



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

VULNERABILITY SPEAKER SERIES



Improving the wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people

RioTinto

Seminar
24 August 2018



#vulnerability2018
@CCYPWA



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Marie Taylor





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Commissioner Colin Pettit





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Young people

Commissioner's Aboriginal Leadership Cross-Cultural
Solutions Program





Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Winthrop Professor Helen Milroy

Former Commissioner for the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.



*Improving the wellbeing of
Aboriginal children and young
people*

*The Vulnerability Speaker Series
CCYP 2018*



Life is relationships



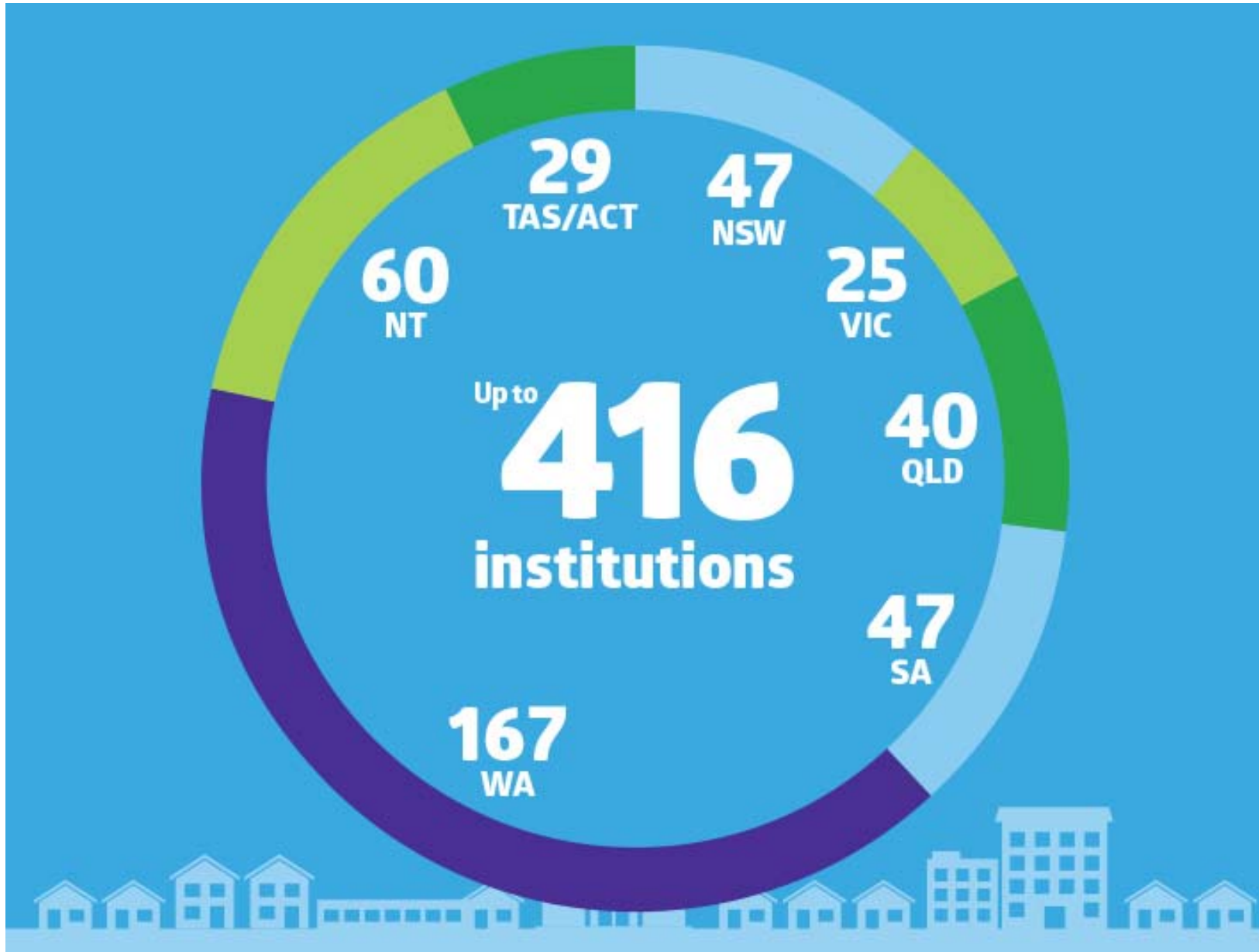
Three Questions

- Have we really understood the magnitude of what happened?
- Can you really address the vulnerability of children in isolation from family, community, culture?
- Have we really understood the value, strength and importance of culture, Aboriginal knowledge systems and healing practices?

