



Report on Child Safety Research Conference

**Child protection – integrating research
policy practice**

Learning from each other and creating new knowledge

14–15 November 2006



Executive Summary

The inaugural Child Safety Research Conference was held on 14–15 November 2006. A total of 334 delegates attended the conference. Each day 310 child protection practitioners (government and non-government), policy officers, other departmental staff, students and researchers heard keynote and sub-keynote addresses, participated in working sessions and had the opportunity to see examples of good practice.

Over 160 departmental staff attended the conference, including over 75 frontline staff from 41 child safety service centres across Queensland.

'Integrating research policy practice' was the conference theme, with the sub-theme *'Learning from each other and creating new knowledge'*.

Topics as diverse as excellence in child protection practice; building bridges between policy, practice and research; permanency planning; corporate parenting; child protection in the context of a culturally diverse society; 'Playing it Safe – the challenge of safety decision making'; parenting under pressure; and finding and using research in child protection practice were presented in a variety of formats.

Both keynote speakers, Associate Professor Karen Healy and Professor Dorothy Scott, were extremely well received by delegates and presented key research and shared their extensive expertise in the field of child protection. Another feature of the conference was the co-facilitation of most working sessions by a researcher and a child protection practitioner. This partnering was used to model the interactions possible between practice and research. Feedback from delegates and presenters on this model was positive.

The Child Safety Research Advisory Group (CSRAG) supported the conference with advice on topics and program. CSRAG members who presented at the conference:

- Professor Dorothy Scott (Director, Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia)
- Professor Chris Goddard (National Research Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Monash University)
- Associate Professor Judy Cashmore (University of Sydney)
- Professor Ros Thorpe (James Cook University); Professor Jan Mason (University of Western Sydney)
- Dr Daryl Higgins (Australian Institute of Family Studies)
- Dr Yvonne Darlington (University of Queensland)
- Dr Jennifer Osmond (Griffith University).

A conference working group was approved by the Director-General to plan the theme, program, speakers and to review the conference. Members of the working group included representatives from across the divisions of the department, Dr Yvonne Darlington (CSRAG representative) and an executive officer from PeakCare. Strategic Policy and Research Branch, Policy and Program Division, organised the conference. Dr Stephen Lake A/Senior Advisor, Pieta Sephton Senior Policy Officer, Nicola Warman-Flood temporary Project Officer and Michael Power, Director, were the officers responsible for the conference.

Overall feedback on the conference from delegates and presenters was very affirming. A positive tone pervaded the conference with many delegates thanking the department for the opportunity to attend and asking when the next conference to explore the integration of research, policy and practice will be available to them.

**Child Safety
Research Conference
2006**

Learnings
from
presentations
and
working sessions

Key learnings

Keynote address

Investing in practitioners: creating conditions for excellence in child protection practice

Associate Professor Karen Healy (University of Queensland)

- We cannot expect practitioners to arrive 'fully formed' for frontline work.
 - The characteristics needed are:
"about emotional stability, robustness, self-reliance...Because when you start as a front-line worker anywhere here, very, very quickly events of case loads and casework take over and at the end of the day you are left with whatever you come into the organisation with".
[Australian, Child Protection Manager]
- Why is this a problem?
 - 'Practice ready' does not equal 'fully formed'.
 - Generic educational programs.
 - The intensive and specific demands of practice.
- Creating effective systems for new workers includes:
 - internship models
 - structured and extensive inductions
 - mentoring.
- (Re)valuing frontline service roles:
 - takes time and resources
 - requires polishing
 - should be highly valued and defended.
- An agenda for action:
 - Build an evidence base about what works for building and sustaining excellence.
 - Public recognition of excellence in frontline practice and supervision.



Associate Professor Karen Healy

Delegate responses *

DChS

- Validated the issues prevalent in all offices of child protection.
- Believe it validated what the majority of CSOs feel working within the department.
- Lends to management/supervision practice. It validates my existing knowledge and beliefs gained from experience as a departmental worker.
- Confirmation of challenges faced in frontline work – builds confidence in purpose of work.
- Good thinking material, some affirmation also.
- Good but not much to takeaway. A good assembly of ideas but would have preferred more of an in-depth analysis.

Non-government agency

- Great presentation! Excellent information regarding retaining staff and providing the type of working environments conducive to proficient practice.

Other government agency

- Issues for frontline staff need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- Great to hear about staff retention. It has such a huge impact on the quality of work with children and families.

* Delegate responses are examples of responses provided to conference organisers. Responding to sessions was at the discretion of delegates. Some sessions had multiple feedback forms submitted while other sessions had only a few forms submitted.

