

**Submission  
No 17**

**SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN OF IMPRISONED PARENTS IN NEW SOUTH  
WALES**

**Organisation:** Deadly Connections Community & Justice Services Inc

**Date Received:** 28 February 2020

Partially  
Confidential



**DEADLY CONNECTIONS**  
COMMUNITY AND JUSTICE SERVICES

## **Inquiry into the support of children of imprisoned parents in NSW**

### **Submission on behalf of Deadly Connections Community & Justice Services Inc.**

#### **Introduction**

Deadly Connections welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry into the support of children of imprisoned parents in NSW. As Aboriginal people who have experienced imprisonment and also support Aboriginal parents professionally we inherently understand the adverse impacts of imprisonment on our children, families and communities.

Ongoing colonisation, trauma, racism and systemic disadvantage underlie the health and social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people and are implicated in their over-representation in Australian prisons<sup>1</sup>.

Given the significant over representation of Aboriginal people and parents in prison, a disproportionate number of Aboriginal children are affected by parental imprisonment. Furthermore, the large kinship structures and extended networks in Aboriginal families and communities means that the parent of a child does not have to be imprisoned for a child to be affected. The affects of imprisonment on Aboriginal children extends beyond parental incarceration. The imprisonment of a Grandmother, Grandfather, Uncle or Aunt has profound affects on our children.

Indigenous Australians make up 2% of the general population but 28% of the prison population<sup>2</sup>. There are an estimated 60,000 children under 16 years of age in the state of New South Wales (NSW) who have experienced parental incarceration; at least one in five are Aboriginal children<sup>3</sup>. Aboriginal inmates are three times as likely to have had a parent incarcerated during their childhood than non-Aboriginal inmates<sup>4</sup>.

Our direct concerns for Aboriginal children with imprisoned parents encompass parental contact, keeping children connected to family, community and culture during periods of care for the children, lack of support and rehabilitative options for Aboriginal parents, restoration to parents, the increased cost of child protection interventions, long terms orders, research and support to develop the capacity of Aboriginal parents.

#### **Summary**

Based on our experience as Aboriginal people and professionals, more resources should be directed to Aboriginal Community Controlled, grass roots organisations such as Deadly Connections to provide place based, culturally responsive and safe interventions and services.

Deadly Connections is the only specialist Aboriginal organisation that deals with both child protection and justice system involvement of Aboriginal people, families and communities. Deadly Connections is also very unique in our approach to offering programs across the life span (see table below).

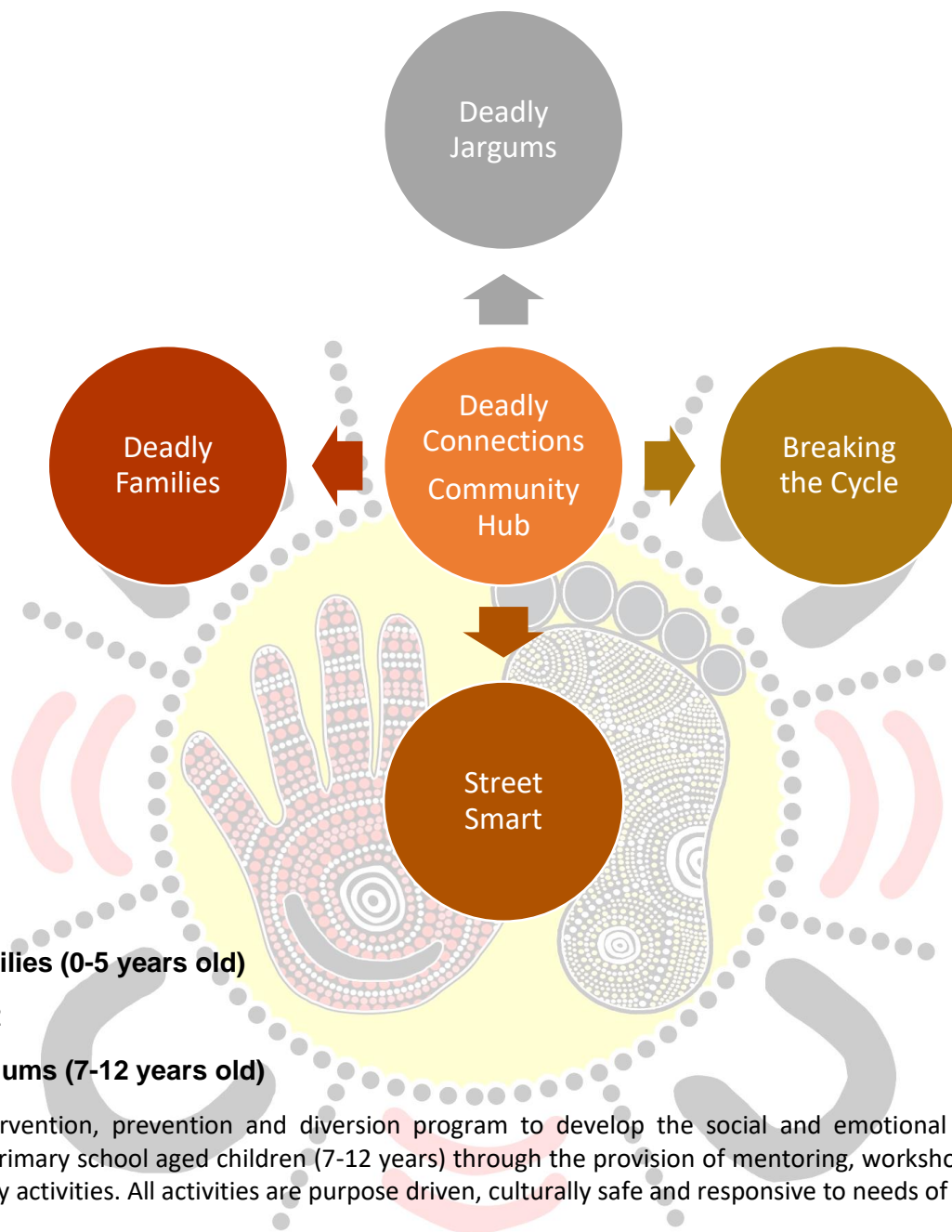
Deadly Connections receives ongoing requests for support for justice involved people through self referrals, professionals, family and community however is not currently resourced to do so.

