
New World, Old Frontiers

An ecological perspective on the problem of attraction and retention of
statutory child protection workers in the West Australian Department
for Child Protection's Murchison District: 2009–2012

Maree Collins

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology,
The Australian National University

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other university, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signed

Maree Therese Collins

Date:

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Abstract

The attraction and retention of statutory child protection workers in regional, rural and remote Australia has been identified at the national and state/territory level as a priority challenge for the child protection sector. This research emerged from the recognition of and response to this problem by the Government of Western Australia's Department for Child Protection (the Department), Murchison District, and the Department's search for evidence-based responses under the umbrella of the Australian Research Council Linkage Project 'Pathways to Better Practice' (LP0082806).

The size and distribution of the Australian population, and the extreme nature of the physical environment, means that geographic and demographic characteristics of place are central to the challenges of service delivery in regional and remote Australia. Maintaining the supply of a skilled and professional workforce to these places is largely dependent on 'migration' employment models, particularly for professional workforces such as that of the Department. The significant over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system is identified as presenting particular challenges. In Western Australia, the employment of Aboriginal people is integral to strategies across the sector to improve services and outcomes for Aboriginal children and families. The geographic distribution and demographic characteristics of the Aboriginal population in remote Western Australia suggest additional challenges for the delivery of child protection services in locations such as the Murchison District. This is due to a combination of factors, including the level of disadvantage and the

complex needs of this client population, the limited resources in place, and the cultural dimension to practice.

In seeking to develop an evidence-based response to the problem of attraction and retention of child protection workers in the Murchison an ecological model has served as both the conceptual and methodological framework for the research. This approach to the study of the problem has meant attending to the multiple settings in which the research is embedded, and the interplay between variables acting on attraction and retention. These variables range from the individual work and lifestyle choices to the organisational responses and local characteristics of place to the effects of the global labour market, and are consistent with reflexive theories in sociology.

In exploring the dimensions of place, work and individual life choices to attraction and retention, the research has embraced a combination of methods: analysis of secondary statistical data to examine the characteristics of the Murchison and Department's workforce; interviews; and surveys of the individual subjects of the Department's interventions, the Murchison District workforce.

The research reveals the complex web of both actual and potential factors that shape attraction and retention. These include changing preferences and life trajectories both in the work and non-work environment that demonstrate the limits of unilateral, organisational responses. The research reveals a number of paradoxical effects in relation to the Department's strategies to attract and retain. These include the constraining effect of the introduction of changed qualifications requirements for child protection roles on supply, and the disconnect between the

Department's idealised representations and the realities of the places to which the Department seeks to attract and retain. The changing nature of place, work and the 'life' in late-modernity which reveal the heterogeneity of preferences presents both opportunities and challenges for future interventions.

Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| New World, Old Frontiers | i |
| Acknowledgements | v |
| Abstract | vii |
| Contents | x |
| Glossary and shortened forms | xvii |
| Chapter 1 Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 Conceptualisation of the research | 5 |
| 1.2 The ‘self’ as researcher | 10 |
| 1.3 Structure of the thesis | 13 |
| Chapter 2 The ecology of the research process | 19 |
| 2.1 The research problem and general approach..... | 21 |
| 2.2 Conceptualisation of the research subject | 23 |
| 2.2.1 Conceptual and theoretical orientations | 25 |
| 2.3 Research design | 33 |
| 2.4 Research methods and data sources | 39 |
| 2.4.1 Data collection | 40 |
| 2.4.2 Overview of sources and methods of collection..... | 46 |
| 2.4.3 Observation/fieldwork | 51 |
| 2.4.4 Issues in approach: in principle and practice..... | 52 |
| 2.4.5 Exploratory sequential..... | 54 |
| 2.5 Analysis of data | 61 |
| 2.5.1 Visual data | 65 |
| 2.6 Ethical considerations..... | 68 |
| 2.7 Limitations of the research..... | 71 |
| Chapter 3 Subjects of intervention: The Department and its Murchison | |
| District | 74 |
| 3.1 The Department and its Murchison District..... | 74 |
| 3.1.1 The Department | 74 |
| 3.1.2 The Murchison District..... | 79 |
| 3.1.3 Local context to current child protection..... | 84 |
| 3.2 The Murchison as a geographic place | 92 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Chapter 4 The ‘new’ world | 120 |
| 4.1 The end and beginning of work..... | 129 |
| 4.1.1 Women and work..... | 132 |
| 4.1.2 Women and work: The case for becoming more family friendly or friendly? .. | 135 |
| 4.2 Placelessness and belonging..... | 138 |
| 4.2.1 Liveability..... | 142 |
| Chapter 5 ‘Loci of affect’: The enduring attraction of place | 145 |
| 5.1 Thinking about place..... | 155 |
| 5.1.1 Attachment, identity and being out of place..... | 158 |
| 5.1.2 Enduring landscapes and making place..... | 168 |
| Chapter 6 Work and life changing careers | 185 |
| 6.1 A particular type of work, a particular set of challenges: child p rotection in Australia..... | 186 |
| 6.1.1 The over-representation of ATSI children: that most wicked of problems | 189 |
| 6.1.2 The ‘stain’ of history..... | 193 |
| 6.1.3 Review and reform..... | 199 |
| 6.2 The universalities and particularities of Australian child protection practice: an examination in the context of the international literature..... | 205 |
| 6.2.1 Different, yet similar: working with Indigenous peoples in international contexts..... | 209 |
| 6.2.2 Attraction and retention: a universal problem?..... | 213 |
| 6.2.3 Realist job previews..... | 216 |
| 6.3 Universal particulars: key challenges in contemporary child protection work..... | 218 |
| 6.3.1 Risky business..... | 219 |
| 6.3.2 Working with ‘the other’: The client–worker relationship..... | 222 |
| 6.3.3 Support and recognition of the work..... | 224 |
| 6.4 Similar, yet different: The universal and particular of types of work and places as challenges to attraction and retention. Contributions from outside the field..... | 227 |
| 6.5 Particularities in context: the problems of work and search for solutions in the modern era – a potted history..... | 229 |
| Chapter 7 Discourses of Place and Work: A review of selected policy developments and media discourses 2009-2012 | 247 |
| 7.1 Race, resources, royalties and rights..... | 249 |
| 7.1.1 The politics of regional policy..... | 250 |
| 7.1.2 Resources, regional and remote and economic futures..... | 252 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 7.1.3 Regional futures | 256 |
| 7.2 Population, participation and productivity | 260 |
| 7.2.1 Meeting the demand: ‘Foreigners’ and FIFOs..... | 261 |
| 7.2.2 Fly-in-fly-out and drive-in-drive-out | 264 |
| 7.2.3 The reform of the state..... | 269 |
| 7.3 Scandal and reform | 277 |
| 7.3.1 Aboriginal children and failings of the child protection sector | 280 |
| Chapter 8 To have and to hold: The organisational perspective | |
| on attraction and retention (2009–12)..... | 287 |
| 8.1 The status of the ‘problem’: vacancies and turnover rates..... | 288 |
| 8.1.1 The problem in context: vacancy and turnover rates across the Department . | 292 |
| 8.2 Organisational responses to attraction and retention..... | 294 |
| 8.2.1 Aboriginal attraction and retention..... | 294 |
| 8.2.2 Qualified workforce..... | 298 |
| 8.2.3 Regional attraction and retention | 307 |
| 8.2.4 Promotions and innovative recruitment strategies | 314 |
| 8.2.5 Workforce planning and profiling..... | 322 |
| Chapter 9 Country practice and attraction and retention: | |
| The experience and reflections of District workers | 327 |
| 9.1 The practice of similarities and differences: an exploration of ‘country practice’ | 329 |
| 9.1.1 Country practice as ‘different’ | 329 |
| 9.1.2 The requirements of practice | 334 |
| 9.2 Factors in joining, staying and leaving..... | 339 |
| 9.2.1 Influences on attraction..... | 339 |
| 9.2.2 Influences on retention | 344 |
| 9.3 Characteristics of the work setting: supporters or inhibitors of retention? | 348 |
| 9.3.1 Organisational environment..... | 348 |
| 9.3.2 The particularities of work–life conflict in the Murchison | 357 |
| 9.4 The relationship between reported intentions and behaviours | |
| of District Workers: survey responses for former employees..... | 363 |
| Chapter 10 The ecology of the attraction and retention of Statutory | |
| Child Protection Workers in the Murchison District..... | 366 |
| 10.1 The findings in the context of the research questions | 367 |
| 10.1.1 The difference and challenges of remote practice..... | 367 |
| 10.1.2 Influences on joining, staying and leaving | 378 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 10.1.3 Particularities of place that support or inhibit practice | 381 |
| 10.2 The findings in the context of the ecological framework..... | 382 |
| 10.2.1 Balancing individual, organisational and institutional imperatives..... | 382 |
| 10.2.2 Lessons from the ‘marketplace’ | 389 |
| 10.3 The localised effects in a global world | 398 |
| Bibliography | 408 |
| Appendices..... | 437 |
| Appendix 1 Interview instrument..... | 439 |
| Appendix 2 Participant information sheet | 440 |
| Appendix 3 Survey instrument | 442 |
| Appendix 4 Human Research Ethics Approval | 451 |
| Appendix 5 <i>Children and Community Services Act 2004</i> | |
| (Part 2, Division 2) | 454 |
| Appendix 6 Murchison District Offices | 459 |
| Appendix 7 AEDI data..... | 461 |
| Appendix 8 ‘Local’ perspectives on the Murchison | 463 |
| Appendix 9 Child Protection Qualifications Framework | 464 |
| Appendix 10 Murchison District Promotional Material | 468 |
| Appendix 11 Media images from ‘Life changing career campaign’ | 470 |
| Appendix 12 Handwritten transcription: example | 473 |
| Appendix 13 Intake flow chart..... | 474 |
| | |
| Figures | |
| Figure 1.1: Map of the Department’s country districts and office locations..... | 2 |
| Figure 1.2: Location of District Office by Australian Statistical Geography Remoteness Area Boundaries | 4 |
| Figure 2.1: Bronfenbrenner’s Human Ecological Systems Theory | 27 |
| Figure 2.2: An ecological model as a methodological framework..... | 30 |
| Figure 2.3 Procedural diagram for mixed-methods approach | 35 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Figure 3.1: Map of the Department Country District and Office locations | 77 |
| Figure 3.2: The distribution of Aboriginal peoples across Western Australia..... | 95 |
| Figure 3.3: Average annual number of days with temperatures above 30 degrees Celsius for select locations in the Murchison and select Australian capital cities | 99 |
| Figure 3.4: Media report of Wiluna policeman posting of Aboriginals in custody on Facebook | 104 |
| Figure 3.5: A view of Meekatharra from the highest point. | 106 |
| Figure 3.6: Information on local road conditions: Shire of Wiluna | 109 |
| Figure 3.7: ‘Encounters’ on the road between Meekatharra and Wiluna | 109 |
| Figure 5.1a: The distribution of the Australian population | 148 |
| Figure 5.1b: The distribution of the Australian ATSI population..... | 150 |
| Figure 5.2: <i>Wake In Fright</i> playbills..... | 182 |
| Figure 6.1: Rate and Ratio of Child Protection Substantiations by Indigenous Status: 2007-08 to 2011-12..... | 190 |
| Figure 6.2: Pathways to retention: The US experience | 215 |
| Figure 7.1: The three aspects to addressing workforce challenges..... | 272 |
| Figure 8.1: Aboriginal recruitment campaign (2011): ‘Our Kids, Our Future’ | 296 |
| Figure 8.2: People development framework – key levels and outcomes..... | 304 |
| Figure 8.3 Benefits of working in country WA with the Department..... | 309 |
| Figure 8.4: International recruitment (UK): ‘Work and Play in WA’ (2011) | 314 |
| Figure 8.5: ‘Our Kids, Our Future’ and ‘Live and Work in WA’ visual media..... | 315 |
| Figure 8.6: ‘Life Changing Career’ campaign | 317 |
| Figure 9.1: Relative importance of work factors on attraction to current location (Question 8) | 341 |
| Figure 9.2: Relative importance of social factors on attraction to current location (Question 9) | 342 |
| Figure 9.3: Relative importance of influences on decision to join the Department (Question 15) | 343 |
| Figure 9.4: Relative importance of social factors to remain living in the Murchison (Question 51) | 345 |
| Figure 9.5: Relative importance of social factors to continue working for the Department (Question 50)..... | 347 |
| Figure 9.6: Overall satisfaction with the job and work (Question 42) | 349 |
| Figure 9.7: Reported Preparation of Field of Study for the Role by Type of Qualification (Survey Question 30)..... | 353 |
| Figure 9.8 ‘Black office – the only one in the State’ | 358 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Figure 10.1: An ecological model of attraction and retention for the Murchison District: the Work context..... | 405 |
| Geraldton (Source: Collins MT March 2012)..... | 459 |
| Carnarvon (Source: Google Street View (Image 2, March 2008). Accessed online: http://maps.google.com.au/ . April 2012) | 459 |
| Meekatharra (Source: Collins MT March 2012)..... | 460 |
| Wiluna (Source: Collins MT March 2012)..... | 460 |

Tables

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 2.1 Basic research and applied research | 22 |
| Table 2.2: Media review search frame | 48 |
| Table 3.1: Child protection roles..... | 78 |
| Table 3.2a Comparative Profile of the District and Department Workforce by Age and Gender: 2009-2011 | 81 |
| Table 3.2b: Profile of the Department and District Workforce by Age and Gender: 2009-2011..... | 83 |
| Table 3.3a Child Safety and Wellbeing Outcomes for Department Districts 2011/12 | 88 |
| Table 3.3b: Child Safety and Wellbeing Outcomes for the Murchison: 2009/10 to 2011/12..... | 89 |
| Table 3.4: ATSI Peoples as a Proportion of the Population for Selected Localities in the Murchison and Western Australian Capital..... | 94 |
| Table 3.5: District office locations/key towns by measures of remoteness | 107 |
| Table 3.6: Major characteristics of 13 of Western Australia's most disadvantaged LGAs, including those in the Murchison..... | 113 |
| Table 4.1: The full classification of women's work-lifestyle preferences in the 21st Century..... | 126 |
| Table 4.2: The democratic family | 128 |
| Table 4.3: Measurements of Liveability and Quality of Life..... | 143 |
| Table 5.1: Influence of physical characteristics on patterns of interactional potential..... | 164 |
| Table 6.1: Features of different approaches | 207 |
| Table 6.2 Individual and organisational issues at four stages of entry..... | 243 |
| Table 7.1: Child Protection Inquiries in Australian States/Territories 2002 to 2012 | 280 |
| Table 8.1: Workforce Dashboard Report – Murchison District (period ending 30 June 2011)..... | 288 |
| Table 8.2: Size of district workforce and year on year change by location..... | 289 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Table 8.3: ATSI workforce targets by business area and district | 295 |
| Table 8.4: List of specified calling and non-specified calling positions | 300 |
| Table 8.5: Child Protection Qualifications Framework by knowledge area | 302 |
| Table 8.6 Regional Incentives Scheme: incentives by location category | 311 |
| Comparative AEDI Results for Children Developmentally Vulnerable on 2 or more Domains for Selected Communities in the Murchison: 2009 and 2012 | 461 |
| Summary of AEDI 2012 results for Selected Murchison Communities, Percentage of Children Developmentally Vulnerable | 462 |

Glossary and shortened forms

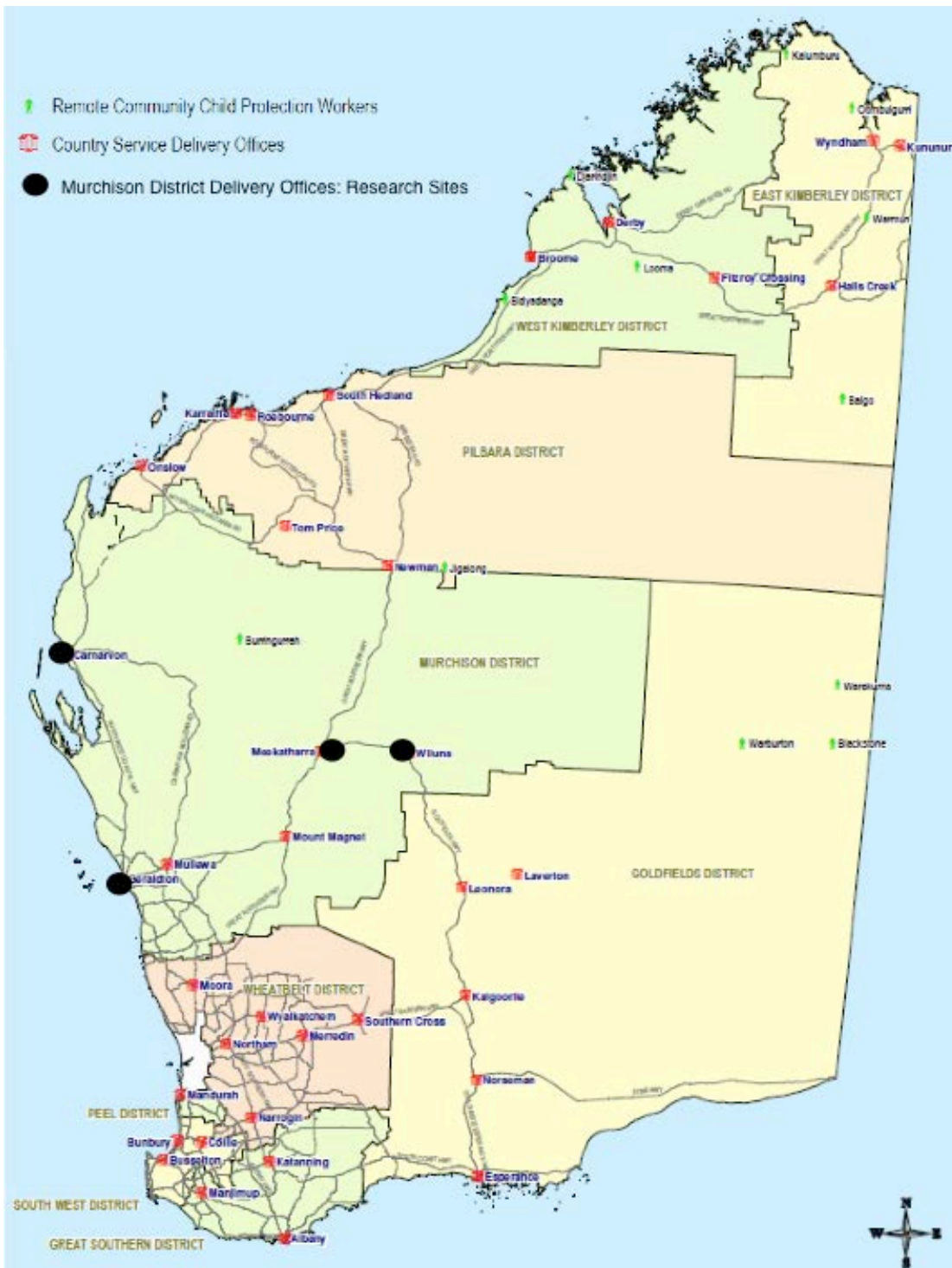
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|-----------------|--|
| ABS | Australian Bureau of Statistics |
| Act, the | <i>Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA)</i> |
| AEDI | Australian Early Development Index |
| AIHW | Australian Institute of Health and Welfare |
| ARC | Australia Research Council |
| ATSI | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander |
| C4C | Communities for Children |
| DCD | West Australian Department of Community Development |
| Department, the | West Australian Department for Child Protection |
| District, the | West Australian Department of Child Protection's Murchison District |
| FaHCSIA | Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Communities Services and Indigenous Affairs |
| HR Unit | Human Resources Unit |
| LDC | Learning Development Centre |
| LGA | local government area |
| Linkage Project | Australia Research Council Linkage Project Pathways to Better Practice (LP0082806) |
| Murchison, the | Geographic area corresponding to the Department's Murchison District |
| NT | Northern Territory |
| WA | Western Australia |
| Workers | members of the District workforce/research participants |

Chapter 1 Introduction

The attraction and retention of statutory child protection workers in regional, rural and remote Australia has been identified as a priority for the child protection sector at the national and state/territory level (Department of Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), 2009; Ford, 2007; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2013; Northern Territory Government, 2010). Following a review of the West Australian (WA) Department for Community Development in 2007 (known as the Ford Review), which led to the separation of that department into the Department for Child Protection (the Department) and the Department of Communities, attraction and retention became a priority workforce issue for the newly formed Department, the statutory agency responsible for 'identifying and supporting vulnerable children and young people' in WA (Ford, 2007, 11). The Department's identification of locations in its Murchison District as 'hard to recruit' led it to seek a targeted, place-based approach to address the issue of attraction and retention. This study originates from the Department's search for evidence-based responses and their support for under the Australia Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project 'Pathways to Better Practice' (LP0082806; hereafter, the Linkage Project). In collaboration with Griffith University, Queensland, and the Queensland Department of Child Safety, the project explored child protection practices in Western Australia and Queensland to develop models for effective child protection practice in rural and remote areas (Stehlik, D., L. Chenoweth, C. Tilbury & D. Macauliffe, 2007).

The organisational context of this study places it in a distinct legal, political and economic environment. The Department's Murchison District (the Murchison) is one of nine 'country' districts that cover the Department's areas of operation outside the Perth metropolitan area (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: Map of the Department’s country districts and office locations



Source: Composite Map derived from Department Country District and Office Map (2011):¹

¹ Accessed online
<https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Organisation/employment/PublishingImages/CPFS%20-%20Country%20District%20map.pdf>:

Located in the mid-west of Western Australia, the Murchison District covers an area of approximately 660,000 square kilometres: an area equivalent to one quarter of Western Australia, or two and a half times the size of the United Kingdom (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2012c). This research has focused on the Department's four main district offices²: the Murchison District headquarters of Geraldton, and the Carnarvon, Meekatharra and Wiluna offices. As shown in Figure 1.2, while the Murchison District offices might be understood to be located in actual geographic places they can also be conceptualised as located in (outer) regional and remote Australia by classifications of remoteness (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011a).

The identification of the problem has emerged from successive reviews of the failure of statutory child protection services to protect children from harm (FaHCSIA, 2008; 2009). While each review has identified the particular challenge of attraction and retention in locations at the geographical margins (defined here as rural, regional and remote Australia) the issue has been only one of many addressed in these reviews.

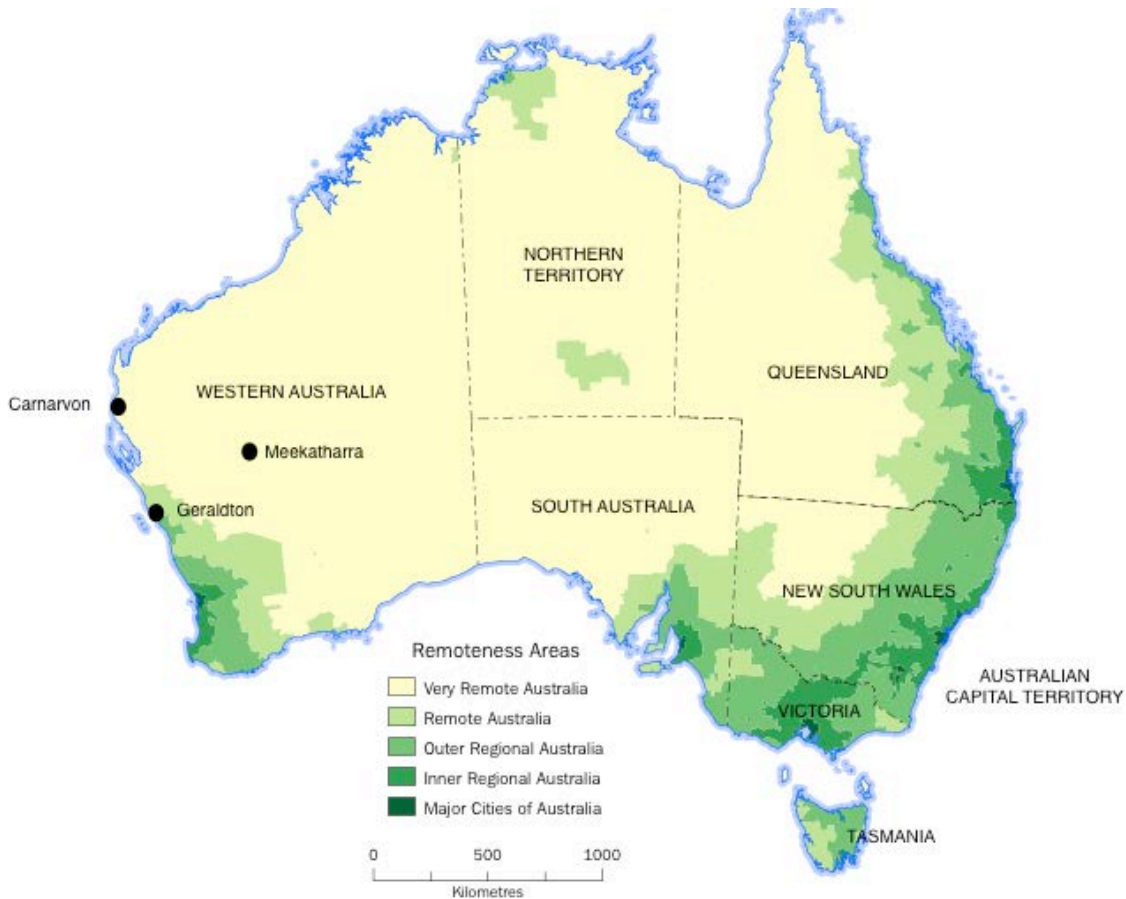
This research is based on the assumption that the size and distribution of the Australian population, and the extreme characteristics of the physical environment, are central to challenges of service delivery in regional and remote Australia. One of the critical issues for service delivery in this context is

<https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Organisation/employment/PublishingImages/CPFS%20-%20Country%20District%20map.pdf>:

² Here the main office is defined as those locations with a permanent or full-time complement of staff.

maintaining a supply of a skilled and professional workers. This has inevitably meant a growing dependence on ‘migration’ employment models.

