Supporting Aboriginal people with cognitive disability

Disability Justice Project

Scott Avery
6 September 2016
### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander - prevalence of disability (NATSISS Analysis)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of disability within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of severe and profound disability – raw</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of severe and profound disability – age standardised (to allow for comparison with non-Indigenous)</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence differential compared to other Australians</td>
<td>2.1 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with severe and profound disability (2016 population estimate)</td>
<td>58,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual growth rate using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population projections</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Aged 15 and over, private households
The *under*-reported prevalence and nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability

- Under-reporting - no word for ‘disability’
- Disability in childhood eg. Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)
- Prisons and other institutions
- People who are homeless
- The living environment (eg. urban vs remote)
- Trauma – ‘broken spirit’
## The life trajectory of an Aboriginal Person with disability

### LIFE-STAGE ASPECT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIFE-STAGE</th>
<th>Peri-Natal</th>
<th>Early childhood</th>
<th>Schooling years</th>
<th>Young people</th>
<th>Justice</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Ageing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>Low awareness of disability</td>
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<td>Less likely to secure employment</td>
<td>Denial of rights-over incarceration</td>
<td>Subconscious bias – institutional racism</td>
<td>Reduced life expectancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental factors, increased likelihood of low birth-weight</td>
<td>Exposure to trauma</td>
<td>“Bad black kid syndrome” – punitive schooling over supported disability</td>
<td>Increased likelihood of police contact</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Low birth weight and environmental factors in developmental disability</td>
<td>Disability assessments aren’t carried out to the extent that they need to be</td>
<td>Undiagnosed and unsupported disability</td>
<td>Less likely to secure employment</td>
<td>Denial of rights – indefinite detention and fitness to plea for people with cognitive and psychiatric disability</td>
<td>Subconscious bias – diagnostic over shadowing</td>
<td>Inadequate public infrastructure especially in remote communities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Suggested citation:
Avery S. (2016) ‘The life trajectory for an Aboriginal and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Persons with disability’. In: First Peoples Disability Network Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives on the Recurrent and Indefinite Detention of People with Cognitive and Psychiatric Impairment.
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PERSPECTIVES ON THE RECURRENT AND INDEFINITE DETENTION OF PEOPLE WITH COGNITIVE AND PSYCHIATRIC IMPAIRMENT

A Submission to the Senate Inquiry on the Indefinite Detention of People with Cognitive and Psychiatric Impairment

Prepared by:

FIRST PEOPLES DISABILITY JUSTICE CONSORTIUM

An alliance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations, disability, justice and legal researchers, Universities and Research Institutes.

An initiative of First Peoples Disability Network (Australia), its strategic partners and supports.

April 2016
A model of disability justice based on wellness and healing

- Community direction
- Trauma-informed, acknowledge systemic barriers and discrimination across the life course
- A multi-disciplinary response, integrating knowledge of disability and legal systems
- Diversion and post release support
- System mapping between justice systems and the NDIS
- Highlight Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)
- Safeguards, checks and balances in legislation and codes of practice
Contact

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