



PASIFIKA TALANOA

A Snapshot Report

ABSTRACT

This snapshot report, and the Talanoa research upon which the report is based, was done to firstly pay homage to the stories of Pasifika peoples, their solidarity and resilience as well as their struggles and adversities. It also written to complement existing literature and bring awareness to issues and suggest ways to improve government policy and service delivery by documenting and analysing the community's Talanoa – their powerful and invaluable voices full of complexity and wisdom.

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The Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our company is located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. The Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

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“...We cannot resolve and fix everything but if we can work together collectively to minimise and making sure that everything it's there for our people to make an informed decision then we can put our hand on the heart, yes, at least we've done something to help out...”

(Talanoa Participant, 2019)

SPECIAL THANKS

Malo e lelei, talofa lava, kia orana, fakalofa lahi atu, bula vinaka, kia ora

We would like to thank Marie Pewhairangi for being the rock we could rely on and draw strength from. Marie was instrumental in building the essential community relationships we needed to undertake, design and resource the Talanoa. Marie is a powerhouse who supporting us when we really needed it. The research could not have been done without her effort, hard work, knowledge, skills and experience.

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Thank you,

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Australia is lauded as being one of the most successful multicultural countries in the world. However, there are still many barriers that exist for minority communities in accessing social services and engaging in wider society. We cannot assume that the Pakeha/Palangi system works for everyone; we must be mindful of culture and language and become better at co-designing services with diverse communities. If we truly are the most successful multicultural nation then we should see the beauty and strength in diversity of culture and language.

This report and the following recommendations ask that we look at the dominant structures and open up a space for more inclusive ways of designing and delivering services. These recommendations are not exhaustive; they represent the insights of this snapshot report. Further research and analysis will be conducted at a later date that will build upon this report, its findings and recommendations.

An Annual Pasifika Conference

The Victorian Government must provide ongoing funding, with the support of service providers and Pasifika communities, to a regular Pasifika Conference in Victoria. This conference must allow Pasifika peoples and all those who work with Pasifika peoples an opportunity to come together on a regular basis to *Talanoa* with each other and discuss important issues and positive steps that must be made.

Cultural Safety

The Victorian Government must allocate funding to support the building of a Pasifika cultural assessment model within service providers. Limitations on resources is often quoted as a reason for services providers inability to cultivate adequate cultural safety within their processes (this also applies to cultural intelligence training).

Service providers and all who work with Pasifika communities must authentically consult and co-design with Pasifika communities throughout every step of the way to ensure the program is culturally safe - into its formulation, its implementation and its evaluation. We learned how cultural safety was integral to fostering a trustworthy relationship with Pasifika peoples and Pasifika peoples are relational peoples.

Resourced Service Providers & an Improved Community of Practice

Service providers deliver help up to or at a certain point, however they are restrained from delivering their service more broadly due to lack of resources. We heard of cases where participants were not able to access services due to geographical boundaries or could not access services until they were already in dire need. We know that service providers are stymied by the broader context of their relationship with governments (local, state and federal), other funding sources and their relationship with others in the community space.



We recommend a change in funding models allowing services to access longer term funding and for the government to fund a platform that promotes up-to-date programs and services that is available for communities to access. This platform will allow those seeking a particular service to be able to find what they are looking for, but also see where the gaps are. If a program is working well in the west then it can be rolled out in the north. Government should also promote a better community of practice, not just online but by supporting gatherings and networking.

Cultural Intelligence Training

This type of education is needed to help those working with or interacting with Pasifika peoples. Understanding something as basic as how to pronounce a name correctly shows respect to the person and culture. Understanding certain cultural norms can reduce incidents of prejudice and stereotyping, increasing people's sense of wellbeing and belonging. Cultural intelligence does not mean having to know everything about all cultures. It is about understanding ourselves and our own internal biases and frameworks from which we operate.

A Federal Government Enquiry Into the Legislative Frameworks Around NZ Citizens in Australia Accessing Services

An enquiry into the way that NZ citizens in Australia are treated with regards to accessing support services is overdue and urgently needed. We heard countless stories of Pasifika people in hardship who were unable to access or had limited access to the assistance that they need. An already vulnerable peoples is without proper government support. Intergenerational disadvantage is encouraged by the legislative frameworks around NZ citizens in Australia and their access to services and it demands a government enquiry.

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GLOSSARY

Maori	First Nations people of New Zealand (through birth and ancestry)
Pasifika	Maori and Pacific Islanders
Pacific Islanders	First Nations people of countries in the Pacific Islands region (through birth or ancestry and recognition from other first nations peoples)
NZ	New Zealand
Pakeha, Palangi, Palagi	<p>These words refer to people of European descent or things 'Western'. Each Pasifika nation has a word to refer to such peoples.</p> <p>Pakeha is the Maori word, Palangi is the Tongan word and Palagi is the Samoan word. Palangi translates as '<i>sky breakers</i>' (those that broke the sky with their boats, referencing the first Europeans seen in the Pacific)</p>
Talanoa	<p>An ancient methodology of storytelling, conversing, sharing of views and perspectives.</p> <p>Another word for focus group.</p>
WJ	WEstjustice Community Legal Centre
UCA VIC/TAS	Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
VCAA	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
AIM	Achievement Improvement Monitor
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
VET	Vocational education and training



ABOUT PASIFIKA TALANOA

The Researchers

The *Pasifika Talanoa* Project brings together two separate projects led by Semisi Kailahi of WEstjustice Community Legal Centre (WJ) and April Kailahi of Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (UCA VIC/TAS).

Semisi is a second generation Australian with Tongan parents. He leads the Pasifika Project of WEstjustice – implemented in early 2018 – funded by Department of Justice and Regulation.

The Pasifika Project involves:

- ▶ a *Pasifika* legal clinic which is a generalist legal service for legal referrals, information, advice and court representation,
- ▶ community development
- ▶ research, policy and advocacy

The Pasifika Project was guided by a steering group of community members. These community members were chosen by community leaders of community organisations such as the United Pacific Council of Victoria. Marie Pewhairangi is the chairperson of the Pasifika steering group. This steering group would extend their oversight to include not only WJ's work, but also the joint *Pasifika Talanoa* project of WJ and UCA VIC/TAS.