Figure 1.2: Location of District Office by Australian Statistical Geography Remoteness Area Boundaries



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011a

Indigenous children are over-represented in the child protection system: they are eight times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be the subject of a substantiation of abuse or neglect³ (AIHW, 2013). This presents specific challenges for child protection services in view of the level of disadvantage of this population,

³ A substantiation is defined as an assessment where ‘there is sufficient reason to believe that a child has been, is being, or is likely to be, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed’ (AIHW, 2013, 3). The ratio for WA is considerably higher than national average at 13.4. However, the AIHW notes that this data should be interpreted with caution due to the possibility of double counting due to reporting by Indigenous status for substantiations (AIHW 2013, 16: Table 2.4).

and historical and cultural factors (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2013; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), 2007). The employment of Aboriginal people is integral to strategies across the sector to improve services and outcomes for Aboriginal children and families.

1.1 Conceptualisation of the research

This study adopts an ecological framework perspective (the framework) to examine the problem of attraction and retention in the Department's Murchison District. The approach starts from the premise that attraction and retention is a two-way process (Wanous, 1992), reflecting both the individual's choice of an organisation and the organisation's choice of the individual. The ecological framework has been adapted from Human Ecological Systems Theory, as developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1994). (An illustration for this theory is presented as Figure 2.1 in Chapter 2). The framework was conceived for and focused on the Murchison District workforce, as they are the subjects of the Department's attraction and retention interventions. The framework adopts many of the key elements of Bronfenbrenner's model. For example, the individual 'worker' is conceptualised as embedded in a system of influences ranging from the micro to macro, all of which act to shape individual outcomes. Further, the influences are bi-directional in nature, occurring both within and across settings. Also, the effects on individuals are different, and depend on personal attributes such as gender or racial/ethnic identity, lifestyles and belief systems.

This research has therefore attended to both the individual and organisational dimensions of this process to understand the factors that influence attraction and retention, and the distinctive place and work setting in which the research is

embedded. The choice of an ecological framework rests upon the argument that an examination of the problem in context is essential in order to satisfy the criteria of ecological validity that is fundamental to applied research, and attends to the multiple dimensions of the research context. The thesis takes the view that the individual subjects of the Department's interventions are social beings, embedded in a social world. The Department is an organisation embedded in distinct legal, political and economic contexts. The imperatives that drove the Department's prioritisation of attraction and retention during the research period (2009 to 2012) reflect the importance of attending to context, as these imperatives originated in the reform that followed the Ford Review of 2007 (Ford, 2007). (The external and internal imperatives that led to the review emerged are discussed further in Chapter 3.)

The broad aim of the Pathways to Better Practice project was to establish whether recruitment is undertaken for practice and/or place, and what, if any, are the additional challenges in areas of relative isolation and high Indigenous populations. In view of the Department's identification of the Murchison as the WA research site, place was an important focus of this research from its beginnings. However, it is has not been the only focus. A number of considerations influenced the focus of the research topic beyond the broad parameters established by the Linkage Project, notably an examination of the problem in 'context'.

As is further outlined in the next chapter of this thesis, three questions emerged:

- (1) Are the challenges for child protection workers in remote areas different from those in non-remote areas? If so, how and why are they different?

- (2) What are the particularities of place that support/inhibit practice in the sites of interest? Are these different across sites?
- (3) What are the factors that influence the decision to join, stay and/or leave remote practice?

There has been considerable national and international research on the problems of attraction and retention of skilled workers and professionals, including child protection workers, in settings which are central to this research. This includes work on statutory agencies and geographical settings which might broadly be understood as being located at the margins. There has been considerable consensus around the issues that impact negatively on attraction and retention in such geographies both in the Australian and international research (Delaney, 1999; Hall, D., Garnett, S., Barnes, T. & Stevens, M., 2007; Haslam-McKenzie, 2007; Martinez-Brawley, 2000; McAuliffe & Barnett, 2009; Healy & Lonne, 2010). However, there has also been considerable dissent as to the distinctiveness of practices in such settings (Brownlee, K., Delaney, R. & Tranter, D., 2002), and therefore the possible universality of interventions in specific contexts. Such arguments are examined in detail in Chapter 6. Here, an analysis is undertaken of the Australian and Canadian contexts, where the universality of the issue reflects the geographic characteristics of each country: both occupy a large land mass with a relatively small population, with sparsely populated areas distant from major centres, and challenging climatic conditions and Indigenous populations.

This thesis proposes that previous research is limited as it typically addresses the problem using a place-centred or occupation-centred approach. Thus, geographers have approached the problem of attraction and retention from a regional policy

perspective (Haslam-McKenzie, 2007), while social work (Lonne, 2001; Martinez-Brawley, 2000; McAuliffe & Barnett, 2009), education, and allied health (Hall et al., 2007) academics and policy makers have approached the problem from a professional or occupational perspective.

The innovation and significance of this research lies in its multi-disciplinary orientations and draws on the background of the researcher in urban and regional studies and sociology. The attendance to both macro- and micro-level issues, contributions to key subjects of interest to this research and theoretical and applied approaches within these traditions, brings an important perspective on the problem – not one that is grounded in professional interest. The thesis does draw on the contributions of other fields to the problem of attraction and retention, including those with professional interests, and these have been invaluable to the undertaking and recommendations of the research. The value of an ecological framework for this research is its accommodation of both these perspectives.

Through a presentation of the contextual dimension to the attraction and retention of child protection workers in the Murchison District, this research has endeavoured to communicate the complexity of the environments in which the research problem occurs and the limits to predict and control: a fundamental assumption of the overarching research project which has supported this research. The theories of the transformation of the Self/Family ('Life'), Place and Work in late-modernity present both opportunities and challenges for supply and demand side issues with which this research is concerned. Here it is argued that the changing world of the family throughout modernity and the changing discourse on the role of children and their care and protection will continue to shape child

protection policy and practice. This evolution will necessarily also require an evolution in the capacities and capabilities of institutions, and the individuals that comprise them, to enable them to respond effectively to this changing world. The 'availability' of work/life choices, while presenting opportunities for individuals, also paradoxically present challenges for institutions and for those employers attempting to accommodate these preferences. It is suggested that while typical responses to changing lifestyle preferences have responded to productivity imperatives (such as women's workforce participation) they also offer potential pathways by which the Department can distinguish itself as an employer, and achieve its aspiration of becoming an 'Employer of Choice'. This issue is also addressed when considering the limits on the Department as a statutory agency to accommodate change to fulfil such aspirations.

The applied nature of the Pathways project – the search for practical interventions in attraction and retention – must necessarily confront the uncertainties and contradictions of late modernity (Bauman, 2007). It is argued that the multiple dimensions impacting on individuals, on decisions impacting on their employment and location intentions, and on organisations and their responses to attraction and retention, would make such a search for certainty and control an essentially Herculean task. Nevertheless, as the research reveals, there are some factors within the Department's (relative) 'control' to influence, principally its representation of the realities of living and working in places such as the Murchison. The research has also considered that there are patterns in employment that identify human supply chains that have served the Department well in the past in attraction and retention.

Every research tells a story. Every researcher has a story. This chapter concludes with an account of the 'self' in this story and an outline of how the story of this research will unfold in the following chapters.

1.2 The 'self' as researcher

Preconceptions are not the same as bias, unless the researcher fails to mention them

Malterud (2001, 484)

In spite of the emphasis on the recognition of 'self' in the research process within social research there remains a general reluctance to acknowledge self in relation to research within the finished exposition lest the 'real' meaning of the research become unclear and any claim to 'objectivity' (and, at a deeper level, legitimacy) be undermined. Further to Malterud (2001) there are a number of considerations relating to the self in this research process that deserve mention. They are presented here not only to underscore the imperative for a reflexive methodology in this research context (and more generally) but because they reveal a little of the life process of which the PhD is only a part. It is the latter point which is an important theme in this research.

Arguably, my familiarity with the organisational and geographic setting has been invaluable in informing aspects of this research. My extensive travels within the Murchison District in both a personal and professional capacity have familiarised me with the region's geography, including (as noted in Chapter 3) the sites of natural beauty for which the region is acclaimed. Furthermore, my familiarity with the Department and its Murchison operations stems from my engagement on a two-year formative evaluation of the then Department for Community Development's early intervention and workforce initiative between 2003 and

2005⁴. This meant I was both familiar with the organisational and geographic setting for the research and I knew workers in the District office in a professional capacity. While these relationships have been useful in facilitating the interviews and survey with the workforce it also meant I was aware of the 'back story' to some of the personalities in the workforce.

The commencement of the PhD in 2009 coincided with my relocation to Darwin from New South Wales, precipitated by my partner's work. As with any major 'life' event there were a number of considerations in our decision to 'move north' - both emotional and practical. One consideration was to leave my job and 'start again', something I had done before, having relocated from Australia to the UK in my early twenties and returning from abroad in the early part of the 2000s. However, our decision to move was as much influenced by the place to which we were moving: a place that looms large in the Australian psyche as the 'last frontier'. Perhaps I should not have been surprised by the reactions of people - including family and friends - on our decision. While a few people were supportive, often identifying the adventure in the move, many were overwhelmingly negative: 'They're either misogynists, mad or missionaries'; 'You'll go troppo'; 'You'll regret it'; 'It's full of people running away from something' (I have pondered which category we fall into). This may have said more about our social networks than anything else, and yet I understood the subtext. I grew up in Western Australia, I was aware of the divide between the metropole of Australia's south-east and its western and northern periphery. I have vicariously witnessed the difficulty in attracting

⁴ This research, through the larger Linkage Project, has its antecedence in this evaluation with two of the Chief Investigators of the Linkage Project (Professor Daniela Stehlik and Professor Lesley Chenoweth); also, the Chief Investigator's of the Evaluation (Alcoa Research Centre for Stronger Communities, 2006).

'quality' people to the Territory; the disdain for 'newcomers' by locals, particularly if they think they're being told how things are done differently elsewhere. I have confronted the challenges of the 'build up' and the cost of living. I have stood as a conflicted witness in the public scenes of domestic violence between Aboriginal people that become the taken-for-granted performances of Darwin street life. I have observed the effects of the Intervention, the scandals and inquiries that have beset the Northern Territory's child protection system (Northern Territory Government, 2010) and the philosophical discourses on the 'problem' of Aboriginal Australians. On the eve of the anniversary of our fifth year in the Territory (and as we prepared to return 'south'), these observations resonated with me every day and deserve mention. In some ways, there are autobiographical elements to the stories reported by District workers and the literature for this research. This includes the messiness of life and the spillover effects of 'work'. 'Life' did not cease to happen during this research: it sometimes happened around it, it sometimes interrupted it. It invariably shaped aspects of the research, including its delays. In the last three years I moved house three times, got married, shared in the sadness as my step-son and daughter-in-law cared for and then lost a healthy child to a rare disease, saw friends marry or separate, and celebrated as nieces and grandchildren were born⁵. In all this I managed the tensions between work and life, including my life as a partner in a public role. This is the messiness of life. But Darwin is not Geraldton. I am not a child protection worker employed by the Department. While the coincidence of elements of our biographies not only underscore the imperative of a reflexive methodology for the research they can be

⁵ Since first submitting this thesis I have relocated back 'down south', precipitating another move interstate, another house move (with another one pending, though this one our own) and a much anticipated return to the workforce!

understood as illustrative of something more: the shared biographies of the self in late-modernity in an increasingly mobile and connected world.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

Convention often stipulates the way in which a story is told. The doctoral thesis is no exception. The order in which the story represented by this thesis deviates slightly from such conventions in order to better reflect the ecological model that serves as the conceptual framework for the research for its organising structure. Analogous to the reflexive methodology that underpins the ecological framework adopted here, the structure of this thesis is designed to mirror the reflexive relationship between the levels or contexts in which the research is embedded and which are interpreted as acting on attraction and retention at both the individual and organisational level. Thus, readers looking for a literature review in the second chapter of this thesis may be disappointed to find that it appears in Chapter 4.

This thesis is presented in 10 chapters. Consistent with most introductory chapters, this chapter has sought to provide a brief introduction to the research, highlighting the distinct organisational and geographic contexts in which it occurs, and considerations and exposition of the research approach.

In a break with convention, Chapter 2 *The ecology of the research process* turns to foundational matters on which this research rests. Commencing with an overview of the philosophical and methodological foundations of the research approach, with an emphasis on its distinctly pluralistic and pragmatic tendencies, the chapter concludes with an overview of the research methods utilised in the production of this research.

Chapter 3 *Subjects of intervention: The Department and its Murchison District*, introduces the place and organisational subject of the Department's interventions: the Murchison District. In this research the Murchison is an organisational construct for the administration of services. However, in understanding the Murchison as a geographical place, a profile has been formed from the various geographies found within its borders. This approach incorporates descriptive, constructionist and phenomenological approaches to thinking about place (Cresswell, 2004). In reporting on 'objective' measures typical of descriptive approaches, the chapter has drawn principally on official statistics but it also draws on both historical and contemporary accounts to give voice to the people of the Murchison and a view of place in their own words. In addition to utilising historical records and local histories, the chapter draws on representations of the Murchison from some literary sources.

Moving from the particularities of the microsystem of the Department's Murchison District, presented in Chapter 3, Chapters 4 to 6 seek to take the reader on a journey of thinking about the particular place and work settings in which the research is embedded including the 'new world' of late-modernity.

Chapter 4, *The 'New' World*, contextualises the research problem in a temporal context: the era in which it occurs. This research may be concerned with analysing the internal and external context to attraction and retention for the period 2009 to 2012, but it takes account of a broader sociological timeframe: that of late-modernity. In so doing, it responds to the argument that the current era is one of profound social change, as illustrated by the recognition of the consequences of an ageing population (and workforce), and a shift to a knowledge economy as

fundamental structural drivers of workforce demand and supply issues in the sector. The significance of these changes highlights the extent to which an examination of the purported changing nature of the Self, Family (which are typically referred to by the more inclusive term 'Life' hereafter) and Work in late-modernity are critical for understanding current and future directions in organisational and individual decision-making to attraction and retention as it is in and to this 'new world' that the Department seeks to recruit.

Chapters 5 and 6 explore concepts related to thinking about Place and Work, including in settings specific to this research: remote Australia and child protection. Taking its title from concepts of place and the relative attraction such locations hold in our affections (Tuan 1974; Urry 2007), Chapter 5 *Loci of affect: The enduring attraction of place* presents an overview on thinking about Place with particular attention to the importance that Place holds for shaping attitudes and experience of 'other' places and the significance of the process by which attitudes to Place are shaped by a relationship to the 'other'. Chapter 5 also explores the characteristics of the broader geographical setting through an examination of the literature and an analysis of discourses to accentuate the general and particular issues they present for attraction and retention in the context of the Murchison, and similar geographies in Australia, and what this may imply for the application of strategies to attract and retain from outside the sector.

Chapter 6 *Work and life changing careers*, commences with an examination of two of the problems associated with the work and research problem: turnover and burnout. In recognition of the distinct work and the work setting in which this research occurs, the chapter subsequently examines the particularities of child

protection work at the margins geographical – regional, rural and remote settings – and the dimension to child protection work with Indigenous children and families and the significance of historical interventions for the latter. In its recruitment strategies, the Department has emphasised motivations historically linked with the choice of social work within a children protection context, examined in more detail in Chapters 8 and 9. This research shows that while the literature reveals the importance of vocational choice to attraction and retention, it also highlights the extent to which aspects of the work, including those aspects featured by Department in its promotions, are also implicated in burnout and turnover. In drawing on an adapted Bronfrenbrenner model (see Chapter 2) the research reveals the extent to which developments at the level of the exosystem simultaneously reflect and shape those at both the level of the microsystem and macrosystem and the significance of these for organisational responses to attract and retain both in the present and the future.

In recognition of the importance of mass media in shaping public opinion on public issues, including key policy developments, Chapter 7 *Discourses of the place and work* presents a review of selected policy developments and public discourses relating to aspects of life, place and work in Australia between 2009 and 2012.

Chapters 8 and 9 examine the processes of attraction and retention from oppositional perspectives: the organisation and the individual Murchison District worker. Chapter 8 *To have and to hold*, presents an outline of the attraction and retention from the organisational perspective and undertakes an overview of two principal measures of attraction and retention – vacancy and turnover rates – to examine the status of the ‘problem’. The chapter then presents an analysis of the

Department's responses to attraction and retention, including those specific to the Murchison. In contextualising these responses within the context of the Ford Review (Ford, 2007) and subsequent reform of the Department, the chapter also identifies the extent to which the Department's responses can be understood to reflect both internal and external imperatives, an argument to which the Discussion chapter returns in Chapter 10.

Chapter 9, *Country practice and attraction and retention*, undertakes an analysis of attraction and retention from the perspective of the individual subjects of the Department's interventions: the people who comprise 'the District workforce'. The chapter presents the findings from primary research activities undertaken for this research: the interview and survey of the people who comprise the District Workforce. Reflecting the conceptualisation of the District workforce as people embedded in a social life, the interviews and survey sought to gain an insight into the identity of these individuals outside the formal role in which they were employed. In doing so, it presents the findings for those factors that workers reported as influential on their decision to live and work in the Murchison and to work for the Department, and their reflections on the factors that would determine their decision to leave or stay.

Chapter 10, *The ecology of the attraction and retention of Statutory Child Protection Workers in the Murchison District*, discusses the findings of this research in the context of the literature. Through problematising the Department's responses to attraction and retention in the context of employee perspectives and changed social realities, the discussion highlights how developments external to the Department impact on the Department's capacity to respond to current and future

'problems' of attraction and retention. It concludes by reflecting on the extent to which the Department can adequately predict and control for attraction and retention and responds to the proposition of whether ecological models are appropriate for practitioner-focused interventions. In doing so it returns to the subject of the changing nature of 'life', place and work in late-modernity to reflect on the implications of this 'new world' for interventions to attract and retain in the research context. The title of this thesis reflects the location of the research in conceptual, ideological and geographical terrains that are grounded in both the challenges of late-modernity and modernity, located as they are at the intersection of both a 'new world' and an 'old frontier'.

Reflecting the applied origins and focus of this research the chapter concludes by presenting a number of recommendations for the Department's consideration with regard to future interventions.

Chapter 2 The ecology of the research process

As our circle of knowledge expands, so does the circumference of darkness surrounding it.

Albert Einstein

A research presentation is in every respect the very opposite of an exhibition, of a show, in which you seek to show off or impress others. It is a discourse in which you expose yourself, you take risks ... Homo academicus relishes the finished. Like the pompier (academic) painters, he or she likes to make the strokes of the brush, the touching and retouching disappear from his works.

(Bourdieu in Bourdieu & Wasquant 1992, 219)

Disciplines, like nations, are a necessary evil that enable human beings of bounded rationality to simplify the structure of their goals. But parochialism is everywhere, and the world sorely needs international and interdisciplinary travelers who will carry new knowledge from one cave to another.

Simon (1992, 269 in Giri 2002, 146)

We can only observe 'facts' through some conceptual lens. Both descriptions and explanations of facts always have some kind of theory embedded in them.

(Van Krieken et al. 2005, 633)

This chapter explains the process undertaken for the research represented by this thesis, with attention to the foundational and guiding structures that hide behind the façade of the finished research thesis. Beginning with its origins in a broader research project, the discussion then covers the conceptualisation for the research questions, the theoretical and methodological foundations of the research approach, and the methods of inquiry.

The title for this chapter repeats the metaphor of the ecological model that serves as the conceptual framework for this research. The conceptualisation of the research process as an ecosystem, with the implied reflexivity and fluidity of boundaries are foundational to the interpretation of the model as a methodological framework as discussed later in this chapter.

The rationale for an exposition of the research process in this the second chapter, outside its typical position in the organisation of PhD theses, rests on two points. Firstly, on reading a number of theses across a range of disciplines it has always struck me as odd, and slightly jarring, to read a review of the literature in which a particular study is embedded before being introduced to the foundations and structure which give birth and form to the research. It implies that somehow the review of the literature sits outside the research process, a position with which I disagree. Thus, it has always seemed to me that the foundations and structure from which the research inquiry emerges should appear as it does here, in the second chapter. Secondly, the use of the ecological model as the conceptual framework for this research and the organising structure of this thesis allows for the placement of a 'scaffolding' chapter to support the narrative flow in subsequent chapters that correspond to the levels of systems/settings of the adopted ecological model. Notwithstanding the account of the ecological model presented in this chapter, it is perhaps useful to illustrate how the systems/settings of the model are reflected in the presentation of subsequent chapters of this thesis. Chapter 3 attends to the place and work microsystems in which workers interact: that of the Department and the Murchison District. Chapter 4 moves beyond these microsystems to the level of the Exosystem and Macrosystem to examine the broader political,

economic and cultural contexts in which these microsystems sit including the influences within the broader culture that shape the form they take in the current period.

The following exposition of the research adopts a reflexive stance. This recognises that the research was undertaken by a person with the incumbent implications of this to claims of absolute objectivity and neutrality.

Thus, accompanying my exposition of the methods and methodologies of inquiry which have been adopted, this chapter also includes my account of this process, including acknowledgement of influences of 'self'. By incorporating these reflections, this chapter seeks to convey the practice of reflexive sociology which Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wasquant 1992) describes as being analogous to that of the painter where unlike traditional 'non-reflexive approaches' the academic painter/painting obscures rather than reveals the rough brush strokes that have been integral to the production of the work. As with any 'messy' production the following exposition is unlikely to convey the messy reality of the research process.

2.1 The research problem and general approach

No research emerges in a vacuum. This research originates in the Western Australian Department for Child Protection's identification of attraction and retention as a problem for its Murchison District, their search for evidence-based responses to this problem under the Australian Research Council Linkage Project 'Pathways to Better Practice' (LP0082806), and support for this PhD research as part of this investigation under the Linkage Project. The Linkage Project was a

collaboration between the Department, Griffith University (Queensland), the Queensland Department of Child Safety, and Curtin University of Technology (Western Australia). It explored child protection practices in Western Australia and Queensland to develop models for effective child protection practice in rural and remote areas. More specifically, the Linkage Project supported two PhDs, one being this PhD, focused on examining issues of recruitment and retention in areas of relative isolation and high Indigenous populations (Stehlik, D., L. Chenoweth, C. Tilbury & D. Macauliffe, 2007). For this PhD, the Department and Linkage Project team selected the Murchison District due to its qualification in satisfying both these criteria and more fundamentally, a place identified by the Department as ‘hard to recruit’.

The location of this research in an organisation and identified ‘real-world’ problem distinguishes it as a particular type of research and approach that meets the objectives of the real-world problem it seeks to solve. A simplistic account of this difference in approach is presented in Table 2.1 (Gray 2009).

Table 2.1 Basic research and applied research

| Basic Research | Applied Research |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Purpose</i></p> <p>Expand knowledge of organisational processes</p> <p>Develop universal principles</p> <p>Produce findings of significance and value to society</p> | <p><i>Purpose</i></p> <p>Improve understanding of specific organisational problems</p> <p>Create solutions to organisational problems</p> <p>Develop findings of practical relevance to organisational stakeholders</p> |

Source: Gray (2009, 3).

As examined later in this chapter in relation to the ethical considerations and limitations of this research, its identification as ‘organisational’ and ‘applied’

presents its own set of challenges. However, while the applied focus of this research may imply the outcomes are wholly orientated to finding solutions to the Department's problem, this would ignore the broader objectives of the research in bridging theory–practice to improve understanding of the problem and its broader application beyond the Department. Thus, while the collection of data from current District Workers on reasons why people want to join or leave the District and/or Department has provided empirical evidence to improve an understanding of the problem of attraction and retention consistent with the applied focus of the research, the research has also sought to highlight the value of theoretical contributions on place and work to inform the research recommendations and illuminate the research problem more generally. Furthermore, the significance of this research is argued in the value of the adopted ecological framework outside of traditional subjects, to the research subject as explained more fully below.

