Could voluntary safe homes improve the well-being and literacy of Indigenous kids in remote areas? As an alternative to institutionally run hostels or child protection orders, safe houses where kids go voluntarily for food, a shower, and a good sleep, and where parents and carers are welcome, might provide an answer - achievable without red tape?
Background
Addressing risk factors

Voluntary safe house

- Health risk factors
- Protective risk factors
- Literacy and improved outcomes

Interactive Workshop - Voluntary safe house concept
Health risk factors

Impact of Trauma

- Needs analysis research conducted by the Healing Foundation on trauma and its impact on communities has identified children and young people as key victims.


“...The intergenerational impact of trauma, particularly its impact upon children and young people, but also its impact upon families and communities, was given the greatest emphasis by respondents.”

- Another key finding of this research was the recognition by research participants of “the impact of trauma on brain development and how this has impacted on the capacity of individuals to participate in learning”

- Trauma, combined with FASD, makes life and the attainment of literacy even more difficult with the sad but true very high rate of Indigenous youth suicide undoubtedly being one of the tragic consequences of this trauma.
Health risk factors

- More than twice as many Indigenous babies suffer low to extremely low birth-weight compared to non-Indigenous babies and Indigenous children are twice as likely to be hospitalised for infectious diseases (SCRGSP, 2005)
- Upwards of 70% of Indigenous children in remote communities suffer from chronic Otitis Media, a serious middle ear disease that can cause permanent hearing loss and inhibit language and literacy development (DET, WA 2006)
- Nutrition and health are closely connected to educational achievement, school attendance and literacy skills (DEST 2003 and ABS 2005)
Impact: health and environmental risk factors

Relative risk

- Findings from AIHW (2012) report *Child Protection Australia 2011-12* include:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children almost 8 times as likely to be the subject of substantiated child abuse and neglect as non-Indigenous children in 2011–12
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 10 times as likely to be in out-of-home care
  - Indigenous children are significantly over-represented in the child welfare system and more specifically in out-of-home care:
    - 13,299 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care in at 30 June last year, representing over one third of all children in out of home care
  - the rate of substantiated child abuse and neglect for Indigenous children was 41.9 per 1,000 children, compared with 5.4 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children
Data recently released by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) includes:

- Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) information in relation to high numbers of Aboriginal children in remote areas in WA entering school where teachers have concerns about children's development in a number of areas, including social/emotional and language/cognitive issues.

- Informal evidence that suggests very vulnerable families are the least likely to access existing services.

Interactive Workshop - Voluntary safe house concept
Impact: health and environmental risk factors

- Indigenous Literacy Foundation – [www.literacyfoundation.org.au](http://www.literacyfoundation.org.au) – cites research identifying the importance of literacy and causes for poor literacy among regional and remote Indigenous children:
  - School absenteeism negatively affects academic performance and Indigenous students miss around 26 days a year cf 8 days for all students
  - Indigenous students living in remote and very remote locations are likely to miss an even greater number of school days (Zubrick, Silburn, De Maio et al., 2006)
  - Non-Indigenous students far outperform Indigenous students in benchmark tests for reading, writing and numeracy in Year 3 and Year 5, and by Year 7, the gap has widened, particularly for numeracy (DEET NT 2006)
  - By the age of 15, more than one-third of Australia’s Indigenous students 'do not have the adequate skills and knowledge in reading literacy to meet real-life challenges and may well be disadvantaged in their lives beyond school' (PISA cited in Bortoli and Cresswell, 2004, page 11)
Impact: health and environmental risk factors

Current research reveals:

- 60 per cent of Aboriginal children are developmentally behind their peers when they start school
- only 10 per cent of Aboriginal children graduate from Year 12
- three per cent of Aboriginal children complete a university degree
Protective risk factors

Prevention and early intervention

- Current thinking accepts the premise that early childhood experience strongly affects health and wellbeing and the attainment of competencies such as social and academic skills at later ages:
  - investment in the early years will be reflected in improved education, employment and even national productivity (Keating & Hertzman 2000)
  - evidence that early intervention can counteract biological and environmental disadvantage and set children on a more positive developmental trajectory continues to build (Brooks-Gunn et al. 2000)
Protective risk factors

The role of parenting


- The responsiveness of parents to their children, and the manner in which parents talk with and teach their children are important determinants of children’s later wellbeing and development (Landry et al. 2001; Osofsky & Thompson 2000)
Protective risk factors

Parenting in an Indigenous context

- Despite a recent trend for many Aboriginal families to be isolated from their own Indigenous communities due to dislocation and displacement, often resulting in loss of language and culture, the cultural norm still dictates that:
  - The responsibility for child rearing and teaching children is through an extended family, kin and community (SNAICC 2004)
The development of English literacy skills is important for the life opportunities of Indigenous children and youth.

