SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
ON WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH AFRICAN AUSTRALIAN
COMMUNITIES IN VICTORIA FOR THE WELLBEING OF
CHILDREN

- A focus on early intervention strategies and collaborative
  work
ABOUT VICTORIA LEGAL AID

Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) is an independent statutory authority established under the Legal Aid Act 1978, and is a leading and responsible force for community access to the legal system and for social justice.

One of VLA’s major programs is the **Access and Equity Program**. The objectives of this program are to:

- assist people to deal with their legal issues by ensuring that VLA services are accessible, effective, efficient and appropriate to need
- promote a fairer and more efficient justice system through proactive and collaborative law reform and systemic advocacy.

The **Community Legal Education** Program (CLE) sits within the Access and Equity Program and is dedicated to increasing knowledge of legal rights and responsibilities by providing effective and targeted community legal education, products and strategies.

The **Family, Youth and Children’s Law Program** is another major program of VLA, with a key objective to assist adults and children to resolve their family disputes to achieve safe, workable and enduring care arrangements for children. The **Child Protection subprogram’s** main objective is to:

- assist children removed, or at risk of being removed from their families by the State, and their parents, to reach safe, workable and sustainable care arrangements by ensuring the informed participation of children and parents in decision-making before, during and after care and protection proceedings in the Children’s Court.

PURPOSE

One purpose of this submission is to collate and consolidate recurring issues and themes in the delivery of child protection services to African Australian communities. These issues have emerged as a result of three years of consultation and project work, including education sessions, directly with a number of these communities.

The other purpose is to recommend certain early intervention strategies involving collaborative partnerships with the Department of Human Services. These strategies build on the findings, recommendations and matters highlighted as needing attention in the **Report of the Protecting Victoria’s Vulnerable Children Inquiry**, February 2012.¹

In the area of early intervention work with African Australian communities there is a growing list of Victorian organisations conducting forums and workshops to address

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¹ With a particular reference to Volume 2, Part 4: Major protective system elements, Chapter 13: Meeting the needs of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
the escalating concerns of various African communities across Victoria in relation to child protection matters.

**CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS SUBMISSION**

The recommendations in this submission are informed by four Victorian organisations that have shared their experiences and the learnings from their work with African Australian communities. These organisations are: Department of Justice – Justice for Refugees Program, The Salvation Army, Whittlesea Community Connections and, of course, VLA. Each of these organisations is motivated by a desire to make a positive contribution to the child protection system on behalf of African Australians. Furthermore, there are other organisations, including the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship (OMAC), Spectrum and the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), doing effective parallel intervention work with different African communities and they have validated the issues raised in this submission.²

Feedback received from African Australian communities about child protection matters and services has been documented in a number of reports, including *The Law, Our Culture, Our Children – Forum Report*³, the *Family Harmony sessions for newly arrived communities: Report and preliminary evaluation*⁴ and the *Shepparton sessions for newly arrived communities: Evaluation report*⁵. This paper canvasses recommendations in these reports and other major studies, and documents the outcomes of subsequent collaborative, early intervention engagement work.

VLA is mindful that the Department of Human Services, child protection practice (DHS, Child Protection) is noted as one of the ‘most demanding, contested and scrutinised’ areas of work within the helping professions, ‘primarily because the endeavour focuses on our society’s most vulnerable children.’⁶ The organisations contributing to this submission are dedicated to working collaboratively with DHS, Child Protection with regard to service delivery to the children, parents and families of African communities across Victoria.

**THE LAW, OUR CULTURE, OUR CHILDREN FORUM**

*The Law, Our Culture, Our Children – Forum Report* (the Forum) was held in June 2011 to address issues that were being raised by African communities in Melbourne. Over 100 community participants attended, representing the Ethiopian, Somali,

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² Forums and consultations that have recently been conducted or are being planned by these organisations are: sector consultation on intergenerational conflict organised by CMY on 1 May 2012, Child Protection Forum for South Sudanese communities organised by OMAC on 7 July 2012 and youth homelessness and intergenerational conflict network organised by Spectrum, ongoing project.
³ Jeremiah Temple, Social Inclusion Mentor Program Coordinator, The Salvation Army; report attached as an appendix to this submission.
⁴ Angela Costi, Senior Community Legal Education Coordinator, Victoria Legal Aid, April 2011; report can be found at http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/3971.htm
⁵ Monica Ferrari, Manager Community Legal Education Program, and Angela Costi, Senior Community Legal Education Coordinator, Victoria Legal Aid, June 2011; report can be found at http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/3971.htm
Liberian, Sierra Leone and Nigerian communities. The Forum was organised by peak African agencies, community sector agencies and the Department of Justice. One of the key objectives of the Forum was ‘to provide feedback and recommendations to relevant agencies to improve quality of services for newly arrived families living in Victoria’.