April is a Palangi and is the Community Development Officer for UCA VIC/TAS. April secured funding from the Department of Premier and Cabinet to implement Talanoa Harambee in 2018.

This project aims to engage Pasifika and African communities across metropolitan Melbourne in a culturally competent way to build community capacity and connectedness with one another through sharing stories. In 2019, Talanoa Harambee focused on working alongside the Pasifika communities and in 2020, Talanoa Harambee will focus on working alongside the African communities.

This report and the *Talanoa* research comes under the *Pasifika Talanoa* Project – a project title derived from the partnership of Semisi's Pasifika Project and April's *Talanoa Harambee* Project in 2019.

Pasifika Talanoa involves:

- ▶ Conducting Talanoa. Talanoa was deemed as a suitable method to engage with Pasifika peoples as a research methodology that is often used for focus groups with Pasifika peoples.
- ▶ Three Talanoa were conducted across greater Melbourne. At each session community members were invited to Talanoa on three main issues: youth and education, family violence and access to services.
- ▶ Analysing and presenting the data from the Talanoa along with recommendations in this snapshot report at a *Pasifika Communities Conference*.

The researchers were not able to include the breadth of wisdom and honesty that was captured throughout the Talanoa sessions.

This report gives a snapshot of just some of the important insights we were privileged to have heard and aims to shine a light on the lived experiences of Pasifika peoples. The research and analysis is held together by the de-identified quotes from our Talanoa participants. Talanoa conversations were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Community Driven

All major components of the *Pasifika Talanoa* work went through the approval or came from the desires of the Pasifika steering committee such as the issues that the Talanoa focused on, how the day should be structured, who the facilitators should be, how many Talanoa sessions we will have and where they should occur. This project has sought to walk with Pasifika peoples; researching with not researching on. Teresia Teaiwa (cited in Mila-Schaf 2010, p. 18) writes "*Pacific studies is not only an academic field; it is an especially intimate field that people enter, often with highly personalised stakes*".

The researchers entered into this research with highly personalised stakes as well as the participants and they take their roles seriously and acknowledge that for the community, this is not a project that has a start and end date. Also, they understand that this is the everyday of people's lives and thank every participant who gave up their Saturdays to Talanoa with them. Pasifika people are a complex people with so much richness that cannot be completely unpacked in a snapshot report such as this. The depth of conversation which encapsulated love, spirituality, individual and collective responsibility, culture and identity were weaved throughout each Talanoa. We hold their stories as sacred and hope that we do the participants justice with this report.

The contention of the term Pasifika was raised by Semisi and the steering group, which acknowledged the difficulties of using a term that was inclusive of all people, without causing offence. In the end, *Pasifika* was deemed an appropriate word to use when discussing Maori and Pacific Islanders, because the committee felt there is a unity and solidarity there.

It is important for people to recognise the plurality of Pasifika peoples, that there are a number of communities within the umbrella term Pasifika and that there is no Pasifika "*community*", only communities. In this report we will use the term Pasifika peoples to denote the diversity and plurality.

Methodology

We chose participatory action research (PAR) as the most appropriate methodology to conduct the *Pasifika Talanoa* Project. PAR, otherwise known as emancipatory action research, incorporates the most important elements of a decolonial approach to researching *with* rather than researching *on*. PAR establishes the practice of "*cycles of knowledge and action that produce on-the-ground change*" (O'Leary 2010, p. 154).

PAR attempts to empower communities, while addressing dominant ideologies and systems that shape and constrain the individual and collective ability to thrive. In keeping with the principals of PAR, all elements of the research process were co-designed with the community.

The Pasifika steering committee conceptualised the three topics of: youth and education, family violence and access to services. These topics were seen as important matters concerning the community. On the day of the Talanoa sessions, we split into groups that consisted of: a younger group, an older group and when we discussed family violence, a women's group and a men's group. Talanoa sessions were conducted with participants who ranged from 18 – 70 years old, who self-nominated into the separate age groups. We used the snowball method to find participants. Each participant was given a \$50 gift card as a thank you for their participation.

Using qualitative research, specifically Indigenous methodologies of storytelling, when working with cultures who have strong oral traditions, is essential to 'good practice'. According to McLeod (cited in Palaamo, p. 19) "*qualitative research is a process of careful, rigorous inquiry into aspects of the social world*". This inquiry produces new frameworks which then help to comprise knowledge and create a greater understanding of the social world. We chose to use the Talanoa method of storytelling as a way to listen to insights from Pasifika participants. Talanoa is a traditional word that incorporates a process of inclusivity, participation and transparency. Engaging in Talanoa is to engage with empathy and build experiences through storytelling. The Talanoa method allowed the researchers to engage in deep conversations in a culturally responsive and respectful way, breaking down any barriers between the participants and researchers. According to Faleolo (2016, p. 67) "*Talanoa is an approach that creates a va or relationship between the informant and researcher that creates a free-flowing dialogue*".

For those working with communities such as Pasifika, a deep understanding of the importance of language, metaphor and relationships is needed. Each of these go hand in hand. The Talanoa method supports and upholds language, metaphor and relationships.

BACKGROUND

Pasifika migration is not a new phenomenon. From as far back as 1863, South Sea Islanders were forcibly brought to Australia to work on the Queensland sugar cane fields; this exploitative act of 'blackbirding' brought over 62,000 migrants who were colloquially known as 'the kanakas' (Lakisa, Teaiwa, Adair & Taylor 2019, p. 3). After federating in 1901, many South Sea Islanders were forced to repatriate under the White Australian Policy. After the 1970s the flow of migration from the Pacific Islands and Oceania regions had steadily increased, leading to the current statistics of 1.4% of the national population self-describing as Pasifika by ancestry (Lakisa et al). The Pasifika population in Australia is growing with a median age of 38 (Kearny & Glen 2017, p. 278). Life expectancy for Pasifika peoples is lower compared to the national average, Pasifika peoples are less likely to attend university, Pasifika peoples are over-represented in lower-skilled jobs and also in the criminal justice system (Kearny & Glen; Lakisa et al; Shepherd & Ilalio 2016). Pasifika students often lack the support needed from Pasifika parents due to their long and often irregular work hours in low paid jobs within a familial context of financial disadvantage (Shepherd & Ilalio, 2016).