Talking to the moon



- What stage are we?
- Bearing witness
- Power of enduring relationships
- Safety



Historical Context

- Sustained Trauma and helplessness
- Profound Grief, loss, disconnection, fragmentation
- Extreme Powerlessness and loss of control, denial, deprivation

- BTHR: Genocide
- Cumulative, collective, generational



Private sessions



- 8,000 private sessions held
- 14.3% survivors identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 54.3% male, 45.4% female
- 4.5% children or young people



1. Private Sessions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

- 79.8% pre 1990
- 13.5% from 1990 onwards
- 4.8% reported having a disability
- 23.4% were inmates at the time
- 75% out-of-home care
- 43.5% religious institution.
- most told us they were sexually abused on multiple occasions
- more than one-third said they were sexually abused for between one and five years
- multigenerational



Understanding impacts

- **Complex and profound, interconnected:** Difficult to isolate one impact from another.
- **Differ by individual:** Complex association between sexual abuse, reaction, and wellbeing throughout life. Can affect all domains of development
- **Change over time:** Triggering events, life stages, cumulative harm.
- **Influenced by many factors:** Characteristics of abuse, relationship of victim to perpetrator, institutional contexts, victim's circumstances, resilience.
- **Ripple effects**

What we heard in private sessions

Impacts on wellbeing, as at 31st May 2017

In private sessions, 93.3% of survivors discussed the impact of the abuse. Of these:

- **94.9%** identified impacts on mental health
- **67.6%** described difficulties with interpersonal relationships
- **55.7%** identified poor educational outcomes, economic insecurity
- **24.2%** spoke about difficulties with physical intimacy and affection.
- Chronic disease common



Trauma and Risk

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and child sexual abuse in institutional contexts

Report for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses
to Child Sexual Abuse