2.2 Conceptualisation of the research subject

The focus of the Linkage Project was influential in establishing the general parameters of enquiry for this research: the problem of attraction and retention in the Department's Murchison District. Furthermore, while the Linkage Project team's initial conceptualisation of the WA PhD component as orientated to Place, the approach for this research meant the conceptualisation of the research subject did not presume to privilege Place over Practice, but sought an approach that would acknowledge the complexity of the phenomena. As a starting point, three objectives were identified for the research, to:

- identify current challenges for child protection practice, and whether these vary according to the geographic and demographic context of practice within the sites of interest;
- examine the place-based context of practice for child protection workers in identified sites of interest; and
- identify the influence of place and practice in recruitment and retention of child protection workers in remote areas.

From these objectives, three foundation questions were propositioned:

- Are the challenges for child protection workers in remote areas different from those in non-remote areas? If so, how and why are they different?
- What are the particularities of place that support/inhibit practice in the sites of interest? Are these different across sites?
- What are the factors that influence the decision to join remain and/or leave remote practice?

While the conceptualisation of the research was concerned with an attention to the broader set of influences or context in which it is embedded, it also envisaged attraction and retention as a dialogical or dialectical relationship between employer (the Department) and employee (the District workers). It is this conceptualisation that lead to the adoption of a theoretical and methodological framework that could accommodate these dimensions to guide the research. It is to this framework that the following section of this chapter now turns.

2.2.1 Conceptual and theoretical orientations

An ecological model has served as the conceptual and methodological framework for this research. Elements of this ecological approach can be understood as foundational to thinking in the fields/disciplines of Sociology and Urban and Regional Planning which have most influenced this research, notably an examination of phenomena in context, and an increased recognition of the reflexive relationship between agency and structure (Beck & Willms, 1994; Giddens, 1991).

The ecological framework for this research has been adapted from Human Ecological Systems Theory, as developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1994), an illustration for which is shown as Figure 2.1. The adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model emerged from my experience of its application in the Australian Government's early intervention program Communities for Children (C4C). Based on the US Headstart model, which is founded on Bronfenbrenner's model and theory of human development, the C4C Program seeks to deliver targeted programs to at-risk children and families in 'locales of disadvantage', hence accounting for its framing as a 'child-centred' and 'place-based' approach.

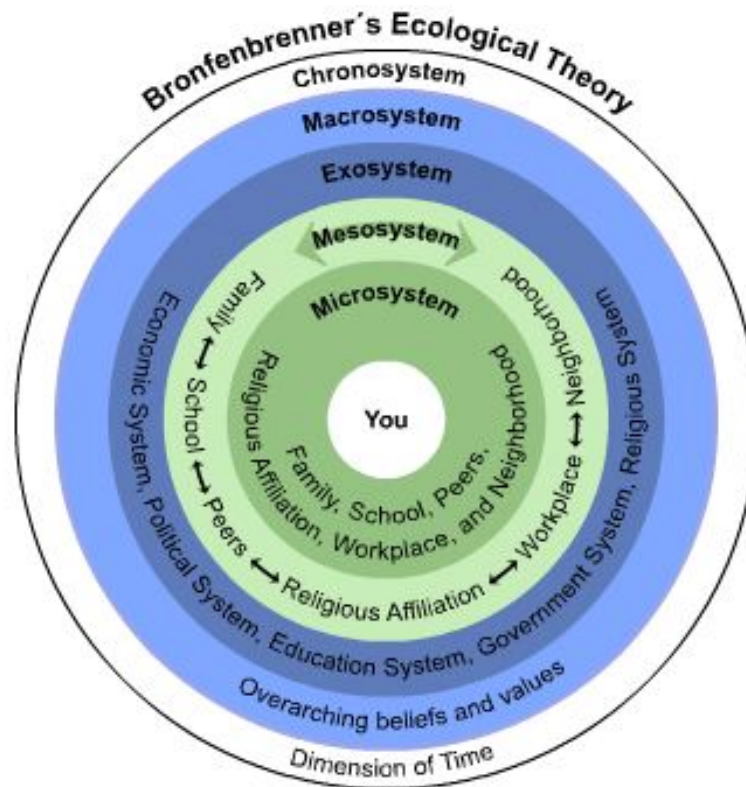
The main point of distinction between Bronfenbrenner's theory and this adapted model is its focus and topic of investigation. While Bronfenbrenner's model is concerned with human or child development, this research is concerned with workforce development, specifically attraction and retention. The conceptualisation of this research as place-based and practitioner-focused derives from two points. First, the identification of the Murchison District as 'hard to

recruit' and the 'place' for which solutions to attract and retain are sought by the Department under the Linkage Project identifies the Department's search for interventions as being place-based. Secondly, the target of prospective and current Workers by the Department's in attraction and retention strategies means that as workers engaged in child protection practices, interventions to attract and retain can also be understood as practitioner-focused. The reported significance of the 'client-worker' relationship in child protection work (examined in Chapter 6) and the use of Bronfenbrenner's theory suggested an attractive proposition: to mirror a framework currently used in interventions targeting the 'client' of statutory child protection work to interventions aimed at the practitioner or 'worker' with whom they are engaged. The framework's application to other settings of central interest, notably organisations (Collins 1998; Grint 1994; Maton 2000), place (Maton 2000), social work (Ferguson 2013) and social work in remote localities and with Indigenous people (Briskman, 2007; Delaney, 1999) more specifically, further supports the potential of an ecological model for this research. Thus, drawing on Beyer, Higgins and Bromfield (2005, 14) and their proposition that in the Australian context a 'developmental-ecological' theory provides a useful model in which to conduct research in child protection, this research poses the question: is the ecological model adapted for this research appropriate for practitioner-focused, place-based interventions? In this context understood as interventions that seek to attract and retain child protection workers/'practitioners'.

The ecological model for this research adopts many of the key elements of Bronfenbrenner's Human Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner 1979; 1992). The individual worker, understood to represent both current ('actual') and

future District Workers, is conceptualised as embedded in a system of influences all of which act to shape individual outcomes. These influences extend from the Microsystems in which the individual Worker is present to those of the Macrosystem, or broader culture. As with Bronfenbrenner's model, influences are bi-directional in nature, occurring both within and across settings. The effects on individuals are different, and depend on personal attributes such as gender, racial/ethnic identity, lifestyle and belief systems. It is the reflexive nature of the interaction in Bronfenbrenner's model that locates its philosophical foundations in key concepts in contemporary Sociology on the reflexive relationship between agency and structure (Giddens 1994).

Figure 2.1: Bronfenbrenner's Human Ecological Systems Theory



Source: Google Images

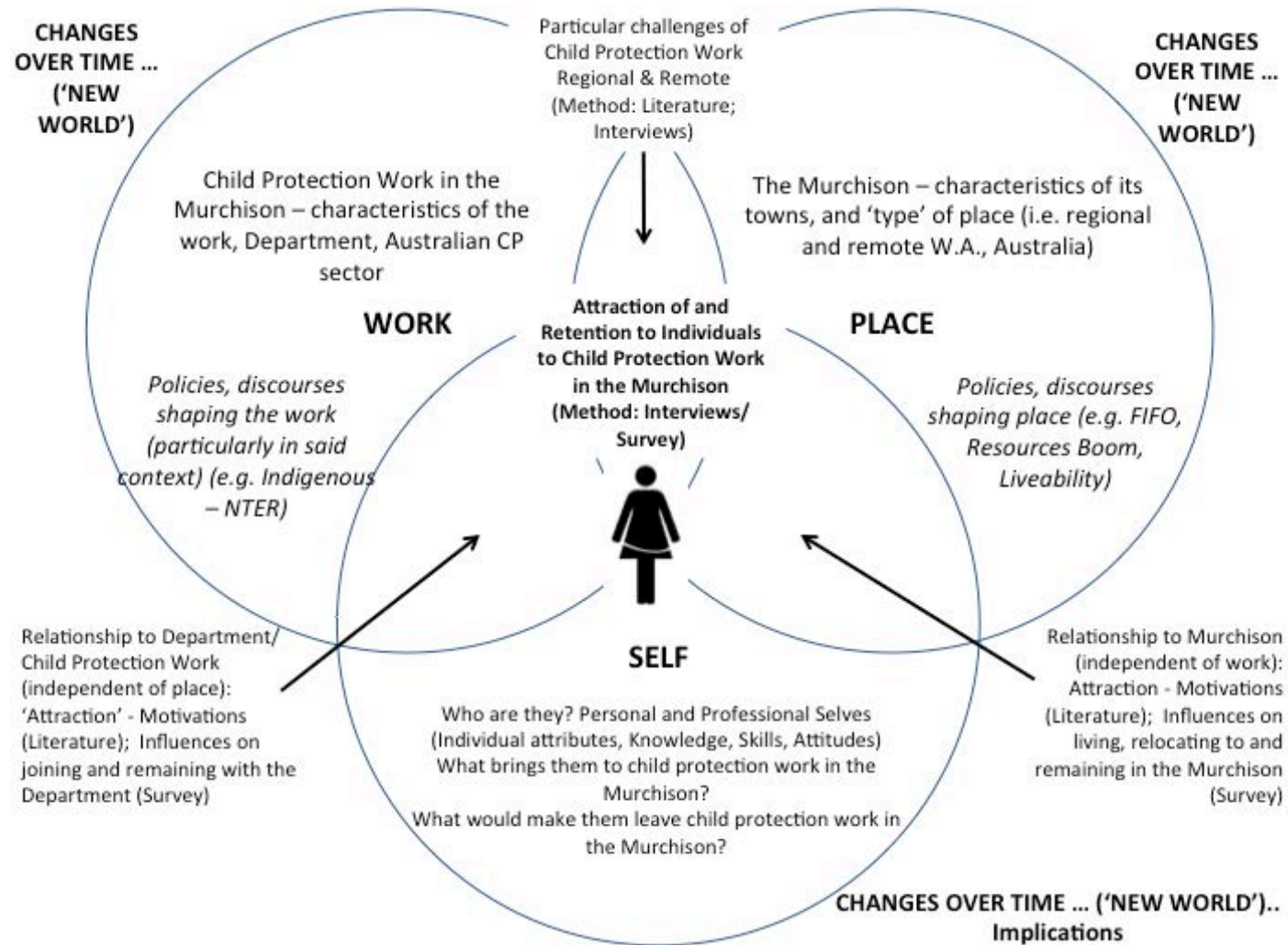
This research, reflecting the fundamental characteristic of the Microsystem as one in which the individual person is both present and actively constructs, has sought to examine characteristics of three microsystems in which the Murchison District workers are embedded: the places in which they live; the organisational setting in which they work; and their personal or family life. These three settings have been framed for this research as 'Place', 'Work' and 'Life'. In view of the origins of this research, an examination of the Work microsystem has been explored in greater depth than the non-Work settings in the interviews and survey of the District Workforce. Illustrations of the adaption of this model to the research context are presented in Figure 2.2.

Consistent with Bronfenbrenner's emphasis on the importance of the building blocks within the Microsystem to shape individual outcomes, this research has also explored the influence of the roles, activities and interpersonal structures of these settings in providing support and/or barriers to attraction and retention. As examined in subsequent chapters, the indicative roles, relationships and activities that constitute the Microsystem of Work and Life for District Workers relate to the complex web of relationships in which individuals are embedded and consequently, the potential range of variables acting on attraction and retention.

The setting of the Mesosystem (the intersection of Microsystems) is an important one for this research given its conceptualisation as being at the intersection of Place, Work and Life. As discussed further in Chapters 6 and 9, the push/pull influences on attraction and retention at the level of the individual are largely a result of the intersection of the micro-settings of Work and Life, with the additional opportunities and challenges presented by the Place setting.

The interpretation of the Exosystem and Macrosystem is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's original exposition. The organisational setting identified the research as occurring within a distinct political and institutional environment, in addition to the broader social and economic contexts. At the level of the Exosystem, the research has paid particular attention to developments within the broader organisational and institutional environment. These include the reform of the Department following the Ford Review (Ford, 2007), the reform of the West Australian Government's public sector, and developments within the economy and labour market.

Figure 2.2: An ecological model as a methodological framework



The analysis of secondary data, notably organisational data and policy and public discourses through the review of news media, has constituted an important source of evidence relating to the Exosystem.

Reflecting the influence of the Macrosystem and broader cultural influences on development, this research is fundamentally concerned with prevailing and changing social and cultural norms with regards to Place, Work and Life, with particular emphasis on the effects of social change in late-modernity within each domain.

In later work Bronfenbrenner refined and reformulated the original exposition of his theory (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 26), adding a fifth and final layer or system: the Chronosystem. With the introduction of the Chronosystem, Bronfenbrenner's theory explicitly took into account the changes that occur across the lifespan. He conceived time not only in relation to the person and their chronological age, but also to the environment. In the context of this research, the Chronosystem has been interpreted as encompassing both the historical time across the career lifecycle and socio-historical time.

The adapted model maintains two additional elements of Bronfenbrenner's model: the concepts of ecological transition and ecological validity. Bronfenbrenner defined an ecological transition as being 'whenever a person's position in the ecological environment is altered as a result of change in role, setting, or both' (1979, 26). He identified such transitions as including 'finding, changing or losing a job' (1979, 27). The concept of ecological transition is therefore of particular significance for this research in view of transitions involved in employment and location choices that are central to attraction and retention.

The problem of attraction and retention can therefore be interpreted as a problem of ecological transitions. Bronfenbrenner's concept of ecological validity shares the fundamental characteristics of naturalistic stances in qualitative research, such as ethnographic approaches and the notion that any investigation must be carried out in 'a natural setting' and involve(s) objects and activities from everyday life (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 1992; Bryman 2004). He argued that while ecological approaches in research acknowledged the importance of this in theory, it is rarely reflected in practice, with the tendency to favour traditional laboratory models. As explored later in this chapter, fieldwork (embedded within the 'natural setting' for this research) has been a critical component in the collection of evidence, including observations of the physical environment and interactions in which District Workers are active in everyday practice.

The bi-directional nature of influences across the ecological model means it is interpreted as an inherently reflexive methodological framework. Therefore this research can be understood as reflexive not only in the sense of the position of the 'self as researcher' but also reflexive in the methodological approach as explained below in relation to the collection and analysis of data during the research process.

It is the complexity of the interaction between individual and institutional elements, often taken for granted and central to the rhetoric of child protection and attraction and retention discourses, that this research seeks to underscore. In doing so, it reveals the limits of this and other research to offer neat 'solutions' to the 'problem'.

2.3 Research design

The conceptualisation of the problem of attraction and retention as a dialectic between the individual as employee (District worker) and institution as employer (the Department) within an ecological conceptual framework meant that the research design needed to accommodate an understanding of the worlds in which both subjects are embedded: that known from within, and the world as known from 'out there'.

Thus, in returning to the original research problem as formulated by the Department, while an analysis of workforce data would reveal the extent of the 'problem' based on vacancy and turnover rates (examined in Chapter 8), such data would not provide the story as to why the Department was having difficulties attracting and retaining workers. A similar logic applies to understanding the particularities of place. While population and geophysical data might convey the characteristics of the Murchison and the towns in which District employees live and work, this 'picture' they provide is one-dimensional. At best it implies rather than conveys the subjective experience of being in these locations, rather than the relationships that characterise everyday interactions and the attachment to place more broadly.

This attention to both subjective and objective understandings of the subjects and their settings necessitated the use of the most appropriate methods by which to obtain this knowledge: the use of both qualitative methods and quantitative methods.

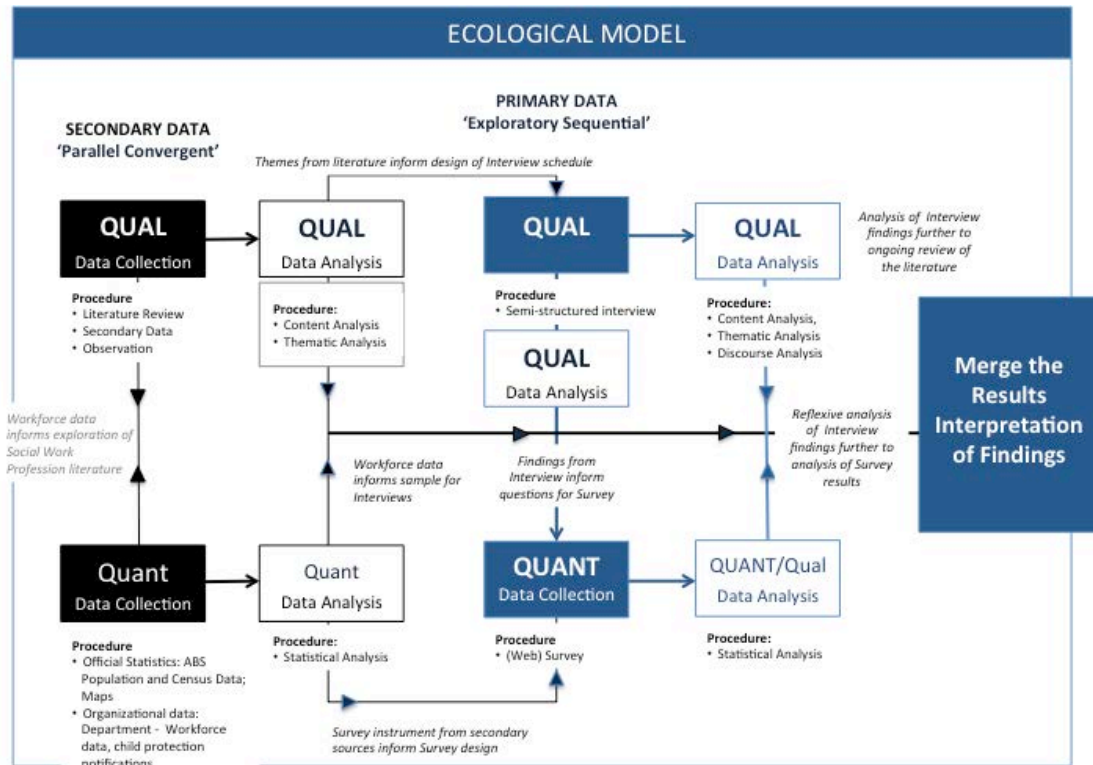
With attention to key issues informing mixed-method design (MMD) selection, notably those of the level of interaction, timing and procedures (Creswell and Plano-Clarke 2011), the following section outlines the process by which quantitative and qualitative ‘strands’ have been utilised under the umbrella of a distinct research design. A discussion of the individual methods of data collection and analysis employed in this research features later in this chapter.

The emergence and expansion of guides for conducting mixed-methods research (MMR) in recent years (Creswell 2009; Creswell and Plano-Clarke 2011), has countered earlier criticism of the lack of any guidance, including procedural guidance for conducting MMR (Bryman 2008). However, while offering a clear guide to choosing an MMD (as evidenced by the reference to such taxonomies to describe this research), and remaining consistent with Creswell and Plano-Clarke’s (2011) emphasis on the philosophical foundations of MMR in pragmatism, the approach for this research is fundamentally one of ‘best-fit’ with the research problem, research questions and overall purpose of the study.

If reflexivity in the research process can illuminate the ‘messy brushstrokes’ that characterise the reality of research practice which remain otherwise hidden from view in the final research manuscript (Bourdieu & Wasquant 1992), then procedural diagrams such as that presented as Figure 2.3 (below) provide a ‘paint by number’ account of the steps in the multi-phase MMD used for this research. Developed using the principles of Creswell and Plano-Clarke’s (2011) ‘Guidelines for Drawing Procedural Diagrams for Mixed Method Studies’, the overall design incorporated two distinct phases: (1) Parallel Convergent; and (2) Exploratory Sequential Design. The approach is consistent with the use of concurrent (or

convergent) and sequential designs in single-study multi-phase MMD (Creswell & Plano-Clarke 2011).

Figure 2.3 Procedural diagram for mixed-methods approach



Source: Collins, MT (2014)

The equal emphasis on understanding attraction and retention from a multiplicity of perspectives, combined with the time and resource constraints impacting on the study due to it being the undertaking by a single researcher, meant that both primary and secondary sources were foundational to gaining these perspectives. The adherence in principle to a form of methodological pluralism for this research meant that the relative importance and therefore priority of both quantitative *and* qualitative strands have been equal during the process of data collection and analysis, as evidenced from the notations in Figure 2.3. Evidence of this equal weighting is illustrated with the examples drawn from the Convergent Design Phase and Exploratory Sequential Phases of the research. As evidenced by the

presentation of the Department and its Murchison District in Chapter 3, official statistics (such as Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census Data and Department workforce and child protection notification data) have been integral to communicating characteristics of place and practice corresponding with the original questions formulated for this research. However, the explanation of these characteristics through quantitative data has been equally informed by the exploration of these particularities via historical and contemporary accounts of place and practice derived from public and private organisational data, including literature and policy and planning documents.

While MMD implies an interactive process between qualitative and quantitative methods, Creswell and Plano-Clarke (2011) highlight that the degree to which this occurs can vary. They describe the 'points of interface' at which the strands are combined, mixed or integrated occurring at any number of phases in the research process; namely, during data collection, during data analysis, or during interpretation. Consistent with the use of a conceptual framework in MMD as a mixing strategy (Creswell & Plano-Clarke 2011) and its conceptualisation as a reflexive methodology, allows the integration of qualitative and quantitative data both within and across phases. This reflexivity in the methodological approach has contributed an additional dimension to the level of interaction between qualitative and quantitative strands initially suggested by the type of MMD. The extent to which the integration of qualitative and quantitative strands was reflexive is evident from the product and outcome examples presented in *italic text* in Figure 2.3. Beyond the typical purpose of mixing strategies for sampling and instrument development (Bryman 2006; Creswell and Plano-Clarke 2011), the reflexive

interaction between qualitative and quantitative strands within the Parallel Convergent Design led to an exploration of the research subject beyond reasons of complementarity, diversity and context conceived at the commencement of the research (Bryman 2006; Green, Caracelli and Graham 1989). This is illustrated in the deeper exploration of social work informed by the collection of qualification data as part of the Department's workforce data. The revelation of social work as the principal qualification held by Department employees (as a proportion of the workforce) precipitated a deeper exploration of the social work professional literature, including national and international workforce trends. In turn, this exploration revealed the broader professional influences on changes to the Department's qualifications framework that has sought to preference social work qualifications for child protection roles.

The timing of the collection of qualitative and quantitative data from secondary sources could be understood to be generally concurrent or convergent, reflecting the equal priority accorded to each strand and purpose for the use the respective method. However, the process of collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative strands in the Convergent Parallel phase could be defined as reflexive in that it was ongoing up to the final integration of 'findings' from both the Concurrent and Sequential Design as presented in the final discussion chapter.

Reflecting on Payne et al's (2004) examination of British sociological output and the strength of long-held claims to methodological pluralism in the reported absence of quantitative research in this output, one limitation of this research may lie in what Payne observed as the disconnect between the claim to MMD and its use in research practice. The relative volume of qualitative data collected (which

exceeded that for quantitative data), and relatively (basic) analysis of the quantitative data in the Convergent Parallel Design phase might present a challenge to fundamental claim of the equal priority given to both strands. This challenge is apart from those based on other factors, notwithstanding the fundamental objections among methodological monotheists of the combination of methods in a MMR design in the first place. In view that this research is a PhD thesis, the question of whether the choice of an MMD benefitted the research inquiry remains the judgement of the reader. It is hoped that the explication of the research design presented in this chapter, and the outcomes of its procedures revealed in subsequent chapters, provides a convincing case for the appropriateness and therefore value of a MMD in this research context.

Of course, cases could be made of equal or more valid theoretical lenses and methodologies through which to examine the original research problem. The identification of the Murchison District and predetermination of this 'case' in the Linkage Project as the focus of the PhD suggested a case-study approach as an obvious approach. Certainly, the approach for this research shares many elements of case-study approach, including its real-world context, its attention to context, appropriateness for descriptive and exploratory questions, use of theory in guiding the research, its integration of multiple research methods, use of methods for triangulation, and potential for revealing opposing explanations (Yin 2012). Discourses of risk dominant in child protection discourses (see Chapter 6), and the conceptualisation of workforce attraction and retention strategies as instruments of risk mitigation, could have lent to the adoption of a risk lens through which to examine the research phenomena. However, each methodology brings with it its

own set of baggage (Payne et al 2004). Case-study research has attracted its own criticism (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster 2000.; Yin 2012), including confusion over its status as a distinct methodology versus research method (Gomm et al 2000; Yin 2012). Furthermore, issues of reliability and validity largely attributed to its association with the exploratory research, perceived lack of systematic procedures, and limits for generalisation of research findings (Yin 2012) could also suggest an argument against a case-study approach. Whether valid or not, such issues have led to its normative status within some research quarters 'as a method of last resort' (Yin 2012, 6). This chapter now turns to an examination of such 'baggage' together with a more practical explanation of the use of individual methods in this study that this chapter now turns its attention.

