



Government of Western Australia
Department for Child Protection
and Family Support

West Kimberley

Using Signs of Safety in a multi agency response to
child sexual abuse in a remote Aboriginal Community

Presenters:

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Cultural Acknowledgment

We would like to acknowledge the traditional owners past and present.

We pay special tribute to the Aboriginal peoples in the West Kimberley region.

Specifically we acknowledge the Aboriginal people of the communities in which the work that is the subject of this presentation was done.

We would like to pay special tribute to all of the brave children who have spoken up about sexual abuse, and the families who are supporting them to be strong in their Liyarn.

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- Introduction to the West Kimberley
 - The Signs of Safety Child Protection Framework
 - Case Example – The Context
 - The Community Response – The Safer Communities Model
 - Using Words and Pictures to build safety for the children

West Kimberley District

Size: 192,000 sq. km.

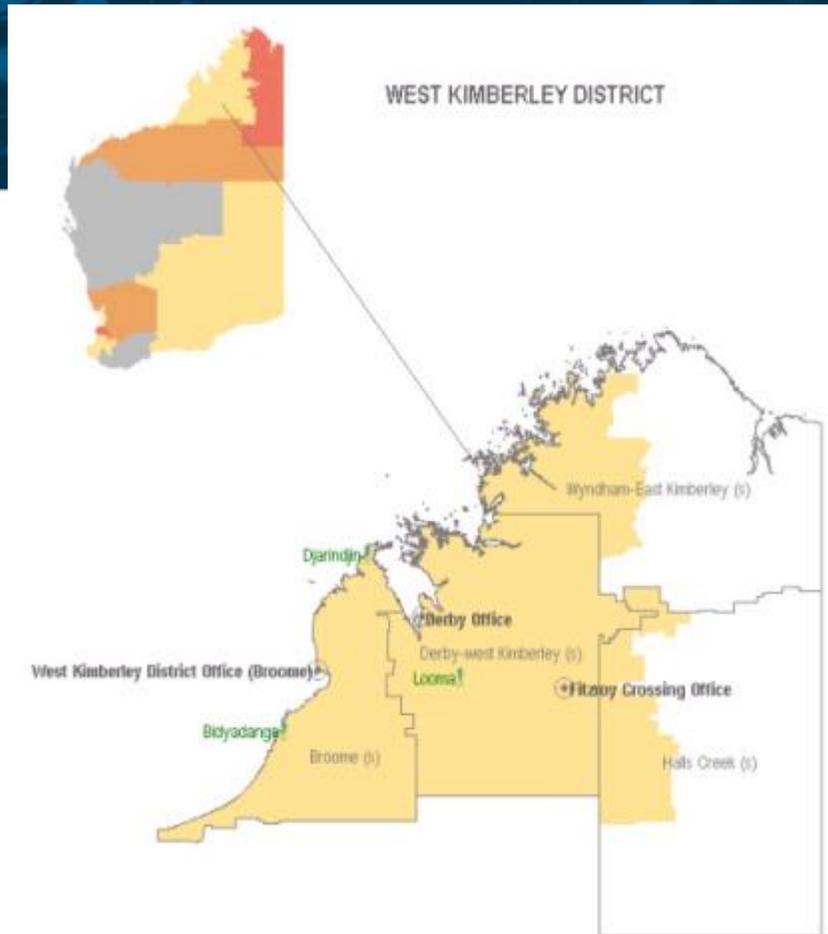
Population: 27,000.

Staff: 91.7 FTE. (32% Aboriginal staff).

Children in care: 198

The West Kimberley works from three main offices located at Broome, Derby and Fitzroy Crossing, and three remote locations (co located with Western Australia Police) at Bidyadanga, Dampier Peninsula and Looma communities.

Most of our work is with Aboriginal families, often in a remote context.



The Signs of Safety Child Protection Framework

1. A clear and rigorous understanding of the distinction between past harm, future danger and complicating factors.
2. A clear and rigorous distinction made between strengths and protection. Strengths need to be demonstrated as protection in relation to the danger, and over time.
3. Rendering all statements in straight-forward, rather than professionalized language, that can be readily understood by service recipients.
4. As much as possible all statements focus on specific, observable behaviours.
5. Skillful use of authority.
6. An underlying assumption that the assessment is a work in progress rather than a definitive set piece.