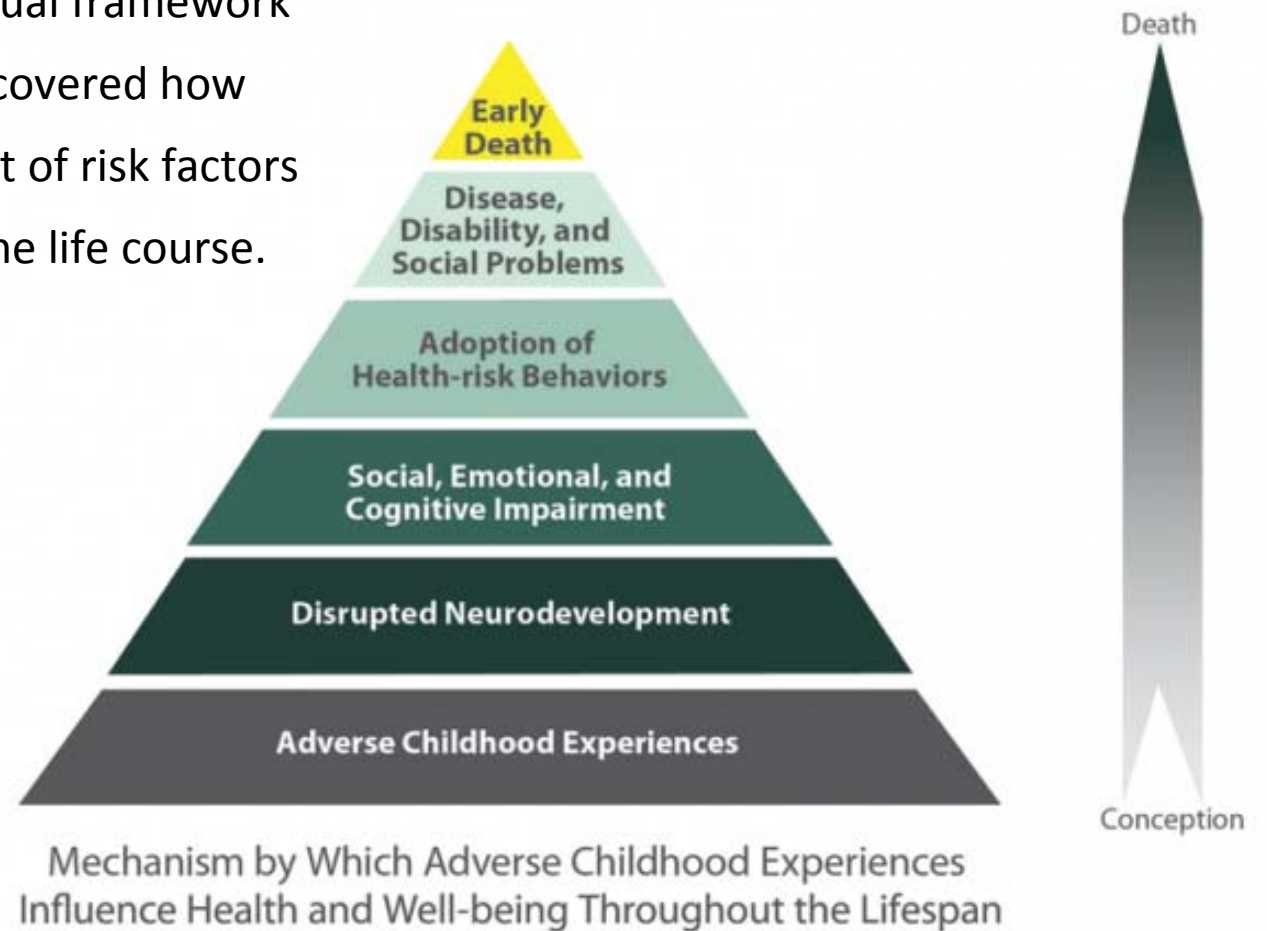


July 2017

- Many generations of removals have resulted in cumulative, collective and intergenerational trauma
- While previous inquiries have shown that all children were vulnerable to sexual abuse in residential institutions, it is likely that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children faced additional vulnerabilities to child sexual abuse, relative to non-Aboriginal children.
- Removals continue and are increasing

Developmental trauma and health

The ACE Pyramid represents the conceptual framework for the ACE Study. The ACE Study has uncovered how ACEs are strongly related to development of risk factors for disease, and well-being throughout the life course.



Impact

Figure 1. Population pyramid of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous populations, 30 June 2016



- Illness and death
- Mental health problems
- Substance use
- Violence and abuse
- Family dysfunction
- Community despair
- Collective sorrow
- Indigenous realities
- Development
- Epigenetics

Note: Excludes 90 years and older age-group.

Source: Derived from ABS, 2014 [19], ABS, 2013 [20]

Historic Trauma Response

- historic trauma causes deep breakdowns in social functioning that may last for many years, decades or even generations.
- the restoration of traditional systems of belief and practice
- the resurgence and reclamation of languages
- the growth of an Aboriginal sense of national identity
- the reconstruction and deconstruction of Indigenous people's history.
- Developing appropriate healing pathways
 - The Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series, North America
- "time does not heal all wounds; there are those that remain painfully open"
 - Wiesel 1978

Current context

- Post-genocide population in a post-colonial society
- Double standards, Hypocrisy, Denial
- Wealth over people
- Prosperity, resources
- In healing what is the role of:
 - Government
 - Services
 - Society
 - Individuals

What language are we using?

Pathways to healing and recovery

- Trauma: Restoration and community resilience
- Grief: Reconnection and community life
- Powerlessness: Self-determination and community governance

- Identifying and rebuilding strengths
- Responsibility, relationships, respect
- Across ages and generations
- Here and now plus building the future

The Apology

- We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.
- A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.
- A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.
 - http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech_0073.cfm

Strength of Survival

- Connection
- Spirituality and culture, belief system
- Collectivism and inclusiveness
- Family commitment, extensive kinship, parenting
- Attachment and reflections of self
- Autonomy and self-reliance
- Endurance and tolerance
- Knowledge
- Humour
- Healing, ceremony

