Intergenerational Conflict and CaLD Communities

A Brief Literature Review

October 2011
Background
This literature review was initiated by the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) in August 2011 to investigate the extent and nature of Australian literature in relation to intergenerational conflict among families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds – in particular those from refugee backgrounds. Intergenerational conflict is one of the MYAN’s 8 policy priorities.

This review was undertaken by Sarah Zahaire, a post-graduate student on placement with the Policy and Sector Development team at the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY). Thanks to Sarah and the Policy and Sector Development team for supporting this work.

Abbreviations and Terminology
CaLD - culturally and linguistically diverse
CPS - Child Protection Services (used here as a general term for Child Protection/Protective Services in any jurisdiction)
FRC - Family Relationship Centre
FDR - Family Dispute Resolution
FSP - Family Support Program
NESB - Non-English Speaking Background (now replaced by CaLD)

Search Parameters
The search parameters used for this literature review were:

- Google with searches using the terms:
  - Intergenerational + conflict
  - Resettlement + family + issues
  - CaLD + young + people + families

- Once some of the key themes were established, the following terms were used to search Google:
  - Acculturation + CaLD + family
  - CaLD + family + services
  - Family + violence + CaLD
  - CaLD + family + dispute resolution
  - CaLD + child + services

- A search of the Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library

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1 The MYAN is a national policy and advocacy body that represents multicultural young people in order to advance their rights and interests. The MYAN is auspiced by the Centre for Multicultural Youth in Victoria.
The Literature – an overview

Throughout the review, it became evident that there exists a fairly substantial body of literature regarding CaLD families’ experiences with Child Protection Services in their respective States or Territories, but only limited resources seeking to identify the roots of the issues within these recently resettled families.

The literature examining Child Protection Services (CPS) identifies the perceptions of CPS held by CaLD families – in particular, the misconceptions held by CaLD parents and youth - and, most prominently, the lack of cultural sensitivity within these services. Much of the literature was concerned with recommendations and initiatives proposed by the authors for working through cultural understandings and changing the perceptions held by CaLD families of child services.

There was greater difficulty in compiling a body of references which sought to dissect the issue of intergenerational conflict amongst CaLD families. Some resources sought to attribute the root of such conflict to the cultural backgrounds of families and attempted to analyse according to the various cultural groups that comprise a majority of recent arrivals. However this type of generalising could prove to be detrimental to the process of understanding and analysing intergenerational conflict, as it attributes ‘uniform’ belief systems to such families. This detracts from an emphasis on the unique experience of migration and resettlement and their respective family histories.

A number of themes on the causes of intergenerational conflict proved to be prevalent throughout the literature. These include acculturation, community values, language barriers, economic stress and parenting styles.

A small number of resources focused on dispute resolution and CaLD family’s experience with the different services available. The general finding was that these services are under-utilised. Similar to resources focusing on CPS, these authors focused on strategies for making dispute resolution services more accessible and appealing to CaLD families.

Factors contributing to intergenerational conflict

Acculturation

Many authors refer to ‘acculturation’ as being at the heart of intergenerational conflict, with the assertion that newly arrived young people thrive in an environment that places an emphasis on autonomy rather than an individual’s responsibility towards a community group.

Parents in a U.K. study felt that their children had ‘too much freedom’, Australian literature supported this finding with parents expressing concern about the way that their children had been/would be influenced by new friends or teachers or even by the media; as a result they would

\cite{Sawrikar2009} \cite{LewigArneySalveron2009} \cite{PePuaArneySalveron2010} \cite{Ibid}
restrict their children’s access to new friends or their participation in social activities. The literature suggests that young people ‘acclimate’ (or acculturate) to new community values significantly more enthusiastically and at a faster rate than do their parents or older family members. A paper on the mental health of CalD young people identified that recognising the older generation’s difficulty with acculturation, young people often sought to protect their older family members or keep from offending them and their values by having secret social lives, which can have the effect of eventually driving an even greater wedge between younger and older generations.

