From Crisis to Crime

The escalation of civil and family law issues to criminal matters in Aboriginal communities in NSW

“If the family and civil problems aren’t addressed they turn into a criminal problem. They always do. Especially when it comes to the family stuff, about the kids, then it turns into someone is going to flog someone else” (LAC Aboriginal staff member).
DISCRIMINATION

“You walk into a shop and all of a sudden you hear ‘Security to aisle three’, and you think to yourself, ‘but who’s here? I never noticed anyone, why have they noticed him, unless it’s me…’; That’s young people right through to old people that cop that sort of discrimination” (Aboriginal legal support workers Dubbo).
DISCRIMINATION

“If you’re in a shop and someone serves you last, it’s not something you can really go, ‘hey, I’m going to sue you’ – there is no legal avenue, there’s nothing you can do because it’s so minute, but it is constantly there” (Mt Druitt Women’s FG participant).
DISCRIMINATION

“Discrimination is one of those things that becomes criminal stuff, because we react” (Aboriginal legal support workers Dubbo).
DISCRIMINATION

“When you go and speak to someone about it they think you’re just crying ‘blackfella’. They tell you, “don’t worry about it, it will be alright”. Well it’s not alright...you’ve still got to walk around every day with that in your head...some people are not as strong as others and they take it to heart, and then they do things to themselves...or others, and then they end up in jail” (Redfern Women’s FG participants).
“It’s amazing – they owe you money, they don’t want to give it to you. But you owe them money, ‘we’re going to terminate your rental here because you’re a week behind in your rent’. They have the authority to go in and direct debit you, but we can’t go and direct debit them!” (Redfern women’s FG participants).
HOUSING

“They intimidate [me]. I’m the weakest link, see, they know where my weak point is. In any case, they’re much stronger.” (Wagga women’s FG participants).

“I’m grateful I’ve got my house. I think maybe it’s just like a test, to see how much you want your house” (Mt Druitt Women’s FG participant).
“There is racism up there at that school [that my sons attend]. Every time my boys go to school they always come back suspended for two, three weeks. So I just give up, stop sending them” (Tabulam Women’s FG participant).
CREDIT AND DEBT

“A lot of the older fellas that got into debt when they were younger, they still can’t get their drivers’ licence because of their debts” (Aboriginal legal support workers Walgett).
“[Care and protection is] one of the highest priorities of representation needed and proactive assistance for clients, otherwise we are going to have another stolen generation, and another one after that, and another one after that” (Legal practitioner Redfern).
CARE AND PROTECTION

“I’ll get a bomb and put it underneath them and blow them up (Dubbo Women’s FG participant).

“I think they forget who they give the kid to sometimes” (Dubbo Women’s FG participant).
CARE AND PROTECTION

“DOCS remove the children far from the family, and family find to hard to get to the child by public transport – in remote places there is no direct route” (Aboriginal legal support worker Bourke).
There needs to be more promotion of what civil law is, and what it can do for the community. ‘Civil’ – you might as well be talking in Chinese! I think a lot of the time, people find themselves in situations that, if they had known what to do about it in the first instance, they wouldn’t have found themselves in X, Y, Z situation (LAC Aboriginal staff member).