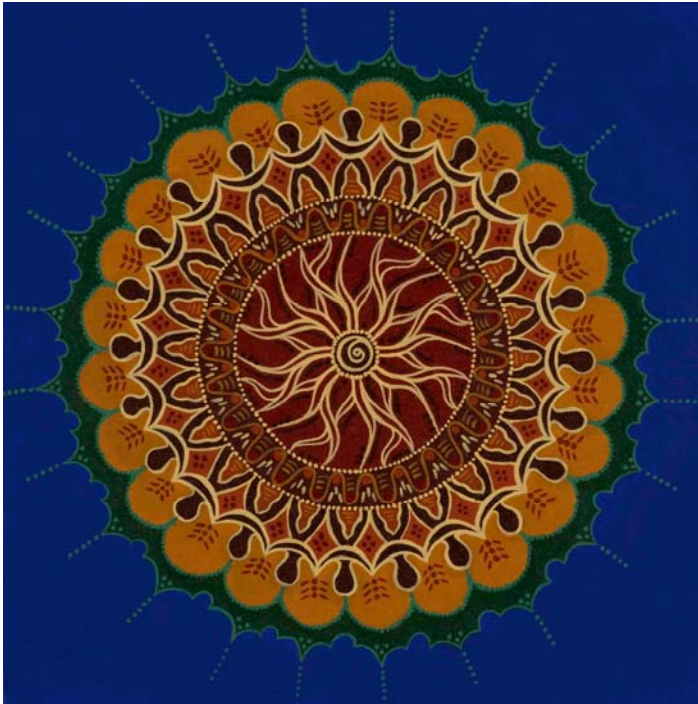
A new (old) psychotherapy



The Joker

- Understanding self through story, image and totem
- Purpose, place
- Strength
- Relationships
- Tangible Reality
- Experience, dreaming

Connection for children



Wellbeing

- Spirit: Transcends time and place
- Nature and totem: ever present
- Future: value and purpose
- Story: continuity and coherence
- Image: positive mirror
- Culture: enduring, identity
- Childhood: Freedom to play; imagination, innocence
- Broader society, Nation??

How do we heal?



- Children need strong, safe, enduring relationships with carers
- Strong culture and identity is protective
- Early, comprehensive and collaborative intervention is essential
- Aboriginal healing practices must be part of the solution
- Prevent the cascade of impacts
- Safe, nurturing childhoods will improve health



Currently



- Too many children are still suffering trauma
- Can we guarantee they will have a safe place?
- Will they have the best care available?
- How will we achieve this?
- How does your service engage with community, generational healing?

Healing

- 'Becoming well'
- Duality
- Healing rights, rights to healing
 - Right to an Aboriginal childhood
- Healing childhood, childhood healing
- Heal the Nation, Nation of healing

Foundations for a stronger future



- Creating the right story
- Within strong relationships
- Understanding context
- Through a cultural lens
- Responsive service system
- Trauma informed and competent care
- Compassionate society

- Once upon a time ...



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Morning tea break

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Mick Gooda

Former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice
Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission





Vulnerability Speakers Series

PERTH

24 AUGUST 2018



The Royal Commission in the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory

There is a need to confront some sort of 'inquiry mentality', in which investigation is allowed as a substitution for action, and reporting is accepted as a replacement for results

Peter Callaghan SC



Following the Evidence

The Intervention exemplifies an attempt by government to tackle child abuse and neglect and improve community safety through a series of centrally determined top down measures, with little involvement of the targeted communities or Aboriginal organisations in either program design or delivery.

Multiple studies have shown patients who become more activated are more likely to engage in preventive behaviour, such as having regular check-ups, screening and immunisation, eating a healthy diet and exercising. They are also more likely to have normal scores for body mass index, blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol.

This evidence is consistent with the finding that greater control over the conditions of life is associated with better wellbeing in many dimensions, both for individuals and communities.

For example, there is evidence that lack of control and disempowerment are important social determinants of health outcomes, as they are linked to stress and anxiety.



Relationships

The relationship between governments and the Aboriginal community has been a defining part of the Australian story. It has waxed and waned through many iterations over the last 229 years and has been variously contextualised through eras of colonisation, invasion, settlements, frontier conflicts, exclusion, integration, assimilation, normalisation and reconciliation.