**Community values**

The difficulty that older generations have with adapting to their new ‘cultural environment’, and the perceived ease with which the younger generations do so, can be explained: the older generations have spent years living in accordance with a certain set of principles which they appreciate and respect, but which may be perceived as oppressive and restricting by young people. In an article written by a Sudanese man outlining the issues faced by parents within his community, he identifies the great divergence in the views of the generations, with community elders labelling ‘rebellion’ what the young people would call ‘integration’.

Results from focus groups conducted in New South Wales identified that the main apprehensions of Australian Muslim parents or older family members were that the activities their young people were involved in were ‘not compatible with their ethno-religious values’ and ‘that they preferred their children to participate in activities targeted towards Muslims’. It seemed that these feelings stemmed from the way that they perceived their new community, such as the perceived prevalence of drugs, sexual relationships and the lack of parental authority apparent in their children’s friends.

Conversely, some parents who took part in the focus group suggested that they felt a better way to deal with these conflicting community values was to allow their children to embrace their new cultural environment rather than to drive them away by imposing their traditional values. This approach stemmed from the fear that their children would take advantage of their new rights and easier access to independence.

Teenage pregnancy was identified as a significant source of conflict between parents and their children, in consultation sessions with community advocates, elders and bi-cultural workers regarding cultural competency in CPS in Queensland. Overall, the literature reviewed revealed that the occurrence of sexual relationships, the lack of clearly-defined gender roles and the prevalence of drugs and alcohol prompts parents to limit social interaction between their children and others outside of their own community.

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7 Black Dog Institute
10 Pe-Pua, R. at al. (2010)
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Mettler, K. (2010)
Parents, particularly Muslim parents, admitted that they would be more comfortable with their children participating in ‘culturally appropriate’ activities and at ‘venues [that] specifically targeted the needs of Australian Muslim youth’\textsuperscript{14}. They felt that this was important so that traditional values could be protected and kept alive (such as the importance of looking after one’s elders, marrying within the faith, and holding on to the native language). These efforts to preserve tradition can often be the source of dispute as young people want to engage in their new society but find it difficult to communicate with their parents on matters such as sex, relationships or drugs and alcohol. A study involving Australian Muslims concluded that ‘questions about sex education and conflicts over gender roles’ were ‘the most common issues faced…in clinical psychotherapy’\textsuperscript{15}.

“...Back home only after 18 years of age are girls allowed to have boyfriends. Here, girls as young as 11 years of age have boyfriends...” \textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{Language barriers}

Language barriers have been identified by many authors as a factor that creates a great divide between younger and older generations. Many CaLD young people become proficient with the English language relatively quickly through school situations, employment, and social activities whereas older generations may learn at a slower rate or be reluctant to practice the language in a bid to hold on to their cultural background. In a study Australia Muslim families, older generations felt that they were losing their relationships with their children or grandchildren due to their difficulty with English, and because of their language difficulties, becoming ‘isolated from the wider community’\textsuperscript{17}, of which their younger family members were becoming a part.

One of the consequences of the language barrier is that children are often elevated to the role of family spokesperson\textsuperscript{18}. In social, everyday situations, or in dealing with social services, for example, children may have to become the representative of their family because their parents or other family members have difficulty communicating in English. This can place a great strain on a family which traditionally is headed by the parents or the father. This ‘shift in power balance between adults and children’\textsuperscript{19} serves to damage the pride of the adults and potentially restructure the family unit in a way that is not compliant with their traditional values.