To alleviate financial stress for their parents and family, students may lean towards leaving school early (Andersson et al., 2012; SELLEN, 2012 cited by Shepherd & Ilalio, 2016). As fewer Pasifika people get tertiary education, there is a scarcity of educated role models for young Pasifika people to emulate (Kearney & Donaghy, 2010 cited by Shepherd & Ilalio, 2016). Pasifika families migrate to Australia in the hopes of better wages and lifestyle. By necessity they gravitate towards relatively low socio-economic areas such as south-east Melbourne and western Melbourne due to the lower cost of living and the need to have support from the existing community in those areas.

Ravulo's 2015 report identified that 45.8% of the Pacific population in Australia – almost 128,000 individuals – have NZ citizenship. For NZ citizens, the ability to delay work and study to attain higher paying work or explore other industries is limited because of the requirement to satisfy excessive residency requirements and ineligibilities to access certain benefits within the social security framework. Securing work is not always done within the timeframe that the Newstart Allowance is available to Pasifika people. The legislative picture entrenches disadvantage within Pasifika peoples (Shepherd & Ilalio, 2016). It is important to understand the barriers Pasifika peoples are facing and discuss solutions, but without pigeonholing Pasifika peoples. Misconceptions and stereotypes are further barriers as we heard in the *Talanoa* research.

According to the South Pacific Foundation of Victoria (2007) report *Pasifika Victoria: The way forward*, shyness or deference shown to authorities can be misinterpreted as a lack of cooperation or truculence. Avoidance of eye contact and verbal interaction has been mistaken for culpability, guilt or insolence: "*the cultural characteristics of deference which is shown to those in authority...can increase the chances of prosecution and harassment*" (p. 39).

As Ravulo emphasises in his article *Connecting and Collaborating across Oceania and its Diaspora: A Shared Approach to Meaningful Development and Engagement*, the significance of Pasifika cultural perspectives must be highlighted through a shared, collaborative and decolonising approach in research, policy and practice, thus reducing cultural misconceptions and stereotypes that are detrimental to the wellbeing of Pasifika peoples.

Ravulo's article highlights the importance of an anti-oppressive practice approach, which seeks to "*understand the power relations that perpetuate structural oppression, cultural oppression and personal oppression*" (p. 31). Structural oppression intersects at the point where the dominant group benefits from social systems including legislation and policies. Within these institutionalised systems, powerlessness and marginalisation are embedded within social relations and contribute towards worse outcomes in areas like health, education and overrepresentation in the youth justice centre. Ravulo notes that providing a platform for Pasifika people to share their experiences could aid systems in being more responsive and addressing structural oppression (p. 31). According to Maidment and Egan (cited in Ravulo, p. 32) "*cultural oppression refers to those dominant sets of knowledge, values, behaviours and customs that are privileged at the*

expense of others in any given society". For Pasifika communities, cultural oppression plays out through the continuation of stereotypes such as being seen as low skilled labourers only suited to manual jobs, having the physicality of the body commodified in the context of sport and not caring about further education. The perpetuation of these stereotypes not only manifest in the wider community's way of seeing and relating to Pacific Islanders, they may also permeate the psyche of the Pasifika community itself affecting the way Pacific communities see themselves. Ravulo sees the need to re-envision and change the language used when talking about Pasifika peoples as a way of facilitating social mobility and amplifying Pacific voices and perspectives.

Personal oppression is seen through the *"negative interactions of interpersonal relationships, attitudes, and actions between people"* Maidment and Egan cited in Ravulo, p. 32). Personal oppression plays out differently in various cultural settings. The intersecting spaces occupied by gender, class, religion, language, sexuality and ability impact a person's perceived and lived identity.

In the Pasifika culture, the relational space in between people is where identities are formed. Intersectionality: gender, class, religion, language etc. and the impacts of personal oppression manifest in various ways. When speaking to participants at the Talanoa sessions the researchers heard how systemic and personal prejudice impacts upon the perceived and lived experiences of individuals.

INTRODUCTION

The issues this snapshot focuses on are Pasifika young people and their identity according to family, church, police, schools, support services and governments; Pasifika young people and the barriers in pursuing their education including limited access to HECS-HELP loans and problematic structures of and approaches within schools; Family violence and the ways in which it is conceptualised by Pasifika peoples and the implications of these; The inability or difficulties in accessing support services for Pasifika peoples, often as a result of being a NZ citizen.

YOUTH AND EDUCATION

During the Talanoa sessions on youth and education, the researchers had many important insights come out. These were some of the main issues the researchers encountered (and unfortunately each individual issue cannot be unpacked to the extent needed due to the brevity that comes with a snapshot report):

- ▶ the lack of cultural understanding within the school system and how this impacts upon agency;
- ▶ the rigid teaching structures that does not support Pasifika students;
- ▶ the need for Pasifika students to learn about the more practical elements of life beyond school;
- ▶ the burden of extra duties at home and the impact this has on school;
- ▶ financial hardship; and
- ▶ the generational gap between first and second generations.

Cultural Safety in Schools

The importance of teachers being culturally aware is a significant and underlying factor which contributes to student wellbeing and their feeling of being valued or undervalued by the education system. Quite often Pasifika students and families are homogenised as being from New Zealand and their names are not pronounced correctly.

The researchers heard that a person's name is their identity and because identity is so important to Pasifika people, treatment of the name is synonymous of treatment of the person's identity. Identity is profoundly important to Pasifika peoples and harms to identity detrimentally impact on their school engagement and engagement in wider society. This was a common theme from both the younger people group and the older people group. For example, the latter said:

For example, the latter said:

“...A lot of them their names are not said properly. You know something as simple as that. We had teachers in that forum (youth forum) and they asked, what is one thing that we could do to make a difference and we put their name...that means a lot especially to us because that's our identity...our names come from our tikanga...”

The former said:

“...We also talk about our cultural identity and all that type of stuff and how we sometimes get annoyed at the fact that a lot of people print our names wrong. And so the reception lady at one of the schools I work with took it upon herself to try and learn. Learn how to pronounce, phonetically, parents' names...”

“...I think they want to be addressed by their first names and I think by addressing them by their first names, you're personalising them, and building that relationship...”

