121. Dr H Blagg, Dr Vickie Hovane, Dorinda Cox

 Inter-generational Trauma

Thank you for inviting this submission.

Below are some notes made after our phone call.

## 1.     Inter-generational trauma impacts on all Aboriginal families and communities. It impacts on individuals, families, communities and cultures.  For Aboriginal people, it is a collective consequence of colonisation rather than simply an individual experience. It is compounded by negative contact with the justice and related systems, such as children’s protection.  Because this trauma impacts across all levels of Aboriginal society, there is a need for a holistic and life-span approach to addressing the issue. Such an approach starts as a minimum from pre-birth through to later-life.  It aims to reduce the incidence of issues such as foetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) as a result of maternal substance use, low birthweight due to poverty, and other impairments among children being born into Aboriginal families.  Such an approach should also respond to the traumatising impacts of processes such as the Stolen Generations on the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, across generations.  These are all symptoms of the profound intergenerational trauma experienced by Aboriginal people.

## 2.     Mainstream approaches and programs, particularly those relying on cognitive behavioural therapeutic techniques have only limited value for responding to intergenerational trauma among Aboriginal people including those in who are imprisoned. It is time for a paradigm shift that requires investment in Aboriginal led, designed and managed initiatives.

## 3.     The current system has been designed by White people for White people. More specifically, it is designed by White men for White men – Aboriginal women are particularly disadvantaged because of this.  This system has been imposed onto Aboriginal communities without the consent of Aboriginal people, who already possessed their own systems of governance and body of laws.  The ongoing oppression and disempowerment of Aboriginal people must stop.  What is required is for governments and their agents to trust Aboriginal people to know what is needed and how to respond to the needs of people, families and communities.  What is required is Aboriginal led and responsive, place-based initiatives that are trauma and attachment informed; initiatives which aim to heal families rather than simply focusing on individuals. The need to maintain and rebuild attachments and connections, severed by imprisonment, is critical for the rehabilitation of Aboriginal people, particularly women, and for the health and wellbeing of children and other dependents.

## 4.     Aboriginal women are pivotal in maintaining the health and wellbeing of families. When Aboriginal women are removed from the family structure via imprisonment it creates a massive crisis, affecting a range of dependents, principally children. The crisis is exacerbated when there are multiple generations of women from one family in prisons, as is the case at Bandyup prison in WA.  The ramifications reverberate negatively across the breadth and depth of family and community wellbeing.

## 5.     Imprisonment has become so ubiquitous and normalised that it does not act as a deterrent, nor is there any shame attached to being arrested by the police, placed before the court and imprisoned. We urgently need a fresh approach that invests in healing and reconnects families. This can only be achieved by supporting the strategies that strengthen Aboriginal law and culture

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