“...When family has low education and the young ones (children) learn quickly the power/control shifts to the children and so the only way to control the children is to use other means such as domestic violence.” \textsuperscript{20}

“My mum and dad, although they are both Eritrean, have different languages and different cultures. There are nine languages in Eritrea. I don’t understand my dad’s language. I find it difficult to be with him.” \textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{14} Pe-Pua, R. et al. (2010)
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid
\textsuperscript{16} Sierra Leonean female participant quoted in Versha, A. & Venkatraman, R. (2010)
\textsuperscript{17} Pe-Pua, R. at al. (2010).
\textsuperscript{18} Lewig, K., Arney, F. and Salveron, M. (2009)
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Afghan male quoted in Versha, A. & Venkatraman, R. (2010: 43)
Economic stress

In the settlement stage, economic stress can contribute to the break-down of family relationships, and as a consequence can increase ‘the importance and influence of peers’ to a young person. Parents often feel compelled to work excessive hours and to take lower employment opportunities in order to provide for their families, resulting in stress and unhappiness. This stress may be carried into the family, creating a non-cohesive home environment and making it increasingly difficult for young people to maintain or strengthen relationships with their parents, who may become unresponsive or simply not present.

Expressing the concerns of his community in dealing with their young people, Puoch notes that children gain a new independence through social security and a society that enables young people to take on employment and become empowered. Traditional family values require young people to contribute financially to their families - this being consistent with the role that the young have to care for their elders - but in becoming ‘westernized’ and introduced to the idea of autonomy and independence, they are more likely to become detached from their families and eventually move out of the family home. Focus groups with Muslim families revealed that one of their key concerns was ‘their children’s newly gained autonomy (e.g. access to social welfare, independent housing).

“...With youth allowance, when the parents ask children to contribute towards family expenses such as food and accommodation they refuse to give any money and spend it for themselves or threaten to leave home. Hence the children have to be educated on this; we are being divided by Government money.”

Prior to or during migration, and particularly as part of the refugee experience, families may become separated and in some cases, may end up with one parent heading the family alone. In these cases more pressure can be placed on children of a working age to contribute financially to the family unit. As illustrated in the example below, it will often be left to the oldest son to very rapidly have to learn to fill the shoes of his father and provide for the family.

“...My husband was killed in war and then my elder son became like his father. All money, he keeps. I don’t know if that is good, but I am happy- gives me good lifeless headache for me...Yes, he gets angry, too much work for him, and then he saw his dad killed, his sister doesn’t listen to him and he argues too much. But, she has to obey as (...) he feeds us all.”

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24 Pe-Pua, R. et al. (2010)
Parenting styles

Authors have identified that CaLD parents struggle with adapting to Western parenting styles. They may either feel compelled to abandon traditional child-rearing practices due to their misconceptions of the CPS or of children’s rights, or take a more ‘authoritarian’ approach to protect their traditional values, as these participants’ quotes from Versha and Venkatraman’s 2010 report demonstrate:

“...In our homes we had a ‘strict’ discipline when our parents spoke we never talked back, but listened and obeyed...here our children talk back to us, sometimes even challenge us!...I don’t know how to react...” (Sri Lankan male)

“...Back home, the child will be disciplined physically as well. Here, this is against the law and we need more education and support around this issue. Parent-children communication must improve.” (Male Sierra Leonean community elder)

“...My 10 year-old daughter tells me all about her school discipline...what we are supposed to do and ‘not to do’...it’s a new experience for me to learn from her...” (Sri Lankan female).

In a UK study, parents from religious backgrounds noted the difficulty in ‘raising children in a secular society’ - the tenets of their religion have a big impact on the values they seek to instill as parents, and the community approach they take to parenting. Parents felt that their authority was compromised due to their children’s new-found autonomy and protection from police and through CPS. Parents expressed fear that their children would be taken away from them if their actions were perceived as too strict or if their children sought to rebel by contacting these services and alleging abuse.

It is apparent in the literature that great misconceptions exist as to the legal rights of children and parents and that this contributes to conflict within families. The confidence of a parent is greatly diminished by their fear of retribution and children feel empowered by their new means of protection. These fears prompt the parents to become more protective of their children and limit their interaction with social groups that are outside of their own community; alternatively, ‘they [do] not enforce any demands on their children at all’.

“...Here, parents and children have equal rights. Parents are scared of smacking children when they misbehave. Thus, unable to instill the required discipline to the children.”