<sup>1</sup> <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1753-6405.12892>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/news/imprisonment-rates-indigenous-women-national-shame>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257042952\\_Children\\_of\\_incarcerated\\_parents\\_Insights\\_to\\_addressing\\_a\\_growing\\_public\\_health\\_concern\\_in\\_Australia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257042952_Children_of_incarcerated_parents_Insights_to_addressing_a_growing_public_health_concern_in_Australia)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/prisoners/health-australia-prisoners-2018/contents/summary>



**Deadly Families (0-5 years old)**

See page 12

**Deadly Jargums (7-12 years old)**

An early intervention, prevention and diversion program to develop the social and emotional skills of 'at risk' (Aboriginal) primary school aged children (7-12 years) through the provision of mentoring, workshops and free after school/holiday activities. All activities are purpose driven, culturally safe and responsive to needs of the children.

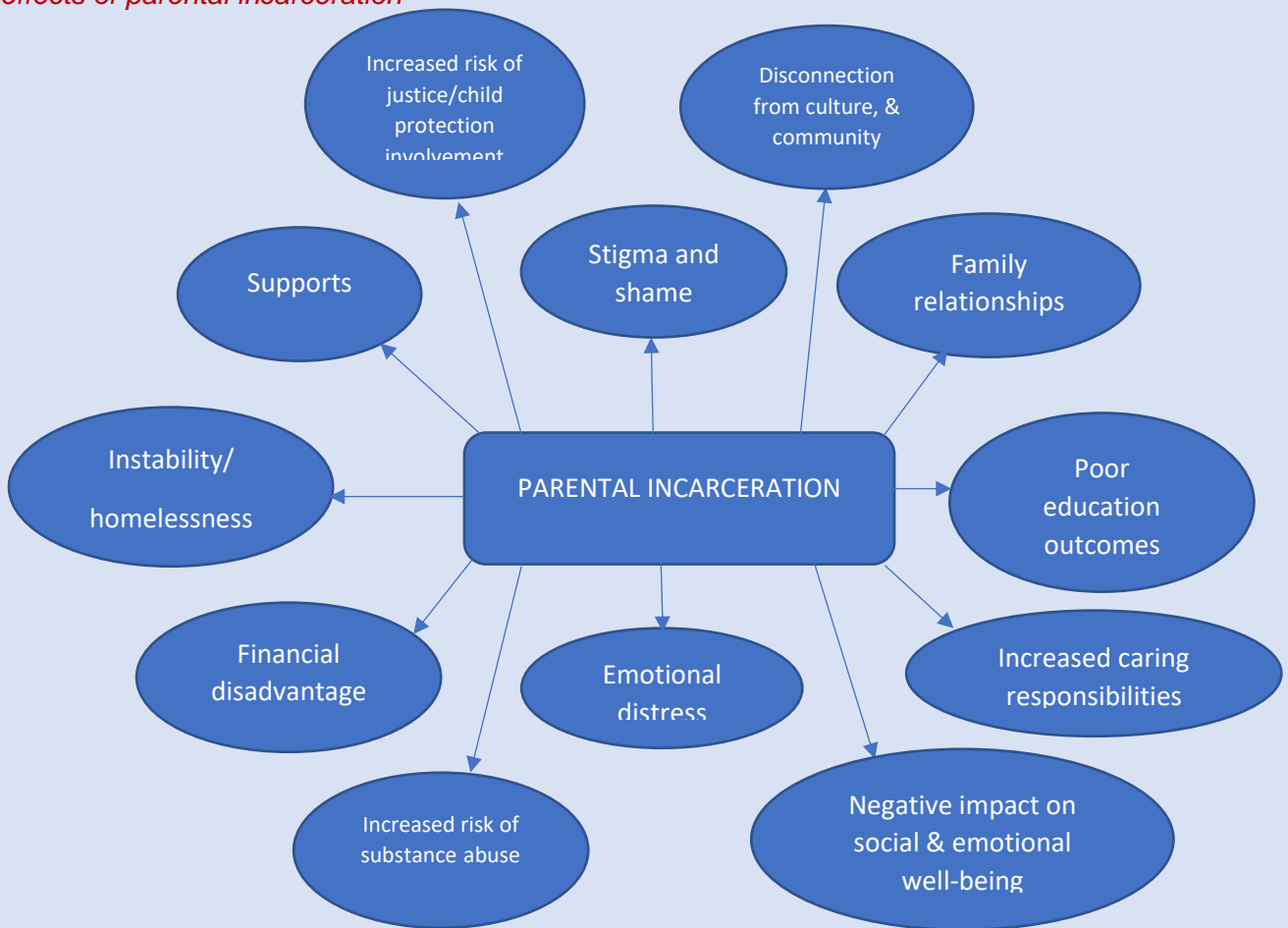
**Street Smart (10-24 years old)**

The Street Smart project adopts a form of outreach and street based youth work, during times of high risk. Street Smart operates without the use of a centre and occurs where YP "are at" both geographically and developmentally'. Street Smart Project is an early intervention, prevention and diversion that seeks to divert young Aboriginal people from the justice system and risky or anti-social behaviours (and the harmful consequences of this behaviour) in Redfern/Waterloo/Glebe aged between 10 - 24 years old.

**Breaking the Cycle (all ages)**

'Breaking the Cycle' is an early intervention, prevention and diversion program that has been designed to divert Aboriginal people from the justice system through reducing recidivism, promoting healing/rehabilitation and improving community safety by strengthening the cultural identity of participants & targeting risk factors associated with child protection interventions and justice involvement.

## *The effects of parental incarceration*



## **Fundamentals**

### **Who we are**

Deadly Connections Community & Justice Services Inc (Deadly Connections) was established in September 2018 as a specialist Aboriginal Community Controlled (Not For Profit - NFP) Organisation (ACCO). This was in direct community response to address the over-representation of Aboriginal people, families and communities in both the child protection and justice systems.

Deadly Connections was founded by two Aboriginal people (with the support of their community), a husband and wife couple with both professional and lived experience in various human service areas including first-hand lived experience of the child protection and justice systems.

A short clip of their work can be found in the link below;