Keynote Address

Building bridges between policy, practice and research: a way forward with and for children and families

Professor Dorothy Scott

(Director of the Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia)

- The past decade has witnessed a growing emphasis on evidence based practices and policies across a wide variety of fields including health care, criminal justice, education and management.
- *“The challenge is to promote uptake of innovations that have been shown to be effective, to delay spread of those that have not yet been shown to be effective, and to prevent uptake of ineffective innovations.”* (Haines & Donald, 2002, p.4)
- The big questions:
 - Policy
 - What is effective in child abuse prevention?
 - What is the best child protection system?
 - Practice
 - What works with troubled families?
 - How is a therapeutic relationship enhanced?
- Successful implementation of evidence into practice requires attention to:
 1. practitioners
 2. organizational context
 3. the nature of evidence
 4. methods of implementation (Barwick et al, 2005).
- Research utilisation is essential but challenging in child protection.
- The major challenge is not research dissemination or professional training but making change in complex organisations.
- Despite the challenges, we have never known more about how to do it than we do now, for example prevention and early intervention programs in South Australia where universal provision of antenatal care is showing promise in reducing risk of child abuse and neglect.
- But research is not enough.
- HOPE. *“Institutions of hope refer to sets of rules, norms and practices that ensure that we have some room not only to dream of the extraordinary but also to do the extraordinary.”* (Braithwaite, 2004)

Delegate responses

DChS

- Excellent and inspirational practical address!
- I really enjoyed the link between child protection practice, government, economics and how this influences practice and policy. A wonderful presenter that was able to provide me with reflective questions for later.
- Very good as always. Great that Dorothy used the ‘Swamp’ metaphor (Schon, 1983) to reference learning and practice. We need to draw from associated disciplines such as adult learning education, etc – How do practitioners learn what they do?
- Very inspirational session. Practical ideas for how to implement research in service centres
- Excellent and inspirational presentation. There of heart and head working together has resonance to me as a practitioner.

Non-government agency

- Absolutely superb presentation! Wonderful discourse about how policy, research and practice is supposed to work together for good of children in care! Riveting and hard hitting.

Other government agency

- Inspirational – lots of HOPE provided.

Other

- Inspiring and a lovely emphasis on the art of CP work. 'Heart' is not a dirty work in CP. Heart, art and science all have their place in CP.



Professor Dorothy Scott

Sub-keynote addresses – notes and delegate responses

'The Truth is Longer than a Lie' – children's experiences of abuse and professional intervention

Professor Chris Goddard (National Research Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Monash University)

- Listening to children, really listening and responding to what is heard, is a key challenge for those working with children and especially those working in child protection.
- We need to ensure that we are not part of perpetuating the 'inaudible' child/ren.
- It is harder for children to tell the truth than it is to tell a more simple lie
- The language that is used in the media, for example, a child referred to as 'it', needs to be challenged and we as practitioners need to be conscious of the verbal and written language used in our work.

Delegate responses

DChS

- This session highlighted to me the importance of the CSO role of being an advocate for children, the importance of contact with children and being there for them. Something we need to do more vs. paperwork.

Non-government agency

- This was great – what a wake up call to the language of the courts and media. I was moved and inspired to make a huge effort to make sure that I don't ignore the issue because it is easy.
- Brilliant session – factual and emotionally touching at the same time. Inspired one to ACT and continue working with the best interest of the child.
- Made me want to listen more to the children.

Adoption contextualised – permanency planning

Jenny Ames (Department of Community Services NSW)

- Finding the right permanency solution for the particular child is fundamentally important.
- Policy framework and practice needs to be supported by an appropriate legislative framework.
- Adoption provides legal and emotional benefits for children which endure beyond their 18th birthday.

Delegate responses

DChS

- Great to hear about new pilot program in NSW for Permanency Planning.
- Post Adoption Allowance.
- Knowledge – enhanced NSW legislation and practice.
- Very informative. Greater awareness of the issues within this subject.
- NSW legislation and how QLD is catching up to the similarities of the ACT were provided. The standardised practice that is interesting and how the collaborative practice is vital for the best interest of the child.
- Can we please trial these? What a great idea (the links between CP and Adoption are great).
- Insight into initial planning right from child removal to referral for perm care/adoption.
- Increased new knowledge.

Corporate parenting – the promise, the constraint and the challenge in caring for children and young people

Associate Professor Judy Cashmore (University of Sydney)

- ‘Corporate parenting’ emphasises the collective responsibility of local authorities to achieve good parenting. In broad terms, there is an expectation that a corporate parent will do at least what a good parent would do for their child.
- Being a good corporate parent means accepting responsibility for children in care, making their needs a priority and seeking for them the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children.
- However, there is a fundamental difference between providing services and parenting. The corporate parent cannot provide day-to-day care and cannot directly meet the relational needs of children and young people in terms of personal continuing commitments, but the corporate parent can delegate day-to-day care and appropriate decision making close to the child.
- The corporate parent can do better on a multi-level basis – by focussing on the child’s immediate environment, ensuring good social and psychological parenting and addressing systemic issues and by ensuring responses are of a multi-agency nature, including areas of education, health, mental health and housing.