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27 Pe-Pua, R. et al. (2010)
29 Pe-Pua, R. et al. (2010: 25)
30 Pe-Pua, R. et al. (2010).
31 Ibid at 26.
32 Ibid.
“...The moment we try to correct our children or try to discipline them, they are told to ring the 000 number and the police intervene. This is a great shock and disrespect of parents.”

As will be outlined in the following ‘Dispute Resolution Services’ and ‘Child Services’ sections, CaLD families often face great misunderstanding when dealing with CPS or Police. The concepts of community parenting or entrusting the eldest child with the care of their younger siblings are not common practice in Western society, and as such these ways of parenting can often be misconstrued as neglect. Due to financial difficulties, parents are often forced to work long hours and their ability to care for their families in a way that is viewed as adequate by Western society is diminished. In the following example, a bi-lingual counsellor describes the circumstances for a mother caring for six children who was threatened with the prospect of having her children removed rather than receiving an offer of support from CPS:

“...A woman with six children living in a house near the highway; one of the children wandered out and she was reported by the support service as 'neglect' and faced the risk of all the children being removed instead of actually being supported to care for the children in a more safe environment. Another with many children was being referred from one agency to another; she had to keep repeating her story and had to run around to keep the appointments, with the children trailing behind her.”

Programs & Initiatives

We have mentioned the scarcity of information identifying the triggers of intergenerational conflict within CaLD communities; as a result there is not an abundance of programs targeted towards strengthening the ties within families.

The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development established a program in schools in 2007, targeted towards parents, which sought to address the issues faced by newly-arrived families. The core aim of the program was to encourage participation by parents in their children’s school and social life. Fifteen Victorian schools sought to increase involvement of CaLD families by inviting parents to observe, and participate in, various different classes; setting up forums for parents to discuss their concerns about issues such as drugs and sex; and providing newsletters and other general information in a range of different languages and accompanied by English audio material. An example of such a program is one supported by St Albans East Primary School and targeted towards Vietnamese parents. Parenting skills workshops were held with various topics such as:

- Helping your children with VCE and their future
- Setting up discipline for your children at home
- Coping with changing attitudes; physical, emotional and social development in teenagers
- Communication between parents and children.

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Addressing the need for parenting materials for Arabic speakers, the Western Sydney Area Health Service translated a number of resources and established parent education courses, conducted by ‘bilingual facilitators from a variety of Arabic speaking backgrounds working in health and non-government organisations’. Participants found that they had gained confidence in dealing with issues that arose in their family relationships and that they no longer had ‘feelings of depression’.

At a 2005 National Muslim Youth Summit in Sydney, a number of recommendations were made that could be implemented in the community to address issues relating to intergenerational conflict:

- Providing parent support groups;
- Educating parents about Australian laws;
- Providing activities that include both children and parents such as camps and sporting activities (that is, father/son and mother/daughter events);
- Involving parents in children’s schooling through school councils and committees;
- Improving literacy and English skills among older family members to enable them to communicate more effectively outside their immediate family; and
- More interaction between Islamic schools and other denominational schools through school events and projects to break down barriers and misunderstanding.

The following recommendations were made after consultation with African community leaders:

- Provision of services to assist young people, parents and families to address issues of intergenerational conflict and long-term support;
- Implementation of capacity-building programs and training, using bilingual and bicultural African workers, to help African communities develop the skills needed to assist their own community members; and
- A review by Centrelink of the information provided to parents and young people on arrival.

Dispute resolution

Research suggests that it is not common within CaLD communities for an individual or a family to approach professionals for guidance, and this is usually reflective of the ‘collectivist cultural norms’ that the community subscribes to.

Armstrong (2010b) sets out three characteristics which should be adopted to make FDR services more appealing to CaLD families.

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38 Ibid.
39 Office of Multicultural Interests, Western Australia (2009: 13)
40 Ibid
41 Armstrong, S. (2010b)
• A holistic approach does not over-emphasise or under-emphasise culture, but sees it as an important dimension of individual and community identity, intersecting with other factors such as class, gender and religion.