At the Forum a considerable number of authoritative keynote speakers addressed the participants, including Robert Ross, Assistant Manager, Child Protection, North and West Metropolitan Region, Department of Human Services. The Forum ran for five hours, during which there was intense, reflective, intelligent and strategic discussion flowing between communities and keynote speakers.

Key issues and points that emerged from the Forum were:

- Parents and community elders feeling alienated and ignored by child protection service delivery. They welcome an opportunity to be a part of the problem-solving process in the interests of their children’s wellbeing and welfare.

- The need for training for community elders to work more effectively with DHS, Child Protection and to be of assistance to child protection workers, and training for child protection workers to be more culturally aware of diverse African Australian communities.

- Community education was requested about how the law is applied in practice and how the system of child protection works, as well as education on the Australian community service system as it applies to African Australian children and families.

- Incorporating constructive, collective ways of family and child problem-solving that are a part of the African resolution process were suggested to improve the mediation and dispute resolution process.

- The out-of-home placement and foster care program were raised as key areas for African Australian input, including training for African Australian families to be foster care hosts, and important aspects of African Australian life in these programs.

FEEDBACK FROM OTHER CONSULTATIONS CONDUCTED WITH AFRICAN COMMUNITIES ACROSS VICTORIA

An extensive consultation with African Australian communities was conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission. This was a three-year national study involving consultation with over 25,000 African Australians taking part in 50 community meetings held around Australia. A number of workshops were held in regional Victoria because of the large number of African communities that have settled there.
As outlined in the *In Our Own Words – African Australians: A review of human rights and social inclusion issues, report*\(^7\), the findings highlighted a number of significant barriers to the settlement and inclusion of African Australians. The report identified a need to:

- ‘develop effective and targeted strategies to address discrimination, prejudice and racism experienced by African Australians
- include African Australian communities as genuine partners in the development and delivery of services, programs and education initiatives for their communities
- provide information and education programs on the backgrounds, culture and diversity of African Australian communities, and the pre-arrival experiences of refugees, to assist service providers and other stakeholders
- engage and support African Australian communities to develop initiatives to address particular areas of concern they have identified, including child protection and family violence.’\(^8\)

Child protection was identified as an area requiring particular attention. The report highlights an urgent need for agencies to:

- ‘increase resources for programs that provide information and build legal ‘literacy’ on child protection issues among African Australian communities, especially newly-arrived families.’\(^9\)
- ‘develop culturally sensitive approaches to assessment and intervention’.

Consultations conducted from December 2009 to April 2010 by the Community Educators of the Justice for Refugees Program, Department of Justice (DOJ), revealed that there is a high need for service assistance in relation to family law. In particular, parenting, domestic violence, intervention orders and appropriate mediation were raised by the Somali and Sudanese communities in the North-West region, and the Sudanese community in the Southern region.

VLA conducted ongoing consultations with the African communities in Greater Shepparton and surrounding districts throughout 2010. These consultations identified that the Sudanese, Congolese and Burundi communities are experiencing frustration, confusion and fear about the role and authority of DHS, Child Protection services.

As a result of these consultations, VLA developed the Family Harmony sessions that were delivered to community representatives and members in October 2010. These sessions used a storytelling approach to provide education about the law relating to

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child protection and elicited a general discussion about parenting responsibilities. The outcomes and learnings gained from these sessions are captured in the *Family Harmony sessions for newly arrived communities: Report and preliminary evaluation*. Further to the Family Harmony Report, a comprehensive evaluation process was conducted which described the beneficial outcomes of the education sessions for the African communities. This final evaluation process is documented in the *Shepparton sessions for newly arrived communities: Evaluation report*.

Throughout the VLA consultations and education sessions storytelling was used as a valuable means to facilitate discussions about legal issues. The African communities involved responded better when difficult issues were raised through storytelling and were more likely to use the stories as a means to continue discussing these issues with other community members.