Implications for the department

- It raises issues of continuing support to young people once they turn 18 years of age, and transition from care into independent living – suggested that the responsibility of the corporate parent continues until the child turns 21 or even 24 years of age if the young person is still being supported in higher education or training.
- It is affirming of the current focus by the Department of Child Safety to work towards an integrated and coordinated approach to families, including education, health, mental health and housing services.

Delegate responses

DChS

- Better understanding of needs for continuing support, management of transitions (in out-of-home care between carers/workers) and impact on child’s development of relationships.
- DChS worker who has worked in UK system wishes DChS and other agencies would adopt this theory.
- Knowledge of safety assessment tool – safety plans.
- Knowledge of UK model that promotes thinking about extending support for young people as they transition from care into adulthood. Good info on collaborative interagency.

Child Protection in the Context of a Culturally Diverse Society

Professor Hurriyet Babacan (Victoria University)

Despite a national increase in reported child abuse, the focus on people from culturally diverse backgrounds remains small. Culturally diverse communities remain invisible in the child protection systems for a range of reasons. This presentation, drawing on work undertaken by the author and an extensive review of the literature, examined causal and risk factors that impact on children of culturally diverse backgrounds and determine the ‘risk of harm’ in the context of migration and settlement.

The paper also covered issues relating to professional and policy responses of service providers and provided an analysis of alternative models and frameworks for a culturally sensitive practice. No further information is available as the paper is approved for publishing in the near future.

Delegate responses

DChS

- Excellent – a different way of learning.

- Very informative and valid topic. This topic covered really well in what CALD/ NESB communities faced with CP area. Need more discussion on this topic.
- Good overview of issues – increased knowledge on practice frameworks.
- Very good – great analysis of problems families and workers have when coming into contact with and responding to child protection concerns.
- Good information re assessment issues however due to time constraints couldn't discuss/unpack this more and more towards more practical strategies in working at CALD families in CP context.
- The lecture broadened my overall knowledge – excellent.
- Why certain cultures may not access service for child protection. The impact that migration has on the extended family unit.
- Understanding trauma/difficulties faced in child safety work in Indigenous communities – both by communities and working especially in rural areas. What research mean in Indigenous communities. How we can encourage this locally?

Non-government agency

- Very informative, would have enjoyed full presentation in more depth. Would also appreciate slide presentation (copy) and would have liked to receive further information/pamphlets.
- Presentation excellent – applicable to good culturally competent practice within DChS framework. More time allocated is advised.
- Importance of need for CALD formed organisation in the community to service minority communities and children and young people in care from CALD backgrounds
- Very interesting especially cultural practices that have been misconstrued as child abuse – thank you.
- Raised individual professional and organisational idea for cultural sensitivity/collaboration. Concept of tacit and explicit culture. Considerations required/food for thought.
- Complexity is described and some solutions suggested – excellent.

Other government agency

- Complexity of issue within all culture. Child safety still priority 1 – need for more training.
- Well presented in a clear logical form. I hope this is available to download.
- Application to CP and DV – principles are similar very interesting.
- Significantly increased my knowledge – would like presentation copy.

Other

- Evidence based statistics on cultural issues and child abuse.

Evidence-based practice or practice-based evidence: an Indigenous perspective

Professor Judy Atkinson, Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples, Southern Cross University

- Participants were encouraged to consider 'what is research' and the challenge was how to value Indigenous research based on oral tradition.
- This session challenged participants' world view of Indigenous people and the presenter shared personal life experiences with participants.
- Presented an opportunity to participants to take a journey to discover a different paradigm from which to work when conducting or considering research involving Indigenous individuals or communities.
- Indigenous Research chronology
 - Terra nullius phase: 1770 – 1900
 - Traditionaling phase: 1900 – 1940
 - Assimilationist phase: 1940 – 1970
 - Early Aboriginal Research phase: 1970 – 1990
 - Recent Aboriginal Research phase: 1990 – 2000
 - Indigenist Research: 2000 plus (Karen Martin 2006)