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10155757813027005>

### **Our Truth**

First Nations people of Australia are grossly overrepresented in the child protection and justice systems. This involvement perpetuates a cycle of intergenerational grief, loss, trauma and disadvantage. True lived experience, culture, healing, self-determination and a deep community connection must be the heart and soul of all work with First Nations people and communities.

### **Our Purpose**



Deadly Connections positively disrupts cycles of disadvantage, intergenerational grief, loss, trauma by providing holistic, culturally responsive programs and services to First Nations people and communities, particularly those who are involved (or are at risk of involvement) in the child protection and/or justice system/s.

## Our Vision

First Nations people have transitioned from surviving to thriving as individuals, families and communities by breaking cycles of child protection, justice system involvement, trauma, disadvantage, and by being empowered to manage and overcome imposed colonial systems and practices.

## Our Work

- We place culture, healing, true lived experience, deep community connections and self-determination at the centre of all we do
- We embody and embed holistic, community-based, decolonising approaches to connecting First Nations people to their cultural, inner and community strength
- We advocate and collaborate to improve justice and child protection systems.

## Themes and values

**Culture** is the fundamental underpinning of our organisation and is built on the critical importance of respect, connection to culture, country, language, belonging and identity.

We recognise that Culture serves as a protective factor and we operate within a healing framework. Deadly Connections develops community-led, culturally responsive approaches and solutions to matters that affect us. We identify that our communities and Elders are a source of information, knowledge and expertise. We adopt a community-led - “bottom-up” approach to owning, managing and dealing with community matters, as opposed to the “top-down” approach imposed by government and other non-government organisations.

Aboriginal epistemology informs our organisation, services and programs in which we authentically embed Aboriginal ways of being, knowing and doing. Our strength also extends to our experience in enabling the development of community capacity and leadership to effect change.

**Lived experience** is not just an essential design feature of our programs, it is everything. Every family, child, and individual have different challenges and require a different response. The heartfelt, intuitive wisdom of someone who has been through a similar experience is vital to giving First Nations people the personalised and culturally responsive care they need and deserve.