2.4 Research methods and data sources

As evidenced by Figure 2.3, a range of sources and research methods were utilised in the MMD for this research. In the context of the ecological model as the overarching conceptual framework, different types of data were utilised to illuminate the different settings in which the practitioner is embedded. Beyond the broad categorisation as either qualitative or quantitative, data from both primary and secondary sources were utilised using a range of methods of collection that encompassed documents, interviews and surveys. This section of the chapter presents a brief overview of the main types of data used in this research before turning to a closer examination of the methods of data collection and analysis. In concluding this section on the methodology and methods of the research process, discussion will turn to the principles and practice of the methods, from their

strengths and weaknesses to the methodological assumptions, including respective 'epistemological baggage' (Payne 2004) that underpin their use.

2.4.1 Data collection

Data collection and analysis procedures

Sampling

As stated in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, the location of this research in the Linkage Project predetermined the site of this research and, to an extent, the research sample. The Linkage Project identified the population from which participants could be theoretically obtained as people employed in child protection roles in the Department's Murchison District workforce. Based on (then) available data for the research sites, the maximum size of the population from which the sample could be derived was 64 persons, of whom 37 were in positions (then) designated as child protection roles. However, a number of considerations recommended the inclusion of workers in non-child protection roles. This approach reflects the small size of the population for this research and recognition of significance of field support roles in supporting child protection practice, and the importance of such roles as pathways to employment in child protection positions.

Thus, the sample population from which research participants were drawn were all employees in the District offices at Geraldton, Carnarvon, Meekatharra and Wiluna. The inclusion of all four sites enabled a comparative analysis of sites of practice by characteristics such as geography and relative isolation more specifically, demography (size and Indigenous population), and workforce.

The access facilitated through the Linkage Project and Human Resources (HR) Unit meant that access to a population list from which participants could be drawn overcame one of the biggest obstacles typically identified with sampling (Gobo 2004). Illustrating the opportunities for integrating qualitative and quantitative methods in a mixed-method design across phases of the research, the sample for the interviews and survey was derived from staffing profiles – a form of customised report run by the HR Unit. For the interviews, a form of randomised identification was based on a cross-section of demographic (age, gender, race/ethnicity) and employment characteristics (e.g. role, and length of employment). In view of the semi-autonomous nature of the satellite offices within the District the sampling approach was purposive in including management (i.e. District team leaders) positions in addition to general staff. The predominance of male workers in management positions across the site meant the sample population was somewhat skewed in terms of its representativeness based on the gender profile of the workforce.

As is consistent with an approach to sampling in qualitative interviews there was no predetermined number of interviews. However, in view of the number of sites within the District that were included in the frame, together with practical considerations (such as the logistics of scheduling the interviews within the timeframe allocated for field visits, which were also determined by airline schedules) and anticipated challenges with accessing participants due to workload demands, the maximum number of interviews was set at around one-third of the workforce or 20 workers.

The survey population were all employees of the District workforce. Given the relatively small size of this population, a total of 73 employees, the survey aimed for 'saturation' of the participation of all District Workers.

Recruitment

Interview participants were recruited via a personal email and telephone request further to the initial, preliminary site visit at which the Linkage Project and PhD was 'introduced' to District Workers. Additional interview subjects were identified during the field visits where identified 'subjects' were not available. All prospective interviewees were given a copy of the information sheet with the interview request and invited to discuss the request and research with the researcher. The survey was circulated to 70 workers for whom email addresses were available: a sample population of 96% of the total survey population. Two of the three workers who did not receive a survey in the initial distribution were subsequently provided an opportunity to complete a survey.

Permissions

Subsequent to confirmation of their interest, each interviewee was sent a confirmation email with the consent form with a request for the form to be read, signed and returned (where possible), prior to the interview. All interviewees were provided with a printed copy of the information sheet and their signed consent form. The engagement of the District director by the HR Unit assisted with access across all offices. To aid this process and to promote transparency in the research process a briefing note was provided to the director of HR and the District director prior to the visit outlining its purpose and the interviews. Consent for the survey was passive, with completion denoting consent.

Administration

Interviews were scheduled at a time and location specified by the interviewee, within the parameters of the timeframe of the field visit. Where the availability of the worker or scheduling constraints did not permit face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews were conducted following the field visit. The team leaders were instrumental in facilitating contact with child protection workers in each office during the field visit. Most interviews were conducted during working hours at the office of the interviewee, with some interviews undertaken out of hours. All interviews were undertaken in private spaces (such as personal offices, interview rooms and private homes) in order to minimise the risk of disruption, with interviewees given the choice to select their interview location. The anticipated duration for each interview was between 60 and 90 minutes, with some interviews taking less than this time and some taking double this time. Following the completion of each interview an email was sent to each interviewee thanking them for their participation and interest in the research and informing them of the next stage in the research process, including the analysis and reporting of the interview findings. All interviewees were invited to request a copy of their interview transcript and were circulated a copy of the report on preliminary findings for comment prior to their presentation to the Department for information.

The survey was constructed and administered as a web-based survey using the service provider SurveyMonkey™ (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>). The functionality of a web-based survey allowed for the inclusion of automated 'skip logic' functions in the design to direct respondents to relevant questions only where the survey sought to explore additional areas of interest to some cohorts,

such as international recruits. The estimated completion time for the survey was 25 minutes. The availability of a paper-based survey as a contingency responded to recognised individual preferences, and time and technology constraints. Although workers were actively encouraged to complete the survey in one sitting, as a pragmatic response to workload demands and possible constraints on Internet access in some sites out of work hours, and to further encourage participation and completion access settings, the survey could be completed over more than one sitting. The survey was initially open for collection from Monday, 9 August to Monday, 23 August 2010 (inclusive). Subsequent to this period, workers who had not responded were provided with an opportunity to complete the survey, including a paper version on request. The survey used an email invitation collector function to send and collect responses. The collector function acted as a unique identifier in the collection phase to ensure only one survey was completed for each worker. Consent was obtained by passive measures, with workers advised that the completion of the survey constituted their consent to participate in this aspect of the research. Consistent with ethical conduct of the survey, workers were advised that this unique identifier would not be used beyond the collection phase for any purpose. Workers were provided with a number of reminders at intervals throughout the collection period for the survey. The use of an email collector function allowed for automated targeted reminder emails to those who had not responded. In all, two such reminder emails were sent during this period. Further email advice was subsequently sent to staff who had not responded to advise them of the option to complete a print version of the survey. The survey was administered with the assistance of the Department. Initial advice to the Department was provided in advance to the director of HR Strategic Services who

subsequently provided written (email) advice to the District director and team leaders in the District. The findings of the survey are presented and analysed in Chapter 9.

Recording

Interviews were recorded by using hand-written notes, combining the use of longhand and a form of short-hand. The hand-written notes were subsequently transcribed into a typed form to aid with the ease of examination during analysis. An example of a handwritten transcription is presented in Appendix 12. As discussed later in this section, whilst the decision not to undertake an audio recording is rationalised on a number of grounds, it could be interpreted as a limitation of this research. The administration of the survey using SurveyMonkey™ meant that surveys were recorded and stored electronically on a secure server with access restricted to me as the researcher. Five surveys were completed by hand, with responses subsequently manually entered into SurveyMonkey™ to enable easy analysis of results.

Participation

In total, 20 interviews and 47 surveys were undertaken with District workers. Interviewees were drawn from across the three principal District offices and sites for this research – Geraldton, Carnarvon and Meekatharra – with participants accounting for over one-third (37%) of workers at these locations. In total, 75% of the (theoretical) sample population for the survey participated (n53), with 47 workers (88.7%) completing the questionnaire and six workers only partially completed the survey. Data from partially completed surveys has not been included in the analysis and presentation of findings.

2.4.2 Overview of sources and methods of collection

Official statistics

While the use of official statistics as a source of data has been reported as problematic within sociology (Bryman 2004), they have been long recognised for their use in describing ‘the state and society’ (Byrne 2006) notwithstanding issues around their production and one’s particular worldview! Encompassing a vast array of data sets, from registrations of birth, deaths and marriage, to periodical large population census counts and household surveys, the value of official statistics is the scale of data on a vast number of characteristics including demographic characteristics not otherwise available to the individual researcher or small research team within the confines of the average research project (Bryman 2004). As maps and other visual texts have been critical media in the representation of place (Casey 2002), official statistics such as Australian Census of Population and Housing have been equally fundamental to our understanding of the people who inhabit these places (Chapters 3 and 5), as meteorological data has to the (climatic) conditions of our environment (Chapter 3). However, as the reported under-representation of child abuse in Indigenous communities suggests (Chapter 6), the usual caveats should apply to interpreting such official statistics in spite of their general acceptance on reliability grounds.

Putting aside criticism of the inherent issue of power in the construction of statistics (Byrne 2006), as the historical omission of Australia’s Indigenous peoples from the population census attest (ABS 2011a), issues of reliability in large ‘state’-produced data sets such as the Australian Census of Population and Housing remain. This is demonstrated in the typical disclaimer that accompanies the

release of Australian Census data relating to the accuracy or quality of the data reported of Indigenous peoples particularly living in remote Northern Territory and Western Australia due to their relative mobility in addition to any other factors. As this and the reported reasons for the under-representation of Indigenous children in child protection data discussed in Chapter 6 reveal, while a useful source of data and the closest picture of the population we're likely to get, such data should be understood as a 'representation' of 'reality'.

Creative media

The integral role of images in the way we tell stories about society and how we see the world (Becker 2007), as evidenced by the representation of place in maps, photography, landscape painting and film (Casey 2002; Reijnders 2010; Urry 2007; Urry & Larsen 2011), is examined in Chapter 5. This research has utilised maps to locate the District in its broader geographical location in order to convey a sense of place or 'picture' of the places that the Department seeks to recruit. The research has also drawn on marketing material produced by the Department in its recruitment campaigns (Chapter 9) in view of its dominant role in representations of the work in the Department's attraction strategies. However, the research has also drawn on the use of graphs to present numerical data, such as Department workforce data (Chapter 3) and survey responses (Chapter 9).

Print media (newspapers)

While the significance of print and other forms of traditional media are argued as diminishing with the emergence of digital media (Bullimore 1999), newspapers remain an important medium of information about the society in which we live and in shaping our understanding of society (Bechhofer and Paterson 2000;

Bessant, Watts, Dalton and Smyth 2006; Bullimore 1999). As Chapters 5 reveals, the media, and newspapers specifically, are acknowledged as influential in both historical and contemporary child protection systems in directing public and political attitudes (positive and negative), including the construction of the child protection ‘scandal’ (Butler & Drakeford 2007; Gillingham & Bromfield 2008; Lonne, B., Parton, Thomson & Harries 2009). Similarly, the media has also been identified as being instrumental in the construction of the relationship between Australia’s ‘cities’ and ‘the bush’, as examined in Chapter 4.

A systematic review of *The West Australian* and *The Australian* newspapers between 2009 and 2013 was undertaken for the purpose of identifying public discourses relevant to shaping attitudes towards the central Work and Place subjects of this research: child protection and (outer) regional and remote Australia. Over 1,000 newspaper articles were collected based on the search frame presented in Table 2.2 below, followed by a thematic analysis of the media to reveal the relative importance and representation of the subjects of interest; that is, ‘What was reported?’, ‘How was it reported?’ and ‘What were the origins to the report?’

Table 2.2: Media review search frame

| Self/Family | Place | Work |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| Child protection | Regional and Remote | Department for Child Protection |
| Aboriginal | Murchison | Public Sector |
| Indigenous | Gascoyne | Workforce |
| | Geraldton | |
| | Carnarvon | |
| | Meekatharra | |
| | Wiluna | |

The articles were organised in chronological order in scrapbooks/folios and key data (such as date, source, and title) subsequently recorded into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. A thematic analysis of each article was undertaken using general coding, and subsequently transcribed against other key data for each article in the spreadsheet to allow a crude content analysis. Reflecting the ideological processes in the production of such discourses (Fairclough 1995, 65) elements of critical discourse analysis have also been used in the further analysis, such as that of the media and other data collected for this research notably the Department's recruitment material presented in Chapter 8. The review of the media is presented in Chapter 7.

Interview

Consistent with their use in gaining an in-depth understanding of a particular subject from an individual (or in some cases, group) perspective (Fontana & Frey 2003), interviews were a key platform of the primary research undertaken for this thesis particularly in view of the conceptualisation of the research as one with the individual worker as the 'subject' of the Department's interventions to attract and retain. Twenty-two semi-structured interviews were conducted for the research: 20 with District workers and two with key informants in principal 'partner' agencies, the police and the WA Department of Communities. A copy of the interview schedule/instrument is included as Appendix 3. Reflecting its place in the mixed-method design, the interview was both informed and informed by previous and subsequent sequences of data collection. Thus, the review of the literature undertaken in the early stages of the parallel convergent phase of the research process identified the core themes for the interview schedule including:

relationship to place; influences on attraction and retention; and (perceived) differences between 'metropolitan' and 'country' practice. While constituting an important source of data in its own right, and consistent with the use of a sequential exploratory research design, the interview findings were utilised in the development of the survey instrument. The use of audio recordings was eschewed in favour of hand-written notes (examined in more detail later in this chapter), with transcriptions then undertaken into a typed format using Microsoft Word to assist in their analysis. As suggested by its use in the development of the survey, the analysis of interview 'data' included a thematic analysis.

Survey

The workforce survey was a major component and important source of quantitative and qualitative data on the work and life choices of District workers and their relative influence on attraction and retention. In total, 53 District workers participated in the survey, comprising 75% of the 'theoretical sample' population (that is, the District workforce), from which research participants were drawn. Reflecting the relatively higher response rates for web-surveys compared to conventional paper-based surveys (Dillman 2007; Tourangeau, Conrad & Couper 2013. 2013), more than four in five workers (n=47; 88.7%) completed the survey.

The survey aimed to explore the identity of workers beyond basic demographic information relating to their roles both in and outside the work setting, such as education qualifications, fields of study, important relationships, and social interactions. Reflecting its relationship to other phases and methods in the research design, as illustrated in Figure 2.3 (Procedures Diagram), the

development of the survey instrument was informed by both the findings of the interviews and the secondary analysis of the literature. Thus, elements of the survey incorporated those of validated instruments utilised in studies of similar purpose, specifically those of Dickenson and Painter (2009) and Lights (2003) in the United States (examining child welfare workers and human service workers respectively), and Hall and colleagues' (Hall, Garnett, Barnes, & Stevens 2007) survey of dental health professionals in the Northern Territory (NT), Australia. The draft survey instrument was tested with members of the ARC Linkage Team at Griffith University and key contacts within the Department's HR directorate. The use of the web-based survey provider SurveyMonkey™ was influenced by the strengths of this type of survey relative to other post-based surveys, such as maximising response rates, the recognition of the ease of access of the Internet as a communications tool in everyday life (Dillman 2007; Tourangeau et al 2013), management of the collected data and distance from the field.

2.4.3 Observation/fieldwork

Coffey (1999) suggests that the primary purpose of fieldwork is to analyse and understand the field. Four visits to the Murchison were undertaken for this research between 2009 and 2012 for that express purpose. The fieldwork component of the research served two important functions: as a source of data and an opportunity for data collection. As a source of data, each visit allowed for some observation of the Work and Place microsystems in which District workers are embedded. Each visit varied in its purpose and length. The visits ranged from: one and two days' in duration accompanying members of the Linkage Project team to selected sites across the Murchison to introduce and update the District on the

project; to two weeks in duration, encompassing the locations of all District offices, and to conduct interviews with the District workforce.

The research has also drawn on existing knowledge of the Department's District operations and the Murchison obtained from visits to the region in both a personal and professional capacity prior to the research. It is argued here that such visits have enabled an insight into the Murchison as place to visit, live and work. In addition to the general familiarity with the geography (as a person who was born and raised in Western Australia), travelling through the District from Perth by both road and air on a number of occasions has provided a critical understanding of the Murchison's geographic dimensions.

2.4.4 Issues in approach: in principle and practice

Concurrent parallel

Consistent with an ecological perspective, the attention to examining those settings or contexts outside of those in which the District workers are present, including the organisational and geographic setting, meant that access to secondary data, including official statistics and organisational data, was a critical component of this research. As illustrated in Figure 2.3, the collection and analysis of secondary data served as a major focus throughout all stages of this research. As an unobtrusive research measure, the use of secondary data was critical in the early stages of the research, particularly in the development of the research proposal and of the research instruments, and enabled a profile of the District workforce, organisational and geographic setting to be composed outside the field. The types of secondary data utilised incorporate both statistical data and 'grey' literature. The range of secondary sources utilised is extensive and includes

Department workforce data, federal and state government legislation and publications, ABS Census data, Department policies and procedures, industry and government employment and economic data, print and broadcast news media, as well as the journal articles, books and grey literature utilised in the review of the literature. Secondary data sources were instrumental in providing the broader context to practice, such as the policy, legislative, social and political environment. This has enabled a snapshot of the people and the places in which the everyday practice of child protection workers occurs. The use of a wide range of media formed the basis of the preliminary literature review for this thesis and therefore the conceptualisation of the research problem and formulation of the research thesis. The inherently unobtrusive nature of this approach meant that secondary data sources provided important background information. This expedited data collection activity that was undertaken through other methods as part of the fieldwork component of this research, specifically in producing demographic profiles of relevant populations.

The relationship with the Department under the Linkage Project provided some certainty in accessing organisational data outside of the public domain. The use of 'official' nature of this data, by implication or actuality, also provides a degree of reliability. The use of secondary data sources also offers an opportunity for comparative and interval analysis (including comparisons between the target population and other sectors or professional disciplines). The unobtrusive nature of this method has meant that the use of secondary data sources was particularly beneficial in the preliminary stages of the research, the stage of 'not knowing what you don't know', as a precursor to the engagement in fieldwork and formulation of

the research problem. Organisational data such as workforce data (presented in Chapter 8) and employee information enabled a profile of the District workforce to be compiled prior to the field visit and assisted in identifying the sample of key informants to participate in the interviews. Policy and planning documents enabled a form of triangulation and therefore verification of data obtained through other interviews and the survey, such reported changes to incentives and benefits to District Workers such as the Attraction and Retention Benefit.

2.4.5 Exploratory sequential

Interviews

The interviews with members of the District workforce constituted an important and first step in the development of an evidence base. The use of interviews as a research method reflected a dual purpose: to explore the experience and attitudes of District workers further to the research question and key themes from the review of the literature; and also to inform the design of the subsequent workforce survey. In total, 20 interviews were conducted with District workers. Further to a review of the literature and reported differences between (professional) child protection and human service practice in metropolitan areas and geographical settings external to these – encompassing ‘northern’, regional, rural or remote locales – eight (8) main themes were identified. These themes were:

1. relationship to place (place of origin prior to role);
2. influences on (their) attraction and retention;
3. experience of different practice settings;
4. (perceived) differences and requirements of (country) practice;
5. (relative importance of) local knowledge (in country practice);

6. reputation/relationship management (between the Department and their communities of practice);
7. impact of generational issues/change within the workplace;
8. and, (their) participation in professional networks.

These were then used to frame the interview questions. The framing of the distinct geographical setting as 'country' in the interviews reflected both the classification of the District and other non-metropolitan districts by the Department' as 'country districts', together with its association and usage in thinking about place to denote a distinct geography beyond the metropole and antithetical to it. This aspect is explored in detail in Chapter 5.

A standard interview format was developed comprising 14 questions, with a further two questions included for personnel recruited from overseas. The interview instrument is included as Appendix 1. The choice of a semi-structured design for the interview reflected its dual purpose and the benefits of flexibility associated with its use in qualitative research, specifically an accommodation of issues and topics of interest that emerged during the interview process, keeping discussion 'on track' and providing a level of standardisation to enable the identification of general and divergent themes from across the participant cohort. The interview instrument and accompanying project information sheet and consent form received approval by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at Curtin University of Technology (RD-33-09). A copy of the information sheet is included as Appendix 2.

Management of data: recording and transcription

If, as argued, we are living in an interview society (Kvale 2007; Kvale & Brinkman 2009; Silverman 2003), then it is also true that we are living in a society where the electronic recording of interviews and audio recordings, in particular, has become such standard practice (Fontana & Fey 2003; Kvale & Brinkman 2009; Rapley 2004) as to become taken for granted and integral to the interview. While the universality of audio recordings in interview research is primarily attributed to its strengths, notably the detail they capture (e.g. a verbatim record of the conversation including vocal dynamics) (Kvale & Brinkman 2009; Rapley 2004) and their capacity to facilitate the immersion of the interviewer in the interview 'conversation' freed from the distraction of note-taking, they are not without their limitations. The decision not to undertake an audio recording, both simple and complex in its motivations, was undertaken in the knowledge of the potential limitations on the research (both real or perceived). Such limitations, noted for their under-reporting in the literature, include producing self-conscious and potentially censored 'conversation' in the recording phase (Rapley 2004) and the fallacy in their capacity to capture the nuance of the full range of interaction which constitute the interview conversation in the transcription phase (Kvale & Brinkman 2009). With reference to Bourdieu's observation of all the nuanced elements that are 'lost in transcription', particularly the non-verbal elements which characterise the richness of the 'live' interview conversation, Kvale suggests their strengths may be over-stated relative to their limitations as 'impoverished, decontextualised renderings' (2009, 178).

The decision also reflected both pragmatic and ethical considerations beyond a fundamental calculation of their value in view of purpose of the interviews as principally exploratory in nature. The ethical dimension to the decision rested on two points – one environmental, the other experiential – and illustrate the ethical considerations in interview practices beyond the ‘rules’ that bound research practice (Kvale & Brinkman 2009). After a decade of undertaking interviews on research and evaluation projects in university research environments, I have observed interviewees’ initial reservations and/or discomfort in agreeing to an audio recording, but their ultimate acquiescence in all but few circumstances. My own reflection on this outcome is that the relatively taken-for-granted nature of electronic recordings and the power relationship between the interviewer and interviewee emphasises its asymmetrical nature, a point argued by Kvale (2009) and others and one with which I agree. I argue this ‘power asymmetry’ (Kvale & Brinkman 2009, 33) is amplified in research where academics are engaged in community-based research and virtues assumed and assigned to their role as ‘expert’. In the imbalanced power dynamic of the interview and the typical time-constraints to consider their options, a presumption of trust leads interviewees to passively agree to the recording as part of their consent.⁶ This is not to suggest that interviewees have no agency, but simply that their agency in this type of interaction is diminished due to the dynamics of the interview. The issue is therefore not one of risks to confidentiality but the extent to which consent reflects

⁶ Whilst perhaps considered an extreme example, the recent controversy around the Boston College IRA Project reveals how the ‘sanctity’ of the research interview, assured and presumed at the time of the interview can be at risk with serious consequences decades after their occurrence, pitting the researcher and research institution against national and international law.

the actual wish of the interviewee – or what they think they should do. The value of the interviews in enabling an exploration of interviewee responses to the key issues meant that they provided a rich source of thick data on the experience of current organisational responses to attraction and retention.

Survey

The survey of the District workforce was a major component and important source of quantitative and qualitative data on the work and life choices of District workers and their relative influence on attraction and retention. The aim of the survey was to explore with the wider District workforce the relative influences of Work and Life factors on attraction and retention, with particular reference to both employment and location choices. The survey explored the extent to which work and social, or 'Life' factors, were or anticipated to be influential on the decision to come to and remain in the Murchison, and to join, remain or leave the Department as employees. The survey also aimed to explore workers' identity beyond basic demographic information relating to their roles both in and outside the work setting, such as education qualifications, fields of study, important relationships, and social interactions. As noted above, the survey questions were informed by findings within general literature (Dickenson & Painter 2009; Hall et al 2007; Lights 2003) and the interviews of the District workforce for this research.

The survey comprised 63 questions, with an additional two questions for international recruits, and organised according to seven areas: education; reasons for coming to the Murchison; recruitment to the Department; employment with the Department; reasons for staying in the Murchison; reasons for staying with the Department; and personal information (including wellbeing and demographic

data). A copy of the survey instrument is included as Appendix 3. The survey received approval by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at Curtin University of Technology (RD-33-09) (Appendix 4).

Fieldwork

My previous employment on a two-year evaluation of a Department early intervention initiative (Alcoa Research Centre for Stronger Communities, 2006) provided valuable background information on the towns of Meekatharra and Carnarvon as places to live and work for Department employees and also served to establish relationships with personnel in the Department and the District.

Once ethics approval for the interview component of this research was received, the first and main field visit to conduct interviews with District Workers was undertaken between 15 September and 2 October 2009. Prior to this visit a briefing note outlining its purpose and a schedule of fieldwork activities was circulated to contacts within the Department, including the District director, for information and consideration. In addition to scheduled time for interviews and observation, a number of unexpected opportunities emerged during this visit. This included interactions with senior management from both within the Department and partner agencies. The former included a three-day tour of the District's Meekatharra and Wiluna office accompanying the District director and (then) executive director, HR and Governance. This trip with senior management offered a unique opportunity for interactions with decision makers at both the District and Department level on (then) current workforce priorities, as well as facilitating an informant interview with an external partner agency.

