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Child protection, education and health services failing to provide culturally safe responses to First Nations children experiencing domestic and family violence, new research has found.

A report released today from ANROWS has uncovered the failure of child protection services, education, and health services to promote healing and recovery for First Nations children who have experienced domestic and family violence, resulting in increased harm and life-long consequences.

The new report, *You Can't Pour from an Empty Cup*, an initiative by Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSCIPP) in partnership with ANROWS and Australian Catholic University (ACU), found that First Nations voices have been sidelined from decision-making, with devastating effects.

The first of its kind in Australia, the research project engaged 8 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community research teams across regional and remote Queensland and was led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander chief investigators, in a collaborative process to elevate First-Nations voices and find community-led solutions for healing and recovery.

The community-led research project resulted in the creation of the *Healing our children and young people framework* a culturally safe, place-based, trauma-aware, healing-informed, children-centred approach to engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experiencing family and domestic violence.

Padma Raman PSM, CEO of ANROWS, encouraged policy makers and practitioners across the service system to consider the findings and to adopt the *Healing our children and young people framework* as a matter of urgency.

“Existing approaches and systems are causing significant harm to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who have experienced domestic and family violence,” Ms Raman said.

“The proposed community-led framework, the first of its kind in Australia, is an exceptional tool for anyone in the child protection and domestic and family violence space.”

CEO of QATSCIPP, Garth Morgan, called for the adoption of the framework and prioritisation and resourcing of First Nations-led approaches.

“The framework values culture as strength and recognises that our communities not only hold the solutions to healing our children but their connections to culture and country is vital in leading this response,” Mr Morgan said.

Across Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are vastly over-represented in child protection systems. The research found that current systems, often disciplinary in approach, create further trauma and harm for children and young people, resulting in negative life-long consequences.

One community researcher stated that current systems fail to respond in healing-focused ways that recognise and respond to the unique trauma that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people experience.

“The approach of some youth justice programs was also found to be lacking in cultural capability and missing the opportunity to address underlying causes... they think they know what they’re doing for our kids, but they don’t have any healing component, they aren’t run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people,” the community researcher said.

ACU Institute of Child Protection Studies Director Professor Daryl Higgins said culturally-sensitive, evidence-based practices as outlined in the new framework are needed to stop the intergenerational trauma of domestic and family violence on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

“This research shows the need to improve education within communities, resource early support services, and ensure the rights and safety of children are upheld through holistic and culturally-responsive systems that support families and give them a voice as they work towards healing,” Professor Higgins said.

The report provides a series of recommendations and solutions, alongside the *framework*, including increased investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation, access to housing and brokerage funds and investment in cultural competency and DFV awareness across systems.

To read the full report and to access the framework: [*You Can’t Pour from An Empty Cup: Strengthening our service and systems responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people who experience DFV*](#)

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About ANROWS

Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety Limited ([ANROWS](#)) is a not-for-profit independent national research organisation. ANROWS is an initiative of Australia’s *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*. ANROWS was established by the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments of Australia to produce, disseminate and assist in applying evidence for policy and practice addressing violence against women and their children. ANROWS is the only such research organisation in Australia.