*‘Indigenous people are more than consumers of social services; we have the skills and capabilities to drive the services of our community. Our model of service delivery requires us to employ local Indigenous people and build the capacity of the workforce within our community and this is what makes the Indigenous community-controlled sector so critical to achieving change.*

Dr Christine Bond, Oodgeroo Unit QUT and board member of Inala Wangarra

**Deep community connections** means that Deadly Connections is family to the people we serve. For traumatised people who are accustomed to systems that problematise, stigmatise and dehumanise, this is extremely important to establishing trust and building relationships that promote healing, growth and empowerment.

**Holistic** means individual health and wellbeing encompasses the whole community throughout the entire life-course. It includes collective issues like social justice, equity, and rights, as well as traditional knowledge, traditional healing, and connection to culture. The Aboriginal concept of health includes mental, social, physical, cultural and spiritual health.

**System change** means advocating, campaigning and lobbying for systemic change on processes and policies that disproportionately affect First Nations communities and for elevating the voices of First Nations people to inform program/service development/delivery and advise on matters that affect us.

## Context and Evidence of the issues

First Nations people of Australia are recognised as the oldest living culture on earth but we face many challenges, those challenges are often inherited and inter-generational.

The over representation of First Nations people in both the child protection and justice system is a result of a complex range of factors related to inter-generational experiences of entrenched trauma, poverty and disadvantage for Aboriginal families and communities.

There is a substantiated correlation between child protection involvement, criminal (juvenile/adult) justice involvement and the experience of long-term social disadvantage. First Nations people are 17 times more likely as their non-Aboriginal counterparts to be in both the child protection system and under youth justice supervision<sup>5</sup>.

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) concluded that the most significant contributing factor bringing Aboriginal people into conflict with the criminal justice system was their disadvantaged and unequal position in the wider society.

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody (RCIADIC) was conducted between 1987 and 1991. The final report was provided in 1991 and made 339 recommendations across a wide range of policy areas. The largest number of recommendations relate to policing, criminal justice, incarceration and deaths in custody<sup>6</sup>.

The RCIADIC also made recommendations relating to health, education and self-determination in recognition of the breadth of factors leading to the high rates of incarceration of Aboriginal people, particularly for young people<sup>7</sup>.

The RCIADIC concluded that “Aboriginal people in custody do not die at a greater rate than non-Aboriginal people in custody... what is overwhelmingly different is the rate at which Aboriginal people come into custody, compared with the rate of the general community”<sup>8</sup>.

Despite this key finding, in the 27 years since the RCIADIC the Aboriginal share of the prison population has doubled, while the mortality rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody has halved. Thus, while there have been positive steps, it is clear that further work is still required to successfully address the disproportionately high, and growing, rates of incarceration among Aboriginal people<sup>9</sup>.

Aboriginal women are the fastest growing prison population in Australia, increasing by 48% between 2002 and 2012 compared to 29% for men and by 55% between 2013 and 2018 compared to 38% for men.<sup>10</sup> They comprise around one-third (33%) of female prisoners in New South Wales, despite making up just 3% of the population. The majority of Aboriginal women in prison (more than 80%) are mothers and Aboriginal women often have primary care responsibilities for other children<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore, *Aboriginal women are more likely to be in prison on shorter sentences and on remand and are over-represented among those released from*

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/f80cfcb3-c058-4c1c-bda5-e37ba51fa66b/aihw-juv-129.pdf.aspx?inline=true.%20Table%20578b>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/review-implementation-recommendations-royal-commission-aboriginal-death-custody.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/review-implementation-recommendations-royal-commission-aboriginal-death-custody.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/review-implementation-recommendations-royal-commission-aboriginal-death-custody.html>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/review-implementation-recommendations-royal-commission-aboriginal-death-custody.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1753-6405.12892>

<sup>11</sup> <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1753-6405.12892>

*prison, with approximately 2.03 Aboriginal women released from prison annually for each equivalent person in prison (compared to 1.62 non-Aboriginal women, 1.27 Aboriginal men and 0.98 non-Aboriginal men)<sup>12</sup>*

Numerous studies have indicated that poverty is one of the major drivers of child protection system involvement. For First Nations communities, high rates of poverty stem from experiences of colonisation, discrimination, forced child removal and inter-generational impacts of resulting trauma (The Healing Foundation, 2013). Nearly one in three (31.4%) Aboriginal people are living below the poverty line.

First Nations people are grossly over-represented on measures of disadvantage that contribute to child protection risks, they are also under-represented in services that could respond and prevent entry to out of home care.

At 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2018 - 20,421 of our children were living in out of home care<sup>13</sup>, the majority of whom will go to bed tonight in home that is not their own, disconnected from family, culture and community.