• Culturally competent FDR services foster relationships with gatekeepers to CaLD communities to engage in reciprocal learning and to develop mutual referral pathways.

• ...a culturally responsive model of family dispute resolution is neither culturally specific nor culturally exclusive, it requires that mainstream organisations and professionals engage in an ongoing process of conscious and critical reflection and learning, or reflexivity, about the relevance of cultures to their professional practice.\textsuperscript{42}

Research into how FDR agencies could enhance services for CaLD communities highlighted the importance of grasping the tenets of the family’s religion, as often cultural and religious beliefs will be connected. However, the importance of not making assumptions about a person’s cultural values or beliefs was also highlighted. Cultural values and expression are diverse and dynamic, even within a particular cultural community. For dispute resolution to be effective, each family/person must be treated as unique and be presented with a range of options, and not only those that would be considered appropriate by the community in general. The role of the community, and in particular its leaders and elders, was considered to be particularly important. It was recommended that family relationship centres liaise with these heads of community in a social and culturally appropriate context as a display of trust and respect between the two bodies\textsuperscript{43}.

Data collected by Kids Help Line from 2001-2005 showed that family relationships were cited as the main concern of NESB children, with child abuse being the fifth most important issue. The calls regarding family relationships often concerned frequent or major conflict or disruption as opposed to divorce or separation which was more common for Anglo-Australian children. Phone calls made by NESB young people to discuss abuse were predominantly concerning physical abuse (59%), with emotional and sexual abuse being less prevalent - phone calls relating to those matters making up 20% and 18% of the phone calls respectively.

The tables below provide a breakdown of the key issues concerning NESB children as well as a comparison between the issues raised by NESB children and Anglo-Australian children, with the second table comparing the concerns of NESB males and females.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Armstrong, S. (2010a)
\textsuperscript{44} Kids Help Line (2006)
### Main problems

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<th>ANGLO (% of calls)</th>
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<td>1. Family Relationships</td>
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<td>2. Peer Relationships</td>
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<td>3. Intimate Relationships</td>
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<td>4. Bullying</td>
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<td>5. Child Abuse</td>
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<td>6. Study Issues</td>
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<td>7. Emotional/Behavioural Management</td>
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<td>9. Grief &amp; Loss</td>
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In a majority (73%) of cases Kids Help Line were able to assist the NESB youth, in 12% of cases the callers were referred to a doctor, school counsellor, mental health worker or other non-specific referral, 11% were referred to another support service for ongoing assistance, and in 4% of cases no further help or referral could be given as there was ‘no appropriate service...available or the caller finished the call’.

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45 Kids Help Line (2006)
“What does this person know about where I’ve come from?” It’s the perception with things like counselling services. Services are available, but clients don’t want to go to mainstream counselling services. They get counselling services from the elders and community leaders. It’s all about ‘Does this person really understand where I’ve come from?’”

“Dad was a big scary character, huge, intimidating... but as soon as the practitioner started talking about the Fijian love of family and [showed he] knew a bit about how Fijian families operate, as soon as he did that, he had Dad on board. Dad completely settled, swung around and they got quite a good outcome at the end.”

**Child Protection Services (CPS)**

A majority of the literature regarding intergenerational conflict within CaLD families and communities focuses on their experience with CPS, with a strong emphasis on the shortcomings of the services when dealing with culturally diverse families. This is a particularly difficult situation when figures outline that the services predominantly deal with CaLD families who have been in Australia for less than 5 years and are not proficient in English.

In *The Working with Refugee Families Project*, the Australian Centre for Child Protection found that the most common notifications spurring the involvement of the child protection system were: neglect; physical abuse; sexual abuse; concerns regarding domestic and family violence; conflicts between parents and teenagers; and drug and alcohol abuse. The issue of physical abuse was often attributed to difficulties with adjusting to a Western parenting style - parents would traditionally use physical means of disciplining their children and may find it difficult to abandon these practices. The paper also found that domestic violence arose in families where, due to a lack of English language skills for example, traditional roles within the family were compromised as children would become representatives of the family due to their English language proficiency.