Importance of Relationship Building With Pasifika Students

Relationships, and the relational space, the space-in-between, identifies and defines acceptable behaviour between people. Language and metaphor are important nuances, which impact on the way Pasifika people interpret the world. Just as important are non-verbal cues such as: eye contact, a smile, a handshake, how someone sits or how someone walks into a room. These nuances are not only fundamental to the internal understandings of Pasifika communities; they also impact upon the perception of Pasifika peoples in the wider community.

It is not only about understanding cultural norms that is essential for teachers and principals to engage with students on a meaningful level, but also understanding where the student is at an individual level. Students feel talked over or unheard, that they do not have a voice or understand what exactly is happening. Parents are also pushed on the outer when their knowledge and understanding of their children is inconsistent to how staff characterise their child.

“...So, how does a young person articulate what they’re actually feeling when people are talking for them all the time? So, you’ve got the school sitting on one side and the parents sitting on the other side. And the parents are made to feel like they don’t know their child, because the school knows the child better than they do...”

“...You’ve got young people on the verge of being suspended and expelled and you’ve got principals standing around, oh, so then, ‘what do you aspire to be when you finish school?’ And this young person’s probably like, Year 9, thinking, ‘so you’re saying aspirin or what?’ And it just clicked in my head that I’ve already built a relationship to know that this young person would not know [what she said]. So I asked him, ‘Do you know what she just said?’ and he turned around and goes he says ‘no’. And then I was like, ‘do you know what aspire is?’ and he goes, no. And then I was like ‘oh what she was saying was basically, what do you want to be when you finish school?’...”

“...The schools, you may get one or two teaching staff that may have empathy for our young people, but the majority of them do not...”

Parents as Advocates for Their Children at Schools

Parents felt that they could not advocate on behalf of their children as they did not know what their rights are in the school system. A sense of both parent and student being lost in the system. Most Pasifika parents lack sufficient knowledge of the school system and the language that is used, thus limiting their ability to speak on the student’s behalf when interacting with school staff.

Not understanding the discourse that is being used, is compounded by the common barrier of English as the second language. Educational institutions can exclude certain people, as it is within those elite institutions where values, language and knowledge are determined as legitimate.

Those who can access the determined values, language and knowledge will be rewarded. Consequently, education is not so much about teaching and learning, as much as it is about socialisation and reinforcing status as “*individuals who are inculcated in the dominant culture are the most likely to succeed, while other students are penalised*” (Thomas cited in Ravulo 2019, p. 216).

Pasifika parents must understand education systems that are structured under the complexities of the English language and the Anglo-Australian educational design. It would be helpful to have a service to assist parents and perhaps help them navigate through confusing jargon such as NAPLAN, VCAA, VCAL, AIM, ATAR, VET and so on.

“...There’s nothing there for you as parents. You have to do it all alone. And you’ll only do it from your own experiences and from your own kind of book of knowledge. And, like you said, it could be wrong. It could be making those mistakes. This is what I find is a real barrier. Where is that support for families to address issues at that level within the education system?...”

“...To have somebody to advocate on behalf of you and your family...”

“...The Pakeha system and us parents are trying to... We try to help but, oh, we need that. We need that kind of support...”

“...When they come back with their homework, I’m looking at it. What happened to A,B,C and 1,2,3? What’s all this, shit? So I had to get assistance with their learning. I just don’t understand their learning. I just don’t understand the curriculum. I find that frustrating...”

Impractical Curriculum

When speaking to the younger and older groups, both articulated a need for practical learning to be intertwined into the curriculum to prepare students for the world once they have left school. Accessing insurance, applying for jobs, writing a resume, these were all seen as important skills to equip young people with and to help them successfully transition to the workforce.

“...Yes, how do you apply for a job? How do you vote? How do you even, like, apply for, normal application when you got to a doctor’s? Things like that...”

“...And especially how you mentioned having, like, financial capital coming in and developing budget plans, or to teach them how to allocate certain monies to different things...”

Young People Are Overburdened

Young people generally saw their education as important, however one of the barriers to reaching their full potential was seen in the overburdening of home chores. The young group was at pains to acknowledge their parents hard work and did not bear resentment towards their family. Strength and solidarity were found within the home and the collective pull of culture and family were seen as unique, important and fundamental to their sense of self.

“...Yes, well, like, especially at school, like, go to school, come back, do the chores, help out these. Do all of that stuff. We haven’t time to do the homework...because it’s every single day.... And it’s not the fault of the parents; it’s not the fault of anybody. It’s just things that need to be done...”

Financial Hardship Impacts Wellbeing of Parents & Children, School Engagement & Family Cohesion

The externalisation of one’s problems is common among Pasifika peoples. If a Pasifika parent were to be in financial stress, other family members and the broader community will Talanoa among themselves to work towards a collective solution that alleviates that stress. The obligation to work towards a solution and the feelings that come with the financial stresses is felt by a network around the individual. Young people bear the financial as well as the emotional burden that their parents experience.

Although the researchers heard that they assume this role unbegrudgingly and out of respect, it can lead to resentment and rebellion within the household. Later in this report is a discussion on how young people bear the burden from home and from their schools.

“...The reason why [there are issues at school] is because of our financial status from our parents.” All our families are struggling with the seeing our parents financially struggle. You know, try and stay positive...try not to ask for, like, money for excursions...It’s not our parents fault that they don’t have anything. It’s actually no fault on anybody...it’s a generational thing, so whatever your parents carried on is what you will carry on...”

Conflicting Identities

Younger and older Pasifika peoples are aware that the expectations of home life differ vastly from the expectations of school life on young people. These expectations can affect the way people are treated in the public sphere and those pressures have a profound impact on their sense of self and therefore their mental health.

“So, the confusion is, who am I? Where do I belong? Where do I fit in? And where is my voice? So, our young people have a whole lot to contend with, just from home to school. And that school has a huge impact on what happens to our young people moving forward.”

“...For our young people, we have certain expectations within the whānau, within our homes. They step out of the door and there’s another lot of expectations, especially when they go to school. Then they come out of there and then there’s expectations from the wider community and so on...”

“...With the pressures...no wonder there’s a high rate of suicide for young people. Particularly in New Zealand and now in Australia and we have to be real about that...”

Issues flowing from and around the pressures from school, family and wider society are complex and interrelated. The concept of cultural hybridity manifests often and this has its benefits and challenges. Often, the path to better outcomes for Pasifika young people depends on their skill in cross cultural coherence – their ability to access and navigate the demands, rules, structures of a multitude of cultural structures.