A third visit to the site with members of the Linkage Project team in October 2010 enabled participation in community-based information and planning activities with industry and other stakeholders which provided a useful insight into broader community priorities, presented in Chapter 3. The fourth and final visit to the Murchison was undertaken in March 2012. The purpose of this visit was to record additional observations of the general amenity of each location through the field-notes and photography. The visual data collected during this visit supplements that obtained from previous visits, and is presented in Chapter 3 to provide a visual context to the physical setting in which the employees live and work. The focus of the March 2012 visit and its timing in the research process was particularly useful for two reasons: it allowed an opportunity for directed observation; and it offered a 'view' of the research setting that was removed in time and space from previous visits and therefore an opportunity for a different perspective to emerge.

The observations conducted during field research included opportunistic observations of the office and its immediate surroundings whilst conducting the interviews. This included observed interactions between clients and workers, and with colleagues. The field visits were particularly useful in observing everyday activities of the places in which practice occurs. This was perhaps more easily achieved in smaller communities such as Meekatharra and Wiluna due to the size of the towns, but also meant the researcher was more visible in some situations. In view of this visibility, the fourth and final visit to these locations towards the end of the research (and independent of any formally scheduled visit to the local Department office) was useful in undertaking less obtrusive form of observation.

Throughout the research, additional visits and periodic email and telephone communication were made with members of the Department's HR Unit in its headquarters in Perth, WA. The visits to the HR Unit served as both opportunities to collect data and to disseminate research findings. In view of the staff turnover within the HR Unit, these contacts often served an important function in relationship management and raising the profile of the research with the Department. In addition to the visit to the Murchison with the Linkage Project team in October 2010, the visit included a tour of the Department's newly refurbished Learning and Development Centre (LDC) in Perth. The visit to the LDC, an initiative of the Department's commitment to becoming a 'learning organisation' (discussed in Chapter 8), served an important milestone in the delivery of flexible learning to the District in enabling the participation in the LDC's first online professional development exercise to the District.

2.5 Analysis of data

The approach to the analysis of the data was informal in that it did not adhere to a single analytical technique or the use of any one technique in any particular depth; rather, it employed techniques as appropriate for the type of data and purpose for its collection, its relationship to the research questions. This process reflects its identification as an emergent rather than fixed research mixed-method/strategy.

While the approaches to the analyses of written text for this research are consistent with those found within the family of narrative analysis, specifically thematic analysis (Riessman 2006), in view of the different forms of written text analysed for this research – interview transcripts, organisational documents, newspaper articles – there were some inherent differences in the actual approach

as reflects their being different forms of written text. In the broadest sense, the approach to the analysis of textual data constituted a form of bricolage analysis common to interview analysis in qualitative research (Kvale, 2007), as evidenced by the following illustrative examples for each of the three main data sets.

Issues in analytical approach in principle and practice

While the research collected an extensive amount of textual data from both primary and secondary sources, the main sources or 'sets' of (textual) data analysed for the research was derived from three sources:

1. interview and survey data;
2. newspapers; and
3. Departmental marketing material.

1. Interviews/survey

The analysis of the interview and survey data utilised both content- and concept-driven coding. The critical shift from the descriptive to the theoretical in the coding process is illustrated in the generation of themes from responses to the first interview question. The analysis of the interview data occurred in two stages, reflecting the dual function of the interviews as both a source of data to inform the design of the survey instrument and source of data more generally. The first-stage analysis of the interview text was largely thematic, with themes both content and concept driven, the latter in view of the thematising of the interview questions in the design stages of the interview further to the review of the literature. An example of the approach to the analysis of textual data from the interviews is illustrated using Question 1 (see Appendix 1). To meet its survey objectives the

first interview question sought to establish the relationship of interviewees to the Murchison to identify response options for a corresponding question in the survey which sought to establish not only the relationship to the Murchison for the wider workforce but to concepts derived from the literature around the relationship to place and mobility/migration patterns. The first stage of coding identified that while some people were living in the Murchison District others had relocated from Perth, other country regions in Western Australia, interstate and overseas. These responses therefore subsequently informed the choice of response options for Question 6 of the survey ('place of residence prior to your current role').

In the context of the reflexive methodology that underpins this research, the analysis also served an important role in identifying 'themes' or concepts to explore in the ongoing review of the literature. The second stage of analysis examined the interview data in the context of the concepts 'generated' from the literature and the Department's responses to attraction and retention. Responses to Question 6 of the survey established not only where the Department had been successful in attracting people from, but in the context of the literature on attachment and being out of place (Casey, 2009), the potential strengths and weaknesses for retention based on current mobility/migration patterns.

Some responses to the questions constituted a form of mini-narrative. These narratives emerged from responses to questions on how the interviewees came to live and work in the Murchison and for the Department, with many participants telling the story of their journey. An example is provided in the transcript below.

| |
|--|
| Question: Were you in the Murchison prior to your current role? |
| Yes, raised here but went away to high school in [location given]. It was bad here at that time – my Mum wanted us moved for high school. I remember the culture shock of moving down south. Now as a parent with a baby I think about the prospect of moving. (Worker 1) |
| Yes. Born in Cue, 15 years working for Social Security and as a Parole Officer in Correction for four years (both part-time). I was offered the job, at the time working in early years (my sister was working for Community Health). (Worker 12) |
| [I] Grew up in the Murchison. Left to Perth to study (would have remained if [study] on offer here). Not attached purely to the Murchison, would like to work elsewhere/other country locations. Lived and went to school in [gave location] from years 1 to 5 [indicated previously lived in another remote location in the north-west in view of parents' work and conveying their position in the service community]. (Further went on to describe the possible influence of their childhood in these locations as possibly influential on their choice of work.) (Worker 20) |

The analysis of the text, using elements of narrative analysis (Gibbs, 2007) revealed a range of motivations, from the autobiographical account of how they came to the Murchison to the 'cautionary tale' of work/life conflict.

3. Department marketing material

A review of the Department's marketing material formed a major component of the analysis of secondary data for this research. As discussed in brief later in this chapter, the examination of the Department's material can be understood to incorporate elements of narrative and critical discourse analysis in their attention to issues of external narratives and the relationship between language and ideological influences. The analysis presented in Chapters 8 and 9 is largely descriptive, with a second, deeper exploration of the material in the context of the literature and research findings presented in Chapter 10. The visual images in the material were considered in the context of their use in the representation of the subject matter and, where this is undertaken, it is in juxtaposition to other images – including those produced for this research – to contrast representations relative

to the subjects, such as attributes of the Murchison and utilised analytical devices particular to this type of 'text', as examined below (Banks, 2007).

2.5.1 Visual data

As previously noted, the widespread use of visual methods across the disciplinary divide has arguably emerged in recognition not only of the ubiquitous nature of visual imagery in society but their value in providing some insight not available through other means (Banks 2007; Pink 2004; Prosser 2011). This is in spite of the reported variability in visual literacy (Connelly 2008; Pauwels 2010) and limited integration of approaches, including a lack of attention to the development of rigorous methodology for their use including their analysis (Pauwels 2010).

As is consistent with the selection of other methods of collection and analysis utilised in this research process, the analysis of visual data is determined by the questions this research seeks to address; broadly, the particularities of place and practice which may support or inhibit attraction and retention. Furthermore, reflecting the origins of data sources, the approach to the analysis of visual data reflected their origin existing images and in the original context of their production.

The analysis of visual data for this thesis pays attention to three key elements identified by Banks (2007): figure, frame, and narrative. (Elsewhere these elements have been described as content (the depicted), form and style (and their relationship with the depicted) and the processes of production (Pauwels 201). In brief, these elements not only refer to the main subject or what is represented (figure), but how something is conceptualised (frame) and the story being told by the images (narrative).

Consistent with narrative analysis in the general sense, Banks (2007) underscores the importance of attending to both the internal and external narrative in the analytic process. Thus, ranging from the description of what is being represented (for example in Figure 8.6 a baby crying) to an interpretation of what this represents with reference not only to the original purpose of its production (the Department's 'Life Changing Career' media campaign) but also its relationship to cultural norms and values 'out there'.

Banks (2007) highlights how, in attending to the external narrative, the importance of looking for clues is not just within the image but elsewhere by 'considering the image as anode or a channel in a network of human relations' (2007, 13). Here, the relationship between discursive and inter-textual elements is consistent with emphases found in critical discourse analysis, particularly that which embraces multiple modes of 'text' (Knoblauch et al. 2008) to highlight how the use of language and visual images are used to create meaning but also the ideological work of texts (Fairclough 1995).

While the particular approach to the analysis of visual data reflects their relative value in responding to these questions, it also takes into account the original purpose of their production. This difference in approach is explained in more detail with regards to the two examples of visual data analysed in this thesis, the poster-bill for the film *Wake in Fright* in Chapter 5 and Department recruitment campaigns in Chapter 8. While both are existing images, thereby necessitating attention to their original production context consistent with the use of secondary data, they are included for what they tell us about narratives relating to the places in which this research is set and/or the work within the common and professional

culture operating at the level of the Macrosystem. However, unlike the *Wake in Fright* poster-bill, the analysis of the Department's recruitment material is undertaken with direct regard for the original context of its production: as part of the Department's attraction strategies. Therefore, approaches to the analysis of these two different examples of visual media are more or less problematic in view of their use in or out of their intended production context.

This is most clearly illustrated with reference to the recruitment media developed by the Department, and presented in Chapter 8. As part of their use of 'innovative strategies' to attract and retain, the Department increasingly adopted more visual-based advertising in its recruitment campaigns. In view of their intended purpose to attract workers to the Department the analysis of the visual elements and their interplay with the accompanying narrative is expressly interested in examining the content and form/style of these advertisements in view of their intent.

Numerical

While the analysis of numeric data collected for this research has broadly corresponded to a basic form of uni-variate and bivariate statistical analysis, different considerations in the analytical approach centred on the source of quantitative data: that derived from primary research collected through the implementation of the survey; and that derived from secondary sources, such as the ABS Census and Department workforce data. As with the analysis and management of qualitative data in this research, that for quantitative data has also utilised both manual and automated systems, the latter mainly comprising MS Excel.

Data management

To aid with the analysis of the interviews, handwritten notes were transcribed into an electronic format. Both formats were used in the analysis process. The original handwritten notes were used as the transcripts in the first stage of coding. Transcripts of the notes was undertaken in the first instance to serve as a record for respondents but were subsequently utilised in further stages of analysis and to aid preservation of the data for archiving. The researcher undertook all transcriptions. While the transcriptions were relatively comprehensive in their length and the level of detail they contain, including a verbatim record of the 'conversation', they are not full, verbatim transcriptions of the interviews. In a sense the notes provide a record of the main discussion points of the interview, including in many instances the evolution of the 'conversation'; however, they can be interpreted as an 'accurate' account of the interview (Gibbs, 2007).

A commitment to participatory research whereby the Department and District were updated on the progress of the research at intervals throughout the research period meant that the dissemination of research findings following the interviews and survey was undertaken within a month of the completion of the field visit. A subsequent presentation and report of the survey findings to the Department and disseminated of the report to District personnel was a critical step in the analytic process in that it provided an opportunity to interrogate and refine identified themes (Kvale, 2007).

2.6 Ethical considerations

This research obtained ethics approval by the original enrolling institution, Curtin University of Technology, and subsequently endorsed by the current enrolling

institution, The Australian National University, further to consultation with the University's Research Office.⁷ The ethics approvals are included as Appendix 4. Consistent with the requirements of the research practice in Australian research institutions and the ethics policies of the enrolling institutions of this PhD, the conduct of the research represented by this thesis has at all times been guided by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) on the conduct of human research, notably the Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), 2007b; 2007a). The broader setting of this research meant that it has been undertaken within codes of conduct and best practice pertaining to a statutory child protection authority, a broader research project, and a research involving working in communities (particularly those identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander). Thus, in addition to the Department and public sector protocols on ethical conduct, and the statement of principles for the ARC Linkage Project that supports this research (Stehlik et al., 2007), the research was also informed by best practice in community-based research (Jordan, Gust, & Scheman 2005; Taylor, Hughes, Petkov & Williams 2005), specifically that involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2002), in that it encouraged opportunities for District Workers to engage with the research outside designated data collection and field work processes. In recognition of the presence of people identifying as ATSI within the District and the Department workforce, and the population of those places in which the District

⁷ The PhD was transferred to The Australian National University (the University) in May 2010. Advice was sought from the relevant office of research and consultation with the University's ethics policy to determine whether additional approvals were required. In view of no further changes or additions to the primary data collection following this transfer, no further application for ethics approval was sought from the University. The researcher has also completed the Research Integrity Training at the University.

offices are located, advice on engaging with ATSI participants was sought from the Department's Aboriginal Mentor appointed to the candidate under the Linkage Project. This approach is also consistent with NHMRC guidelines.

Under the ethics approvals for this research, participants were provided both written and verbal advice as to the confidentiality aspects of the research. This included both their rights as research participants, as articulated in the consent form, and their responsibilities (such as the disclosure of discussion within the focus group setting). Given the relatively small number of the sample from which research participants were drawn, there existed an inherent risk in compromising the confidentiality of participants by providing a detailed profile of participants by demographic and other characteristics. In all instances, measures have been taken to minimise this risk. Such measures included opportunities for research participants to comment on reports on research findings to emerge from data collection activities prior to their circulation. Further measures include limits on the level at which data is reported in the presentation of interview findings in Chapter 9. In this regard, it hoped that the risks in role/identity conflict for the researcher and maintenance of confidentiality and anonymity of participants in pursuit of 'good data' and 'interesting analyses' (Coffey 1999) has been minimised.

Ethical issues

The main ethical concerns identified at the commencement of this research remained valid throughout its duration: issues of consent, invasion of privacy, and trust (Bryman, 2004). These concerns principally related to two aspects of the research: the sponsorship of the research by the Department through the Linkage; and observations of everyday practice during field visits. Given the potential

implications of the particularities of practice on attraction and retention, one limitation of the research was the opportunity to experience the typical interactions of this practice with Workers. Access to the general settings of District Workers' practice (such as the office and towns in which they are located) during the field visits provided some insight into some general elements of place, such as the observations of client interactions with the customer service team at reception. However, in view of the nature of the setting – child protection in a statutory agency – the ethical issues in gaining access to these settings – not least on the basis of confidentiality – meant that even forms of covert-participant observation presented dilemmas relating to trust, invasion of privacy and consent.

Recognition of the valuable contribution of workers and the voluntary nature of participation in this research were central concerns in the ethical conduct of this research. As anticipated, the proposed research benefited from the clear terms of agreement with the Department under the ARC Linkage Project. However, changes of personnel within the Department over the course of the research prevented the timely access to data in some instances.

2.7 Limitations of the research

This research has received support through a Linkage Project. The partnership with the Department under this Project determined the broad parameters of the research, including the selection of the research site. While the selection of the Murchison was on the basis of it containing 'hard to recruit' sites, the relative size of the sample population did not allow for a disaggregation of data due to potential problems with confidentiality and anonymity of participants.

The turnover in the Department's HR Unit over the course of the research meant that effective relationship building and management was a critical to accessing up-to-date information on Department activities. Where delays in obtaining data did occur, these were largely due to it either not being collected or readily available in a reportable format. Furthermore, the location of the point of contact for the research with the HR Unit meant that potential items of interest generated within the Department were not always made known to the researcher.

The limitation of any research is that findings that 'emerge from the field' are at best indicative of a point in time and need to consider possible external influences on observable phenomena during such periods, including the presence of the researcher. Development in the political, economic, and socio-cultural environment during the course of this research, as examined in subsequent chapters of this thesis, resulted in changing policy developments; therefore, the practice context can be seen as subject to the dynamics of economic, political, and policy changes that can and do forge new directions and present new challenges for research.

Both ethical considerations and the design of the Linkage Project limited the settings of everyday practice which could be observed by the researcher, including interaction with the children, families and services with whom the workers engage, and their wider social networks. Observed interaction between client and worker – a critical element in understanding the complexity and therefore challenges of the work – was limited to participant observation in public areas of the District offices.

This chapter has provided a general overview of the process by which this research has unfolded, from the conceptualisation of the research, the theoretical and conceptual framework, research design and process, to the ethical considerations in its conduct and its inherent limitations. The next chapter presents an overview of the characteristics of the Department's Murchison District as both a place to live and place of work, and therefore a place to which to attract and retain.

Chapter 3 Subjects of intervention: The Department and its Murchison District

In this thesis, strategies to attract and retain are conceptualised as interventions designed to appeal to existing and prospective employees to join or remain in the Department's employment. In this sense, the people who are the target of such interventions may be understood as the 'subjects of intervention'. But, as the conceptual framework for this research seeks to bring into focus, the distinct organisational and geographical settings in which the research is embedded point to multiple research subjects. The title of this chapter is offered as both a reminder of the individual, organisational and geographical subjects that are the central to this research: the WA Department for Child Protection; the people who are employed by the Department (in the Murchison in particular); and the places that comprise the District and to which the Department seeks to attract and retain.

3.1 The Department and its Murchison District

3.1.1 The Department

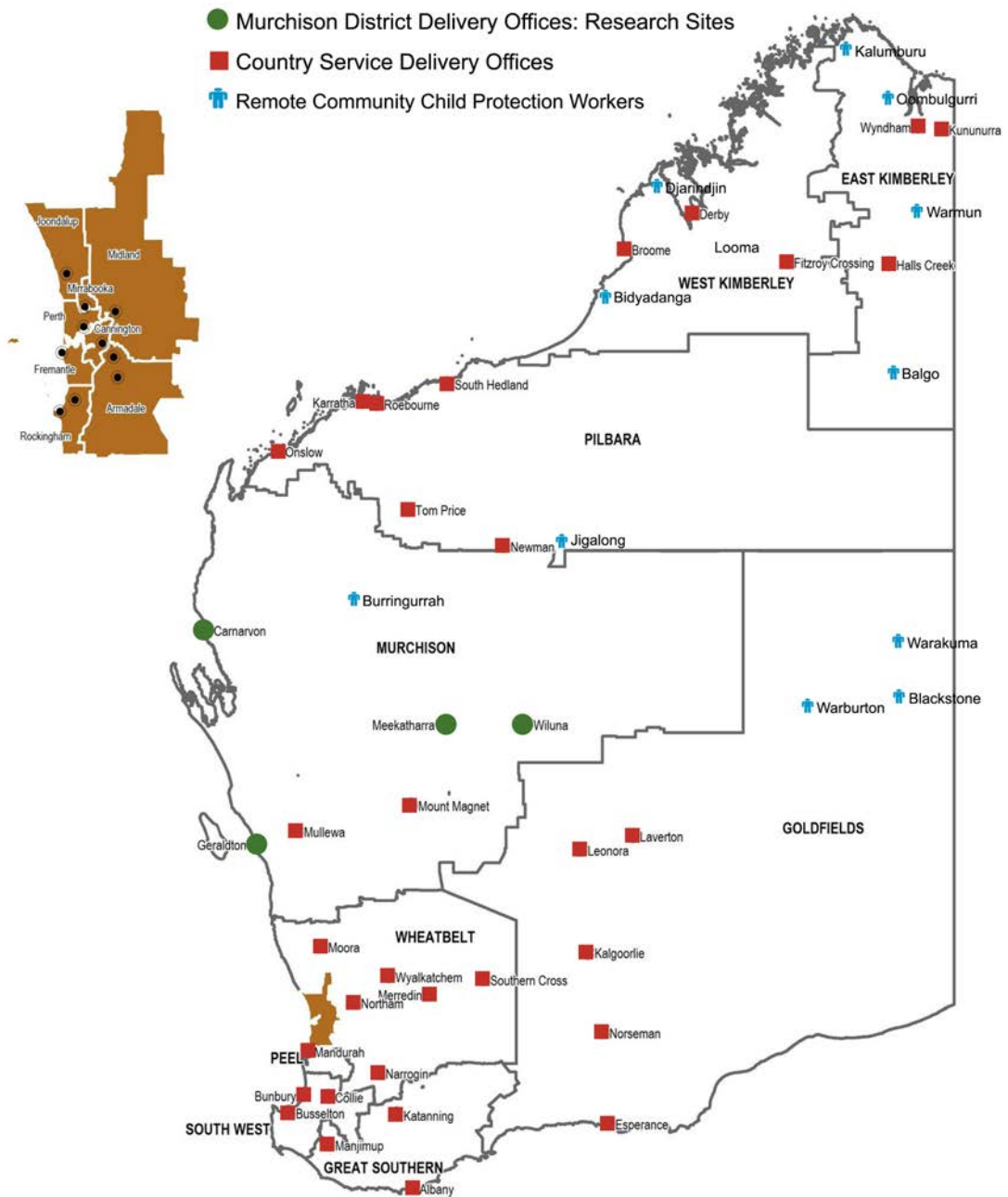
The Department for Child Protection is the statutory authority responsible for the care and protection of (at-risk) children in Western Australia. The Department provides a range of services and forms of assistance both directly and indirectly for the care and protection of children. These include the provision of out-of-home care and services and assistance for people in crisis, including emergency and disaster responses. The Department's operations also incorporate specific services for the adoption of children and employment within the children's services sector (Department for Child Protection (DCP) 2012).

The *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (WA) (Appendix 5) provides the overarching legislative framework for the Department and its activities. The Act sets the provisions under which the Department operates and the parameters of child protection practice in terms of the responsibilities of child protection officers. The Act, which came into effect on 1 March 2006, was amended in March 2011. The Department is currently responsible for administering nine acts and regulations (DCP 2012). The provisions under the Act guide the Department's core functions of providing care and assistance for individuals, children, families and communities, including the protection and care of children (DCP 2010a; Ford 2007). The provisions of the Act relating to what constitutes the best interests of the child and care and protection of children provide the principles which guide the work of the Department in its child protection functions. The Act clearly states as its guiding principle that the best interests of a child is the 'paramount consideration' in any determination under the Act and sets out how these are determined and the principles to be observed in their determination (detailed in Appendix 5). The Department is the state's fifth largest public sector agency (by number of employees), employing 2,446 persons at September 2011 (Public Sector Commission (PSC) 2011a). Consistent with the gendered profile of child protection across other national and international jurisdictions (as examined in Chapter 6), four in five of the Department's employees are women (DCP 2012). While women have historically been over-represented in the Department workforce, the proportion of females increased slightly during the research period (DCP 2012).

The Department's principal or central office is located in the state's capital, Perth. In addition to support provided through business units located in Perth, the Department's operations are administered through 17 jurisdictions or districts

that encompass the entire State (DCP 2012). The Department currently operates 35 offices in eight directorates across the state. The Country Services Directorate delivers both child protection and family services to the Department's nine country districts (DCP 2012). The Directorate also has responsibility for the ChildFIRST Assessment and Interview Team (DCP 2012, 2). The location of the Department's operations and the geographical subjects of this research are presented here in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Map of the Department Country District and Office locations



Source: Adapted from DCP Maps.⁸

⁸ Metropolitan and country districts and office locations (DCP 2010 Annual Report) Country Districts and Offices Map (DCP no date) Accessed online: <https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Organisation/employment/PublishingImages/CPFS%20-%20Country%20District%20map.pdf>.

Responsibility for the management of each district resides within each District office under the direction of the District director (and team leader within each satellite office), with the Directorate of Country Services providing overall line management responsibility, direction and support to all country districts.

The Department distinguishes its workforce between those personnel engaged in child protection roles and those engaged in field support roles. The classification of child protection roles has undergone significant change over the duration of the research, as evidenced by their increase from nine to 12 from the commencement to the completion of the research. A list of roles according to type is presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Child protection roles

| Specified calling | Non-specified calling | Field support |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection Worker (SC Level 1) – Community, Parent Support • Senior Child Protection Worker (SC Level 2) – Placement Services, Community, ChildFIRST, Parent Support, Family Domestic Violence, Secure Care • Psychologist (SC Level 1) • Clinical/Counselling Psychologist (SC Level 2 or 3) • Team Leader Child Protection (SC Level 3) - ChildFIRST, Parent Support, Residential Care, Secure Care • Senior Manager - Residential Care, Secure Care | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential Care Officer • Senior Residential Care Officer Level 3 • Secure Care Officer Level 4 • Manager Residential Care | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Resource Employee • Resource Employee • Customer Service Officer • Customer Liaison Officer • Residential Care Officer |

Source: DCP (no date ⁹).

⁹ 'Career and Education pathways brochure'. Accessed online: <https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Organisation/employment/Pages/Child%20protection%20roles.aspx>. Last accessed: 20 August 2012.

While a detailed examination of the reasons for this change is deferred to Chapter 8, the significance of the classifications presented in Table 3.1 is that each classification carries with it a corresponding qualification requirement, with half of the Department's child protection roles now designated as a 'specified calling', requiring a degree-level qualification in specified disciplines (see Chapter 8).