In December 2011, VLA in partnership with DOJ and the Liberian Community of Victoria (which represents a number of African communities), delivered a Family Harmony session to approximately 40 members of that African community, including young people and children. The education and presentation session was a collaboration with Gwendolyn Ellemor, Manager of Child Protection Policy and Practice, DHS. Gwendolyn’s presence at the session enabled an holistic, effective and meaningful discussion to ensue between service providers and the community. The Liberian Community of Victoria confirmed their positive assessment of the session by way of email, gifts and supper:

‘I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to you for the information session you ran with the Liberian Community last Sunday. It was such a wonderful and informative one.’ Laytay Tuazama, Community representative, Liberian community

Although there is a marked diversity among the various African communities because of factors such as differing birthplaces, the urban and rural divide and levels of literacy and education, it was evident that their legal problems were very similar.

In addition to this, DOJ and VLA have consulted with newly arrived communities from the Iraqi, Afghani and Burmese communities where concerns were raised about family law issues, in particular child protection and parenting.

In 2011, after the Forum and consultation processes, a number of stakeholders regrouped to reflect on key learnings and develop recommendations to consolidate constructive feedback received from communities to improve child protection outcomes for African Australian children and their families. Participating stakeholder organisations were The Salvation Army, Whittlesea Community Connections and VLA.

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HIGHLIGHTED CASES

The three stories used in the Family Harmony sessions (found at page 14-24 of the Family Harmony Report) were developed by the African community workers and representatives from Shepparton. The stories cover common family problems that lead to child protection involvement and sometimes removal of children. The stories capture the strong need for collaborative counselling, education and culturally sensitive management. In particular, the third story highlights consistent reports from parents with teenagers, for example, the use of unfounded threats by teenagers to tell their teachers that their parents hit them, if their parents don’t let them do something like let them go out, have boyfriends or girlfriends. This has led to many parents feeling ‘paralysed’ when it comes to parenting their children, and being fearful of disciplining in any way, even saying the word ‘no’ to their children.

There have been noted cases from The Salvation Army where it appears that the Child First program has not discussed any of its decision making with the parents of children. There are recurrent conflicts between mothers and daughters over the daughters wanting boyfriends, resulting in an out-of-home placement being made for the daughters and the mothers apparently having no access to anybody from Child First to explain the decision and how it would help the daughter to build a better life.

In a great number of cases, once the children are in contact with Child Protection or the Child First program, the family and community consider a great transgression has been made by their offspring. They find it difficult to reconcile with their children because Child Protection is likened to the police: ‘an authority that punishes parents and breaks up families forever’.

There is ever-increasing anxiety in the communities that their children will stray even more with placement referrals that have no cultural point of reference. They are not only worried about their children losing a sense of heritage, but also problems associated with lack of monitoring of Centrelink payments, sexual activity (which in several cases have led to teenage pregnancies), alcohol and drug-taking, and failure to adhere to curfews.

It is worth noting that across all generations of African Australians (similarly with most culturally and linguistically diverse communities) they do not differentiate between matters that we legally and systemically assign to the Family Law area and those that we assign to Child Protection Law – children issues are part of family issues and are part of collective problem solving.

IDENTIFIED SYSTEMIC ISSUES

The issues repeatedly reported by African Australian communities in relation to their interactions with DHS, Child Protection services are:

- Lack of communication by child protection workers with affected families and communities. There is often little or no discussion that takes place with parents,

12 A quote from one of Jeremiah Temple’s clients at consultation meeting, February 2012
families, African community workers or community elders before an intervention is taken or a placement referral is made.

- Lack of cultural awareness by child protection workers. This leads to misunderstandings between Child Protection services and families. There is no pathway of cultural comprehension among child protection workers to avoid some of the recurring inaccuracies or decisions being made.

- Restrictions on the involvement of the community in developing solutions. African community elders and young people have expressed a desire to assist DHS, Child Protection to protect the safety and wellbeing of their children, to nourish their children’s connection to heritage and culture, and to foster mutual respect between parent and child. Once the child is removed, the community, as one large family, suffers anxiety, which is exacerbated by not being permitted to contribute to solving the problem.

These issues are aligned with the key points made in the Report of the Protecting Victoria’s Vulnerable Children Inquiry, Chapter 13: Meeting the needs of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. In particular, we refer to:

- ‘It is important to develop culturally appropriate policies and programs that uphold the rule of law in Victoria and Australia, yet recognise the importance of the values, beliefs, culture and background of differing communities. There is a need to better integrate migrants through positive parenting and education programs about Australian culture and norms.