The population of Aboriginal children in out of home care is projected to double in size in the next 10 years, by 2028<sup>14</sup>.

### **Key issues**

The historical treatment of First Nations people in the criminal justice system has contributed to the ongoing over-representation of Aboriginal prisoners (Cunneen, 2006) who now comprise over a quarter of the Australian prison population yet make up only 2.8% of the Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2017).

This has serious implications for Aboriginal children in particular.

As an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation we are committed to supporting Aboriginal children, families and communities who have been impacted by the child protection and/or justice systems.

Aboriginal children and families will be the primary focus of our submission.

### **Endorsements of other submission/s**

We understand Shine for Kids has presented significant evidence in this respect on behalf of the PRAM group. As members of PRAM, we endorse the Shine for Kids submission.

### **Case studies**

#### **Case Study 1**

##### **Renee (35)**

Renee is a 35-year-old Nyampa woman, born and raised on Wiradjuri land in Griffith.

Renee was arrested in June 2019 on suspicion of Aggravated Break and Enter. Renee has 5 children (aged 17, 14, 9, 8, 6), 4 of which have special needs. Her 8 year old daughter was diagnosed with Leukemia while Renee was in custody and was not informed of her daughters diagnosis or treatment until she was released. Renee spent 6 mths on remand across 3 different Correctional Centres. Renee's charges were dismissed due to lack of evidence.

Whilst in custody, the Father of her children (a DV perpetrator and active heroin user) removed the children from the home of her elderly mother (76) who had been caring for the children since her incarceration. It took Renee 9 weeks to locate her children after her release. After initiating Family Court proceedings to

<sup>12</sup> <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1753-6405.12892>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.familymatters.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/1097\\_F.M-2019\\_LR.%C6%92.pdf](https://www.familymatters.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/1097_F.M-2019_LR.%C6%92.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.familymatters.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/1097\\_F.M-2019\\_LR.%C6%92.pdf](https://www.familymatters.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/1097_F.M-2019_LR.%C6%92.pdf)



recover the children, Renee was informed of her children's whereabouts and was able to recover them without pursuing the matter through Family Court.

Renee advised that she had approached a number of non-government agencies and requested their support without success. While in custody Housing N.S.W also ended her tenancy which meant Renee and her children had nowhere to live after her release.

Renee felt that no correctional officers/welfare workers in the jail were compassionate when she shared her concern for her children being separated from her especially after the lengthy amount of time that they were apart and given they already had special needs. During her time in custody, Renee was so desperate for assistance that she placed an ad in the Koori Mail seeking support and assistance<sup>15</sup>.

The children had experienced significant disruption as Renee had experienced domestic violence for a number of years during her relationship with the children's father.

Dealing with parole has been extremely stressful, from not being allowed have her appointments at her temporary accommodation (currently in Ronald McDonald house) so that she may be with her daughter in hospital, to being given a hard time for attending appointments an hour earlier than scheduled so she can be back to her daughter before her chemotherapy appointments. She also expressed her concern that there was no option for her to attend any type of rehabilitation program unless it was court ordered.

Another obstacle was trying to organise jail visits while her children were with family in Griffith NSW, and Renee was in a Sydney jail. Renee felt there was no financial support (other than the job she had in jail) or Aboriginal specific welfare workers. She also felt that FACs did not offer her any support but instead supported her children's father.

Renee felt that the NSW Government needs more compassion towards both parents, especially in regards to children with disabilities/illnesses (given bail or accommodating alternate visits) she also expressed her disappointment in not being informed of her daughters illness as well as not being informed of family members passing away. She also stated that she feels she would have benefitted from staff receiving more cultural training, instead of dealing with Indigenous peoples with all force, even if they are a victim.

**Deadly Connections interventions children and programs would have been an appropriate support service response for Renee and her children to assist with;**

- **Cultural support for Renee whilst she was in custody**
- **Support to locate her children**
- **Culturally safe space for Renee to access support**
- **Support with DV processes**
- **Supporting Renee with her transition to community including compliance with Community Corrections and visiting her children**
- **Advocacy for Renee to be relocated to a Correctional Centre so that children and family could visit more frequently**
- **Support with housing upon release**
- **Support with compassion and empathy in a culturally safe way**
- **Facilitating contact with Renee and her children**
- **Parenting Education Course for Renee to develop her capacity as parent**
- **Culturally responsive support and activities for her children**
- **Support for her children and family while Renee was in custody**
- **Support through the Family Law Court processes**
- **Counselling and Trauma healing support**
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## Case Study 2

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<sup>15</sup> Appendix A



## Andrew (29)

Andrew was in a relationship with his partner Carolyn before his incarceration. Carolyn fell pregnant prior to Andrew's incarceration and gave birth to a little girl (Amanda) on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May, 2018. Andrew was in custody from December 2017- September 2019.