Through these phases, this relationship has been underpinned by many concepts: self-determination, self-management, mainstreaming, rights and responsibilities, shared responsibility and mutual obligation, and 'closing the gap'.



Relationships

There have been numerous commitments to reset the relationship. This has generally followed an election and a change of government; a catastrophic event such as the death of a young woman in the Swan Valley community; a government-initiated measure like the abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC); the Northern Territory Emergency Response (the Intervention); or the establishment and reporting of an inquiry.

The creation of a government-selected advisory body or consultation process predictably follows, which then predictably dies a natural death at the next election where an incoming government continues the cycle and once more commits to resetting the relationship. This circularity of policy and approach has produced a generation who are both cynical and fatigued.



Measurement of Outcomes

- ▶ At any one time, there is likely to be a myriad of interventions affecting the Indigenous population. This means that it is very difficult to evaluate any single program in a particular Indigenous community because a multitude of programs are being delivered simultaneously.
- ▶ The number of simultaneous activities, the long lag time between actions and outcomes, and the short duration of the Intervention mean it is rarely possible to attribute outcomes to individual measures.



Funding

'[t]he Commonwealth [was] not in a position to easily provide such information, as it does not have a central repository or record of all programs or services, and associated funding, provided specifically for or in the Northern Territory.'

... because of the very large numbers of Commonwealth programs and grants, the multiple sources of information, and the limited timeframe in which the Commonwealth has been required to provide the data, [it could not] be absolutely satisfied that the data is accurate or complete [and] ... there are lines of programs or funding that were unable to be identified in the available time.



Tendering

The current approach of contracting multiple service providers to deliver multiple discrete programs in large and small communities has led inevitably to fragmentation of the service system.

The effort to specify what is required and then contract providers to deliver it in measurable units at a given price is appropriate for some kinds of services.

For example, the laboratory processing of blood tests is a highly specific service and its conduct is standardised, replicable and itemised.



Tendering

these conditions do not apply to complex human services. For example, keeping women and children safe from family violence while intervening with perpetrators to change their behaviour is a complex undertaking that needs to be tailored to local circumstances and individual needs.

Research has shown that providers of complex human services get poorer results when they focus on itemised outputs and neglect their obligation to work towards broader service goals and community outcomes.



Place-based practice-informed approach

The complexity and uncertainties of youth justice and child protection work require innovation, informed over time by experiences of success and failure.

Using funding guidelines to 'rollout' or repackage solutions, seeking to transplant their form from one place to another, is not likely to lead to success.

Every place has different histories and languages, different local responses and different social, political and cultural dynamics. Each has strengths and capacities along with problems and deficits.

This diversity is not amenable to the 'rollout' of uniform policies or structures.



Reforms

a commitment to long-term engagement, with a shared vision over short, medium and long-term periods

agreement on the use of a place-based approach to implementation that varies according to the needs of the local community – with the community deciding ‘the place’

acceptance of the inevitable variation in capability, priorities, strategies and service delivery approaches in different places



Place-based practice-informed approach

Subsidiarity - Place-based approaches to youth justice and child protection will work best when managed at the lowest level possible.

Functions should be devolved to different levels of the system based on effectiveness and efficiency, and as negotiated.



Reforms

an agreement by governments to delegate necessary decision-making authority to local and regional levels

capacity to allocate resources to common purposes, and

tailored accountability frameworks that acknowledge interim outcomes, such as increases in capability and governance, rather than simply focusing on service outputs.



Reforms

local/regional Aboriginal organisations need to be supported and assessed on a level playing field that recognises and measures their unique contributions, including capacity development outcomes

service delivery contracts and agreements need to incorporate requirements for agencies to negotiate shared network governance with community representatives and each other, and

the service governance task needs to be resourced with both time and money.



