

**Report of GREG HOWE as rappourter for the session on
Saturday 28 August 2010**

Stream 3: Civil and Family Law

“Vulnerable Communities and Clients in the Child Protection System”

I was the Chair of this session. The three speakers were as follows:-

William Hayward

William is a young Aboriginal man who is a Member Support Officer with Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Ltd (QATSICPP). He delivered a very thoughtful and well prepared paper highlighting the issue of removal of Aboriginal children by the Queensland Child Protection Service. He delivered a PowerPoint presentation which should therefore be available and can be placed on the website. He urged caution when removing Aboriginal children into care, and suggested that the removal of children may be creating a potential for a further Stolen Generation. He highlighted the massive disadvantage that is faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and their children and pointed out ambiguities and shortcomings in the local Act (which is likely mirrored in similar Acts around the country).

Sandi Seymour

Sandi is the Co-ordinator of the Victims of Crime-Disability Training Programme at Women Working alongside Women with Intellectual and Learning Disabilities (WWILD). She delivered a moving paper highlighting the particular difficulties faced by women with intellectual and learning disabilities whose children are removed from them by child protection authorities. She urged that a better approach is to improve the capacity of such women to parent their children, rather than moving quickly to the removal of these children. She pointed out that, to be defined as suffering from an intellectual disability, one needs an assessment of IQ of less than 70, which is a reduction from a previous bench mark of 85. Accordingly, one can fall between 70 and 85 and not be defined as intellectually disabled. This effectively means that there is a “*lost cohort*” of parents disadvantaged by intellectual disability, but who might not meet that definition. Her paper should be on the website.

Maria Dimopoulos

Maria is a human rights and diversity trainer who has particular interest and experience in assisting with difficulties arising from assimilation and dislocation with the Somali, South Sudanese and Afghani populations. She presented an excellent paper (which again should be on the website) highlighting the particular difficulties faced by these refugees, the massive need for interpreting services for them (particularly highlighting the vast number of languages spoken by the African peoples), the fact that many of them have little or no understanding of any legal remedies that might be available to them, of a lack of data as to such issues, and the lack of understanding of deep cultural and tribal issues relating to such refugees.

Each of the speakers kept to their times well but this meant there was very little opportunity at the end of the session for any questions. The papers were all of good quality and it would

have been preferable if each of the speakers could have had longer to deliver each of their papers and to facilitate times for questions and discussion at the end of their sessions.

The particular issue of interpreting services highlighted by Maria Dimopoulos is relevant to this Committee's earlier consideration of the availability of interpreting services around Australia, with particular reference to the LIV Scoping Study on interpreters. I suspect it is an issue which will continue to occupy our attention in future.