- Victorian child protection services intervene when child abuse and neglect is suspected. It is important that the family services and child protection workforce is culturally competent when managing these interventions with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.’\(^{13}\)

The strategies and practice initiatives described in Chapter 13 of this report emphasise the importance of cultural competence and preventative, early intervention practices. These sorts of practices are also recommended in this paper. Further, we refer to recommendation 38 in that chapter\(^ {14}\) which emphasises:

- ‘The need to provide advice and information about Australian laws and norms regarding the rights and responsibilities of children and parents.’

VLA receives repeated and ongoing requests for effective, engaging education about the rights and responsibilities of child protection and its associated law from African Australian communities. We have met some of these requests by developing and delivering the Family Harmony sessions. These sessions, along with other Shepparton-based sessions, were recognised as a good practice initiative by the Australian Human

\(^{13}\) Key points, page 312
\(^{14}\) Key points, page 320
Rights Commission.\textsuperscript{15} Further, we have led the need to develop a national strategic response towards educating newly arrived communities through our partnership with AMES and National Legal Aid. This has resulted in an education kit which covers the ten most recurring legal problems confronted by newly arrived communities, including child protection.\textsuperscript{16} This education kit has been endorsed by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and was recently launched, in Victoria, by the Attorney-General, The Hon Nicola Roxon MP.\textsuperscript{17} 

In Chapter 16 of the \textit{Report of the Protecting Victoria’s Vulnerable Children Inquiry}, recommendation 68 addresses the major issue of cultural competence:

- ‘The Department of Human Services should improve the cultural competence of integrated family services and statutory child protection services, including through:
  - Requiring cultural competence to be a component of all training;
  - Providing culturally appropriate training, assistance and support to carers of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the out-of-home care system;
  - Encouraging local child and family services to draw links with relevant culturally and linguistically diverse communities as part of area-based planning reforms;
  - Recruitment strategies to attract suitable candidates from Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds into child protection including through the use of scholarship schemes to undertake relevant tertiary-level training;…’\textsuperscript{18}

Aligned with the need for African communities to be involved with a ‘problem-solving’ process that takes a preventive approach, is recommendation 60 of the \textit{Report of the Protecting Victoria’s Vulnerable Children Inquiry, Chapter 15}^1\textsuperscript{19}

‘Protection concerns should be resolved as early as possible using a collaborative problem solving approach with a child-centred focus and minimising where possible, the need for parties to go to court. This means that:

- The Department of Human Services should, where appropriate, use voluntary Family Group Conferencing as a matter of practice to prevent matters from reaching the protection application stage;

\textsuperscript{15} Australian Human Rights Commission, \textit{In our own words – African Australians: a review of human rights and social inclusion issues, A compendium detailing the outcomes of the community and stakeholder consultations and interviews and public submissions}, Victoria Legal Aid’s Shepparton sessions are referred to at 11.5 Justice www.humanrights.gov.au/africanaus/compendium/regional/\
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{What’s the law? Australian law for new arrivals – An education kit about common legal issues in Australia for adult ESL learners}, October 2011, produced by National Legal Aid and AMES\
\textsuperscript{17} For details about this launch and the education kit refer to \textit{Innovative legal education kit launched by Attorney-General Nicola Roxon}, 1 June 2012 http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/4341.htm\
\textsuperscript{18} Chapter 16: A workforce that delivers quality services, page 423\
\textsuperscript{19} Chapter 15: Realigning court processes to meet the needs of children and young people, page 394
• Where a matter has reached the protection application stage, parties must try to resolve the protective concern, where appropriate, through a statutorily mandated Child Safety Conference set out in the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005; and

• Where a matter is before the Children’s Court, parties should, where appropriate, go through a New Model Conference and the Children’s Court should be supported to implement this model of conferencing across the state.}

Appropriate, legally assisted early intervention and alternative dispute resolution has the capacity to assist with the development of culturally aware outcomes for families. This has the potential for sustainable benefits and can assist with reducing the unnecessary disconnection of young people from their families.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our experience with newly arrived communities dovetails with many of the recommendations and findings from the various reports cited in this submission. This synergy has galvanised the four organisations, The Salvation Army, the Department of Justice – Justice for Refugees Program, Whittlesea Community Connections and VLA, to act in partnership and seek the collaboration of DHS, Child Protection. In the spirit of this proposed collaboration, we make the following recommendations:

1. **A community liaison approach in the service delivery by the Department of Human Services**

That an early intervention, preventative model of service delivery be used. This includes targeted partnerships with peak African organisations or service providers working closely with African Australian communities, including young African Australian people, to develop two-way communication strategies. This is a great opportunity to involve a consultation process with key organisations, including the African Think Tank Inc. From these consultations, a cross-organisational reference group could be established to inform the process for this variation of service delivery.