A New South Wales study into *The Fatal Assault of Children and Young People*, found that 28% of the 60 children and young people (0-17 years) who were fatally assaulted in NSW between January 1996 and July 1999 assault were from CaLD backgrounds.

“The cultural background of the victim varied according to the category of assault: nearly all victims of non-accidental injury were from an Anglo-Australian background; while in the family breakdown and victims of parents with a mental illness groups, the majority of the victims were children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.”

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46 Family support worker in multicultural service provider quoted in Armstrong, S. (2010a: 57)
47 Family Relationship Centre Manager quoted in Armstrong, S. (2010a: 78)
Notifications in Western Australia have continued to increase since 2007, with 386 notifications in 2007 and 628 in 2009, and CaLD children in care have risen from 93 in 2007 to 169 in 2010. In comparison, non-CaLD child protection notifications in Western Australia rose from 7700 in 2007, to 10159 in 2009.

**Reluctance towards Child Protection Services**

In many cases, CaLD families do not have an accurate understanding of the role of child services or, throughout their experiences with child services, find that they are misunderstood by their case worker or interpreter. In many cultures family issues are typically resolved within the family, or with the aid of elders or close members of the community.

Revealing the family's problems to someone outside of the community - and especially to someone who doesn’t understand the culture - is seen as bringing shame upon the family name. It is not a typical thing in many of the countries of origin of CaLD families that one would seek out help from the government - especially when dealing with private, family matters. And throughout the migration process, many CaLD families may have developed a fear of, or distrust in, authority.

Some circumstances where child services have become involved with CaLD families have prompted great misunderstandings within the communities regarding the role of Child Protection Services - the typical reaction to child services is fear that children will be taken away as opposed to it being viewed as a support mechanism. This misunderstanding is a source of intergenerational conflict - with children using the threat of child services against parents, believing that they can make false claims and that their parents will be punished or in extreme cases, that they will be removed and placed in foster families that they think will be better providers or allow them more freedom. As described previously, in some instances this will cause parents to take a very lenient approach towards disciplining or guiding their children.

A caseworker lacking the requisite knowledge to understand the family’s cultural background is a factor which prompts reluctance in co-operating with, or trusting, CPS. A report by PeakCare Queensland, gives the following example of a situation involving a ‘culturally incompetent’ caseworker:

...a parent had their children removed but was allowed supervised visits. During these visits the parent was told she is not allowed to speak to her children in their mother tongue, she had to speak English. This significantly hindered the woman’s ability to communicate with her children...

A family will find it difficult to confide in a caseworker who does not respect their cultural values. In many cases, families will not leave behind their traditional family ways upon re-settling, and some of

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51 Government of Western Australia Department for Child Protection 2010
52 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2010
53 Pe-Pua, R, Gendera, S, Katz, J & O’Connor, A 2010
54 Multicultural Development Association: Advocacy and Social Policy Unit 2010
55 Mettler, K 2010
these traditional practices could have been perceived as being neglectful. A case study conducted by the Multicultural Development Association Advocacy and Social Policy Unit provides a clear example of such a scenario.\(^{56}\)

Following a domestic violence incident between an MDA client and her husband, the police notified Child Safety Services as they were concerned about the safety of the couple’s children. Child Safety Officers visited the house and expressed concerns including that there was insufficient food in the house for the children, and a lack of essential living items, namely beds for the children.

When MDA case officers spoke with the family, the mother explained that the children felt lonely and scared sleeping in separate beds, and consequently they prefer to sleep together in the one bed. In that family’s culture, children sleep in the parents’ room and often together to look after each other, particularly when children are under five years old.

In any event, extra beds were located in other areas of the residence. A cultural support worker also advised that the family’s ethnic group was a hunter gatherer group in Africa, and accordingly they prefer obtaining and preparing fresh food daily.