- ‘Indigenist Research’ in the context of cultural fidelity, safety and security, should be based on “rights, respect and responsibilities” in research (Rigney, 1999: 3).
- Rigney further defines Indigenist Research as being informed by three fundamental and interrelated principles, “resistance as the emancipatory imperative, political integrity, and privileging Indigenous voices” in a collective activity by Indigenous peoples, with Indigenous peoples in research where the goals are clearly defined to assist in the struggle for self-determination (1999: 12-16).
- Rigney (1997) also says “Indigenous people are at a stage where they want research, and research design, to contribute to their self-determination and liberation struggles, as it is defined and controlled by their communities” (p. 3).
- He explains that this is because “Indigenous peoples think and interpret the world and its realities in differing ways to non-indigenous peoples because of their experiences, histories, cultures and values” (p.8).
- The foundation of Indigenous research lies within the reality of the lived Indigenous experience. Indigenous researchers ground their research knowingly in the lives of real persons as individuals and social beings, not on the world of ideas.
- Research in Indigenous communities or with Indigenous people is a very different process than in non-Indigenous communities.
- Do not make assumptions about the person in front of you.
- You need to stop what you are doing and think!

Delegate responses

DChS

- Excellent presentation, thought provoking and reflective on proactive work Indigenous people/communities.
- Fascinating lecture – approach to ideas that should be used in all cases.

Family Inclusion in Child Protection Work

Professor Ros Thorpe (JCU), Mark Carey (Mercy Family Services) and Karyn Walsh (QCOSS and Micah Projects)

Research findings derived through consultations and work with families as part of the Family Inclusion Project (FIN) – Ros Thorpe:

1. Most families in the child protection system are disadvantaged and vulnerable.
2. Loss and grief is a constant feature. Feelings of loss and unresolvable grief in parents, hidden disenfranchised grief and chronic sorrow.
3. Parents may experience child protection as excluding and harmful to them; the parent’s experience of a child coming into care is viewed as harmful to the child; some parents experience disrespectful relationships that are belittling; an experience of the use of power over parents.

‘My Family First’ Program – Mark Carey

- My Family First is a nine week course that helps parents with their grief and loss, to manage their emotions and still be important to their children, when their children are in care. Outcomes of the program include dealing with strong emotions and negative behaviours; parents becoming more motivated and becoming more constructive in case planning processes with DChS. The aim is to include families more in the process.
- Systemic issues affecting family intervention practice include:
 - discourse of parents living in poverty
 - discourse of parents in the child protection system and the need to listen
 - the impact of poverty in the lives of parents and the need for investment at the micro and macro level
 - who brings together the resources that families need?
- Focus on interests of the child. Engagement process workers have the power and cannot deny that power and we need to use that power wisely.

- Areas for practice improvement include:
 - information for parents about the child protection system
 - child protection process is a legal process
 - administrative fairness
 - more investment in family support.
- An outcome of the program is that parents work more effectively with DChS.

Delegate responses

DChS

- More emphasis to be placed on including families in decisions and exploring department process to families.
- Confirmed some concerns re: our work with parents. Program in Toowoomba looked positive and helpful. This and other session would have benefited by a response from a CSO.
- Hurray Hurray – Great presentation, sensible suggestions on what to consider with respect to the needs of parents. This point of view (of parents) has showed me that there are huge deficits of understanding in our practice. But now we can make change that accommodates their needs and improve our services.
- Little unbalanced in the presentation – emphasis was on how DChS excludes parents in CP process as opposed to emphasis on how DChS can include more in day-to-day department work, for example, My Family First program – unrealistic application to departmental day. Learning – unfair administration: DChS to better record when clients contact and not only when dept contacts the clients.
- Have taken away re-invigorated and even some new learnings – thank you.

Children's needs in out-of-home care – Practice and policy implications of research findings in which children's voices were privileged

Professor Jan Mason (University of Western Sydney)

- The major need for children in out-of-home care is for connections. Continuity in connections is important for meeting children's emotional needs, that is for love and someone being there.
- Children said that these connections need to be based on what is happening in the present and having things in common. They expressed how important it is to have relationships with mothers, people of their own age (including siblings and friends) and that these relationships are reciprocal.
- The importance of hearing children's voices was emphasised, because in the words of children themselves "because then we get a kid's point of view, from where they are standing which might be different to where someone else is standing".
- Adult professionals effectively connect with children when they take on the role of 'learning' from children, negotiate control with children and develop skills in communicating with children.

Implications for the department

- Recommendations that policies, procedures and record systems ensure that important connections and relationships of children are maintained and developed.
- Explore how the department includes and listens to the voices of children.

Delegate responses

Non Gov

- Best session I attended in both days. Very well presented. Very practically applicable and a nice reminder to frontline practitioners.
- Didn't provide enough on children's rights.
- Useful material and remind us of the importance of observation with children.

Working sessions

Working sessions were conducted each afternoon of the conference. These sessions were specifically designed to offer participants the opportunity to consider and workshop critical child protection issues with colleagues. There was a specific design brief to presenters – model interactions and the possibilities when researchers and practitioners work together.