<http://www.signsofsafety.net/>

The three columns diagram

What are we worried about?	What's working well?	What needs to happen?
<p>Past Harm <i>What behaviours have led to the child being harmed?</i></p> <p>Danger Statement(s) <i>Behaviours likely to cause harm to the child in the future.</i></p> <p>Complicating Factors <i>Things happening for the family that make the situation more difficult.</i></p>	<p>What is going well in the family in relation to the child and does this create safety for the child?</p>	<p>What needs to happen for the child to be safe in the future?</p>



Adapted from Turnell A. & Edwards S. (1999). *Signs of Safety: A solution and safety oriented approach to child protection case work*. WW Norton, New York.

Signs of Safety Tools

- Mapping tools – 3 Columns
- 3 Houses
- Wizards and Fairies
- Words and Pictures

For further information visit the Signs of Safety or WA Child Protection Websites:

<http://www.signsofsafety.net/>
www.dcp.wa.gov.au

The Three Houses



House of
worries

House of
good things

House of
dreams

The Context – Disclosures of child sexual abuse



Safer Communities Model – Three Phase Response

Response

Joint investigations by WAPOL and CPFS.

Recovery

Action plan for communities developed by the "Local Action Group" comprising of relevant government and non-government stakeholders. Focus on child and family safety, education on child abuse and overall family and community wellbeing.

Ongoing Community Building

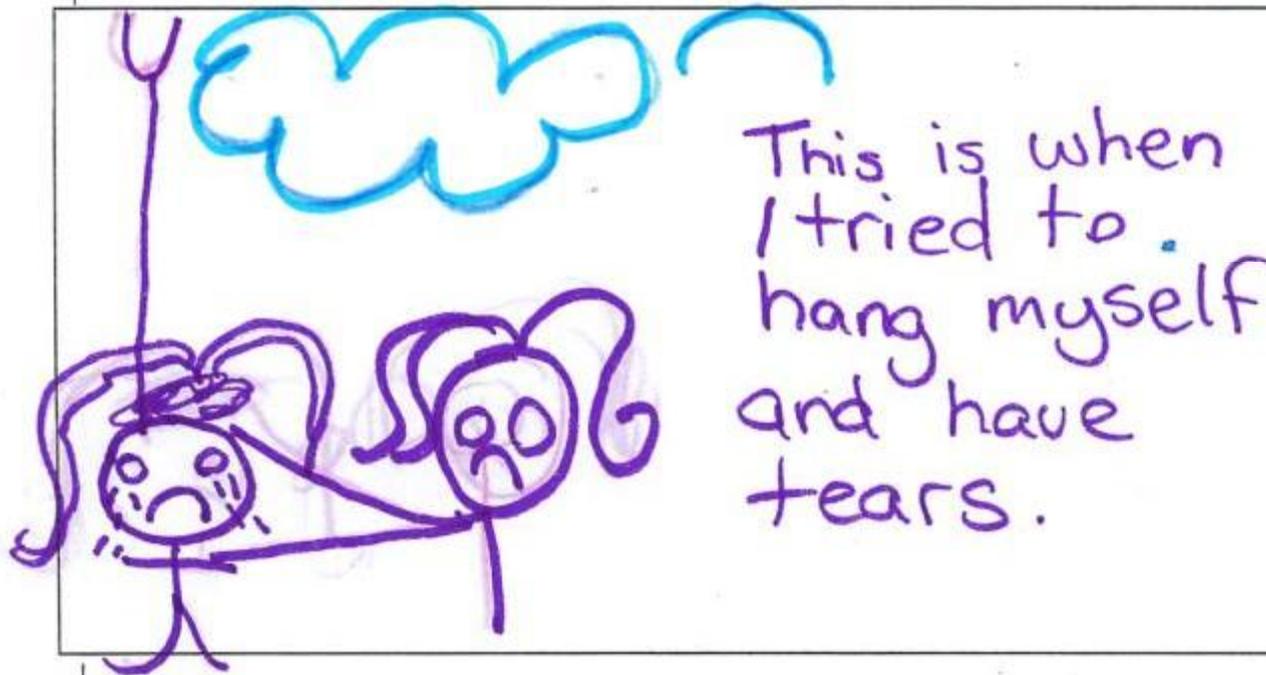
Following on from the Recovery phase - actions that are community directed and supported through the Local Action Group.