3.1.2 The Murchison District

The Department's Murchison District is one of nine 'country' districts under which the Department delivers child protection services outside the Perth metropolitan area. It is the second largest district by land area, encompassing an area of 660,000 square kilometres. The District comprises the state government administrative regions of the Mid-West and the Gascoyne, deriving its name from an area to the north, in and around the Murchison River. While Figure 3.1 illustrates the size of the District relative to the state of Western Australia for the purposes of international readers and references to international contexts presented later in this thesis, it is worth putting the size of the area in a global perspective. By land area the District roughly equals the combined size of Texas (420,411 km²) and California (250,702 km²), is two and a half times the size of the United Kingdom (a region of 65 million people (ABS, 2012c)), or equal in size to Alberta, Canada (Canada's sixth largest province by land area),

The Department's District operations are administered through offices in six locations: Geraldton, Carnarvon, Meekatharra, Wiluna, Mount Magnet and Mullewa (DCP 2010b, 3). The District headquarters is located in the regional city of Geraldton in the state's Mid-West region. Located approximately 432 kilometres north of Perth, the Geraldton office is one of three main permanent staffed offices

in the District and the closest to Perth by distance and travel time. This research has primarily focused on the three main office locations of Geraldton, Carnarvon and Meekatharra, being those offices with a permanently staff profile. However, as examined in Chapter 8, in view of the Department's identification of Wiluna as a hard-to-recruit site requiring its own strategy in the early stages of this research, and in view of the particular characteristics of the place, this research also includes an examination of the Wiluna office.

Central to this research thesis is the importance of the physical setting to interactions (Bronfrenbrenner 1979), and the role of setting in place attachment (Milligan,1998). To support this aspect of the research, photographs of the exterior of the District offices are presented in Appendix 6. The photos suggest the variability in the physical environment of the Department's offices in the selected localities. The relative size and quality of the Geraldton office, where the Department is co-located with other WA public sector agencies, reflects both the size of the District workforce and the difference in infrastructure provision in Geraldton as a regional city. Each of the District offices, including Carnarvon, is situated on the main street of each town. In the case of Meekatharra, the 'street' is the Great Northern Highway, with the Department's office located at the northern edge of the town. The Department's Carnarvon office is located on the first floor and is accessible by stairs in a shopping arcade.

The District workforce

The profile of the District workforce is ageing and female. Table 3.2 presents a summary of key demographic data available for the District workforce from June 2009 to June 2011.

Table 3.2a Comparative Profile of the District and Department Workforce by Age and Gender: 2009-2011

| Indicator/ Characteristic | MURCHISON | | | DEPARTMENT | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|
| | Dec-09 | Jun-11 | Dec-10 | Dec-09 | Dec-10 | Jun-11 |
| 1. Gender | | | | | | |
| Total Females | 82.1 | 88.3 | 86.7 | 79.1 | 79.8 | 79.8 |
| Total Males | 17.9 | 11.7 | 13.3 | 17.9 | 20.2 | 20.2 |
| 2. Age | | | | | | |
| < 25 Years | 4.5 | 6.5 | 9.6 | 7.2 | 7.5 | 7.9 |
| 25-34 Years | 19.4 | 19.5 | 18.1 | 22.1 | 23.3 | 23.1 |
| 35-44 Years | 23.9 | 16.9 | 20.5 | 24.8 | 24.2 | 24.2 |
| 45-54 Years | 31.3 | 28.6 | 25.3 | 28.2 | 27 | 26.7 |
| 55-59 Years | 14.9 | 22.1 | 19.3 | 9.3 | 10 | 10.2 |
| 60+ Years | 6 | 6.5 | 7.2 | 8.4 | 8 | 8.1 |
| <i>Total 45 Years & above</i> | 52.2 | 57.1 | 51.8 | 45.9 | 45 | 44.9 |
| <i>Total 55 Years & above</i> | 20.9 | 28.6 | 26.5 | 17.7 | 18 | 18.2 |
| 3. Diversity | | | | | | |
| Aboriginal | 14.8 | 15.6 | 18.1 | 9.7 | 10.2 | 9.3 |
| Culturally Diverse | 14.9 | 10.4 | 14.5 | 9.8 | 9.3 | 9.8 |
| People with Disabilities | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.6 | 1.5 | 1.5 |

Source: Derived from Annual DCP Workforce Dashboard Reports for 2010 and 2011 and Workforce Analysis Report for the Murchison District December 2009.

As the data in Table(s) 3.2a and 3.2b reveal, four in five people employed in the District are women, with the relative proportion of women to men in the workforce higher for the Murchison than for the Department as a whole. However, as illustrated by the comparison data for Country Services and the Metropolitan area presented in Table 3.2b, it is consistent with the profile of these service areas. The female characteristic of the workforce is consistent with that of most statutory child protection authorities across Australia and those professional disciplines represented within the sector, notably the social work and psychology professions

(Healy & Lonne 2010). As examined elsewhere in this thesis, the distinctly 'female' profile of the District workforce and sector workforce is implicated in presenting distinct challenges for attraction and retention strategies, particularly in view of reported changing Work/Life preferences for women in the 21st century.

As examined in Chapters 7, the consequences of an ageing population are implicated in presenting a unique set of challenges for public sector institutions due to the age profile of its workforce. As Table 3.2 indicates, these challenges also confront the Department and District workforce: the District workforce is generally older, with half the workforce aged 45 years or over and more than one-quarter aged 55 years and over at June 2011. The proportion of younger age cohorts within the District workforce grew during the period, with persons aged 25 years or under almost doubling (although this represented a total of eight persons). As at June 2011, approximately one in five District employees identified as Aboriginal persons (n=15), a 3% increase from the commencement of the research period.

Table 3.2b: Profile of the Department and District Workforce by Age and Gender: 2009-2011

| Indicator | MURCHISON | | | DEPARTMENT | | | METRO | | | COUNTRY | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|--------|--------|
| | Jun-11 | Dec-10 | Dec-09 | Jun-11 | Dec-10 | Dec-09 | Jun-11 | Dec-10 | Dec-09 | Jun-11 | Dec-10 | Dec-09 |
| 1. Gender | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total Females | 86.7 | 88.3 | 82.1 | 79.8 | 79.8 | 79.1 | 85.7 | 85.4 | 83.5 | 84.7 | 84.1 | 83.3 |
| Total Males | 13.3 | 11.7 | 17.9 | 20.2 | 20.2 | 17.9 | 14.3 | 14.6 | 16.5 | 15.3 | 15.9 | 16.7 |
| 2. Age | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| < 25 Years | 9.6 | 6.5 | 4.5 | 7.9 | 7.5 | 7.2 | 8.5 | 7.8 | 7.3 | 5.4 | 5.9 | 7.1 |
| 25-34 Years | 18.1 | 19.5 | 19.4 | 23.1 | 23.3 | 22.1 | 26.0 | 24.4 | 22.7 | 20.8 | 22.8 | 21.5 |
| 35-44 Years | 20.5 | 16.9 | 23.9 | 24.2 | 24.2 | 24.8 | 21.8 | 23.5 | 25.4 | 27.3 | 25.3 | 24.6 |
| 45-54 Years | 25.3 | 28.6 | 31.3 | 26.7 | 27 | 28.2 | 24.7 | 25.5 | 25.9 | 28.5 | 27.6 | 29.2 |
| 55-59 Years | 19.3 | 22.1 | 14.9 | 10.2 | 10 | 9.3 | 9.3 | 9.4 | 9.1 | 9.7 | 9.6 | 8.8 |
| 60+ Years | 7.2 | 6.5 | 6 | 8.1 | 8 | 8.4 | 9.7 | 9.4 | 9.7 | 8.3 | 8.7 | 8.7 |
| <i>Total 45 Years & above</i> | 51.8 | 57.1 | 52.2 | 44.9 | 45 | 45.9 | 43.7 | 44.3 | 44.7 | 46.5 | 45.9 | 46.7 |
| <i>Total 55 Years & above</i> | 26.5 | 28.6 | 20.9 | 18.2 | 18 | 17.7 | 19.0 | 18.8 | 18.8 | 18.0 | 18.3 | 17.5 |
| 3. Diversity | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Aboriginal | 18.1 | 15.6 | 14.8 | 9.3 | 10.2 | 9.7 | 5.1 | 6.0 | 6.2 | 19.7 | 20.6 | 18.7 |
| Culturally Diverse | 14.5 | 10.4 | 14.9 | 9.8 | 9.3 | 9.8 | 11.5 | 11.0 | 10.9 | 6.3 | 5.4 | 6.3 |
| People with Disabilities | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.8 | 1.9 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 0.1 |

Source: Derived from Annual DCP Workforce Dashboard Reports for 2010 and 2011 and Workforce Analysis Report for the Murchison District December 2009.

3.1.3 Local context to current child protection

In seeking to understand the particularities of child protection practice in the Murchison during the research period beyond an acknowledgement of the location of the District offices, two contexts are worthy of closer examination. As evidenced from the policy developments and discourses relating to child protection in Australia during the period presented, at a state/territory and national level the child protection sector was the focus of considerable review and reform. While the most recent and comprehensive review of the Department (Ford 2007) was held prior to the period with which this research is concerned, being 2009-2012, the origins of this research in the Ford Review and subsequent reform process (see Chapter 8) and its more general consequences for Department policy and practice during the research period, signifies the review and reform process as worthy of a brief consideration.

The Ford Review

The current organisational incarnation of the Department follows the split of the then Department for Community Development (the DCD) arising from recommendations of the Ford Review ('the Review', Ford 2007). Reflecting the Department's location in a regulatory and political context, the reform of the Department, which is invariably linked to the recommendations of the Ford review, reflects a broader set of circumstances and influences. The Department identifies these influences as: the inclusion of the Department in a functional review of public sector agencies; the media reports on the death of an eleven-month old child Wade Scale in 2003 (see Chapter 7), and; two Ombudsman's reports into foster care assessments and treatment of children in residential care

(DCP 2008). Nevertheless, the Ford Review was explicit in acknowledging the complexity of the child protection system, as well as the need for change of the then approach in Western Australia (Ford, 2007). Further to Recommendations 1 and 2 (2007, 11), this included the separation of the forensic and therapeutic functions of the DCD.

As noted at the outset, the origins of the problem of attraction and retention of child protection workers in the Murchison and its conceptualisation for this research emerged from the identification of the problem by the Department and conceptualisation of the ARC Linkage Project as a response. The identification of attraction and retention as a 'problem', and its emergence as a priority workforce issue, principally originates in the Review. The Review (2007) identified attraction and retention as one of eight (8) workforce issues requiring reform. The Review acknowledged the problem of attraction and retention as a universal one for child protection systems, nationally and internationally. The author cited the commonality of issues confronting child protection systems across jurisdictions: the complexity of the work; the workload; inadequate supervision; and increased media scrutiny and criticism of the sector, this latter giving effect to a culture of 'blame' (2007, 44). The latter, as reported in Chapter 6, a key challenge for child protection systems reported across national and international jurisdictions. Pointing to the consequences of structural change on attraction and retention, the Review highlighted the effects of the demand (and shortage) of skilled labour, and the mobility and change in work/life preferences of prospective employees, particularly younger cohorts. However, the author emphasised specific challenges confronting the WA child protection sector; namely, the competition from the resources sector for skilled and unskilled workers. In particular, the Review

highlighted the issue of parity in remuneration of the resources sector compared with the human services field irrespective of (formal, tertiary) qualifications. By locating the problem of attraction and retention of child protection professionals in a broader context, the author highlighted the reflexive relationship between the micro and macro influences shaping the problem. The Review identified six (6) key issues for attraction and retention:

1. rolling short-term contracts;
2. the recruitment process;
3. caseworker qualifications;
4. training and development;
5. rural and remote; and
6. parity with other agencies (Ford, 2007, 69).

Reflecting the implementation process and period over which the research has occurred, the emphasis on some of these issues changed over time. An examination of the Department's response to these issues is presented in Chapter 8.

The state of child protection services in the Murchison

The level of relative socio-economic disadvantage and poor developmental outcomes for children in the Murchison is reflected in child protection data for the District. Tables 3.3a and 3.3b present data for safety and wellbeing assessments for 'All Districts' and the Murchison in 2010/11 and 2011/12. The data reflects all assessments, rather than the outcomes of the assessments, substantiated and unsubstantiated. As indicated from Table 3.3b, reports for the Murchison were generally higher for most types of abuse than for other country districts. The data in Table 3.3a indicates the Murchison reported the highest number of reports for

Neglect (n=204), Emotional (n=180) and Sexual (n=131) abuse in all the non-metropolitan districts. The District also reported the second highest figures for Physical abuse (n=92). In the Murchison, reports of abuse for 2011/12 were substantially higher for most categories compared with 2010/11. The data for year 2011/12 shows that, as a percentage of all reports, physical and sexual abuse had decreased from 2010/11, while Neglect and Emotional abuse had increased significantly.

Table 3.3a Child Safety and Wellbeing Outcomes for Department Districts 2011/12

| DISTRICT | Neglect | | | Emotional | | | Physical | | | Sexual | | | Other | | | TOTAL | |
|----------------|---------|---------------|------------------|-----------|---------------|------|----------|---------------|------|--------|---------------|-----|-------|---------------|------|-------|------|
| | No. | % All Reports | YOY ¹ | No. | % All Reports | YOY | No. | % All Reports | YOY | No. | % All Reports | YOY | No. | % All Reports | YOY | No. | YOY |
| Murchison | 204 | 29% | 84% | 180 | 26% | 233% | 90 | 13% | -2% | 131 | 19% | 41% | 99 | 14% | 11% | 704 | 60% |
| East Kimberley | 94 | 28% | 13% | 31 | 9% | 182% | 42 | 12% | 17% | 79 | 23% | 58% | 93 | 27% | 11% | 339 | 28% |
| Goldfields | 118 | 21% | 16% | 130 | 23% | 160% | 62 | 11% | 15% | 115 | 21% | 47% | 135 | 24% | 31% | 560 | 45% |
| Great Southern | 78 | 27% | 7% | 61 | 21% | -6% | 30 | 10% | -6% | 72 | 25% | 36% | 48 | 17% | 23% | 289 | 10% |
| Pilbara | 130 | 28% | 21% | 114 | 24% | -35% | 47 | 10% | -46% | 86 | 18% | -7% | 95 | 20% | -57% | 472 | -31% |
| South-West | 105 | 19% | 6% | 97 | 18% | 149% | 94 | 17% | -18% | 127 | 23% | 34% | 128 | 23% | -8% | 551 | 13% |
| West Kimberley | 45 | 16% | 114% | 22 | 8% | 450% | 34 | 12% | 55% | 96 | 34% | 88% | 87 | 31% | 89% | 284 | 97% |
| Wheatbelt | 55 | 13% | -15% | 62 | 15% | 377% | 47 | 12% | 15% | 102 | 25% | 62% | 142 | 35% | 100% | 408 | 61% |

Notes:

1. Year on year (YOY)

Source: Baseline data derived from Department for Child Protection Annual Reports 2009/10 (Table 47, 94); 2010/11 (2011, 111) and 2011/12 (Table 52, 125)

Table 3.3b: Child Safety and Wellbeing Outcomes for the Murchison: 2009/10 to 2011/12

| | Number of Reports | | | % All Reports/Year | | | Year on Year Change | |
|-----------|-------------------|---------|---------|--------------------|---------|---------|---------------------|-----------|
| | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2010-2011 | 2011-2012 |
| Neglect | 59 | 204 | 111 | 26% | 29% | 25% | 246% | 84% |
| Emotional | 28 | 180 | 54 | 12% | 26% | 12% | 543% | 233% |
| Physical | 83 | 90 | 92 | 36% | 13% | 21% | 8% | -2% |
| Sexual | 58 | 131 | 93 | 25% | 19% | 21% | 126% | 41% |
| Other | 0 | 99 | 89 | 0% | 14% | 20% | | 11% |
| TOTAL | 228 | 704 | 439 | | | | 209% | 60% |

Source: Baseline data derived from Department for Child Protection Annual Reports 2009/10 (Table 47, 94); 2010/11 (2011, 111) and 2011/12 (Table 52, 125)

The significant increases in reports during the period reflect the changes in reporting and increased conceptualisation and awareness of different forms of abuse over the period (DCP 2012). This is clearly illustrated in the spike in reports for sexual abuse that can be observed for 2010/11 from the previous year, which correspond to the introduction of mandatory reporting for child sexual abuse in WA in 2009. The Department does not report safety and well-being assessment data by Indigenous status. However, Aboriginal children are likely to comprise the majority of the assessments reported in Tables 3.3a and 3.3b. This is based on a number of factors: the proportion of Aboriginal people in the general population for the Murchison; over-representation of Aboriginal people in the Department's client population; and the over-representation of children in care. District data for children in care for the 2011/12 year indicate nearly three in four children were Aboriginal (72%) (DCP 2012). As implied by the increase in assessments undertaken by the District during the research period, the District experienced an increase in demand for its services and identified increased volume of child protection notifications as a key issue (DCP 2012).

During the research period the Department's Murchison District was the focus of a major child protection investigation, Operation RESET, a joint venture between the Department and the WA Police. The initiative was established in response to the reported incidence of child sexual abuse in remote Aboriginal communities (Mace & Powell 2012) and identification of Aboriginal communities in the Murchison with high risk factors and under-reporting of sexual abuse relative to known cases (pers. comm. Child Abuse Squad Detective, Detective Senior Sergeant Burnett, 29

November 2012¹⁰. Operation RESET resulted in investigations into 120 allegations of child sexual abuse, with 23 arrests (WA Police 2012). In addition to the increase in notifications and prosecutions that arose as a result of the pilot, some of which included historical cases, the pilot also highlighted legacy issues of a culture of mistrust between the community and the Police and Department (pers. comm. Child Abuse Squad Detective, Detective Senior Sergeant Burnett, 29 November 2012). Despite this, the pilot's collaborative way of tackling child protection received a 2012 Premier's Award in the Improving Government category. The initiative has subsequently been implemented in the Eastern Goldfields region (DCP, 2012), with advice received to date indicating broader implementation across all Department jurisdictions (pers. comm. Child Abuse Squad Detective, Detective Senior Sergeant Burnett, 29 November 2012).

Locations in the District have been successful in attracting new services and infrastructure that support the child protection activities. These include the establishment of a new family group home in Meekatharra (2011) and introduction of the Responsible Parenting Program in Carnarvon. A review of the District Allowances Scheme meant that District workers benefitted from changes to the geographic boundaries and an increase in the zone rate. Funding for both the Responsible Parenting Program and an increase to the District Allowance under the Royalties for Regions Community Services Fund (Grylls 2010) the first review in 30 years, illustrates the direct impact of the resources boom on child protection services in the District, and highlights the importance of this revenue stream for investment in public services in regional and remote Western Australia

¹⁰ While an evaluation of Operation RESET has been undertaken the report remained unavailable as at May 2013.

and (by inference) a 'resources future' (see Chapter 7) to critical aspects of child protection work in the District and other regional and remote areas in future.

3.2 The Murchison as a geographic place

As the presentation of the literature on place in Chapter 4 reveals, the relative attractiveness of a place rests upon a number of a factors. While the development of liveability indexes imply a set of 'objective' criteria (Chapter 4), the factors that determine the relative attractiveness of places is largely subjective. As evident from the following representations of the Murchison in the early 19th century and early 21st century reveal, the characteristics that attract people in the 21st century were not as apparent to early European visitors:

Living in Geraldton is like country living in the city; Beachside alongside rural life; Thermometer friendly environment - between the hot North and cold South; A town where you can have your boat and horse as well; Murchison is the crayfish on the menu, banana of the fruit bowl and gold in the coin and has something for everyone...

Geraldton Staff [Member], Living and working in Geraldton (DCP 2011a)

The coast ... from the moment we saw it exhibited nothing but a picture of desolation; no rivulet consoled the eye, no tree attracted it; no mountain gave variety to the landscape, no dwelling enlivened it. Everywhere reigned sterility and death ... Threatening reefs, seem desirous of opposing the audacity of the mariner and forbidding his approach to this land, abandoned by Nature ... At the first view you take in an immense distance; but beware of looking for any enjoyment. The search would be merely wasting your strength, without finding the least relief... The sun sets: everything is dead. The myriad of flies that devoured us have disappeared ... no voice disturbs the silence of this melancholy solitude ... a consuming heat oppresses us; we seek repose and find nothing but fatigue. What a frightful abode!

Letters from M. Arago, Expedition member of the French Naval Vessel, Uranie (Captain Freycinet), Shark Bay, 1818 (Battye, 1915) (cited in Battye 1915)

Early European accounts of the Murchison typically reflected the subjectivity of European perspective on ideals of landscape and civilisation (Tuan, 1974; Casey, 2009). Reflecting the power of representations of place to shape attitudes (Cresswell, 2004; Waterhouse, 2005; Willis, 1993), Green (1981) argues that early accounts such as Monsieur Arago's were to negatively influence attitudes towards the Murchison region for the next two centuries. What both accounts do share is their grounding in a common, dominant western/European culture. Neither account reveals the meaning of these places for their original inhabitants, the Indigenous people of the Murchison. In the Murchison there are six distinct Aboriginal tribal and language groups: Nanda, Nagguja, Amangu, Wajarri, Badima and Western Desert (WA Department of Indigenous Affairs and Mid-West Development Commission 2010).

While Monsieur Arago's account of the harshness of the natural environment was a common response by many early settlers to the Murchison and other parts of Australia (Battye 1915), the landscape of the Murchison has been a critical determinant of the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the land across millennia. As evidenced by the meanings attributed to Aboriginal place names in the region (Meekatharra is understood to mean 'place of little water') environment remains an important factor in Aboriginal relationships to the land. The important role of mobility of Aboriginal peoples in adaption to changing environmental conditions is reflected in the seasonal movement of Aboriginal peoples from the Western Desert through the towns of Wiluna to the coast (Rowley 1971a, b).

Patterns of settlement in the Murchison generally reflect that of the wider Australian population, with the majority of people living along the coastal fringe

and in the main population centres. One half of the Murchison's regional population live in the city of Geraldton (31,349 persons), while half of the Gascoyne's regional population live in the town of Carnarvon (4,559 persons). Some 40% of Aboriginal people live in regional and remote Western Australia (ABS 2011b,d,e). In the Murchison, this distribution of Aboriginal people as a proportion of the general population in key towns is presented in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: ATSI Peoples as a Proportion of the Population for Selected Localities in the Murchison and Western Australian Capital

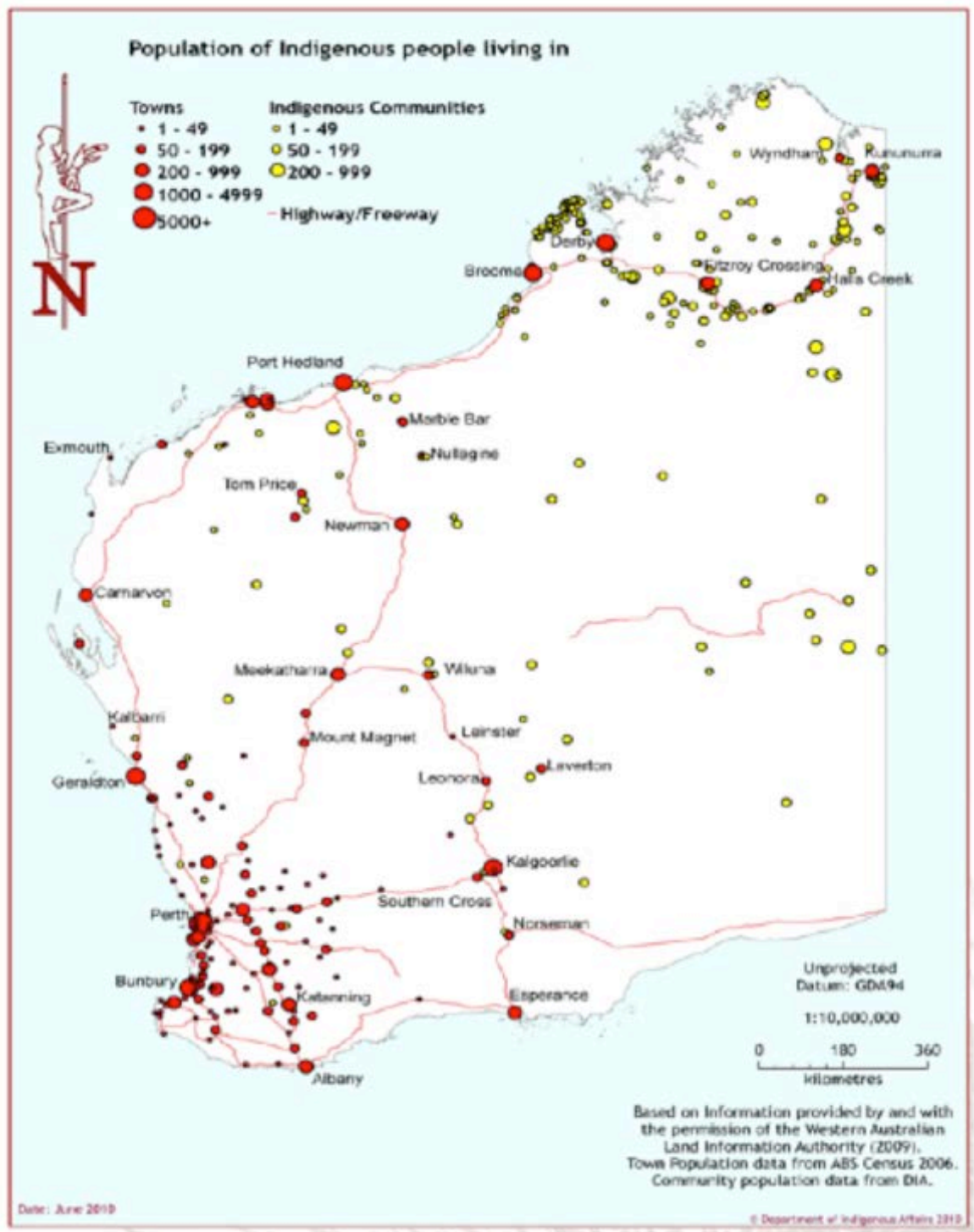
| | Australia | WA | Geraldton | Carnarvon | Meekatharra | Wiluna |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-------|-----------|-----------|-------------|--------|
| Indigenous | 2.5% | 3.1% | 11.4% | 23.6% | 46.4% | 58.8% |
| Non-Indigenous¹¹ | 97.5% | 96.9% | 88.6% | 76.4% | 53.6% | 41.2% |

Derived from: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011a

As indicated in Table 3.4, the proportion of the population identifying as Aboriginal varies considerably across localities, ranging from approximately one in 10 persons in Geraldton to half of the population in Meekatharra and Wiluna. The evident pattern is that the more remote the region, the higher the proportion of Aboriginal people. Further, in addition to Aboriginal people living in the main towns, the Murchison contains at least 16 'discrete' Aboriginal communities (Figure 3.2).

