

“Working for the welfare: Exploring the lived experiences of Indigenous child protection workers”


Fiona Oates, PhD Candidate

James Cook University, College of Arts, Society and Education

Primary Advisor: A/Prof Debra Miles

Secondary Advisory: Dr. Nonie Harris





I would like to
acknowledge the
Traditional Owners past
present and future of the
land on which we meet
today as well as of the land
that this research project
will take place on

Literature & Gap





Indigenous children are 8
times more likely than non-
Indigenous children to be the
subject of a substantiated
report of harm or risk



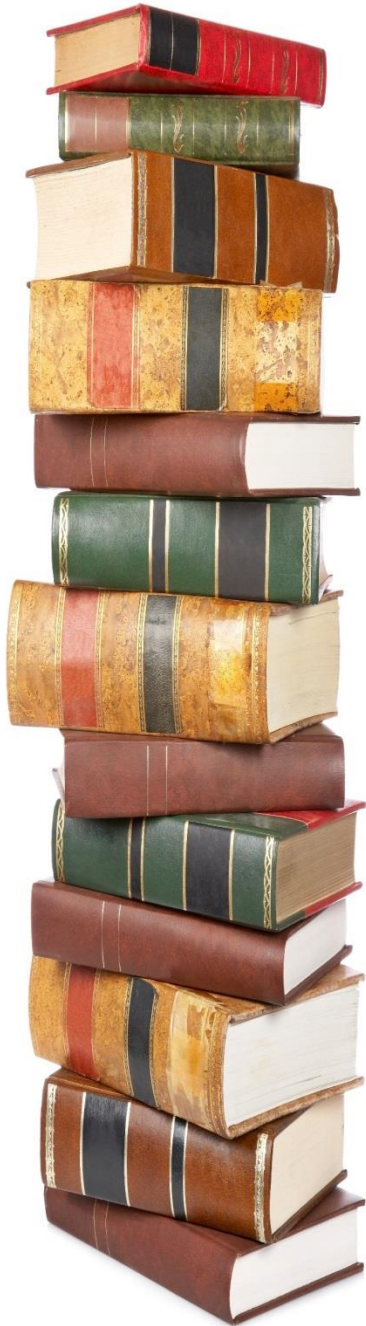
Indigenous children are
10.6 times more likely to be placed in
out of home care in Australia

point six

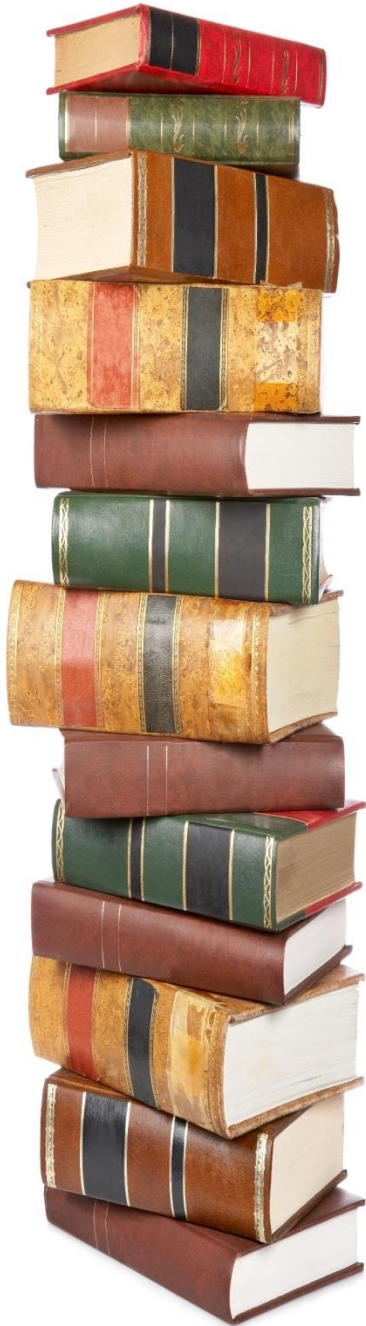


A method increasingly discussed in the literature to address this over-representation is to recruit more Indigenous workers