Presenters were asked to co-plan and co-facilitate their allocated topic. This occurred in most instances and was successful in most of the working sessions as presented at the conference.

Specific feedback from Chairs and delegates on each working session is attached as Appendix 1.

Examples of good practice

Three examples of good practice were presented at the conference:

- Indigenous Projects – engaging Elders and responding to needs in Indigenous communities
- From them and us to just us – an integrated model of out-of-home care
- Therapeutic and behaviour support – reflections on positive outcomes for extreme needs young people.

These sessions were presented concurrently, with delegates choosing one of the examples. Organisers attempted to offer a variety of examples. All three examples involved significant levels of collaboration with non-government partners or other government departments. The sessions were generally well received with most feedback indicating that more time should have been allocated to this session so that additional interaction could have occurred between presenters and delegates.

Specific feedback from Chairs and delegates on each example of good practice is attached as Appendix 2.

A delegate from a government agency commented on the conference:

"I thought that the whole conference acknowledged staff and recognised them for a difficult job well done. It showed a commitment to their professional development, and gave practitioners time out from the daily pressures of their job to refresh and renew. I loved the attention to detail – great food, good venue, the movie and social event. All of this created an atmosphere where it was possible for DChS staff (and others) to catch up with colleagues, take time out and think about wider issues, which they may not have time to do in their day to day work.

'Inspirational' was the word I used when I got back to the office. You've set the bar very high!"

Appendix 1

Working Session Chair notes and delegate responses

Session A

Working with children who have been sexually abused and adolescents who commit sexual offences

Annette Vasey (DChS) and Professor Stephen Smallbone (Griffith University)

The session was well supported in numbers. This was the first run of the presentation. It would be interesting to see if the second time it was run if it was more seamless.

Strengths

Professor Smallbone presented very interesting research, had good presentation style and interacted with the audience. Speakers were both well organised and had ample (probably too much) material to present. Both speakers are well regarded on the topic of sexual abuse and have very good reputations.

Weaknesses

Amphitheatre was a difficult place to get interaction from delegates.

Overall

Based on total presentation, feedback from most participants I spoke to was that they wanted more specific examples about sexual abuse from Annette and departmental clients and research that related to intervention, assessment and engagement.

Delegate responses

DChS

- Stephen Smallbone was excellent but ran out of time. Very important to get his information disseminated.

Session B

Stickability in Child Protection

Professor Lesley Chenoweth (Griffith University), Chris Bowman (DChS)

1. There is a need to manage the tension between personal and practical issues:
 - Models need to be flexible enough to accommodate rural and remote staff.
 - Strategies, such as access to supervision, need to be focussed not just on procedure issues but also on personal and professional issues.
2. Carer pathways need:
 - a variety of professional practice skills beyond the PO5 level
 - to offering greater mobility and flexibility in carer pathways within the organisation.
3. Manage the image of the department presented in the media better.

Whose responsibility is it to solve this – individual/office/organisation?

Delegate responses

DChS

- Knowledge of situations in other offices and what 'hasn't' worked.
- Chris's presentation about strategies that make for good operations in offices were influential. Concrete things that I can put into practice. Also hadn't thought about offices which over time have experienced 'hey days and low times' based on who is there at particular time and their influence and expertise.

- Excellent.

Session C

Outcomes for children and young people in care

KC Weir and Reeny Jurczynszyn (CREATE) and Matthew Armstrong (DChS)

- A child focussed decision is one you could explain and provide an evidence base for, if the child who was the subject of the decision asked about the decision in 25 years time.
- Research needs to look at what helps young people growing up in care become strong and successful.
- CSSOs showing unconditional positive regards has a powerful and proactive impact on young people's futures.

Delegate responses

DChS

- Excellent session – found their research to be beneficial.
- To focus on the positives NOT the pathology – look forward to hearing more research.
- Very interesting to hear their thoughts and perspectives. I think the research is much needed and will be very useful for informing future practice.

Session D

Playing it safe: the challenge of safety decision making

Sue Smith (DChS) and Cheryl Lingard (DChS)

- Overview of safety assessments – immediate harm factors; safety interventions; safety decisions and safety plans. Focus of the tool is on immediate safety factors.
- 5000 safety assessments have been completed in the 12 months of operation of the tool.
- Determining the safety threshold – a timeframe concept from within a year to right now. Co-exists with a higher level of harm serious impact/effect for the child (range from 'not detrimental' to 'life threatening').
- Assessing for safety – not an incident based assessment but a deliberate process of information collection. The assessment is based in the here and now.
- Concepts of safety and risk – safety is a subset of risk and risk exists on a continuum from high to low. Safety has a threshold level.
- Safety = now; risk = the future or likelihood.
- The safety plan – need to be explicit in the plan about defining the danger and that the plan develops a plan of intervention, requires a written agreement, but important that without the definition of what the safety is, the plan will not properly address how to ameliorate the danger.
- A safety plan is not the final case plan – its purpose is to control and manage not treat or change, it is simple and achievable.
- Moving from deficit based approach to strengths.
- Exercises discussed with reference to two case scenarios, immediate risk vs risk.
- Safety plan example provided.

