

Royal Society of Queensland: The Disadvantage of Youth:

Notes of Workshop 2, 9 August 2018

Malcolm McDonald – They Grow Up

- Epigenetics
- Alcohol can damage paternal DNA sperm (related to dose and timing)
- Foetal alcohol brain injury (FABI)
- Childhood and adolescent development: a range of complex health & social problems
- Education & employment: learning disability, disruptive behaviours, early school dropout, unemployable, tend to get bullied rather than be the bully
- More common than autism, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and SIDS combined
- Often characterised as an indigenous problem – but vastly more non-indigenous people with FABI/FASD in Australia
- Also wrongly diagnosed
- Incarceration rates
- Pre-birth brain injuries...
- No provisions or resources for diagnosing FABI/FASD in Qld
- Reason: what is required to make the diagnosis
- Take home messages: recognise that shame is a major obstacle to progress. We must find ways to avoid people being shamed.
- Mainstream health problem: most of it goes under the radar
- It should be 100% preventable; advocacy is critical.

Questions/Thoughts:

- If you get the education/health files: you can pull this information together so it doesn't have to cost thousands of dollars
- What is the role of brain imaging? It's not part of the current guidelines
- PwC have Indigenous Consulting
- Costs more to pay for someone to be in jail
- Incarcerated for low-level crimes; cycle through the process
- When we think younger, think younger again
- Need a model for preventative health – not a single form of treatment
- Alcohol within the community – mother usually takes the blame for the child with problems

Sarah Amos

- Exploring social investment frameworks
- Social investment frameworks seek to use data and use technology to better understand the individuals and families accessing public services
- Can you improve the life outcomes of those seeking public services?
- White Paper: Vulnerable Children (NZ)
- 4 key indicators for children at risk:
 - 1) having a CYF finding of abuse or neglect
 - 2) being mostly supported by benefits since birth
 - 3) having a parent with a prison or community sentence
 - 4) having a mother with no formal qualifications
- Australian Priority Investment Approach to Welfare – came out of the review of Australia's Welfare System – A new System for Better Employment and Social Outcomes
- A key part of the process was developing an annual actuarial valuation of the Australia Government's social security and income support system

- Key result of the actuarial valuation is the total lifetime cost – ie the net present value of future in-scope payments made to all people ...
- Targeting cohorts or ‘at risk’ individuals can be problematic
- Requires access to longitudinal datasets
- The effects of some policies (eg changing outcomes) may take a number of years before they are seen in the data.

Questions/Thoughts:

- Structural and institutional challenges that prevent us from doing what needs to be done
- The average minister wouldn’t necessarily know the nuances whether someone is self-interested or publically-interested?

Toni Craig

- *Understanding the causes of childhood offending: changing the narrative, changing how we respond*
- Disadvantages: structural & cultural causes
- From impoverished families
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Children
- Children from low-socioeconomic status locations
- Why?
- Manifestations of disadvantage work against positive individual development (over-crowding)
 - Aged between 10-17 yrs
 - Likely to have diagnosed or suspected mental health disorders – most commonly depression or anxiety (~38%)
 - Very likely to be using substances (~80%)
 - Almost 6% of these young people are parents or soon to be
 - Foetal alcohol syndrome
 - Speech, language and learning delays and disabilities
 - Experience of trauma through physical and sexual abuse
- Raised questions about the age at which children cease being children and should be considered adult
- Other countries have recognised that children and young people do not mature into fully functioning adults with associated decision-making capacity until their early 20s
- Youth Justice Strategy: development of a five year Youth Justice Strategy provides an opportunity to influence and contribute to change
- www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au

Questions/Thoughts:

- Lower cohort that actually go to court; even lower go to jail
- Looking at their life circumstances is important
- Absolute numbers vs percentages
- Not telling the children that they matter
- Not telling children what success is/looks like
- More support services once the children are in jail.

Kate Tillack

- Create Foundation
- Risk factors: male, Indigenous, substance use, education experiences, low-socioeconomic status

- Care environment: placement instability, being placed in a residential facility, lack of comprehensive leaving-care planning
- Care criminalisation
- Justice system can be re-traumatising for young people especially when they don't know what is happening or why, and when they have no support
- Protocols between police and out-of-home care providers
- Increased training and education for caregivers
- Adoption of a trauma-informed youth justice system.

Questions/Thoughts:

- Insufficient effort training the community carers? Attention to this would have a huge pay off.
- Issue: we don't call the police; always called in residential care (people more at risk are the ones who get the police called)
- NGOs so important for the individual's families; the government fails to put more money to NGOs
- Training for those people at the frontline looking after these children at risk
- Ongoing support and mentoring is needed
- Background of trauma with kids
- Why is it being treated as a youth justice issue not a health issue
- Illicit drugs – they'll never stop it, harmful use, huge issue
- Drug possession crimes are on the increase
- Don't focus on the cost to the individual and their family when we put these people in jail
- Human services
- Qld Coroner – Amnesty International – shouldn't be putting 10 year olds in prison
- Should the health system be dealing with these issues?
- Children in Logan going to school hungry; can't take a project and put it elsewhere, it's about the engagement of the community and working together
- Logan Ready Program // Griffith University

Plenary Session

- Pre-school education should be a must
- Individuals CAN be left to manage themselves? Community-managed
- Capacity build for the community
- Communities can manage, individuals need support
- Don't scale up, scale down e.g. through micro-loans (example is the microfinance model of Mohammed Yunus in Bangladesh/India)
- It's about family, housing, having a job
- Don't narrow it down to the Qld Govt, it is a federal issue too
- Policy should be environment-driven
- Place-based; decentralised or centralised? (Government services)
- People need shelter; housing and homelessness is fundamental to the problems young people and young families face
- You need a safe and secure place to live
- Housing & accommodation, health (food/mental), education = these are the building blocks to take their lives forward
- The Government should enable people to have the best health, best education
- But the community must participate in this!
- Best opportunity we have had to shift the system in a positive direction (Youth Justice Strategy)
- Service clubs & churches have assisted (civic society), quite effective strategy to engage
- Youth talking to Youth – who should fund this?

- PHNs? Nuanced understanding on needs gaps and networks to undertake this body of work
- Primary Health Network = Federal funded, 31 across the country, Qld perspective they are tasked to work with community to identify health service needs and gaps, build up networks, collaborations, bring sectors together (health: chronic, aged, mental, indigenous etc.); all structured differently based on local-needs; suicide planning; community plans; fairly new just over 2 years; ability to tap into PHN
- What is the solution to foetal alcohol syndrome? We avoid projects because they always come to an end, long-term commitment sometimes you need to have a 10-20 year commitment
- Cultural change takes time
- People feeling as if they have the control of their health
- Govt. should stay out of it, they should only be the capacity building function
- Community-controlled service doesn't need to get elected every three years
- Institute for Urban Indigenous Health – Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island
- Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS) – conference happening on the 27th of August at the Brisbane Convention Centre <http://www.iuih.org.au/> <http://www.iuih.org.au/Events>
- Talk about individual responsibility – up to them – but, not taking into account there are range of other health providers out there – health not just about GPs etc – also about family, housing, job, good relationships, etc – to narrow down to Qld govt. is wrong
- Needs to be about different environments - ie if you want people to eat vegetables, need to make vegetables available
- People need shelter – ie housing is main thing young people face – as long as physically and mentally, need a safe place to live – not happy with how principle 1 and 2 are phrased – needs to be an enabling space

Authorised by the Royal Society of Queensland from notes by officers of PwC

13 August 2018