“...You take the good and the bad, in your culture...”

“...I take the good that is the foundation of the family...”

The ability to grapple with the complexities of conflicting cultures and structures is something that the researchers heard from many participants; successfully navigating “the good and the bad” is not easy.

Expectations Don’t Match Entrepreneurial Skills

One of the findings was that the younger group and older group surprisingly shared the same point of view in regards to expectations placed upon young people by their parents. Young people are seen as intelligent, resourceful and entrepreneurial, never lacking in creativity, nevertheless, sometimes stymied by a rigid school system.

They both agreed that parents need to appreciate the talents of the young person, the courage or fortitude to feed their passion and willingness to work hard even if what the young person is interested in falls outside the normal convention of curriculum and immediate trajectory from yr. 12 to tertiary education.

Allowing and supporting Pasifika students to go down the entrepreneurial path is an issue not just for parents but also for the schools that they attend.

This may be due to an often-rigid pedagogy that may be focused on gearing career support to traditional pathways of early exit to trade or later exit to tertiary study. A lot of onus is placed on the student to be courageous, articulate and reflective enough to go down the entrepreneurial path. They must recognise their entrepreneurial skill, demonstrate that they possess it and communicate this to their school and parents in a persuasive way. If the school and parents are naturally leaning towards traditional pathways and are not intuitive and working alongside students in this respect first, students who don’t speak like CEOs but have the skills may never get to where they should be because they get stopped at the first instance.



“...Our parents want you their meet their expectation culturally, whether they’re driven that way or not...”

“...Parents also need to understand that things are changing and it’s evolving, that they have to also adapt their mindset and expectation on their children and to recognise the talents in their children...”

“...Our parents instil in us education, education, education, numero uno, without realising that sometimes their child may not be that way inclined” “Very innately entrepreneurial and few are academically inclined...”

“...Artistic and creative, but deemed to be seen as not as the norm because they don’t go through the education system. They’ve got this creativity. They’ve got this knowledge of where they want to be and it’s outside the parent’s view of what their children should be...”

“...Pacific Islanders are really intelligent, we’re really resourceful...”

“...He had a chat with his parents, he had a passion and he started talking like a CEO. His parents were stopping him, saying you need to focus on school. Education is the key but there are certain things, we are gifted with God’s blessing and if we can acknowledge that and support them...that’s cultural expectancy. I think we made the right decision to support him...”

“...If you’re going to come out of school, I want you to focus on your gift and that was art...his mum had that support there for him, to say, if you want to go this route, I’ll support you no matter what. Even though the school was going at her, left right and centre...”

Colonisation

The effects of colonisation influence how individuals and communities are treated and/or perceived by the wider society; these perceptions can then become internalised. One participant noted that the thoughts Pasifika parents often have are colonial and that these thoughts affect the way they interact with their children. The ongoing effects of colonisation is found throughout the themes of the Talanoa; it is especially seen in the way Pasifika peoples are discriminated against and stereotyped.

“...I think colonisation has a lot to do with the way we think as a people, in terms that it filters down to our kids... We feel as if we’re open, but really, we’re not as open. We need to understand that culture is an evolving thing... to stand up and say, yes, I’ve got colonial thoughts, but be willing to be open for our children...”

Discrimination & Stereotypes

“...I think our kids are stereotyped. I think when potential employers look at them, they just see that they’re not educated and they’re brown and all of that kind of stuff...”

“...It’s like a stigma, they brand us as low work people. They look at us like that...”

“...Won’t come to work, it’s a fine day they go fishing instead of coming to work. All of those kinds of assumptions. Stereotypes, that’s a big barrier, the stereotyping of our people, of our kids...”

Structural, cultural and personal oppression can be seen within the Pasifika communities through the policing of bodies. Many of the insights from the Talanoa revolved around bodily perceptions.

“...I was so tall, and I stood out. When I first went to school, my class mates thought that I was a student teacher. And when they said...this is our new student they all freaked out and thought that I was some kind of freak, because I was so tall...”

There is a visibility/invisibility dichotomy that is evident when listening to the insights of the Talanoa; being told that you are too big or too loud, yet having to then fight to be heard or access services. Society has certain expectations of Pasifika-ness.

You can be tall, big and loud and strong if you are on the rugby field, but not if you are on the sidelines watching rugby or have another profession. You can have those structures without being unfairly targeted by class mates. You can speak clearly into the microphone if you are singing to the crowd, fulfilling your role as musician, but not if you are an advocate for yourself and your community.

“...And then, you know it was sort of like, you had to fight for, you had to push yourself more. You know, because it’s like you had to...to be seen and also to be heard...”

“...I see it in some of the sports clubs that we go to, it’s like if we go out west and north, it’s okay to cheer loud. If we come out to the east, we can’t cheer too loud because it’s seen as aggressive and all you’re doing is just cheering. For me, as a parent, if I’m cheering my kids or our team, they have people that are walking in the crowd. You have to calm down a bit...”

“...Good rugby playerz” “talented sports” “only good for rugby” “big” “fat” “too loud” “strong...”

Being good at sports seems to be synonymous with being Pasifika. Sport is important to many of our participants; however, it was also seen as a stereotype that disadvantages other parts of one’s identity. According to Bruce (et al cited in Fitzpatrick 2013, p. 138) “more than 20 years of international research makes it clear that media sport represents athletes differently depending on their racial or ethnic background...commentary about hard workers and leaders tends to be about players who are racially identified as ‘white’ while players of colour are more often talked about as being physically talented”. Fitzpatrick goes on to point out that the difference is illustrated in the Cartesian mind/body split, where the mind represents logic, rationality and control over the body, and the body represents desire, feelings and irrationality.

So, while white players are seen as logical, rational and have control over their bodies, players of colour are seen as uncontrollable.

"...When you listen to the young people, there are two things that they're labelled with. One, they can all rugby and two, they can all dance. For our Maori kids, they can all sing. They don't want to be known for that. They want to be known for these entrepreneurial things, that they have these ideas in their heads.

That's what they want to be known for. Those are the opportunities that they want. Our kids are burdened with a lot of barriers coming from our home, coming from our cultural backgrounds. Stepping out the door, into the schools, into the church, into the wider community, there are things before they even walk out of our door..."