¹¹ Non-Indigenous includes persons identifying as non-Indigenous and not stated.

Figure 3.2: The distribution of Aboriginal peoples across Western Australia



Source: WA Department of Indigenous Affairs (2010, 35).

The Gascoyne and Mid-West regions record the second and third highest number of Aboriginal persons for Western Australia's 'outback' regions outside the Kimberley in the far north of the state (ABS 2012b). As examined in subsequent

chapters, the Department's Aboriginal employment targets for the Murchison (Chapter 8) reflect the higher proportion of Aboriginal people in the population. In contrast to the non-Aboriginal population, the Aboriginal population in the Murchison is younger and growing. It is estimated that the Aboriginal population in the Mid-West is growing three times faster than the non-Aboriginal population (DCP nd-a). The relative youth of Wiluna is, in sharp contrast to other localities, largely indigenous, and the proportion of children and young people in the population aged between 0 and 14 years is higher there. Wiluna also reports a higher proportion of the teenagers: double that for the Gascoyne region. While the coastal centres of Geraldton and Carnarvon have populations aged 65 years and over, higher than the WA average this population segment, in Wiluna is a quarter of the national average. The relative youth of the Wiluna and Meekatharra population is also evident when median ages are compared. For Carnarvon the median age is 38 years while the median age for Mungallah Aboriginal community (near Carnarvon) is 27 years and Karalundi Aboriginal community (outside Meekatharra) is 26 years. As previously noted, the general distribution and characteristics of the population has particular significance for the delivery of services to these communities, as discussed in chapters 5 and 7.

While the environment may have historically served to inhibit people visiting and living in the Murchison, it presently serves as a platform to attract people (and capital) to the region. The regions of the Mid-West and Gascoyne are increasingly promoted as desirable places to visit, work, live (and invest) based on the lifestyle opportunities provided by the natural environment. (This emphasis is illustrated in the Department's advice for the District, discussed in detail in Chapter 8.) The

diverse and unique physical environments of the Murchison are renowned locally and internationally in attracting sailors, surfers, anglers, divers, geologists, botanists, amateur prospectors, and four-wheel drive enthusiasts. Ironically, the vastness and relative isolation that are identified as historically impeding development within the Murchison have provided it with a competitive advantage in attracting people and capital to its regions in recent decades. The location and relatively unspoilt nature of the World Heritage-listed Ningaloo Reef and Shark Bay and other marine environments in the Murchison have driven the growth in tourism and eco-tourism. The presence of a radio-quiet zone across most of the Murchison was integral to its consideration as the site of the Square Kilometre Array radio-telescope project.¹² The emergence of the Murchison, or rather its constituent regions of the Mid-West and Gascoyne, has increasingly emerged as a lifestyle destination in the last couple of decades, as evidenced from the findings of a survey of regional Western Australians in the late 1990s (the most comprehensive and recent survey of its type available at the time of this research¹³) (Patterson Market Research, 1999). By findings for 'ideal location', the Gascoyne reported highly for lifestyle (37%), retirement (20%), climate (53%) and fishing (34%) for main reasons for moving to each region: recording the highest scores of all regions for its climate. For the Mid-West, career move (24%), climate (22%) and family (17%) were the main reasons given for moving.

As suggested by the size and demography of the Murchison, the geographies of the towns of Geraldton, Carnarvon and Meekatharra and their surrounds are as

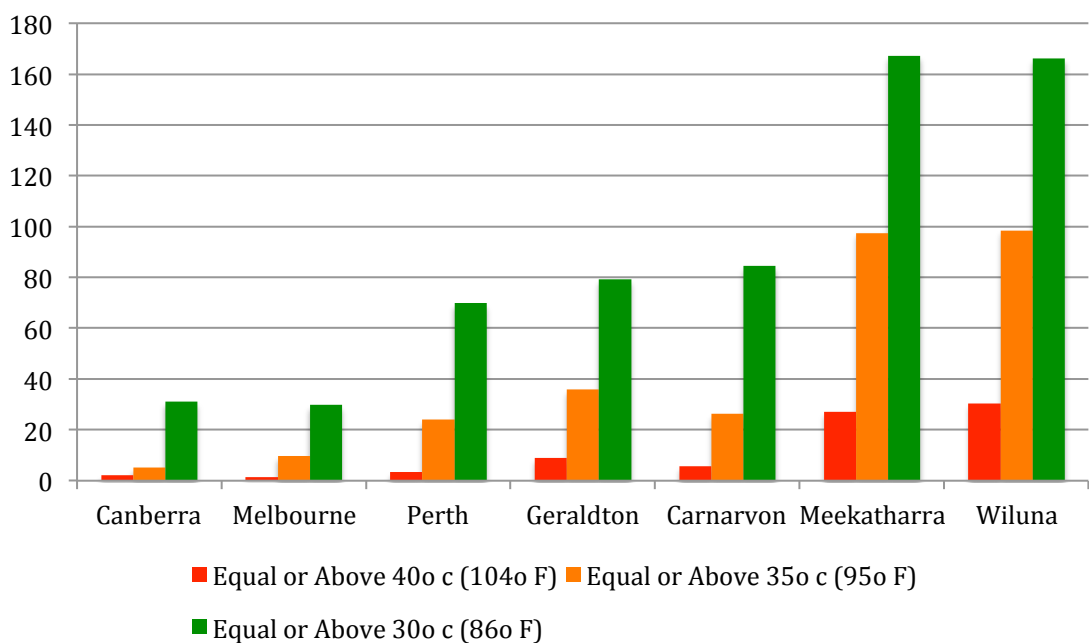
¹² See SKA website at: <http://www.ska.gov.au/Observatory/Pages/RadioQuietZone.aspx>

¹³ In December 2013, the Government of WA's Department of Regional Development released publication of its 'Living in the Regions: A survey of attitudes and perceptions about living in regional Western Australia'. In view of the elapse of over a decade since its first publication, the report was sponsored through the State's Royalties for Regions program.

different as they are distant from each other. This includes the relative liveability based on climate and lifestyle opportunities available within each place. While Geraldton and Carnarvon share a coastal location on the Indian Ocean, they fall within different climate zones: one temperate, the other tropical. The locations of the town of Meekatharra and the town of Wiluna, the Department's eastern-most office) several hundred kilometres inland on the edges of the Great Western Desert, further suggest the variability in climate between places in which the District personnel live and work. As suggested by their desert location, and Aboriginal meanings attributed to the place names of Meekatharra ('place of little water') and Wiluna) 'place of winds'), the towns are subject to some extreme weather conditions. During the research period, areas within the Murchison recorded some of the most extreme weather events on record. In 2010, the Gascoyne region in the District's north simultaneously recorded its worst year on record for both drought and flood. In the summer of 2012/13, Meekatharra and Wiluna recorded their hottest January on record and Wiluna had the dubious honour of having the state's warmest night of 33.5 degrees (Bureau of Meteorology (BoM), 2013). In general, the Murchison experiences some of the highest average summer temperatures in Australia (BoM, 2010a). These extremes in weather are clearly illuminated in an examination of annual average days above 35 degrees. Data shown in Figure 3.3 shows that, on average, people living in Meekatharra and Wiluna spend more than three months of every year in temperatures above 35 degrees, and nearly half the year in temperatures above 30 degrees. These temperatures are in sharp contrast to the experience of people living in the cities of Melbourne and Canberra and the state's capital, Perth. While Geraldton's status as one of Australia's sunniest locations (BoM, 2010b) and the temperate and

tropical climate of Geraldton and Carnarvon may recommend them for their 'mild winters' and 'hot, dry summers', some places in the Murchison may not recommend themselves as places to live and or visit for people seeking a more moderate climate.

Figure 3.3: Average annual number of days with temperatures above 30 degrees Celsius for select locations in the Murchison and select Australian capital cities



Source: Data in Table derived from individual location report on 'Climate, averages and extreme weather records', Accessed online) <http://www.weatherzone.com.au/climate>. Last accessed: 22/03/2013.

Findings for the Living in the Regions survey (Patterson Market Research 1999) indicate that on being asked about perceived community spirit, residents of the Mid-West and Gascoyne agreed with the statement that their region was a 'friendly place to live'. However, the findings also showed a perception of negative factors of living in 'the regions' such as 'divisiveness' and the loss of privacy associated with the 'small town effect'. Important for this research is that the Gascoyne and Mid-

West scored the highest and second highest out of all regions for respondents who agreed there were divisions in their community, with the Gascoyne reporting the second highest for respondents who reported feeling negatively about their relative (reduced) privacy due to the size of their local community. The survey findings highlight the realities of living in any place, however 'idyllic', and the assumptions that underpin the perception of certain places in ideal rather than real terms. This is particularly important in view of the findings from this and other research relating to the expectations of people migrating to country areas such as the Murchison.

The location of the Murchison in a 'post-colonial' landscape lends a deeper significance to the community divisions reported in the Regions survey, suggesting the 'community' in which the Department's child protection workers are entering to live and work is divided at a fundamental level. As discussed in the next chapter (in relation to working with Indigenous peoples in a social work context) this dynamic is associated with challenges to both effect change through the work, and the relationships between 'social workers' and people with whom they live and work. Like other places in regional and remote Australia, the towns of the Murchison were until relatively recent times places of exclusion for Aboriginal people (Rowley 1971a). The significance of places created for Aboriginal people following the removal from traditional lands to enable 'settlement', such as reserves on the fringes of its towns like Mungallah in Carnarvon, continue to stand as a monument to this division and a community at the margins within the district. In frontier geographies such as the Murchison, where the Aboriginal populations

remain relatively large and of place, the effects of these processes remain acutely evident not least in spatial, but also in social and economic relations.

An examination of selected characteristics from the 2011 Census of Population and Housing data based on Indigenous status reveal the extent of the 'gap' in relative advantage and disadvantage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people at a number of different location levels in the Murchison (ABS 2012c,d). By median weekly household income, Indigenous households were at least \$300 worse off than their non-Indigenous counterparts. In the discrete Aboriginal community of Burringurrah (outside of Meekatharra) Indigenous people were significantly worse off than their non-Indigenous counterparts based on both household and personal income. The median weekly income for Indigenous households within this community was less than half (\$774) of that for non-Indigenous households (\$1,874). The median personal weekly income for Indigenous persons was less than one-fifth (\$259) of that for non-Indigenous persons (\$1,437). A similar gap in household and personal income is reported for Wiluna. The proportion of persons aged between 15 and 64 years of age who reported Year 10 as their highest level of school was comparatively similar for Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons. However, the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons was significantly larger for the proportion of the population who reported completing Year 12. The relative disadvantage is further reflected in unemployment and labour-force participation rates. At the regional level (that is, Mid-West and Gascoyne), the unemployment rate for Indigenous persons is six times that for non-Indigenous persons. However, this becomes considerably higher at the shire and community level. In the Shire of Carnarvon, the rate of Indigenous

unemployment is 23% compared to 3% for non-Indigenous persons. In the Shire of Wiluna, (ABS 2012e) the Indigenous unemployment rate is 32%. Indigenous households were significantly more likely than non-Indigenous households to be overcrowded with half of Indigenous households in Wiluna requiring at least one additional bedroom. Indigenous households were on average twice as likely to have no Internet connection compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. The significant differences in comparative Indigenous disadvantage in some locations is compounded by the characteristics of the non-Indigenous population, with non-Indigenous persons typically employed in skilled and professional occupations including employment in government agencies.

While there exist many examples of strong and positive affective relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples local to these places (Clark 1992; Day 2010), the memory and legacy of historical events highlight the fundamental divisions that remain at and below the surface of these relations, as evidenced by these oral histories of local Aboriginal people:

As far as I know, nearly all the white bosses used to chase the Yammatji womens. That's how all the half-caste kids come to be here now. They would give the women things like tucker, or a dress, or just force them. The Yammatji men were not allowed to say anything about it. They were too scared. If they complained, they'd get hit with a stock whip.

Charlie Ryan, 75 years old (Clark 1992, 95)

My Yammatji mother was the promised wife of an Aboriginal bloke, but that didn't make any difference to the white fellow. He stole her. My mother died pretty early. She was killed in a tribal way. Her husband didn't like her mucking around. He quietly arranged her death so the white man could not have her any more. My white father growed up Gordon [his brother] and me and made us do a lot of work around the station until we were about nineteen or twenty years old. My father got sick

about then and had to go to Perth to see a doctor. While he was away, Dalgety's, the stock and station agent, told me and my brother that we would have to pack up our things and leave the property for good. They gave me 100 head of cattle as a sort of present and told me to get moving because there was no more work for me or Gordon on the property.

Wally Lockyer, 59 years old (Clark 1992, 149)

Racial prejudice was a part of the way of life. However, my growing dislike of the locals served only to highlight the degree of injustice I perceived, so that action and reaction intensified. The Aborigines quickly sensed I was partisan. In addition I was now the third Native Affairs Officer to be stationed one after the other at Mullewa, so that my permanence in the town seemed assured. They began to do things which perhaps for years they might have wished to do but were too fearful to put into effect. They were the kind of developments that attracted accusations of "stirring up trouble.

Adrian Day, Native Patrol Officer (Day 2010, 111)

The experiences and situations described in the above personal accounts have consequences for and equivalents in the present. As reported in the next chapter, Day's (2010) account of the effect of his different (positive) attitude towards Aboriginal people on his relations with non-Aboriginal people in the 1950s is an experience shared by District personnel in recent history.

In the Murchison, the towns of Mullewa, approximately one hour east of Geraldton, as well as Carnarvon and Wiluna, periodically experience community-wide violence within the Aboriginal population (ABC News 2009, 2012). Furthermore, the mistreatment of Aboriginal people in the Murchison by non-Aboriginal people is not confined to the past ('Officer stood down over Facebook incident', ABC News, 18 February 2011). As the headline and accompanying caption in Figure 3.4 reveals, Aboriginal people continue to be held in disregard by many in the community, including by those in authority. This needs to be understood in the

context of what has been described as an 'infamous history' between the Aboriginal communities of Wiluna and the police highlighted in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADC) (Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) 2004, 40).

Figure 3.4: Media report of Wiluna policeman posting of Aboriginals in custody on Facebook



(Source: Styles 2011)

The importance of a brief examination of the divisions in communities within the Murchison for this research is twofold. First, it is foreground and background to the interpersonal relations of place in which the child protection workers are engaged. This context is discussed in more detail in the following chapter, in view of the post-colonial landscape and the historical and contemporary policy

interventions under the auspices of child protection, which cause the relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians to assume a more complex dimension (Guerin & Guerin 2008; Kowal 2011). Second, and related to the first point, it reveals the ideal of community including the possibility of it being found in the Murchison. This thesis argues that the illusion of this ideal extends to 'white' perceptions of Aboriginal 'culture'. While Berndt (1980) asserted that the survival of 'traditional' Aboriginal culture for most Aboriginal peoples throughout the Murchison was generally 'a thing of the past', 'traditional' culture has both endured and been revived among some Aboriginal groups in the Murchison. These practices include ceremonies around initiation and death. Furthermore, Aboriginal languages remain spoken among some groups, particularly those around Wiluna. (The mobility of Aboriginal people of the Murchison is linked with maintenance of cultural practices with Aboriginal groups as far away as the Western and Central Desert regions and far north-west of Western Australia, which in itself has implications for service delivery as well as increased risks associated with child protection.) However, these 'traditional' practices stand alongside the use of the new and social media tools and technologies of the 21st century. A reflection of the role of social media in amplifying conflict within the wider population was the escalation of feuding between families in Carnarvon during the research period was attributed to postings on Facebook. The significance of this is the incongruity of the 'traditional' and 'modern' of Aboriginal life that confronts people who come to work in these communities. As discussed in the next chapter, the challenge presented by the incongruous behaviours of Aboriginal communities and regional and remote communities is how these are framed and understood by people

moving to places where such behaviours lie outside their existing frameworks of reference and expectations (Zapf 1993).

In the context of living and working in towns within the Murchison, the potential of the 'small town effect' reported in the Regions survey is illustrated in the case of Meekatharra, one of the Department and District's most difficult sites in terms of vacancy and turnover rates. The area of the town, picture in Figure 3.5, is 1.6 square kilometres (ABS 2011b). The nearest town of Cue is 115 kilometres south, while Geraldton is 536 kilometres away, or approximately a six and a half hour drive. Leisure and recreation facilities in town consist of a swimming pool, one pub, two restaurants (including the pub and motel), and one grocery store.

Figure 3.5: A view of Meekatharra from the highest point.



Source: Collins, M.T. (March 2012).

The limited facilities available in Meekatharra reflect the difference in services and infrastructure provision in places outside the major cities and regional centres across the state. While this provision has serious implications for delivery of and access to services for people living and working in these places, examined in more detail later in this thesis, this research is particularly concerned with its importance to people moving from outside the region and its function as an enabler or inhibitor to the decision to live and remain 'in place'.

Table 3.5 presents the remoteness of the District locations relative to selected locations in other Department districts based on the standard measures of geographic remoteness in Australia, the Accessibility/Remoteness Index (ARIA) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics Remoteness Structure.

Table 3.5: District office locations/key towns by measures of remoteness

| District | Location | ARIA Category | ARIA ++ Score | LORI | ASGS Remoteness Category |
|-------------------|-------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------|--------------------------|
| Perth | Perth | Highly Accessible | 0 | None | Major City |
| Murchison | Geraldton | Accessible | 2.76 | Low | Outer Regional |
| | Carnarvon | Remote | 8.16 | Moderate | Remote |
| | Coral Bay | Very Remote | 14.44 | High | Very Remote |
| | Meekatharra | Very Remote | 10.80 | Moderate | Very Remote |
| | Wiluna | Very Remote | 10.99 | | Very Remote |
| South-West | Bunbury | Highly Accessible | 0.94 | Low | Inner Regional |
| Goldfields | Kalgoorlie | Moderately Accessible | 3.97 | Low | Very Remote |
| Pilbara | Tom Price | Very Remote | 11.83 | | Remote |
| Kimberley | Broome | Remote | 9 | Moderate | |

(Source: Derived from The University of Adelaide, Australian Population and Migration Research Centre. Accessed online: ARIA website. <http://www.spatialonline.com.au/aria/>; Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA): Search Facility. Accessed online: <http://www9.health.gov.au/aria/ariasrch.cfm>. Access date: 6 July 2010.

As indicated by Table 3.5, access to services and infrastructure for locations across the District (including the towns in which District workers live and work) is highly variable. Furthermore, as evident from comparative scores for locations in other Department jurisdictions, the District shares relative levels of remoteness with jurisdictions in the north-west of the state.

However, further to noted limitations in measures such as ARIA to reflect factors such as travel conditions and access to transport (Pink 2011), the road networks that link sites within and outside the Murchison are limited. When taking into account travel conditions, the issue of accessibility and related issue of safety become more apparent. In addition to notorious road safety black-spots scattered throughout the District, particularly in the north, the Great Northern Highway is the main arterial route connecting the north and south of the state. (It is also the main road through the town of Meekatharra and location of the District's local office.) As such, it carries significant levels of heavy traffic, or 'freight trains'. As illustrated in Figures 3.6 and 3.7, the condition of the Wiluna–Meekatharra road (the Goldfields Highway) has been a long-standing issue due to its unsealed nature and variable access (Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) 2004). While the unsealed road presents risks due to reduced visibility from road dust and erosion from heavy traffic, wet weather periodically results in road closure and, as a consequence, reduced access to and from town. There also remain hazards from kangaroo, emu and livestock crossings and, as illustrated in Figure 3.7, the occasional abandoned vehicle.

Figure 3.6: Information on local road conditions: Shire of Wiluna



Source: Collins, M.T. (March 2012).

Figure 3.7: 'Encounters' on the road between Meekatharra and Wiluna



Source: Collins, M.T. (March 2012).

Mobile connectivity is severely limited across most parts of the Murchison. This is consistent with mobile telecommunications coverage in regional and remote

Australia outside of urban centres: while 85% of Australia's population is covered by mobile telecommunications, this accounts for only 15% of the landmass¹⁴. The lack of connectivity means that access to satellite mobile telecoms was the only means of telecommunications when travelling between sites. While the research sites are served by scheduled and chartered airline services to and from Perth and Geraldton, the frequency of the service and cost are such that they do not offer a feasible alternative travel option for most people. The findings of this and previous research highlight the importance of access to core services and infrastructure for living in the Murchison.

Preliminary findings for the most recent survey of living in WA's regions, *Living in the Regions 2013*, undertaken by the WA Department of Regional Development¹⁵ identified the Mid-West as one of only two regions where health services are seen as important to people's choice of location. Findings from both the literature and this research reveal the importance of access to education in the choice of location, and perceived deficits of education in regional and remote locations. An examination of the education services and infrastructure available in the Murchison illustrates how, outside of Geraldton, the level and quality of services and infrastructure is highly variable. This includes the provision of both options and alternatives at different levels of the education system. There is one primary school in Meekatharra and no high school. The options for secondary school in Carnarvon are one state high school and one Catholic middle school. Reflecting the relative isolation of many households and communities and distance to core services and infrastructure for people living outside of town, schools of the air and

¹⁴ Telstra Coverage Map: Mobile Phones [Online]. Telstra. Available: <http://www.telstra.com.au/mobile-phones/coverage-networks/our-coverage/>.

¹⁵ The full report on the survey was released after the submission date of this thesis.

the flying doctor service remain core providers of education and health services across the District.

The experience described by Day (2010) and echoed in accounts reported elsewhere in this thesis highlights another important dimension to how particularities of place influence attraction and retention. While the preceding discussion emphasised the effect on the perception of places within the Murchison as points of attraction or repulsion for people migrating to the town to live, work and/or visit, the research findings also tell of the 'revelation' (Day 2010) that comes to many of these 'outsiders'. Day's recollections echo those of Zapf (1993) who described this revelation in the Canadian context as being confronted with the reality, rather than the abstract, of the living conditions of Aboriginal people. In the context of remote Australia, Rowley (1971a) underscores the magnitude of the revelation whereby the conditions embody the value placed on Aboriginal people by wider society. The town of Wiluna is one such example. Government and non-government reports over the last decade have highlighted the poor infrastructure in the town that extends beyond the issue of the Meekatharra and Wiluna road (DIA 2004) and the provision of fundamental public health infrastructure (Brant 2006). While there have been considerable improvements in services and infrastructure in the town during the research period this has not extended to all built environments, as discussed in subsequent chapters in the context of the Department's office and accommodation in Wiluna (see Appendix 6).

Characteristics of the population

The lifestyle factors and relative liveability of the Murchison is a key platform for the promotion of the region as a place to come and live (Gascoyne Development

Commission 2012). However, in spite of reported strong performance in a number of sectors of the economy, the Murchison remains characterised by high levels of disadvantage and prevalence of factors known to increase the risk of children requiring care and protection.