Words and Pictures – Bringing the child's voice to safety planning



Example of a child's Words and Pictures used in Safety Planning

Why everyone is worried.





Everyone is worried because people will try “be silly” with me. They worry I might hang myself. I tried this before cause feel stressed. [redacted] help me and got me down from the rope. I still think about this when I feel stressed – no good. My family will know I feel this way cause my mum will have a feeling and will see in my eyes that I feel stressed.

My sister [redacted] worry for me that I am in the house. [redacted] I feel good. She put blanket on me and whisper in my ear that they outside have a party.

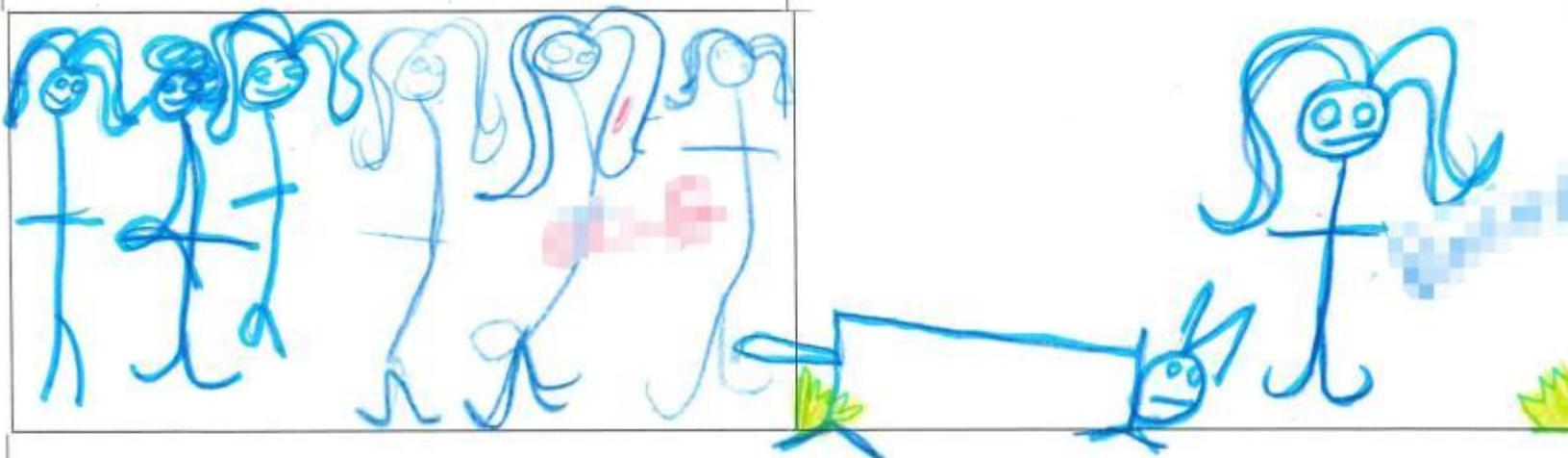
My biggest worry is when I sleep - that I might be rape.

Why I need a safety plan. If things don't change what might happen?
What I am most worried about.



Who are the people in my safety network

What does my safety network have to do to help keep me safe



- "No Drink Beer and No Smoke Gunga around me".
- They have to mind me. (This means they have to watch over me and look for me).
- They have to ask me "Are you ok?" and if I say I feel stressed they should keep me close at home or take me fishing. 13

What I need to do to help keep me safe.

1. No running off.



2. If I want to go anywhere I have to tell mum. She will make sure that one of my safety network people takes me and picks me up and that there is a safe person to help watch over me at all times.



I need to tell a person on my safety network straight away if I feel no good or someone makes me feel no good.

3. If I don't feel safe I will tell [redacted]
I will tell people on my safety hand. My safety people have to believe me and help make me safe.



3. If I don't feel safe I will....

my safe people have to believe me and help make me safe.



The children talk about their Safety Plans

"My family and my sister help me to be safe"





What we are most proud of – Our Safety Planning for the children

- Planned Response
- Flexible
- Child Focused
- Working with the Community
- Collaborative



West Kimberley staff workshop the Words & Pictures safety plans.

Conclusion

With thanks to the children, families and communities and all of the West Kimberley agencies and services who have been a part of the work.