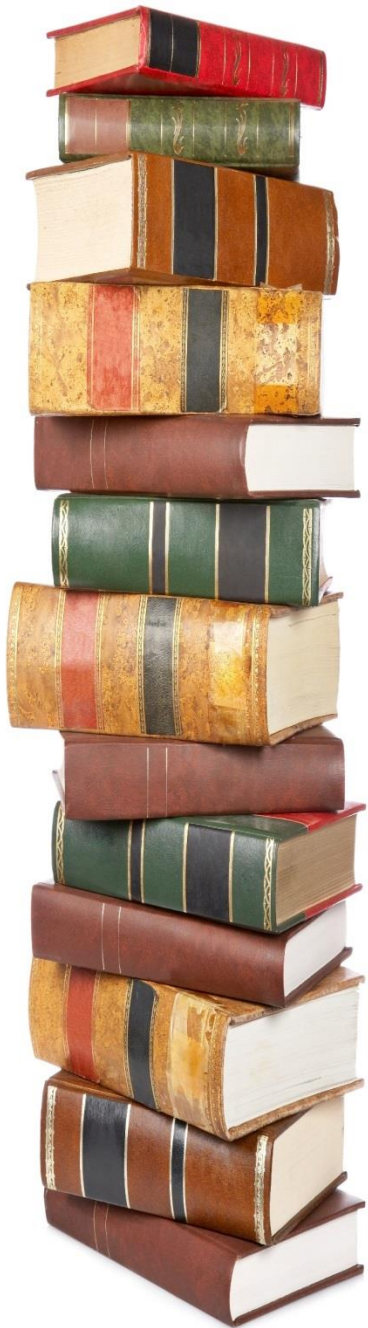
(The Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry, 2013, p. 212).



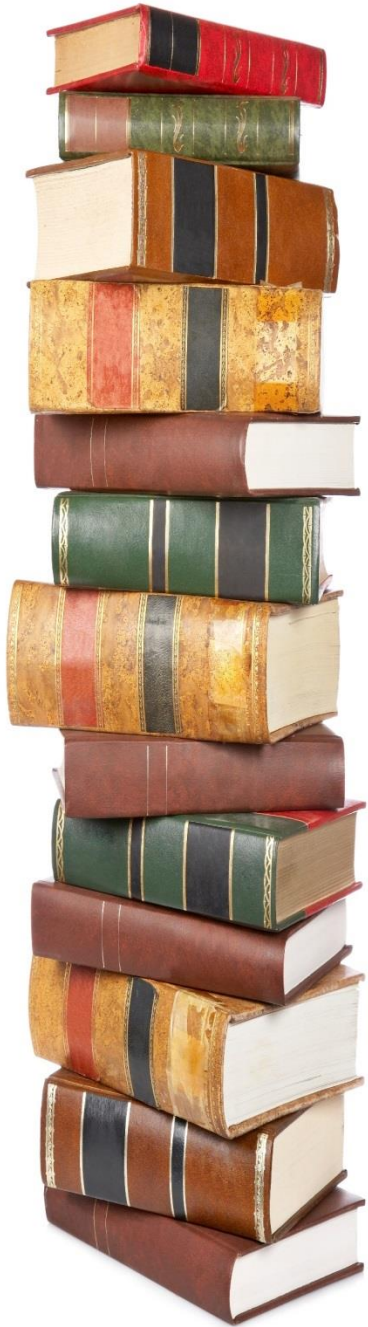
Despite recent and consistent calls for an increase in the employment of Indigenous people in child protection, there is little documentation which explores the experiences of Indigenous people working within the child protection system.



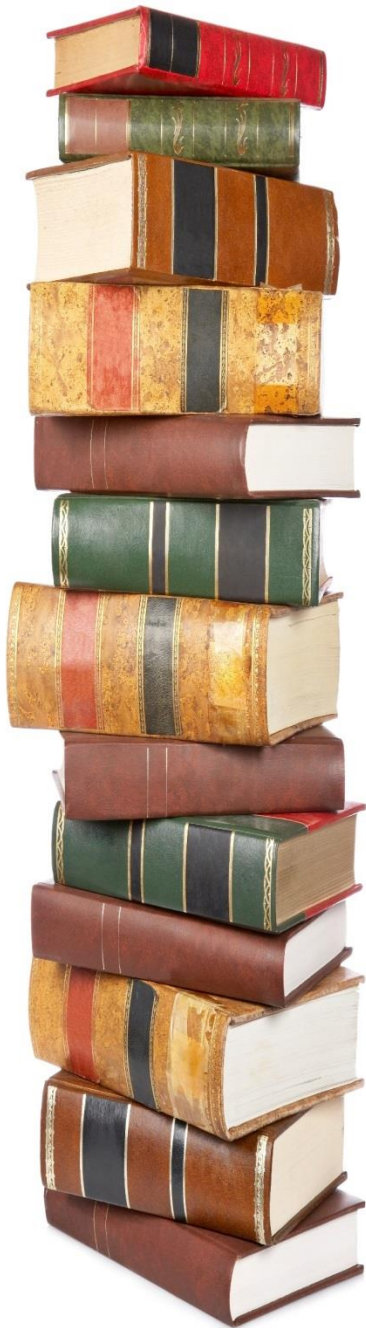
Whilst there has been work in relation to the support needs of child protection workers generally they have not been Indigenous-specific, meaning that the Indigenous child protection workers' voices are left unheard (Dane: 2000; Gibbs: 2002; Anderson: 2000).



