Exploring concepts of safety and well-being with children and their families within the context of child welfare practice
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS...

Front cover
AASW Code of Ethics (2010)
Illustration: ‘Murr-roo-ma
Mur-rook Boo-larng’

[To Make Good Together]

Original artwork:
Elizabeth McEntyre, Worimi Nation (NSW)
Mentor: Les Elvin,
Wonnarua Nation (NSW)
Kungera Art (Aberdare NSW)
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SEMINAR OVERVIEW...

- The Best interests?
- **Aim of research** and **Research Questions**
- Angel’s story
- **Child aware approach – from practice to research**
- Methodology
- **Isabella and Jennifer**
“The true measure of a nation’s standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born”

(UNICEF 2007)
WHAT IS BEST
FOR CHILDREN

yes

YES
INFORMATION SHEET

The reason for me wanting to talk to children, is to find out important things that will help **adults UNDERSTAND** what is **best for children** and how they can help children to feel as **safe happy and well** as they can be.

IF you **DECIDE** that you would be **OK to talk** about these things we will make another time to meet. You will have a lot of different activities to **CHOOSE** from to help explain your **IDEAS** and everything you say is kept safe so that no-one ever knows what you have said.

There is **nothing** that you HAVE to do and it is **OK to** ask **QUESTIONS** **OR** **STOP** **AT ANY TIME.**
‘In the Best Interests of the child’:
exploring safety and well-being with children and their families
within the context of child welfare practice.

- How do children explain what is ‘in the best interests’ of children
  and how do they define and discuss the concepts of safety and
  well-being for children?

- How do adult family members define the notion of ‘a child’s best
  interest’ and concepts of safety and wellbeing generally and within
  a statutory child protection practice context?

- What do children and their families identify as supporting and
  hindering these concepts generally and specifically in relation to
  child welfare practice?
RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS...

The participant groups for my study include ...

• **children**, aged between 4-14 who have experienced an intervention with the Queensland Department of Child Safety;

• **adult family members** (parents/grandparents/significant others) who alongside children of their family, have experienced an intervention with the Queensland Department of Child Safety, and

• a sample of **adults who as children**, experienced an intervention with statutory child protection services.
Part 2 Purpose, principles and administration of Act

- **4 Purpose of Act**
The purpose of this Act is to provide for the protection of children.

- **5A Paramount principle**
The main principle for administering this Act is that the safety, wellbeing and best interests of a child are paramount.
“It’s my life and I deserve to have a say”

[Bec, 15 years. Young person in State Care. Qld Govt. 2011]
Once upon a time

METHODOLOGY...

- Legitimacy of child participants
- Participatory, relationship-based, age appropriate
- Congruence with theoretical practice framework
- Qualitative
- Researcher subjectivity and critical reflection
- In depth interviewing and creative resources
WELL

We care about others

SAFE

We want the best for each other

I help others when they hurt themselves

Health

I am a calm person.

I look after other people.
Once upon a time


*Toowoomba: Coalition Caring for Kids & The Advocacy Support Centre.*
"The rich descriptions generated by qualitative research provide a window into family life and the meaning that family members attribute to their experiences" (Gibson 2012).
Isabella: **Safe** means like you’re **comfortable** and all that and you are **not like scared** of something and **happy** means that you **enjoy** everything like everyday and you have a **GOOD** day
The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other ...is our attention.

(Rachel Naomi Remen)
Isabella: and if they listen, they have to listen to the person. And the judge will agree which one will do something. You know what I mean. Yeah like that.

Kim: So if you were able to talk to a judge to say what’s best. What would you tell them?

Isabella: I would say that the best thing to me is what I just said. Like...
Isabella: My friend. His step-mum. She is a child safety worker but I don’t know her, so she’s nice.

Kim: So you know what they do for a job? Or what their job is?
Isabella: Yes

Kim: What do you think that is?
Isabella: They take kids off parents... and put them in foster care.

Kim: Yeah? Why do you think they do that?

Isabella: Because they think it is the best interest for the child. But some, like me, when I was in it I got bashed. I got punched in the face and all that.
... I really want to live with my Mum cause she takes care of me. She gives me stuff and all of that.

...and loves me and that’s the most important thing.

She helps me when I am sick. She looks after me when I am sick. She comes with me to the doctors when I had the virus in my lung, and I would say a virus in my lung is a virus which means sick.

...and she feeds me, buys me clothes, buys me toys.
“His father told me when he was a baby that he could give him a better life than I could. I said yes, but you will never give him the love that I will give him”
What sort of things do you feel can get in the road of children having what they need to be safe and well and happy?

- ...Well money.

- ...It would be good, like what they want and all the stuff they need, because society... there’s peer pressure for the kids to be put up high. My kid’s doing this, my kid wears that.

- ...My kids this, my kids that and if you haven’t got money

- The kids feel that, there’s bully-ness at school and stuff
Jennifer ...

- I don’t got no family

- Because I was brought up bad and so like I said to you, I’ve been fighting ever since I was young

- and it’s hard when you haven’t got family in your life – proper decent family...to support you.

- I have to do everything by myself.
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REFERENCES...


National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) (2003). *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research*. National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia.


• Punch, S. (2002). Research with children. The same or different from research with adults? Childhood, 9(3), 321-341.