Reforms

governments need to delegate additional decision-making authority to regional and local level decision-makers to counterbalance the powerful pull of the centre, whether in Perth or Canberra

those regional/local decision-makers need to have the capacity to share designated resources for common goals horizontally across departmental boundaries and within the community

communities need to consider their priorities, the methods of engagement they prefer or will find acceptable, and how they will be represented



Bourke Principles

Our organisations will build partnerships based on mutual trust, respect and commitment. Programs, projects and services operating in Bourke must work with Bourke Community to ensure that they:

- ▶ are culturally competent and culturally secure
- ▶ build the capacity of local Bourke Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- ▶ have a Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy that is endorsed by the Bourke community



Bourke Principles

be responsible to the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, through Bourke's own representative institutions

do not duplicate other service

are coordinated with other services; and



Bourke Principles

have an exit plan



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Krista Dunstan and Rhys Paddick

Aboriginal forum co-facilitators





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Q&A





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Thank you to Principal Partner

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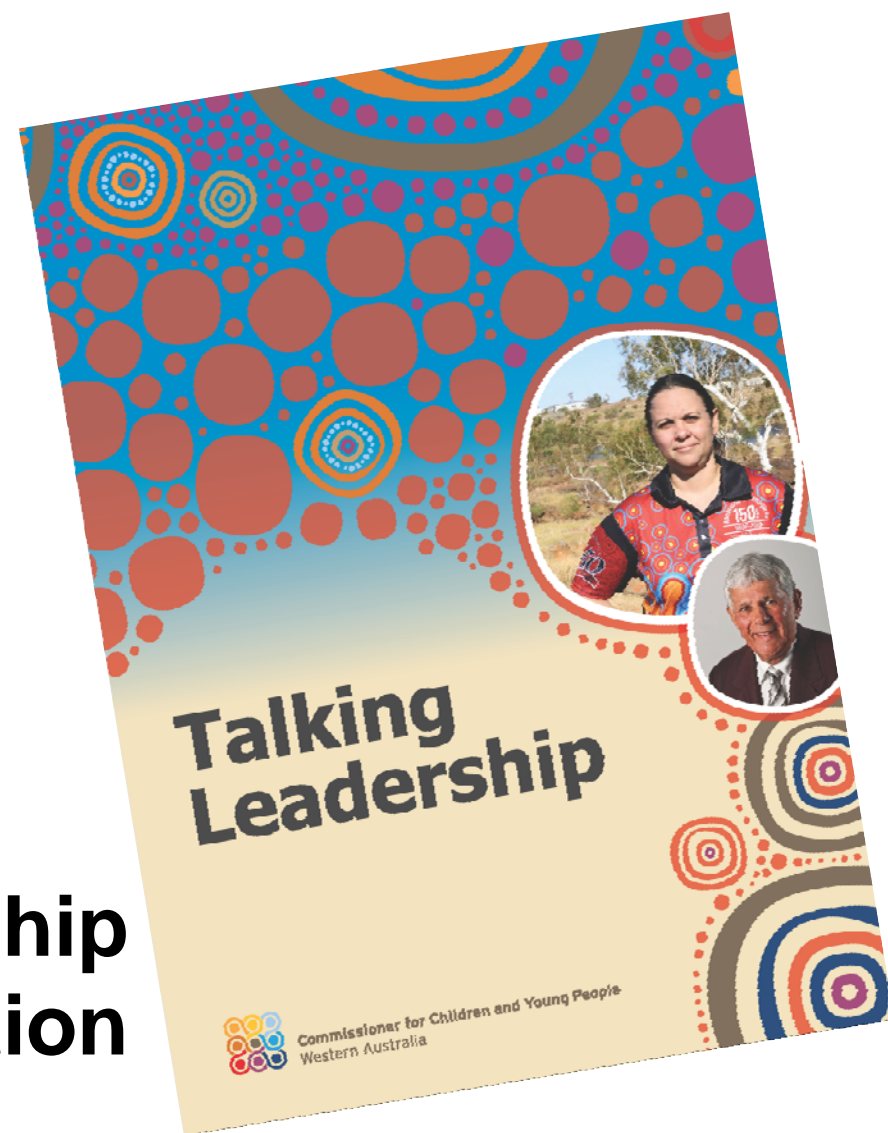




Engaging with Aboriginal Children and Young People Toolkit &

Talking Leadership publication

Available from ccyp.wa.gov.au





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Free event: Child safe organisations seminar

20 September 2018. Book through ccyp.wa.gov.au

Contact the Commissioner



info@ccyp.wa.gov.au



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