Delegate responses

DChS

- Good tool for CSOs – time line etc, great distinction between safety/work.
- Good practical session on safety assessments and safety plans. Session needed more time as quite rushed.
- Excellent for a working example of a safety plan, succinct and well presented.
- Good refresher to existing practice.
- Risk vs safety.
- Clear and concise description of the difference between safety and risk.
- Increased awareness – will now go back and read about SDM and safety plans.

- Finally it's clear! Continuous Risk/Safety Threshold.
- Useful check list/useful questions to support SDM Tool Q's.

Other government agency

- Have an insight into the assessment of safety and risk of harm.
- Great overview.
- Minimal info for someone external to DChS. However, probably very useful for CSO's using tool.
- Excellent opportunity to understand and share (and appreciate!) practice issues of DChS.
- Very good introduction to child safety examples and decision making.

Non-government agency

- Not to be used myself but important knowledge of practice of CP workers.
- Good insight.
- Good practice session, squeezed too much into the available time – good activities – give more time if possible.
- Practice knowledge increased. Would like more time – group work slower.
- Dept processes re: safety and especially clarification re: definitional difference between safety and risk.
- Awareness raising.
- Exposure to the tool and concepts. Useful in my role as Externals (Independent) Reviewer Child Death Review.

Session E

Parenting Under Pressure

Dr Paul Harnett (UQ) and Professor Sharon Dawe (Griffith University)

- This session focussed on the Parents Under Pressure (PUP) program developed by Griffith University's Professor Sharon Dawe and Dr Paul Harnett from the University of Queensland.
- PUP is an intensive one-on-one 10 module, home-based program designed to improve child behaviour, decrease parental stress and improve family functioning.
- The program has been trailed on parents with substance abuse history, parents leaving prison and parents/families with a history of child neglect or abuse.
- Results of the trial, one in three chance of success or improvement in target group.

“Control your own mind, instead of letting your mind be in control of you.”

Delegate responses

DChS

- Very good program, very useful tools to use with parents and children.
- Very interesting.
- Useful strategies in intervention with families – multi dimensions.
- How to work with parents when they are under pressure. Not to judge them but to work with them to understand the issues.
- Good information about a structures program for reunifying children with at risk parents.
- Current practice strategies and interventions that can be used in working with multi-problem families.
- Was interesting to hear a holistic approach to CP – but didn't really help significantly re: usefulness for me. But interesting thoughts.
- Good overview of a program to assist parents, it has provided some information that I would like to seek more details about.
- Good ideas for addressing substance, life issues/parenting in a holistic way

Other government agency

- Able to ask questions.

- The focus on complex family issues not available in programs currently available to me. Provides interesting possibilities

Non-government agency

- Great knowledge will pass this on in daily support of others. To assist others to cope at time of stress and conflict.
- Sounds like a good program but too lengthy for foster carers. Believe it would be costly training.
- Raised questions re: similarities and differences between intensive (in-home) family services that already work with similar population and whether any research considering PUP in relationship to these has occurred.
- Liked it a lot, particularly how to help parents with mood regulation and improved confidence co-parent/self esteem.
- Good handout, not enough time for case study – applicable to my like of work.
- Very good content – longer and better acoustics would have been good.
- Useful tools provided. Would be interested in seeing the entire workbook.

Session F

Finding and Using Research in Child Protection Practice

Dr Daryl Higgins (AIFS) and Leanne Black (DChS)

- Focus was on how to you use research to improve what you do to provide services to children, young people and families – this included:
 - Group discussion on what is research, evidence base and practice wisdom.
 - How do you know when an article is good research?
 - How do you support the use of research in your workplace?
 - What is the role of managers/supervisors in supporting a research culture in the workplace?
 - What are local examples of discussing and using research across agencies – peer networks?
 - Discussion of what resources are available from AIFS.

Delegate responses

DChS

- Great information on accessing research and ways of linking research to practice.
- Different approach – made me stop and think!
- Both presenters were fantastic. Format was interesting and involved us as participants.

Other government agency

- Interacting with other people from different areas and different information shared will help me with my ideas and practices.