Presenting black and brown bodies as predominantly physically rather than intellectual can be traced back to colonial discourses and representations; unfortunately, this inherent racism is still seen today and creates a double bind for Pasifika peoples. Stereotyping like this, limits potential in other areas, positioning Pasifika peoples as *"only good for rugby"*.

Not only adding to the already existing barriers felt in school and wider society, it also limits Pasifika people's potential on the sporting field, casting them as the raw, untamed and wild player; not in control or unable to lead with focus and logic. The notion of being uncontrollable, again, can be seen in colonial discourses and representations and is used associated with Pasifika peoples in other ways.

"...I think with views of society on Māori they see us as violent people. Women-bashers and all that sort of thing. I say that because that movie that came out, Once Were Warriors, a lot of people turn around and use that when they're talking to us.

I went out one night and this Ozzie guy comes up and says to me, oh, you're from New Zealand. I said, yes, I'm from New Zealand. Where are you from? Oh, I'm from here. Oh, you fellows are wife-bashers, hey?..."

Mental Health

Several factors have been found to be associated with increased risk of mental disorder among immigrants such as: *"English proficiency; separated cultural identity; loss of close family ties; lack of opportunity to make effective use of occupational skills; trauma exposure prior to migration; and the many stresses associated with migration and adjustment to a new country"* (Minas, Kakuma, San Too, Vayani, Orapeleng, Prasad-Ildes, Turner, Procter, & Oehm, 2013, p. 19). As well as these contributing factors, cultural stigma is felt among Pasifika peoples.

The Talanoa research found that participants, although grateful for the mental health plan that they were able to access, felt that there were not enough sessions. After they had finished, there was no follow up. If the participant wanted to continue with therapy, they were often forced to choose between paying for the therapy or paying their rent or taking out loans.

"...My daughter...diagnosed with mild depression. Now as a Tongan to talk about depression was like, get over it. Here's a Bible, believe in God, you'll be fine. But that's not the issue. The thing with culture and depression is that there wasn't enough support from our community..."

"...We had to go there ten sessions. After that we were done. There was no follow-up. We were kind of chucked away after that. ... And we got ten sessions. We were grateful. I'm not dogging the system. I'm saying thank you for it. We believed in it. We trusted the process. We said, cool this is going to help my daughter get better, but it didn't. After the ten sessions it was back to normal. The whole depression stage just started getting worse. She didn't want to go to school and so forth..."

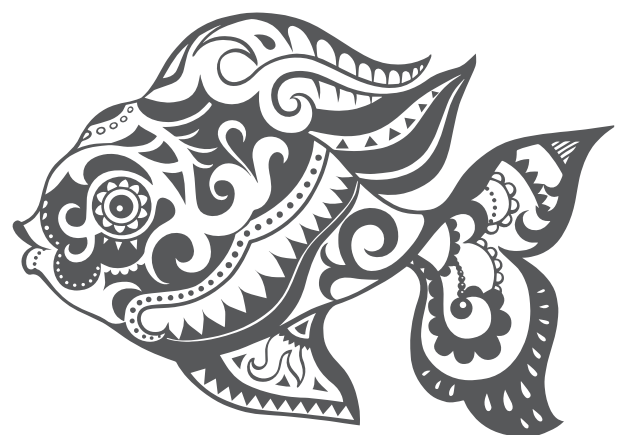
"...I mean people come to me and say to me that they're taking out loans to try and get that support for their child or for where their accessing and it's just put them in deeper and deeper ditch. But they would do anything to try and help their child..."

Police

The Talanoa research learned that there is a perception as well as a small reality that Pasifika peoples are often unfairly viewed as someone who is about to commit a crime or as someone who has a committed crime. Pasifika communities responded by saying that police need to undergo skills and training and to understand the context of Pasifika peoples. They also helpfully offered solutions to improve trust between police and Pasifika young people through intentional recruitment of Pasifika police officers, having those Pasifika officers promote what they do and a consistent idea from the young people across the three Talanoa was the idea of setting up an opportunity for police and young people to play sport together, either on the same team and different teams for example, through a game of touch rugby.

"...I think there should be more Pasifika police officers, because they're loyal...and they can call your mum, you know? It's easier you know what I mean? It's easier for them to approach..."

"...Let them [Police] come to the school to promote what they do in their industry so that most of the kids can be encouraged to do the same thing that they do, you know..."





FAMILY VIOLENCE

“...Whatever culture you belong to. The thing is family violence is family violence...”

This research unequivocally recognises family violence is a national emergency – requiring action from all people not just those from minority communities such as Pasifika. The Pasifika steering committee deemed family violence to be an issue that needed to be discussed at the Talanoa and this choice suggests a recognition from the community that the detrimental impacts of family violence create the need for collective urgent action. This commitment to collective action arose out of the Talanoa sessions, as participants spoke about what sort of preventative actions should be available and what their views and understandings are when it comes to family violence in general. There were discussions around: not being able to access culturally sensitive support services, not being eligible for support due to geographical or visa restrictions and being brought up to be subordinate and to just accept the situation. Intergenerational trauma was a continuing theme that arose in both the women’s and men’s group as factors which influence family violence.

Cultural Safety in FV Services

The Talanoa research heard that many institutions are not culturally safe which limits positive outcomes in service providers work with Pasifika peoples. In the family violence context, practitioners are equipped with skills and knowledge that applies to all victims and perpetrators of family violence and perhaps a more generalised set of CALD cultural sensitivity skills. However, they need cultural training specific to Pasifika peoples and instruction on designing their programs so it is culturally safe. Service providers, for example, must know about Pasifika stigma and shame associated with issues such as mental health and how Pasifika peoples are generally inclined to seek help only from within their communities; and in the case of family violence, even more so. For example, participants in the Talanoa said that a Pasifika victim’s community will focus on securing a quick and quiet solution for all parties which is doomed to be short term. Communities are quick to address the perpetrator’s behaviour, when the first priority must be the victim.

There is a scarcity of culturally safe parenting programs and behavioural change programs that cater to Pasifika parents. More programs like these are needed and existing programs need to have the opportunity to be better resourced by the Victorian government so it encompasses more Pasifika peoples within their boundaries or catchment. In the case of family violence, participants found it difficult to access services that were culturally appropriate and culturally safe.