- Literacy 'provides ... the necessary skills to interact within mainstream society and avail themselves of the broadest range of civic, social, educational and employment possibilities' (Mellor and Corrigan, 2004)
Crisis in out-of-home care

Vulnerable child
- Temporary foster or kinship care
- Smaller scale group homes, state funded charities
  - Psychiatric focus
- By adolescence, severely damaged
- Taxpayer funded psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists, counsellors

Parent
- Treatment for mental illness
- Treatment for substance abuse
- Treatment for domestic violence

Interactive Workshop - Voluntary safe house concept
Cost of out-of-home care

- Overall $2.8 billion expenditure on out-of-home care

Estimate of number of Aboriginal children & youth in out-of-home care 2011-2012

$9,000 per child per year \times 13,299 = $119,691,000

“The financial cost of these continued policy failures is considerable. But the human cost to the individual children, their families and communities is devastating — and it will impact on generations to come”

(SNAICC NEWS, 2013. SNAICC Chairperson Ms Sharron Williams commenting on findings from the latest AIHW report New approaches needed to improve the protection and wellbeing of our children)

Interactive Workshop - Voluntary safe house concept
Cost of out-of-home care

- Real recurrent expenditure on child protection services (CPS) out-of-home care (OOHC) and intensive family support services (IIFS) 2010-2011 in WA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Protection Services (CPS)</th>
<th>Out-of-Home Care (OOHC)</th>
<th>Intensive Family Support Services (IIFS)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$66,916,000</td>
<td>$205,393,000</td>
<td>$7,154,000</td>
<td>$279,463,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures for WA alone show the significant and rising cost of services for children at risk*
Potential impact: voluntary safe house on outcomes

- Indigenous child
  - Disadvantaged with low literacy and basic skills for further learning
  - Higher risk of poor performance at school
  - Higher rates of truancy
  - Higher relative risk of being in out-of-home care
  - Higher relative risk of child abuse and neglect
  - Poor relative health

- Potential outcomes
  - Improved literacy
  - Brighter future
  - Happier contribution
  - Improved family environment
  - Preservation of culture
  - Improved physical, emotional and social wellbeing

Interactive Workshop - Voluntary safe house concept
Why fund – social capital?

Social capital

“Projects which build the social cohesion of a community, support or enhance social inclusion, build or strengthen social networks or address issues which are specific to minority groups. The outcome is more integrated communities.”

*Australian Government, Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government GUIDELINES, Regional Development Australia Fund Round Two, p.33*
Derby children

Interactive Workshop - Voluntary safe house concept
Workshop objectives

- Test two models
- Gain insight into model strengths and weaknesses
- Improve the research proposal
- Establish the framework for a pilot program

Interactive Workshop - Voluntary safe house concept
Learning outcomes

- Understand complex nature of safe house concept
- Effective achievement of stakeholder buy-in
- Cost/benefit analysis – weigh up costs (resource allocation) against benefits (protective risk factors, e.g. improved social and emotional well-being, literacy outcomes)
- Project risk identification and management
- Factors influencing funding decisions
## Workshop timing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Backgrounding</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups 1-3 brainstorm</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups 1-3 representatives present their case</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5 mins each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4 (funding body) evaluates each presentation against given criteria and reports back</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group discussion &amp; Questions</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Role play scenario

Four groups, including funding bodies, consider and advocate for two models:

- **Group 1** (4 key stakeholders)
  - Argue for Model 1 – voluntary safe house

- **Group 2** (4 key stakeholders)
  - Argue for Model 2 – network of supported voluntary safe houses

- **Group 3** (4 key stakeholders)
  - Argue against both Models

- **Group 4** – Funding bodies (up to 3)
Key stakeholders

Funding Bodies
- State and Commonwealth Health, Indigenous Affairs, Community Services

Manager local Indigenous NGO

Local community parent advocacy group

Local Aboriginal Health Service

Local Indigenous Leaders (2)

Local Shire Councillor

Director Local Hospital

Caseworker State Dept Child Protection

Corrective Services, Youth Justice

Early childhood specialist government school

Caseworker local Indigenous NGO

Principal non-government school

Workshop participants selected for roles as key stakeholders

Interactive Workshop - Voluntary safe house concept
Why fund – social capital?