Carolyn had a history of drug use and due to child protection concerns Amanda was removed and placed with the Maternal Aunt who was not Aboriginal. Permanent Orders were made while Andrew was in custody which granted Parental Responsibility to the Minister until she was 18. Given the fact that Andrew was in custody, he had no way of challenging this decision or actively participating in the Court processes.

Andrew has been referred to our Deadly Families Project by the Care and Protection field officer from the Aboriginal Legal Service to assist him in developing his capacity as a parent, providing intensive family support and applying for a Section 90 so that he can regain custody of his now 2 year old daughter.

## Recommendations

We strongly support and endorse the 97 recommendations made in the 1997 Report into Children of Imprisoned Parents by the Standing Committee on Social Issues;

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2005/Compiled%20report.pdf>

In addition to the following recommendations:

- As per RCIADIC recommendations imprisonment should be used as a last resort particularly for parents
- Establishment of community hubs for justice involved people to have their needs met at one access point (Deadly Connections is currently working towards establishing one in the Inner West of Sydney)
- There is a distinct lack of holistic and culturally responsive programs, Deadly Connections provides holistic and culturally responsive services and programs but is under resourced to do so
- In accordance with *Bugmy v The Queen [2013] HCA 37* promote and resource the preparation and submission of individual (Bugmy) reports during court/sentencing processes that adequately capture the complexities, historical and current factors that entrench Aboriginal people, families and communities in the justice system (Deadly Connections is currently implementing this as part of their current programs)
- Comprehensive, culturally responsive assessments of the needs of parents should be undertaken at the earliest possible time to allow for adequate support and release planning
- Improving access to technology for imprisoned parents to increase contact and connections to children
- Acknowledgement of prisoners as parents and the vital role they play in their children's lives
- Alternatives to imprisonment should be well known and used where appropriate
- Well-resourced programs that target Aboriginal parents with child protection history or involvement (such as the Deadly Families Project)<sup>16</sup>
- Increased culturally safe, educational and skills-based programs to develop the capacity of parents (Deadly Families is currently developing this as part of our Deadly Families Project)<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Appendix B

<sup>17</sup> Appendix C

- Culturally responsive programs to work with justice involved Aboriginal people (e.g. Breaking the Cycle)
- Culturally responsive programs that target factors that contribute to disadvantage, grief, loss and trauma
- Implement legislative and policy/practice change to support the action of recommendations by Deadly Connections and other community agencies (otherwise we run the risk of repeating the same process of RCIADIC)
- Acknowledgement of Aboriginal kinship structures in both correctional and community settings (understanding that Uncles may act as Fathers and Aunties may act as Mothers)
- Elevate and implement the voices of justice involved parents to inform service delivery and programs
- Improved sustainable employment pathways and support for justice involved parents
- Increased in-reach services to custodial settings that connect Elders and other community representatives to those in prison
- Culturally responsive, place based residential parenting facilities for Aboriginal Mums and Dads
- Priority (safe and stable) accommodation for parents exiting prison with caring responsibilities
- Extension from 6 to 12 months of reduced rent for imprisoned parents in community/public housing properties
- Prison visiting; supported visits and fathering units; and educational fathering programs
- Increased access to community-based orders for parents (including ICO's)
- Flexible reporting mechanisms for parents subjected to community-based orders when they have children with special needs (including children with chronic or terminal illnesses)
- Allow people in prison to access support for rehabilitation at any point in their sentence (this now has to be Court ordered prior to sentencing)
- Culturally responsive programs in custody including yarning circles for parents
- Increased training for stakeholders in the justice system to understand the complex reasons behind the entrenchment of Aboriginal people and families in the justice system
- Equipping justice stakeholders to understand the difference between urban, rural and remote Aboriginal people/communities and their complexities
- Visiting areas in Correctional Centre's should be child friendly with play equipment, healthy food options and opportunities for parents to engage in activities with their children
- Visits should be staggered to avoid lengthy waiting periods for families especially those with children who have special needs

- Increased resources and access for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to access and provide support to Aboriginal Mums/Dad's or carers
- Increased provision of culturally safe programs, services and activities that develop the capacity of imprisoned parents particularly for those who's parenting skills have been disrupted through their own experiences of care and/or justice involvement
- Vary eligibility criteria for Aboriginal people to access community-based programs (e.g. violence as an exclusion criteria disproportionately effects Aboriginal people given the high levels of violence in Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal people are over represented as both victims and perpetrators of violence)
- Increased accountability to keep parents and children connected to each other, Culture, Country and Community particularly by non-Aboriginal carers
- Aboriginal women who are considered perpetrators of violence should be considered in the context of Aboriginal Family Violence
- Aboriginal parents are most responsive with a place based, Aboriginal service such as Deadly Connections
- Any service provided needs to be provided in prison and through the transition out of prison
- Department of Communities and Justice (which incorporates both child protection and corrective services) still operate as separate agencies, there should be increased collaboration in supporting those with child protection and justice involvement including specialists within correctional centres to assist those in custody with understanding orders, rights and responsibilities in Care and Protection matters
- Focusing on supporting both the incarcerated parent and their family in the development of pre-release planning and support where appropriate would thus benefit. Currently, families are not a central component of this process
- Increased collation of data on imprisoned parents and the affects on children as;
  - The majority of prisoners are men, yet there has been very little formal attention concerning the parenting status of these men<sup>18</sup>
  - In Australia, the exact number of incarcerated parents, and children of incarcerated parents (COIP), is unknown, as this data is not collected<sup>19</sup>