Non-government agency

- Excellent and productive.
- Good overview of issues. Could DChS share their relevant practice notes and infonet with non-gov sector?
- Really enjoyed this workshop. I have missed referring to research and this workshop promoted the accessibility of options.

Session G

Willing but not able

Louise Dwyer (Alina Program, Spiritus/Anglicare) with Glenys Carlson and Robert Green (Disability Services Queensland)

- This session centred on the challenge to involve people with a disability in decision making.

- Another point emphasised was the need to value people with a disability in society.
- The large group was broken up into three smaller groups and were given scenarios of people with a disability who had children. The scenarios focussed on decisions having to be made with regard to the person with a disability and whether they were part of the decision making process.
- All scenarios highlighted 'contributions' required from various government and non-government stakeholders in order to support parents and children and the lack of cohesion between all parties in order to make that decision.
- The scenarios used demonstrated that when agencies keep within their strict boundaries of what services they offer and when – that this was a contributor to children and young people coming into care.
- New parenting resource – Healthy Start is a national strategy for children of parents with a learning difficulty which support parents to promote a healthy start for their child.

Delegate responses

DChS

- It taught me more about how DSQ can work with us with parents with a disability. This can be a more effective option and outcome as we work together.
- Great to talk with our partners.
- Tension around gate keeping and roles of dept in responding to disability issues. How to overcome role indifference. Well thought though session.
- Some of the ideas/concepts are little removed form the everyday client /DSQ/DChS processes in rural – non metro locations where neither DSQ nor related programs are located or exist!
- Would have liked more information re: research on how to work with parents who have a disability, for example, development of case plan/ongoing partnership; involvement in family group management; supporting parents to meet case plan ie – turn up for contact visit, teach skills to parents etc; how to approach investigation and assessment of CP concerns.
- Good presentation and learnings – thank you.
- Viewing the situation outside C.S framework.

Other Gov

- Good discussion/brainstorm re: scenorios.
- Would have liked more info on resources particularly with regards to children of autism, and their families, and guidelines and concepts around DSQ etc and eligibility etc.

Other

- My understanding of system (structural) limitations – when disability (resourcing) issues become or have to become CP issues.

Session H

Building collaborative inter-agency strategies

Dr Yvonne Darlington (UQ) and Sandra Tucker (DChS)

- Research findings show that workers have the will to collaborate. There is evidence that there is substantial contact between workers and agencies (90 per cent) but that in only 10 per cent of situations is it demonstrated that true collaboration occurs.
- Elements of best practice and areas of improvement include:
 - improved communication
 - resources available for use
 - development of knowledge between people and agencies
 - formal and informal strategies.
- Risks include:
 - often collaborating workers leave
 - important to acknowledge that collaboration strategies should also include staff at the team and office level in addition to close working relationships with individuals.

- Common themes that need to be addressed at the zonal level need to be drawn together to improve collaborative opportunities at other levels in an organisation.
- Improving inter-departmental information sharing, for example, confidentiality and what are the boundaries that need to be worked on.
- Yvonne and Sandra introduced a Working Plan for Interagency Collaboration framework that includes formal and informal activities in key areas of:
 - communication
 - knowledge development
 - resources (personal, organisational in-kind).

Delegate responses

DChS

- Interagency work – quality speakers!

Session I

Evidence-based practice or practice-based evidence – Indigenous educating

Professor Judy Atkinson (Southern Cross University), Jeanette Hughes (DChS) and Cynthia Rowan (DChS – Chair)

- There were significant learnings from this session that need to be understood in the context of the location where Jeanette works (Mornington Island).
- Jeanette expressed some of her experiences and difficulties as an isolated worker.

Learnings for consideration:

- Skill development is needed for staff who supervise Indigenous workers.
- Staff who are related to families under investigations for child abuse should be excluded from the Intake and Assessment process.
- Staff should be skilled to work with Indigenous people before being sent to remote communities.
- Staff need to develop a relationship with key or significant people in remote communities before undertaking statutory work there.
- Fortnightly supervision and debriefing for Indigenous staff located on remote communities after each significant event – such as removal of child/ren from remote communities.
- There should be two staff per location to ensure support and professional work continues.
- Ensure that staff who work in remote locations are provided with meaningful and regular support and training opportunities.

Working Session J

Permanency Planning

Dr Claire Tilbury (GU) and Dr Jennifer Osmond (GU) with Soraya Shah (DChS)

- Permanency Planning is not new, but there is now evidence from research to support practice.
- The most important aspect of permanency planning in children's opinions is having enduring, unconditional emotional connections in relationships.
- The language we use to talk about permanency planning is important – we need to make sure that discussions on permanency focus on relationships and not on long-term out-of-home care.