Social capital

“Projects which build the social cohesion of a community, support or enhance social inclusion, build or strengthen social networks or address issues which are specific to minority groups. The outcome is more integrated communities.”

* Australian Government, Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government GUIDELINES, Regional Development Australia Fund Round Two, p.33
## Evaluation touchstones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions about program need</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>what needs are not being met?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what are the characteristics of the target population?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what are the assets/resources among target groups that can be used?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions about context</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How well does the model fit into the local setting?</td>
<td>who else does something similar? Is there overlap or potential learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What ‘environmental’ factors inhibit or contribute to success?</td>
<td>who are cooperators and who are competitors?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions about program implementation</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is there infrastructure to support the model?</td>
<td>what resources are used?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is the strategy for program delivery comprehensive?</td>
<td>are the financial and staff resources adequate? who participates in program activities? What is their level of access?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions about outcomes/impacts</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>are the model's outcomes worth the resources?</td>
<td>what are the model's strengths and weaknesses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what are the social, economic, environmental impacts on people and communities?</td>
<td>which activities contribute most/least?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are there any unintended negative or positive effects?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>is the model responding to the need identified?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions about who benefits and how?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>who actually participates in the program?</td>
<td>how do program participants compare to the wider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what is their level of involvement?</td>
<td>who is harmed by the program and how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who else gains and what is their gain?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions about model in the wider policy environment</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the program duplicating other efforts?</td>
<td>how are these models similar/different/complementary?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what makes up the program?</td>
<td>what is our particular niche/expertise?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what similar programs exist?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interactive Workshop - Voluntary safe house concept
## Evaluation pro-forma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context appropriate fit</th>
<th>MODEL 1 – VOLUNTARY SAFE HOUSE</th>
<th>MODEL 2 – NETWORK OF SUPPORTED SAFE HOUSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resources available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(including financial, staff)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>can access?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>what resources?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>who participates?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>they in the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>duplicating other efforts?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reference list


- Indigenous Literacy Foundation [www.literacyfoundation.org.au](http://www.literacyfoundation.org.au)


Reference list


- Ngroo Education Incorporated (a community based not-for-profit organisation) website found at http://ngroo.org.au/about.html
Margaret Lum - Bio

- Margaret Lum has 20 years experience in social and market research, on both buyer and supplier sides. For many years she worked on the client side for the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing.
- After leaving DoHA, Margaret gained experience as a supplier of research services.
- More recently, Margaret has applied her skills in the niche market of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audience research, developing her strength in working on highly sensitive issues including health, employment, education and child support.
- Margaret is passionate about integrating action research amongst high-need audiences to develop flexible and responsive services that fit socio-cultural contexts and build capacity at the grassroots level.
- Margaret is a current member of:
  - Independent Researchers Group (IRG)
  - The Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS)
Madeleine Read – Bio

- Madeleine is a professional woman with Australian and overseas business and community development experience.
- She returned to Sydney from Derby in the West Kimberley 12 months ago.
- In her three years in Derby, Madeleine re-established the WA Department of Indigenous Affairs’ local office as Senior Project Officer and prior to that managed a $2.5 million FaHCSIA funded program delivering municipal services and powerhouse fuel to 48 remote Indigenous communities in the West Kimberley, including the Fitzroy Valley.
- She became closely connected with the local Derby community and their children to whom the initial Kidtime Derby safe house concept is dedicated.
- Since January 2011, Madeleine has consulted, advocated and researched widely with the local community and others including all levels of government on the need and potential for voluntary safe accommodation options for Indigenous primary school kids in remote areas.

Interactive Workshop - Voluntary safe house concept