The perception held by families is that child services will become involved following minor incidents, or completely misconstrue certain aspects of their family life. Intergenerational conflict can also arise where children have been exposed to ‘Western’ families and wish to have child services involved so that more ‘Western’ approaches may be implemented in their own family.

**Conclusion and recommendations**

This literature review has identified two recurring recommendations: (i) the need for culturally aware and competent caseworkers, and (ii) the importance of educating CaLD families about the role of child (protection) services and the extent of their authority.

Training caseworkers to be able to provide adequate support for CaLD families, it is argued, would encourage families to co-operate and to communicate candidly and comfortably. Consulting with elders and respected members of communities has been suggested as the most effective way to gauge the values and the attitudes of the community. Caseworkers felt that it was important to do so in social situations such as community events, where members of the community could see that there was a mutual respect and a good relationship between the case worker and the elder. This would allow caseworkers to approach child protection being fully informed and being able to see the situation through the eyes of the family. A recommendation in *Culture Matters* highlighted this:

> A culturally competent child protection system would acknowledge different ways of supporting families; would examine child protection issues from

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56 Multicultural Development Association: Advocacy and Social Policy Unit 2010
various paradigms: participants spoke of how definitions of harm and neglect are culturally bound. For example, a number of participants identified that in their country of origin it is normal for three generations of a family to live in one home, and that children are sometimes two or three to one room. Participants stated they have heard that these things are considered unusual and may bring them to the attention of Child Safety Services. 

In 2006, during an assessment of law reforms pertaining to the family relationship sector, caseworkers and those in similar positions admitted to a lack of ‘confidence in engaging with CaLD and Indigenous families’. The benefit of engaging community members in such a way that they could educate caseworkers and also act as a link between the community and child services professionals has been identified as an important approach that should be implemented. In *Queensland’s child protection system: Systemic challenges for people from refugee and CALD backgrounds*, a recommendation made to introduce bicultural support and liaison workers was justified by identifying the following benefits:

- Improve communication, relationships and understanding between Child Safety Services and multicultural communities.
- Educate and assist workers in understanding culture and cultural issues, values, beliefs and protocols of different ethnic groups and communities, and issues affecting people from refugee and CALD backgrounds.
- Act as a conduit between Child Safety Services and communities and families, particularly around individual cases new and emerging issues for those communities.
- Improve the communities’ knowledge and understanding of Child Safety Services.

A need was also identified for the consistent and accurate collection of data. Caseworkers would benefit from having a clear and current picture of the communities which they seek to serve.

Misunderstandings as to the role, authority and extent of power of child services has been identified as a factor contributing to intergenerational conflict. The need to educate CaLD families has been noted and the response has been to provide a general support program for newly arrived families. For example, the *Families in Cultural Transition- New South Wales Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)*, ‘is a ten week workshop program to assist successful settlement of newly arrived refugees and to provide education about Australia. Topics discussed include Australian culture and systems, torture and trauma experiences, families, children and parenting, health and other key areas’.

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57 Mettler, K 2010  
58 Australian Government Australian Law Reform Commission 2010  
59 Multicultural Development Association: Advocacy and Social Policy Unit 2010  
60 ibid  
61 Multicultural Development Association: Advocacy and Social Policy Unit 2010
An example of more ‘parenting-focused’ program is The Building Stronger Families Project delivered by QPASTT (Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma):

The Program provides a safe place where individuals, parents and carers can discuss issues of concern to them, share ideas and develop strategies around parenting with a strong and proud ethnic identity. … Workshops offer practical information and aim to enhance people’s conceptual understanding of their new environment including Australian systems that impact on family life. … Other aspects include consultation with local community groups and members before each workshop series to ensure that what this Program offers meets the needs of local community groups\textsuperscript{62}.

Such programs also act as a measure for early intervention and concurrently provide valuable information for family relationship professionals.

\textsuperscript{62} ibid
Bibliography