Exploring the potentially precarious position of working within a similar service system that was the catalyst for much of the intergenerational trauma experienced by contemporary Indigenous communities today,

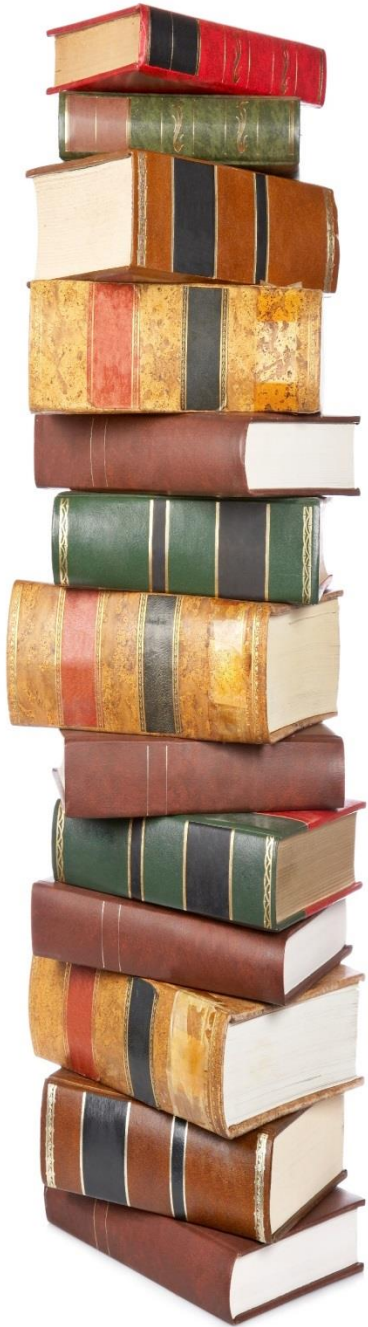


that is, the government led forced removal of children on the basis of their Aboriginality, would be of great benefit.



The historical experience of Indigenous Australian's has led to a distrust of authority and a number of other social issues, disadvantage and barriers to accessing mainstream services.

(Atkinson:2002; Libesman: 2004 and Stanley, Tomison & Pocock: 2003)



There is a plethora of information regarding the cultural support needs of Indigenous people who are *clients* of the child protection service system but not staff



Research Question

What are the experiences of
Indigenous child protection
workers?

Aims

- To explore the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who work in the child protection field;
- To explore the impact of historical trauma experienced by Indigenous Australians and its symptomology within a child protection workplace;





Aims

- To explore participant views of culturally responsive models of support for Indigenous workers within the child protection system; and



Aims

- Based on the findings, prepare and disseminate a report with recommendations to relevant Government departments and other agencies to promote improved workforce outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and therefore improved client services.

(principles of Research Knowledge Transfer)



Methodology

This exploratory qualitative study is underpinned by the theoretical paradigm of critical inquiry within a decolonising methodological framework.



Cultural Broker

This project has been designed to incorporate the use of a Cultural Broker.

The role of the Cultural Broker within this project is to offer guidance to the principle researcher in relation to:



Cultural Broker

- protocols regarding researching sensitive matters;
- location and pace of interviews;
- Participant support and debriefing;



Cultural Broker

- dynamics within the participant group that a non-Indigenous researcher may be unaware of; and
- to be a point of contact for the principle researcher to ensure that the data is analysed in the context in which it was provided by participants.



Cultural Broker

The Cultural Broker will also be an additional point of contact for the participants.

The principle researcher will also be guided by the Cultural Broker in matters relating to distributing the findings of the project and publication protocols.

A vertical photograph on the left side of the slide shows a wooden boardwalk or path made of light-colored planks. The path curves through a dense, lush green forest. The foliage is thick, with many ferns and other green plants visible. The lighting is soft, suggesting a shaded forest environment.

Advisory Group

An Indigenous Advisory Group
will be established as part of
this project.

A vertical photograph of a stone path winding through a dense, green forest. The path is made of light-colored stones and curves through lush green foliage and trees. The image is positioned on the left side of the slide.

Advisory Group

The Advisory Groups role would include but not be limited to:

- A consultative body that can also act as a conduit between the sector and the Principle Investigator;
- Direction on participant recruitment strategy;

A vertical photograph of a stone path winding through a dense, green forest. The path is made of light-colored stones and leads into the distance, surrounded by lush green foliage and trees.

Advisory Group

- Engage in regular robust discussions about the research topic informed by current policy and practice within the sector adding depth to the project; and
- Review the findings of the project and advise on strategic dissemination strategies relevant to influencing policy and practice to improve outcomes.

A narrow, winding stone path made of light-colored rectangular stones leads through a dense, lush green forest. The path curves to the left and then right, disappearing into the thick foliage. The forest is filled with various types of green plants, including ferns and tall, thin trees with dense canopies. The lighting is soft, suggesting a shaded forest environment.

Advisory Group

The Cultural Broker will be an active and integral part of the Advisory Group



Project is due for
submission in September
2017