“...I was speaking to Legal Aid about this, and I was asking whether or not there’s a programme out there that exists that’s culturally sensitive? Like there’ll be parenting programmes, there are, but are there ones which are culturally sensitive for Pasifika people? So that’s something that, I think, would be good to take advantage of and needs to be made available...”

“...But going back to your point about the cultural perspective and the cultural aspects of these services, they won't do it. They offer cultural awareness training to different organisations, but not all workers have access to their training, because for a lot of services they're not, especially for the not-for-profit services, they don't have the funds to train their workers...”

The researchers also heard about how service providers should work with young people in the context of family violence.

“...Well, I think it comes down to if you've built that rapport with that young person, I think it's the easiest way for them to disclose all that information to you. And if it does, and hypothetically if we were case managers and whatnot and were dealing with young people that were in that situation, I guess we'd link them up with services. But also going to those services and being a part of that young person's journey, if that makes any sense, so provide that cultural awareness and also that lens to sort of better help that service provider better engage with that young person, if that makes any sense...”

Appropriate Facilitators

One of the basic cultural aspects of participating in a service would be for the women to have a female facilitator and the men to have a male facilitator. This was an alarming find for the researchers as it would have been understood that this would be normally best practice for all peoples, Pasifika or not.

“...The thing I find the hardest to do that when they mandate our men to behavioural change programmes and they have a woman facilitator...So they've got to go to these things for 15 weeks and listen to this woman tell them how bad they are...”

Intergenerational Trauma

When children suffer trauma, as Judith Herman notes, there is an indelible affect that lasts the rest of their lives - “repeated trauma in adult life erodes the structure of the personality already formed, but repeated trauma in childhood forms and deforms the personality” (1992, p. 96). Pasifika peoples acknowledged that intergenerational trauma and learnt behaviour was real and are a key contributor towards later perpetrations of family violence. It was noted in the Talanoa that parents raise their kids according to the toolkit they have. Not everyone's toolkit is complete and the way the parents were brought up greatly affects the way they parent.

“...We've heard lots of people that I've worked with have said, man, I've got a boot up the arse when I was younger and I'm okay. They don't realise they're not. This is what we're talking about before...”

“...I think the whole structure really comes down to your family upbringing. What you were taught as a child, will come through to your adulthood. Especially, if it's trauma. Those troubled kids that you see on the corner, the gangster ones, all they want is just love...”

“...And we watched this as kids. Without realising it, it was impacting on us for one reason, for a couple of reasons. The first one is you persevere with it because that's what your mother did. You made your bed, you lie in it...”

“...And now they're married and have kids and they're dysfunctional as well...”

Expressions

As well as acknowledging family violence as a problem, there was also a deep understanding of the need to talk, listen and share experiences and just how healing this can be. Some people started their own programs where they could do just that – share their experiences in a safe and non-judgemental way.

Storytelling is a part of the identity for Pasifika peoples. Identity is grounded in relationships with the land, ancestors and future generations. As Wilson (cited in Beltran & Begun 2014, p. 157) acknowledges Pasifika Peoples see themselves as the relationship, rather than *in* the relationship. As discussed in other sections of the report, it is more likely that expressions will occur when the listener is from the community and has the cultural skills.

“...Listening to the experience of other peoples is very important...”

“...We sit there with these participants and we listen. And it's all about listening...”

“...I think the thing as well, because we are men, we are seen to be... We can't really express our feelings. So, if something happens like that, I was only 14, I just had to man up and forget about it or something but I'm really mentally scarred. Then later down the track you just become loose and you just lose it and stuff.

You go off and stuff and it's not really good. But the good thing when I experience things like that is that I get to talk to my mum which is the biggest help in my life, I swear. She's gotten me through a lot of pain and stuff but, yes, Mum's number one...”

Religion & Spirituality

Bible verses were frequently used as an important way to unpack the self and to connect with God. Metaphor and allegory are intrinsic to Pasifika languages and bible verses perfectly encapsulate the rhetorical elegance found in metaphor. The need to incorporate spirituality is permeated throughout the discussions. In a secular society where spirituality is compartmentalised, it can create further barriers for those whose religion is entwined within the everyday.

“...Accountability, honesty, truth, transparency, integrity and respect. That's the pathway to us finding peace.

Now, the other one that took the anger out of me, it's scripture. It's the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians, Chapter 5, verse 22-23, and it goes like this, every day I apply the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love...the flavours of the fruit of love is joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...”

“...Regardless of what background you’re from, you need to have a spiritual... Something spiritual whether it’s yoga or what because yoga means union, it means union you with the world and nature. So, you’ve got to have something spiritual that you can really control your inner self...”

Listening and sharing are an important part of the educative and healing experience; as well as acknowledging and incorporating the roles of culture and faith. Participants noted that these elements are often missing from western family violence frameworks and there is a striking power imbalance when engaging with the system. Another barrier that prevented participants from engaging with the system was because of fear, and unfamiliarity with legal language.

ACCESS TO SERVICES

In this section, services within the community and justice system will be discussed excluding schools and police as they were covered in the previous section. However, it is important to recognise that any service provider or practitioner can draw lessons from this section and the entirety of this snapshot report.

Fear of an Unfamiliar & Complex System

The first step for services in the community space is communicating what they do and persuading the people they work with that they are there to help, an often hurried or ignored step with more emphasis on the delivery rather than the design.

The researchers heard that service providers need to make the language easier to understand and that community education should occur as well. Pasifika peoples are an oratory and visual people and face to face education is preferred rather than the provision of written materials. Community leaders have indicated that train the trainer models of education are welcomed.

“...We are disadvantaged as a community, because Maori and Pacific people...we’re scared of that system. Justice means policemen, Policemen means arrest and stuff. And these people talking to me, they should know their work. So we should just go with that and be happy that they’re there to support us. So I think the language and education around that is really important for our people. Who’s going to do that and say, okay, this is what you should expect if you apply for Legal Aid...”

“...Our people, our women, our men are not sure how to...navigate through those systems particularly the legal one. The words and everything is just over top of their head so they will sit there and obediently follow what the lawyers say...”

