

QATSICPP Record of Advice: Aboriginal Kinship Care



ChildProtectionPeak

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are over-represented in statutory child protection systems across Australia and the reality is that too many of those children live away from their parents and family being raised by foster carers, in residential care, or with people the State has deemed as 'kin'.

QATSICPP holds a firm position regarding full adherence to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, recognising the five constituent elements as presented in multiple QATSICPP and SNAICC publications and as articulated in the 3rd Action Plan of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children.

QATSICPP also maintains a clear position on what constitutes Aboriginal Kinship Care, within the context of implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle. The QATSICPP resource "Position Statement for Aboriginal Kinship Care", published in March 2018 clearly articulates our position regarding Aboriginal Kinship Care as well as outlines implications for legislation, policy, programs, processes and practice.

QATSICPP recently participated in the Reference Group for the Kinship Care Project and would like to ensure that our position in relation to Aboriginal Kinship Care for both this project and any ongoing discussions in relation to Aboriginal Kinship Care is highlighted, understood and adequately acknowledged.

Purpose

To ensure QATSICPP member organisations and other important stakeholders are informed about the position advocated by the sectors Peak body and to promote accountability and transparency of advice provided in relation to Aboriginal Kinship Care.

QATSICPP recognises the significant risk of our participation in various steering committees, advisory groups and related consultative mechanisms might be interpreted as passive endorsement of a final outcome. Particularly when the end result reflects a clear departure from our established position.

A key purpose of publishing this record of advice, is to restate the importance of Aboriginal children and young people being raised by family in community. Stability for Aboriginal children and families exists in relationship and connections to community, culture and country. Being with family, being raised by family in culture is at the heart of an Aboriginal child's perception of permanence, belonging and identity development.

Advice

Information contained herein, reflects QATSICPP advice and position in relation to Aboriginal Kinship Care. QATSICPP are currently working towards publishing a position statement in relation to the child rearing practices and traditional adoption practices of Torres Strait Islander children and young people and therefore this record of advice relates primarily to Aboriginal Kinship Care.

In relation to a definition for Aboriginal Kinship, QATSICPP advocates that Aboriginal Kinship is a diverse and complex system and that Aboriginal Kinship refers to the biological bloodlines that have been passed on from generation to generation. Consideration of *who is kin* to a child is also the decision and responsibility of family and those with cultural authority, not the statutory agency.

QATSICPP has consistently expressed that Aboriginal Kinship Care and the customary child rearing practices and traditional adoption practices of Torres Strait Islander children and young people should be acknowledged as being uniquely different to one another. It is therefore imperative that any discussion in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Kinship must be kept separate and their uniqueness acknowledged.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-control is fundamental to self-determination and reflective of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities operated in the past and to this day. It is QATSICPP position that Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations are given the opportunity to focus primarily on supporting Aboriginal Kinship Carers. There needs to be adequate support mechanisms for these services and flexibility in service delivery.

QATSICPP is supportive of SNAICCs recommendation that it is inappropriate for the formation of a National Kinship Care Organisation.

QATSICPP advocates that there must be adequate supports for those informal Aboriginal Kinship placements for families that have stepped up in looking after their children and provide an opportunity for a child to thrive.

A child's connection to family, community, culture and country must be maintained and supported and not risk being de-prioritised as a result of attempts to incorporate Aboriginal Kinship Care within a generic, conceptual definition of kinship. Whilst this may be convenient or administratively efficient for statutory systems and service providers, it is the rights and needs of our child that remain our priority. We can not support approaches that undermine the integrity of our kinship systems, the cultural authority of our families or the rights of our children to cultural continuity. Aboriginal Kinship Care must remain distinct from other forms of 'Kin' and, such distinction should be reflected in legislation, policy, programs, processes and practice, irrespective of jurisdiction.