### **Include your details**

This submission was prepared by Carly Stanley (CEO & Founder) and Keenan Mundine (Co-Founder & Ambassador) and is endorsed by our Board of Management.

Carly Stanley

Keenan Mundine

Thalia Anthony (on behalf of the Board)

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Dated the 27<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2020.

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330360454\\_Supporting\\_incarcerated\\_fathers\\_An\\_exploration\\_of\\_research\\_and\\_practice\\_in\\_Victoria\\_Australia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330360454_Supporting_incarcerated_fathers_An_exploration_of_research_and_practice_in_Victoria_Australia)

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330360454\\_Supporting\\_incarcerated\\_fathers\\_An\\_exploration\\_of\\_research\\_and\\_practice\\_in\\_Victoria\\_Australia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330360454_Supporting_incarcerated_fathers_An_exploration_of_research_and_practice_in_Victoria_Australia)

# YOUR SAY



On page 24, Jackie Huggins looks at Australia's dismal human rights record following a UN report.

## On the inside, calling for help

I AM currently serving a nine month sentence in prison, I have fallen prey to the prejudice corrupt law enforcers of Griffith, NSW.

There are many stories like mine but I am one person who just can't sit and do time that was made for me on the hands of corrupt police, lawyers and judges.

I have five children, four of whom are

special needs, my elderly grandmother and father, who has lung problems, depend on me to be their primary carer.

I was accepted into Tranby College to study Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander legal advocacy in March.

I dream to be able to fulfil those dreams along with psychology, welfare and a variety of other diplomas to be able to help others

in these predicaments.

I need contact with media, legal experts, Indigenous affairs, parliament, whoever will take my story seriously so I can get home. It's so hard to get an address or phone number the right places to help address this but please, any help will do.

Rowena Charles  
Bathurst Correctional Centre

## POETRY

### Treat People Right

Are You Making It Easy For Good People

To Become Hateful, By Treating Them So Bad

Everyone Is Innocent Until Proven Guilty

So Don't Abuse Them Or Make Them Sad

Have You Ever Been A Victim When You Had Done Nothing Wrong

Has Someone Pointed At You A Finger

And It Went On For So Long Wouldn't It Make You Defensive

To Be Rejected In That Way The Feelings Of Being Unwanted

Will Forever With You Stay If You Spoke To People Softly

And Treated Them With Respect

Things Would Be So Different And Goodness You Could Expect

But If You Choose To Be Nasty

And Bitter In Your Life You Will Never Be Happy

Until The Day You Die

Abi DRabi

## Because of mum, we can

NAIDOC's 'Because of her, we can!' is a powerful reminder that there are so many women in our lives who empower us to be all that we can be and much, much more.

For my mob it was our mum who played a critical role in our lives and the lives of so many others. Not only did she give us life, she gave us values, support, truth and purest of unconditional love.

I want to tell you a little about this extraordinary and wonderful human being that just happened to be our mum Jainey (Jane) Williams.

She was not only our mum, but a best friend to us, her eight children, before she spread that oceans of love to her grandchildren, great grandchildren and to many others.

Sadly, mum lost her battle with cancer five days after her 69th birthday on December 13, 2012. This time was meant to be a celebration of her 69 years

physically on this earth but we, as a family, no matter how hard we tried to be happy in front of her, watched as the cancer was drawing her life away.

It was on the December 18, 2012, that we got the news we knew was coming, but were still not prepared for.

The pain that was to engulf us and the grief that ensued and that continues to hang like a heavy fog over us as we remember her every day.

Although we continue to grieve, we are constantly reminded that her physical life here was only one part of her life's journey, what she has left for us all is truly inspirational and is a legacy to carry forward into time immemorial.

The hardest part is knowing she will not be returning to us, yet we are comforted by still seeing her face in pictures, seeing and hearing her in our minds, in our dreams, feeling her when we go to that part of our hearts where she resides.



Jainey Williams.

This is not a sad story, it's so much more than that.

If you knew what Mum had to endure, the many difficult times that played in the background of her life and the difficulties she willingly carried and burdened

herself with for us and many others, you would have truly been inspired.