Service Providers Not Resourced Enough

Interestingly, Pasifika people spoke at length about the state of play amongst metropolitan Melbourne’s service providers. Services are desperately needed; however, they are also greatly under resourced and

are therefore unable to meet community expectations in the nature and extent of their provision. Pasifika peoples are distressed by the reality of an under resourced community sector as service providers limit their offering to certain issues and areas.

Service providers deliver help up to or at a certain point and they restrain their service delivery to geographical areas due to the broader context of their relationship with governments (local, state and federal), other funding sources and their relationship with others in the community space. As this occurs, unfortunately Pasifika peoples and other vulnerable people are left wanting and (sadly inevitably) fall through the cracks.

“...To house our people, they need to be in some sort of trouble...”

One symptom of service providers being under resourced is that the Pasifika person seeking support is continually being redirected. Pasifika peoples are observing what’s being offered in other regions and are asking themselves, why can’t they help me?

There is an answer to this depending on who they speak to, but the answer does not comfort the person in respect to the short term. People are confused and frustrated by the system and have to be ‘passed’ around by service providers until they get, they help they need. Pasifika peoples were observing program delivery in other areas of Melbourne and saying:

“...We’re crying for help out here...”

“...So we were in a catch 22 situation on both sides of the fence. To house our people, they need to be in some sort of trouble...”

NZ Citizens & Accessing HECS-HELP Loans

The Talanoa research confirmed the sweeping impact of the unfair legislative arrangements for NZ citizens in Australia when it comes to securing support from the federal government under their HECS-HELP scheme.

The researchers found that many participants had experienced problems accessing HECS-HELP if not personally, then through family and friends. NZ citizens in Australia were telling those in NZ to “stay there”.

This invites researchers to ask whether governments and service providers in NZ are giving full and clear information to NZ citizens before their migration to Australia or is the onus on the public to be aware of the legislative frameworks for NZ citizens before hand. Especially when migrants have come to Australia to seek a better life, are unlikely to have capacity to navigate the complexities of such a system on their own.

The researchers learned that many NZ citizens who have attempted to continue with their higher education, only completed the first semester before dropping out because of financial hardship that the cost of study contributed to or created. For many NZ citizens, the cost of study necessitated either a return to NZ to do further study or a move into lower paid jobs without a requirement of tertiary qualifications.

For those that did continue with their higher education they were having to work full-time and study part-time so that they could pay for their tertiary studies; many participants expressed interest in studying courses such as medicine, law, criminology, education, nursing and tourism.

The researchers argue against upfront fees for NZ citizens because of the financial stress they cause but also because NZ citizens are often under financial hardship already and separating Pasifika families by encouraging students to return to NZ is quite problematic in many respects.

||| *"...There's a number that like did the first semester and then they just dropped it. Yes, that happens a lot..."*

||| *"...It'll be like, oh, it's too much to handle and they need to get a job..."*

||| *"...They want to do it, but then it's just that thing that's stopping them from doing it..."*

||| *"...To be able to go to university, we had to send her home. Because we're not eligible for any funding support. Her father...not eligible. So, we sent her back and she's now attending Auckland university as we speak. But it's separated the family now, just so she can have access to good education. Now that's a big barrier for us as a family that's very closely knit. But like everything else in Australia, we work around that. That's my barrier.*

||| *She ended up working, but it just wasn't for her. So, as a result, she now lives in NZ and she studied there. So, it's kind of like separated our family in a way and now that I'm reaching my final days of year 12 it's a barrier. I no longer feel like that strong to go to uni just because of the financial thing. However, instead, I just want to take the long way. Like, take gap year, work and save up and then go into uni later. So, yes, that's where I'm at now.*

||| *Like, I don't know if it's the same for everyone, but we came here in 2008/9. And, when I do ask my parents why did we move? That's their answer, for a better life, there's more opportunity with work. So, when I do mention about going back to study like my sister did, their view is you're going to move backwards. You're just going backwards. I could go study for free for my first year, it's just I don't reckon it would be as beneficial..."*

Other Issues for NZ Citizens

The researchers acknowledge that NZ citizens in Australia face a complex set of issues arising from unfair legislative arrangements. This report is limited to a focus on HECS-HELP loans due to the weight of stories that came out of the Talanoa research as well as the nature of this snapshot report. Briefly, some of those other issues include permanent residency, sponsoring family and other relatives for permanent residency, NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme), public transport concession, centrelink benefits, government-funded employment services, housing (Centre For Multicultural Youth 2018).



CONCLUSION

This snapshot report looked at three main issues: youth and education, family violence and access to services from the social and legal perspective. Pasifika communities as a whole feel the consequences of an individual's hardships. This means that hardship for one is a hardship for the whole.

The selfless inclination to share the burden comes from the village mentality passed on throughout ancestry to Pasifika peoples in diaspora. This mentality is documented by the Talanoa. For example, one person's inability to access HECS-HELP loans, because they are New Zealand citizens, yet they live and pay taxes in Australia, may mean that immediate family members work longer hours. Students who do not appear as academically inclined may be encouraged to leave school earlier to work and assist financially; parents may sacrifice adult education for a low paying job because they just cannot afford the tuition.

Ineligibility or hampered ability to access certain Centrelink benefits compounds the financial stress. Health outcomes are negatively affected as cheaper options of food are adopted by necessity such as fast food. Groceries are limited, payment of rent and utilities become delayed. All these problems are interlinked for the family. In Pasifika families, a household may not just include parents and their

children, it often includes extended family members as well.

The issues in this report cannot be compartmentalised and the dichotomy of social and legal perspectives is incredibly difficult and perhaps unnecessary to discern. Compartmentalising is tempting for readers; however, it is the compartmentalising that has often resulted in poor outcomes when it comes to working with community peoples. A long-lasting solution is achieved through understanding that compartmentalising is not only incredibly difficult, but is the easier and reckless option. All issues are connected and affect one another. All issues involve social and legal perspectives and each of those perspectives inform the other.

This is why a holistic solution is needed. A solution that is found through the commitment and ownership of the people, organisations and governments who are all responsible.

For example, the inability of the young person to successfully engage in school must not just be the responsibility of the child to correct, but also the parents, the teacher, the school, the education system, the government mandating that education system and those service providers operating within that education system. Governments and service providers need to understand the magnitude and the urgency of legal reform and service provider action needed.



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