with current service providers already connecting with communities needing to be considered to provide the service rather than new players due to the trust and relationship issues mentioned above and the time frame that will be required for services to be up and running.

Funding for outreach needs to be significant with trips needing to be more regular than those mentioned above ie. 2-3 weekly ideally and government needs to be mindful of the significant extra cost of remote service provision including the addition costs of recruiting and paying staff, rent assistance for staff, air-conditioning subsidies, costs of renting suitable premises in the NW and additional costs of staff training and supervision.

It can easily be assumed that the costs of proving a service in a rural location would be at least 25% extra than a metropolitan service and for remote locations at least 50% more.

Jennie Hannan
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Anglicare WA

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