Delegate responses

DChS

- Very practical session including research and practice base. Would have been better to explore how to improve better but great reminder of basics.

- Clearer understanding of difficulty facets of perm planning ie in home care – out-of-home care relationship connections.
- Great to ‘thrash out’ meaning of permanency planning.
- Excellent interactive session – good discussion about real meaning of permanency planning.

Other government agency

- It was great to hear about permanency planning being talked about in relation to relationships. Creative exploration of it.

Session K

Therapeutic Interventions

Professor Graham Martin (UQ), Associate Professor Robert King (UQ) and Tim Wood

Strengths

The session had good numbers. Both psychiatrists clearly had a wealth of information. Professor Martin was an engaging speaker who used good stories to present his session. The information presented was interesting and had clear links to the work of delegates.

Weaknesses

The power went out, though it did not matter as neither presenter had any visual presentations. Tim Wood was not afforded time to present.

Overall

Feedback from most participants was that they were really interested in this topic but the presentation style and lack of organisation or preparation was clearly apparent.

The venue was not conducive for a more interactive workshop format which appeared to be the way the presenters wanted to go.

Delegate responses

DChS

- Excellent – thank you.
- It was extremely informative and its speakers were extremely knowledgeable and engaging.

Non-government agency

- Has there been research into Therapeutic options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples? Particularly given the over representation of ATSI in CP system. Given commitment to include in CP Act specific needs of this target group. Healing options. Addressing trans-generational trauma.

Appendix 2

Examples of good practice – Chair notes and feedback from delegates

1. Indigenous Projects – engaging elders and responding to needs in Indigenous communities

Kelly Murdock and Jan Metcalfe (DChS)

Both presentations highlighted the importance of:

- building strong and enduring relationships with key community stakeholders was the single most important factor to creating a new way of working
- being honest and open with each other regarding decision making processes
- constant nurturing of the relationships, despite the strong existing relationships, and that is the responsibility of all concerned
- doing the hard work of building new relationships, past hurts could be forgiven.

Delegate feedback

DChS

- Good to get thinking/encouraging to see some good things happening – empowering.

Non-government agency

- First part was informative.

2. From them and us to just us

Toni Cash (DChS) and Lisa Hillan (Save the Child QLD)

Session was well supported in numbers. This session was only run once but should have been run twice.

Strengths

This was probably the session (other than keynotes) that I most enjoyed. Even though it was only 45 minutes it covered a great deal of information. Both Lisa and Toni are excellent speakers and they engaged well with the audience in a limited time. The content was excellent in terms of best practice and this was supported by Professor Scott's comments about best practice in Australia in the WRICSI model. The room seemed to work well.

Weaknesses

Time, this session could easily have had another 45 minutes and still maintained interest and covered key points. It would have been an interesting workshop option. Another challenge was people dribbling in to the room after the end of the previous session for a period of about 15 minutes.

Delegate feedback

DChS

- Excellent presentation – what hope they have given to other CSSC's as to what can be achieved – partnerships with NGO's for successful outcomes for children is really possible! Great example and that motivated us to 'have a go' at local CSSC.

Non-government agency

- Excellent – very enthusiastic presentation – and good info. Inspirational.
- Excellent presentation – excellent initiative and program.

Other government agency

- If what was found to be useful was put into practice it would be a much better system to work with!

3. Therapeutic and Behaviour Support

Colin Smith (DChS), Stephen Bell (QHealth) & Robyn Bridges (DSQ)

- Focussed on the notion of inclusion of children and families in their work to achieve better outcomes in the long term.
- Expect to work with children and families for six – eight months before any positive outcomes. This is due to the time it takes to address a number of the trauma and other issues impacting on children/young people in care.
- Work is underway on defining outcome methodology.
- An important part of the establishment of the service was to establish an identity as one service where an interagency support plan is developed – rather than a case plan where one agency negotiates services with others and there is a lack of planning and understanding of what each is doing. Focus on one identity as a service – rather than three separate agencies working together. All agencies working together to make a decision. This has required a working through of difficult decisions as a team.
- This has also involved joint planning days between staff from different agencies and using joint assessment tools. Joint training has also been undertaken.
- All agencies are explicit in their involvement and role with families which includes:
 - goals and outcomes that are explicit with timeframes
 - avoiding repetition in work between agencies.

It has been useful to use the service to review placement breakdowns when they occur to focus on what else could have been done to assist the child/young person and to focus on solutions.

The service has also undertaken joint training for carers on the impact of trauma and how to assist children and young people.

Delegate feedback

DChS

- Have clients who could be referred to this program.

Non-government agency

- Good overview of program – clearly presented.

Other government agency

- An excellent model to case manage children with very high level needs.
- I would like to see managers preparing staff for this level of collaboration.