We could write a 10,000-page book about her and the good that she did and the legacy she left, but that still wouldn't cover the inspirational things she did and still does for us.

Her legacy was based on love, respect for others and carefully guided discipline.

It would be wrong of me to not to mention that Mum was also a very proud believer in the Bible and what it teaches, which gave her the belief and strength which we also benefited from.

Mum got her strength from the Bible and we got our strength from her. Her blood running through us and because of her, we can, we have, we do, so thank you to our dear dear Mum wherever you are.

Always in our heart. On behalf of our family and friends,

Ross Williams  
Brisbane, Qld

## Is it possible to merge all languages across Australia into one for all?

I've sent you some time back a proposal that Australia should have two languages, English and a made-up Aboriginal language 'Yurla Wugnna'.

Now I hear on the ABC that all Aboriginal languages might have one ancestor,

a Proto-Australian tongue.

Wouldn't this be a great time to at least raise the issue of another language?

Either getting back to the roots or creating a new language like an Aboriginal Esperanto?

I know some people want to only preserve their own tongue but only an Australian-wide language would have enough people to ensure that it survived.

Nnamvurlaran (speechsower)

## Keeping Your Say short and sweet

A BIG thanks to all of our readers for sending letters, poems and other feedback; we love hearing from you.

You can help us by keeping your letters to 400 words or less and poems generally no more than 25 medium-length lines. This will increase your chances of being published. Even if sent via email, all letters and

poems must be accompanied by the author's full name, home town/city and state/territory, and a contact number so we can verify content. After that, we're happy to withhold names and addresses upon request.

We will publish 'Looking For' letters as long as they do not breach the privacy of individuals mentioned.

And we're happy to consider photos alongside letters – as long as they're of a high enough resolution and standard, and as long as copyright requirements are met. We accept no responsibility for returning original photos, so please send copies instead.

– EDITOR



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Send it to us on 02 66 222 600



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The address is: editor@koorimail.com

The Koori Mail welcomes your Letters to the Editor. Preference will be given to submissions of interest to Indigenous Australians. Please include your town and State of residence, and daytime telephone number for checking purposes. Items may be edited and reproduced.

## Once Upon a Time

Once upon a time, there lived a little black girl, that nobody could stand.

They tormented and tortured her soul, to the point, she felt she wanted to hang.

Then with one loud mighty angry shout, she spewed her heart out. And with her heart laying open and bare, she pointed to every cut, graze and pain she had felt there.

And though her heart did bleed red, her eyes were swollen as she continually bitterly wept.

They stared at her, with their dark wide eyes, and felt nothing for her demise.

They couldn't see or understand, instead they called her, the fruit loop of the land.

She knew they never would want to know, this little black girl, who is all alone...

Denise Bloomfield





**DEADLY CONNECTIONS**  
COMMUNITY AND JUSTICE SERVICES

# 'DEADLY FAMILIES'

**Deadly Families** is a culturally responsive, early intervention and prevention program (for Aboriginal Mum's and/or Dad's), designed to target risk factors associated with child protection notifications and interventions.

**Deadly Families** will develop the capacity of parents, improve their parenting and life skills, promote positive outcomes for participants and their families and encourage healthy, connected, strong, safe relationships with their children through individualised, holistic, cultural and social support to actively assist both men and women who are:

- At risk of having children removed from the family to out of home care OR
- Who's children are already removed from the family & placed in out of home care AND
- Seeking to reduce the risk of removal of their children OR re-establishing contact and/or reunification with their children.

**Deadly Families** will equip parents with the skills, knowledge and support to reduce their level of risk and involvement with FACS, successfully shape their own futures, navigate life's challenges, begin their journeys of healing and empower participants to take responsibility for their individual development to thrive and become the best parents they can be.

## We provide;

- Intensive, practical, individualised and targeted support through specialist, culturally responsive case management, referral and advocacy
- 8 week parenting education program to develop parenting skills in a culturally safe space including healing centred engagement strategies
- Active support and encourage positive engagement when dealing with FACS
- Increased connections to Aboriginal identity, culture, country, family and community;
- Creation of a circle of care to provide ongoing support to the parent/s and family
- Culturally safe activities to increase connection and improve relationships with children.

## Eligibility criteria:

- Aboriginality (carer being referred)
- Living in (or connection to) the City of Sydney/Inner West LGA (outside areas will be considered)
- At least one child aged between 0-5 years (or pregnant with an expected delivery date of 6 weeks or less from date of referral)
- FACS/ Department of Communities & Justice involvement
- **Priority will be given to parents with current or historical out of home care/justice system involvement.**

Please direct all enquiries to Deadly Connections via email [info@deadlyconnections.org.au](mailto:info@deadlyconnections.org.au)

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[www.deadlyconnections.org.au](http://www.deadlyconnections.org.au)

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