This recommendation includes cultural awareness training for existing child protection staff who are or will be in contact with African Australian children and their families. This training needs to be embedded in child protection practice and relevant to the various communities from Africa. Alternatively or in tandem with this training, community liaison workers from the African Australian communities themselves need to be employed to work closely with the children, their families and the community. This would involve training and developing members from the community to be liaison workers, to be foster carers and to work more effectively with DHS, Child Protection.

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20 The African Think Tank Inc is an independent peak Victorian organisation which is dedicated to informing the process for ‘self-reliant, integrated, sustainable and flourishing’ African Australian communities and associated community organisations, refer to: [http://www.att.org.au/index.html](http://www.att.org.au/index.html)
This approach builds a bridge which will facilitate and investigate ways in which the communities can be part of the ‘solution’ rather than the ‘problem’.

2. **Culturally appropriate mediation or dispute resolution**

In response to the recurring feedback received from African Australian representatives to involve community leaders or elders and extended families in the process of resolving family disputes involving child protection matters, it is recommended that VLA assess its current mediation service. VLA’s Roundtable Dispute Management service already has a number of African families who have accessed the service and resolved their disputes. This model of service delivery can be reworked to better support and trial the provision of culturally appropriate resolution of family disputes and child protection matters for African communities. This would support the approach taken in the *Report of the Protecting Victoria’s Vulnerable Children Inquiry*, with particular reference to Chapter 15.

To further advance the approach of early intervention, VLA could also engage with DHS, Child Protection to trial the provision of legal assistance to African families at the point of connection with the child protection system.

3. **Community education and relationship-building**

That reciprocal education involving child protection lawyers, legal educators, child protection workers and community members be developed. DHS, Child Protection to work collaboratively with VLA and DOJ on a model of delivery that educates, engages and has preventative outcomes for the African Australian communities. This model is based on the Family Harmony sessions, which can be adapted for state-wide delivery to newly arrived communities. These sessions can also incorporate the *What's the law? Australian law for new arrivals* national educational resource as it applies to child protection law.

The education model should incorporate a relationship-building component. It should also enable key service providers to take part in the workshop process, including Child Protection, DHS workers or managers. In consultation with the communities, the education model could involve a three-tiered approach:

- first day: workshop with the parents of the communities
- second day: workshop with the young people of the communities
- third day: workshop with both parents and young people/children, with peer support for young people.
CONCLUSION

Organisations across Victoria that work for and with African communities are finding recurring issues are raised in the delivery of child protection services. In working with these children and their families, other points of reference need to be considered that include cultural liaison work, culturally aware mediation and counselling, culturally appropriate foster care, and an approach that includes communities. This submission has consolidated these issues and has proposed recommendations designed to address them.

There is an opportunity for our organisations and departments to work more effectively with the African communities of Victoria by informing our practices with cultural awareness pathways, training and mediation practices. And by delivering effective education models.

The recommendations align with current research and justice policy which emphasises early intervention strategies and preventative measures. The submission is timely as it follows on from the extensive national study by the Australian Human Rights Commission and the more recent Report of the Protecting Victoria’s Vulnerable Children Inquiry. All reports and evaluation processes point to improving systemic pathways to avoid the recurring and escalating legal problems, and the resulting lack of access to justice. VLA, The Salvation Army, Whittlesea Community Connections and the Department of Justice – Justice for Refugees Program welcome an opportunity to discuss the recommendations further.
Appendix 1
THE LAW, OUR CULTURE, OUR CHILDREN

FORUM REPORT

Forum Objectives
- To gain understanding of the role of Child protection agencies and family services.
- Gain understanding about basic family laws in Victoria
- To raise community awareness about African family lifestyle
- To develop improved relationships between the family services system and new and emerging African communities
- To discuss innovative partnerships between child protection agencies and African communities
- To provide feedback and recommendation to relevant agencies to improve quality of services for newly arrived families living in Victoria

The Law, Our Culture, Our Children was a grass root community forum for African Communities in Melbourne. The forum was organised by All 4 One Social Club and the Sierra Leone Community of Victoria in collaboration with partner agencies such as; The Salvation Army, Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, Whittlesea Community Connections and our major sponsor Justice of Refugee Program (Department of Justice). This forum was attended by young people, parents and African Community Leaders from African communities.

Key note speakers for the forum were Joyce Prinzi, (Acting Regional Director North West Metropolitan Region Department of Justice), Bernie Geary (Child Safety Commissioner, Victoria State Government), Robert Ross, (Assistant Manager, Child Protection, North and West Metropolitan Region, Department of Human Services) and Dr Razak Balogun, (President, Nigeria Society of Victoria).

Forum was also attended by Senior Sergant Trevor Lockwood (Preston Police), Robert Kennedy (DHS), Staff of Justices of Refugee Program (DOJ), Maria Domopoulos (a private consultant with a law background), Whittlesea Community Connection, The Salvation Army, Child First, Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, Department of Justice, Victoria State Government, Ecumenical Migration Centre and Merri Community Health
QUESTIONS DISCUSSED:

1. What’s the difference between African parenting and Western parenting? Are there any aspects that cross over between both cultures?

2. How best can the community assist to resolve domestic issues to prevent family breakdown.

3. How as parents can we help our children keep our traditional family values while integrating in Australian society? (Rephrase question for young people)

4. Do you have experience dealing with Child protection or family law? From your experience, what works well and what needs some improvement.

OUTCOMES:

PARENTS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS OVERVIEW

Parents need mutual respect
Listening to Parents and understanding their side of the story (Agencies need to work with Parents to resolve conflict with their children)
Agencies need to understand how African communities resolved conflicts and problems when living in Africa
Agencies need to show respect for Parents
Child protection need to use the support and advice of the other community members and extended families to resolve issues within families
Agencies (DHS) need to run regular forums like today.
There is a need to focus on keeping children in education. This is an issue as children many children have had limited or interrupted education while in transition between their country of origin and Australia (Refugee Camps)
Give parents a voice in decisions that are being made about their Children.
Educate parents and children about the Australian community service system.
Each Community has a “Fire fighter” (This is a way of resolving family conflicts) within communities.
It is important that Services recognise how the community already resolved their conflicts.
Australian service providers/agencies need to understand in African culture parent comes “first”

TRAINING: Train community elders to work with agencies
Extend family care; ask families where their children should stay. Which family should they stay with etc.
Keep parents informed about where their children are living (If out of home/family care)
Develop specific houses (residential care) for African youth with trained staff. This will be a transition centre between DHS and their family.
Australian schools need to be flexible to allow African young people to attend school based on their ability rather their age. This is a key reason why children are dropping out of school because they are academically behind their peers. This can lead to some problems with young people and lead to breakdown.
DHS staff needs more cultural training. DHS need to recognise there are already established support structures within each cultural group.
Child Protection needs to utilise community elders as a way to resolve family problems.
A difficult issue is that they are encouraging young people to move from home because of their financial freedom.
Parents agree there are problems but parents feel disempowered to resolve issues themselves.

**YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW**

Parents should be able to do what they think is right for their kids (BUT)
Parents should also listen to kids on important things, like who you marry, what you want to do in your life.
Parents hitting kids can be effective way to teach kids
In Aussie families kids get to learn to make mistakes and learn from it
Some (African) parents are too strict with young adults, some give them independence (Too strict = pressure to leave home)
Parents should sit down and talk with kids, help with their homework, encourage, have a little bit of control over what kids do (have good relationship)
Good for parents be strict, to protect you and make you a good person in society
Adults and children/young people need to be heard
Parents should trust young people eg. (to go to a friend’s house)
Parents should give young people a bit more space
Clear authority has an important role in parenting

**What do you think are some of your parents concerns that triggers family dispute?**

The fair of peer pressure from wider society
Parents wants the best for their children and we sometimes see things differently
Young people need help to make good decisions
Parents are worried about young people having ideas from outside home and that might mislead us (Australian way of doing things compare to how we do things in our culture).
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- More adequate and regular training for staff working with African parents and young people. Training should incorporate better understanding of individual cultures within Africa rather than a one size fits all approach.

- Seeing Africa as a continent rather than a country will help to minimize waste of resources. Understanding of African family dynamics will help to develop a more proactive approach in tackling issues that fit cultural proficiency of clients.

- Involvement of community leaders and extended families in dispute resolutions. Understanding individual countries/culture will help to provide information about cultural dynamics of young person or family. Involving extended families/community leaders known as (fire fighters) will demonstrate a sign of a solution.

- Provide regular information about family laws to new and emerging communities and create more opportunities for open discussion with communities.

- Develop a friendly/working relationship with services and the community. Don’t wait for problems to occur before involvement but be proactive by reaching communities at an early stage.

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