Relative disadvantage

According to standard measures of relative socio-economic disadvantage¹⁶, three of the 21 local government areas (LGAs) within the District were ranked within the Top 10 areas of disadvantage in the state: Wiluna (3), Upper Gascoyne (6), and Cue (8). A total of six LGAs were ranked within the Top 20 disadvantaged, with Wiluna and Upper Gascoyne ranked in the top decile nationally. The relative level of disadvantage in the District is confirmed in Vinson's (2007) analysis of the locational dimensions of social disadvantage in Australia.¹⁷ Four LGAs in the Murchison appeared between five and 13 times in the top 14 list for each indicator. Of the 13 LGAs identified in the Most Disadvantaged and Next Most Disadvantaged categories, four were located in the Murchison. By relative disadvantage, Sandstone and Upper Gascoyne accounted for one-third of the most disadvantaged localities in the state, with Carnarvon and Murchison LGAs appearing in the Next Most Disadvantaged category. Furthermore, accounting for different analyses undertaken for his project, Vinson (2007) found that Mullewa was identified for

¹⁶ Derived from the ABS Census of Population and Housing, SEIFA is a tool for measuring the social and economic conditions of geographical areas in Australia. The Index provides four measures of economic and social wellbeing: Index of Advantage/Disadvantage; Index of Disadvantage; Index of Economic Resources; and Index of Education and Occupation REF

¹⁷ Utilising data from both Commonwealth and State/Territory agencies including the ABS, Australian Taxation Office, Centrelink and Australian Health Commission, Vinson's mapping of social disadvantage utilises up to 33 indicators (21 forms of disadvantage) relating to six broad areas: Social distress, Health, Community Safety, Economic, Education, and Community Engagement (Vinson 2007, 6).

inclusion on the Disadvantaged list. Table 3.6 lists the major characteristics of those localities identified as WA Most Disadvantaged.

Table 3.6: Major characteristics of 13 of Western Australia's most disadvantaged LGAs, including those in the Murchison

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Imprisonment | Year 12 not completed |
| Long-term unemployment | Early school leaving |
| Computer use | Low income families |
| Mortality ratio | Disability/sickness support |
| Internet access | Inadequate immunisation |

Source: Table 3-12 Vinson (2007, 42).

In reporting the 'distinctiveness' of the characteristics of localities that appear on the disadvantage lists, Vinson (2007) states that while most indicators are reported as common for all jurisdictions, inadequate immunisation and the mortality ratio stand out in the profiles of WA's most disadvantaged areas. Data for child and maternal health denotes the relative level of disadvantage for all localities in the state, including the Murchison, according to Vinson's primary and secondary factors.

Child development and health indicators

The Murchison fares relatively poorly on measures of child and maternal health (Department of Health 2010). For example, in the Mid-West Health region, which broadly corresponds to the Department's Murchison District, the crude birth rate is higher than that for the state and all regions with the exception of the north-west. While perinatal mortality is lowest for all regions outside of the metropolitan area, infant mortality is in line with most regions (with the exception of the Kimberley) but above that for the state. Reflecting both the higher infant mortality rate for babies and a high proportion of deaths among babies of Aboriginal

mothers in the post-neonatal period, the rates for Aboriginal children in the region are likely to be higher than the reported rates for the general population (WA Department of Health 2010). Deaths among babies of Aboriginal mothers in the post-neonatal period are five times the rate for babies of non-Aboriginal women (Department of Health 2010), with the main reported cause of death in most cases blamed on low birth weight and on lethal congenital anomaly.

Data from the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) provides a further indication of the development of children in the Murchison. The AEDI measures five areas of early childhood development: physical health and wellbeing; language and cognitive skills; communication skills and general knowledge; social competence; and emotional maturity (Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH) and Telethon Institute for Child Health Research (ICHR), 2009). The AEDI reports results for each area as average scores and accord how children are fairing relative to the national AEDI population. According to this classification, children are reported according to three measures of relative development: developmentally 'on track' (children who score in the top 75%); at risk (children who score between the 10th and 25th percentile); or vulnerable (children who score below the 10th percentile) (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). Within the national population, approximately 10% of children are classified as developmentally vulnerable for each domain (SEWPaC, AEDI, 2011). Two sets of data for AEDI results are available for the research period, broadly corresponding to the start and end of the research period (2009 and 2012). The results, presented in Appendix 7, reveal that on average children in the Murchison were developmentally better off in 2012 than in 2009, with some communities

reporting significant (positive) change. However, the results for the communities in which the Department's local offices are located (Geraldton, Carnarvon and Meekatharra) indicate that children in these communities are significantly more developmentally vulnerable than children within the national population. Furthermore, reflecting the spatial dimension to disadvantage across the Murchison, the results for both 2009 and 2012 show there is considerable variability in results across localities for which AEDI are available. In Meekatharra, nearly two in three children are developmentally vulnerable on more than one domain, and two in five children are developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains. The proportion of children in Meekatharra was significantly less 'on track' and more developmentally vulnerable than their peers in the state, with children in Meekatharra more than two and a half times more 'developmentally vulnerable' compared with WA average. The variability reflects the demographics of the local communities, specifically the percentage of Aboriginal population: Indigenous children were more than twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable than non-Indigenous children across the AEDI population (CCCH & ICHR 2009).

The AEDI results are significant to this research for two reasons: client focused, and practitioner focused. While the low AEDI scores highlight both cause and effect related challenges to the provision of children and family services to at-risk children in the District, it also suggests a less than positive profile of the local community for young families looking to move to the location with the Department.

Quality of life in the Murchison

In articulating its vision for the future of the Mid-West, the City of Geraldton (2012) stated its aim of being a place ‘that appeals to a broad cross-section of the community as somewhere to live, work, study and invest’, identifying in the process the objective of ‘enhancing the liveability of communities’ in order to achieve this aim (City of Geraldton 2012).

While this chapter has outlined both the opportunities and challenges for the Department in attracting and retaining workers to the District, anyone consulting the inaugural Quality of Life Index (published by Bankwest in 2008) might be inclined to form a less than positive view of its attributes. As discussed in Chapter 4, the increased popularity of liveability and quality of life indexes can be understood as a characteristic of the increased competition of place in late modernity including for attracting economic and human capital (i.e. ‘people’ and skilled people more specifically) (Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission 2008). Based on a number of key indicators (e.g. employment, household characteristics, including home ownership, education, health and crime rates), two of the District’s four locations to which it seeks to recruit – Wiluna and Meekatharra – are ranked in the bottom 10 of the 590 local government areas across appearing in the index, ranking 578 and 588 respectively, with the coastal locations of Carnarvon and Geraldton ranking within or just outside the bottom decile.

The future Murchison: coming attractions?

The period of the research witnessed a renewed interest in regional and remote Australia. This was largely driven by the importance of resources to the Australian

economy, and consequently the importance of resource-rich regions, but more importantly the neighbouring Pilbara and Goldfields. In the context of social policy issues, including child protection, the renewed interest centred on ‘closing the gap’ between Indigenous and non-Indigenous disadvantage. As with many other development initiatives in WA’s regions, the future development and prosperity of the Murchison is largely based on the continued demand for commodities that has driven the state’s resources boom. Major infrastructure and planning projects, such as \$12 billion Oakagee Port and Rail Development and Gascoyne Revitalisation Plan, are both premised on the regions’ proximity to the resources centres of the Pilbara and Goldfields and the resource markets of Asia, and the investment flows that than can be realised by this proximity. However, reflecting the unpredictability of change in the new, global era, within the period of the research the Oakagee development went from a much-anticipated major infrastructure project critical to the region’s future, to one indeterminately postponed.

It is not clear to what extent the reported slowdown in the resources sector and the outcome of the Commonwealth Senate Inquiry into Fly-In-Fly-Out (FIFO) will impact on the realisation of the Gascoyne Revitalisation Plan. The proposed development of towns such as Carnarvon and Exmouth as residential and recreational hubs for FIFO workers that form the basis of the plan underscore the dependence on the resources boom for the development of Murchison. However, while the Revitalisation Strategy emphasises the benefits of the development as facilitating unprecedented investment and improvement in the region’s service and infrastructure, thereby improving the relative ‘liveability’ of these places for

residents and visitors alike, the plan involves the fundamental transformation of these place into something else. As with all change, this includes the risk of a loss of the characteristics that attract people to place. The relatively undeveloped (in infrastructure terms) nature of Exmouth and Coral Bay has served as an important point of differentiating Ningaloo Reef and the surrounding area with comparable destinations, notably the Great Barrier Reef. As demonstrated in the Save Ningaloo Campaign of 2003–05, the sense of ‘other-ness’, in contrast to the mass tourism of the Great Barrier Reef, was a key platform in the successful opposition to proposed developments in and around the area. The Gascoyne Revitalisation Plan and Save Ningaloo Campaign illustrate the divergent perspectives on the future direction of the Murchison, and the relative meaning of ‘attractive’. In this sense, they demonstrate the paradoxical effect of the processes of globalisation in the transformation of place.

Just as the above drew from historical and literary accounts of the Murchison to present a sense of place, this research also looked to the ‘new world’ and social media discourses to gain an insight into perspective of the Murchison from an entirely more intimate perspective. A list of web links for a selected sample of this media is presented in Appendix 8.



This chapter sought to introduce the reader to the organisational and geographical microsetting for this research: the Department for Child Protection (the Department) and the geographical area that makes up its Murchison District (the District).

In presenting an overview of the environment in which the Department seeks to attract and retain, it has attempted to highlight factors that may be interpreted as either supportive or inhibiting the relative attraction of the Murchison District as a place to live and a place of work. However, as stated in the introductory chapter of this thesis and reflected in the conceptual framework for this research, this research is concerned with an examination of forces beyond the organisational and geographical setting including the temporal. It is to these forces that the following chapter turns the changing nature of the Family, Work and Place in late-modernity.

Chapter 4 The 'new' world

Ancient and durable obstacles are no more, interaction is global. Free trade rules the globe, ubiquitous, and the flow of ideas (and money and jobs) is so pervasive that geography ... 'is history'. The notion that place continues to play a key role in shaping humanity's still variegated mosaic is seen as obsolete, even offensive and deterministic. Choice, not constraint, is the mantra of the new flat-world proponents. Join the 'forces of flattening' and you will enjoy the benefits. Don't, and you will fall off the edge. The option is yours.

(de Blij 2009¹⁸)

As is consistent with the ecological model that guides this research, an attention to the cultural, institutional and temporal dimensions in which the research problem is embedded is fundamental to its inquiry. Sociological inquiry in recent decades has invariably focused on the profound social changes that have transformed individuals and institutions in the second half of the 20th century. The framing of this research in terms of the 'new world' is further to the central thesis that, as a consequence of modernisation, key areas of life and the world in which we live have changed in fundamental ways (Bauman 2007; Beck 2004; Elliott 2008; Elliot & Urry 2010; Giddens 1990, 1998; van Krieken et al., 2005). While for some the juggernaut of change that characterises the 'new world' thesis (in view of its purported break with the passing of 'modernity') is inevitable, for others this is inherently essentialist¹⁹ in its epistemological bent (Garrett 2004; de Blij 2009)

As the process of modernisation in the 18th and 19th centuries challenged prevailing certainties of the period, particularly the social forms and institutions

¹⁸ The power of place: geography, destiny, and globalisation's rough landscape. Oxford University Press Inc., New York.

¹⁹ Understood here in the sociological sense whereby 'complex phenomena are reduced to a single dimension' (Abercombie, Hill & Turner 2000).

which served as a frame of reference for social life, and replaced them with new forms and institutions, the current era remains subject to similar processes with the corresponding dissolution of old certainties. Reflecting its conceptualisation in relation to the 'modern' era and relative consensus of its transitional state, the current period has been interchangeably referred to as 'high modernity', 'late modernity', 'second modernity', 'liquid modernity', 'reflexive modernity' and a 'post-traditional' society. The post-traditional society of Giddens (1994) and the reflexive modernity of Beck (Beck 1992; Beck, Giddens & Lash 1994) reflect the defining characteristics of their theories and their times. Capturing the diversity and divergence of some of these theses and their focus, Bauman's (2007) use of the 'liquid' metaphor to describe the time and its nature is perhaps more evocative in conveying the dissolution of certainties and frames of reference which characterise the nature of this change²⁰.

While signifying unprecedented opportunities, the transformations have also been underscored for the uncertainty they bring (Bauman 2007). In the constitution of the 'self' as a consequence of the process of individualisation, this uncertainty is presented as fundamentally challenging 'ontological certainty' (Giddens 1990, 1991). The challenge to the individual is 'flexibility' and 'adaptability' in the absence of what Bauman terms 'solid' social forms and institutions. While signifying unprecedented opportunities, the transformations have also been underscored for the uncertainty they bring (Bauman 2007). In the constitution of the 'self' as a consequence of the process of individualisation, this uncertainty is

²⁰ A metaphor borrowed, if not attributed to that of Marx & Engel to describe the profound changes that were occurring as a consequence of the process of industrialisation in the 19th century.

presented as fundamentally challenging 'ontological certainty' (Giddens 1990, 1991). The challenge to the individual is 'flexibility' and 'adaptability' in the absence of what Bauman terms 'solid' social forms and institutions. The transformed social realities of Beck and Giddens' frameworks has led them both to challenge the foundation elements of sociological inquiry on the basis that concepts such as 'the family' have been fundamentally altered, transformed, and transmogrified. They argue that the consequence of this transformation has rendered such previous sociological inquiry as meaningless as shell (Giddens, 2000) or zombie (Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Beck & Willms 2004) concepts – based on their lack of resemblance with the changed realities of their subjects.

Invariably, these 'new world' theses have both provoked and elicited challenges to claims of authority. Critics of claims to universalism of the 'second modernity' thesis are rejected on the basis of the indisputably global nature of change in the early 21st century, where all peoples are 'known' because of the colonisation of place which has occurred through political, economic, cultural and 'technical' technologies (Giddens 1998). However, the unevenness of its 'revolutions' in the worlds of the self, family, work and place due to different geographies and cultural context are acknowledged (Giddens 1998; Hakim 2000). This last point is also critical to areas of interest to this research, particularly in relation to Aboriginal Australians and Aboriginal families and interventions under the 'pretext' of child protection, as examined in the context of public discourses on the Northern Territory Intervention in Chapter 7.

A recurrent theme across the literature reviewed for this thesis is not only the recognition of complexity in understanding issues/problems but also the limitations of existing paradigms or approaches to thinking about such problems. As evidenced by the approaches to understanding relationships to place and the problems of work presented in Chapters 5 and 6, and argument for the approach to this research in Chapter 2, traditional narrow conceptualisations of problems are increasingly exposed as being at best limiting and at worst irrelevant – a form of 'zombie' or 'shell' category in which concepts that emerge from the 'new world' theses to describe categories of thinking/knowledge whose content is devoid of meaning based on their irrelevance to the very phenomena they seek to describe.

In response, the traditional intellectual divisions of labour that have held throughout modernity are increasingly giving way to more pluralistic approaches that transcend traditional disciplinary divides (El Sawad, Ackers & Cohen 2007), incursions which Giri (2002) describes as 'border crossings'. Examples of such crossings found in examinations of Life and Work in this chapter include the recourse to psychoanalytical theory in understanding the self (Giddens 1991; Elliott 2008) and the increasingly integrated approach to understanding the work-family nexus (El Sawad et al 2007).

Individualisation and its consequences

Giddens (1999) asserts that of all the changes occurring in late-modernity, those that are occurring in our personal lives – our intimate relations, sexuality, emotional life, marriage and the family – are the most important. As advanced in his thesis of reflexive modernisation of the self, this change constitutes a global revolution of the self: how we think of ourselves, and how we form ties and

connections with others. (Whilst writing before the advent of social media and social networking sites, Giddens' assertions about the transformation of the self in second/late modernity is perhaps more prescient than his critics would admit.) Grounded in processes of (institutional) individualisation and detraditionalisation, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) argue the process of institutional individualisation has opened the realm of what was previously possible, to what is real or realisable. By embedding changes occurring at the level of the institutional and the individual, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) illustrate the self-reinforcing or reflexive nature of changes in transforming the self. This is most clearly illustrated in the case of women. The distinctiveness of the change experienced by women, and the consequence of this for the wider population, in the areas of family and work suggest the transformation of the 'female' selves have been the most significant and whose repercussions have yet to be fully felt (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1983 in 2002; Hakim, 2000). In their exposition of individualisation and women, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) locate the process of the changed social realities for women in the 20th century in the growing awareness and realisation of a life beyond a 'life for others', to 'a bit of a life of one's own'. This notion of changed realities and increased possibilities of women with regard to work and life choices is central to Hakim's (2000) preference theory.

Although grounded in the theories of reflexive modernity and reflexivity of the self, Hakim (2000) offers a theory that distinguishes between the characteristics of women's and men's lives, recognising the heterogeneity of preferences and therefore, possible life choices, within each cohort. Hakim (2000) distinguishes her theory from those in reflexive modernity on both theoretical and methodological

grounds, positing that her theory of preference is based on the actual evidence of women's preferences in late-modernity. As such, Hakim (2000) qualifies the lifespan of her theory based on current trends and estimates its use as a predictive tool is no more than 50 years. She argues that the assumed homogeneity of preferences within cohorts, notably women, has obscured the reality of the heterogeneity of preferences. Hakim (2000) argues that the limited conceptualisation of preferences in earlier research, with a particular reference to women's preferences, has had profound consequences for the realisation of life choices among women and men in late modernity. She asserts that the binary interpretation of women as work-centred or family-centred is the primary reason for the limited gains in solidarity among women, and not the divergent ideological or values position of women on either side of the debate. (This argument has attracted considerable opposition from feminist scholars such as Crompton and Harris (1998) and Tomlinson (2006), as argued later in this chapter).

Hakim (2000) suggests that, in future, a greater understanding and recognition of the heterogeneity of male preferences will invariably shape work/life policies. The changes to parental leave to incorporate paternity leave provide some evidence of this shift. Hakim (2000) offers a typology of women that recognises the heterogeneity of women and their predispositions. She divides women into three distinctive groups that reflect these dispositions, acknowledging that differences in patterns of behaviour will reflect the social, political and economic environment to which they are born, or to which they migrate (2000, 189). This classification of preferences is presented as Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: The full classification of women's work-lifestyle preferences in the 21st Century

| Home-centred | Adaptive | Work-centred |
|---|---|---|
| 20% of women varies 19%-30% | 60% of women varies 40%-80% | 20% of women varies 10%-30% |
| Children and family are the main priority throughout life | This group is most adaptive and includes women who want to combine work and family, plus drifters and unplanned careers. | Childless women are concentrated here. Main priority in life is employment or equivalent activities, such as politics, sport, art, etc. |
| Prefer not to work | Want to work, but not totally committed to work career | Committed to work or equivalent activities. |
| Qualifications obtained for intellectual dowry | Qualifications obtained with the intention of working | Large investment in qualifications for employment of other activities. |
| Number of children is affected by government social policy, family wealth, etc. Not responsive to employment policy | This group is very responsive to government social policy, employment policy, equal opportunities policy/propaganda, economic cycle /recession/growth, etc. Such as: income tax and social welfare benefits, education policies, school timetables, childcare services, public attitudes towards working women, legislating promoting female employment, trade union attitudes to working women, availability of part-time work and similar work flexibility, economic growth and prosperity and institutional factors generally | Responsive to economic opportunity, political opportunity, artistic opportunity etc. Not responsive to social/family policy |

Source: Hakim 2000, 158.

The inclusion of the 'Adaptive' women (Hakim 2000) typology challenges the conceptualisation of work and/or family, which may not reflect traditional

definitions such as paid work or a biological family. As the areas of activity for Adaptive women listed in Table 4.1 suggest, a narrow conceptualisation of 'life' activities as either family-centred or work-centred in organisational workforce strategies and public policy ignore the diversity of preferences and choices now available to and exercised by a growing cohort of women.

The political interest in the life of the family and the function of public policy in social control is reflected in Hakim's (2000) notes on the role of public policy in enabling or inhibiting the social changes that have transformed women's preferences. This has included the availability of flexible employment in some sectors, and policies to support participation of women in the labour market, such as leave arrangements to support maternity and childcare for women with families discussed later in this chapter.

Writing in the early 1990s, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) argued that in spite of the transformation of intimacy which has made work and life choices for women possible, such choices were yet to be realised within the home or elsewhere despite the growing awareness and/or desire for it (most notably, by women) on the basis of its fundamental challenge to the *status quo*. Thus 'tame' requests, such as the increased participation of men in domestic tasks, or choice not to have a family, create conflicts that extend beyond the private sphere and such decisions invariably become political on the basis of the economic consequences at the level of society. Such issues are at the heart of work-life conflict discussed next in this chapter, including their underscoring of the genuineness of choice and reminder of institutional forces including those of class and power (Garrett, 2004; Wright & Wysong 1998).

In his concept of the democratic family, Giddens (1998) emphasises the fundamentally democratic nature of relationships within the family more generally which have emerged in the present era. He points to the changes that have occurred within the family over the last half a century as reflecting increased democratisation within society more broadly. These changes include greater equality of the sexes within marriage, and increase in child rights within the parent-child relationship. Giddens (1998) suggests that the democratic process offers some suggestions on what the new 'democratic' family ideal might look like, and implies the ongoing site of the family as a site of potential conflict between opposing ideological positions. Giddens' (1998) concept of the democratic family has seven defining qualities, as set out in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: The democratic family

| |
|---|
| Emotional and sexual equality |
| Mutual rights and responsibilities in relationships |
| Co-parenting |
| Lifelong parental contracts |
| Negotiated authority over children |
| Obligations of children to parents |
| The socially integrated family |

Source: Giddens (1998, 95).

Firmly placing the family, or rather the democratic family, as a key principle of the renewal of civic society, Giddens (1998) identifies the care and protection of children as the 'single most important thread that should guide family policy' (1998, 94).

While Giddens' work was first published some time ago, its value to this research is twofold: the first relates to the changing nature of child protection work, while the second relates to the broader 'life'/family influences on child protection workers'

employment choices. The increased legal rights of children enshrined in legislation, such as that which underpins statutory child protection work (see Chapter 3), which has shifted to place the 'best interests of the child' at their centre rather than family preservation can be understood as both a cause and consequence of the democratisation of the family. The effect has been not only a re-examination of child protection interventions but as the expansion of types of abuse illustrate, changed definitions of the basis for such interventions.

The second point, one noted by Ford (2007) and argued in defence of the dominance of fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) in the resources boom (as examined later in this thesis) is that increasingly employment choices, particularly those involving relocation, are no longer unilateral decisions made by the main 'male' breadwinner. Rather, such decisions are more democratic than previous eras due to the change dynamics of family including women's increased participation in the workforce and their equality within marriage more generally. In the context of the attraction and retention of child protection workers to the Murchison District, consideration of the latter is important to future attraction and retention strategies.

4.1 The end and beginning of work

As in previous eras, the ongoing process of the re-organisation of work as a consequence of technological developments has continued to re-shape the relationships to work in late-modernity. This is argued as particularly true in the latter half of the century with the changes in patterns of workforce participation, the rate of industrialisation and shift to a 'post-industrial', 'knowledge' and service economy, and mobility of capital and hence production which has disrupted the

traditional relationship between labour, capital and place (Handy 1991; Sennett 1998).

The changed nature of work in late-modernity is contextualised in the effects of technological developments and the organisation of work and its consequences for social solidarity (Beck & Willms 2004; Bauman 2001, Bauman 2005. Beck (in Beck & Willms 2004) argues that the removal of old certainties such as the notion of full employment and a 'job for life' following the Second World War have introduced risk and uncertainty into a domain previously "assumed to be the centre of all social existence" (Beck 2004, 155). Furthermore, the participation of women in the labour market and their relative importance to economic futures has represented one of the most profound transformations in the 'world of work' in the present era.

The altered nature of work in late-modernity has invariably rested on changing definitions, characteristics and relations with the literature revealing a view of either the greater or lesser prominence ascribed to work in relation to the concept of the self and identity (Bradley, Erickson, Stephenson and Williams 2000; Sennett 1998). While there remains universal recognition of the equal value of alternative forms of work to paid work (Grint, 2005), such as care work, nevertheless the broadening of the definition of work particularly by feminist scholars has represented an important change in thinking about work in late-modernity. However, as argued later in thesis with regard to social work, developments in the formal recognition of the value of types of work associated with 'feminine' and 'vocational' work remain elusive (Healy, 2010).

Ironically, the effects of technological developments has meant that similar to their 'pre-modern' counterparts, work and home are becoming less separate in both the

formal and informal sense. Argued as presenting opportunities such as greater flexibility, particularly to manage the competing demands of work and life (Cairncross 1997), technology has also paradoxically been argued as exacerbating the tension between both domains by blurring these very boundaries (Elliott & Urry 2010).

While public discourses emerging during the research may have echoed those within the research literature that pronounce an 'end' to work at least for some types of work ('Writing on the wall for blue collar work', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11-12 February 2012), Strangleman (2007) argues that discourses regarding the end of work, including the contributions of Bauman (2005, 2007), Beck (Beck 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Beck and Willms 2004) and Sennett (1998) can be understood in the context of the nostalgia and sense of loss produced by changes to the nature of work. This includes the reported lack of control of workers in the face of the colonising processes of globalisation that have irrevocably changed the nature of work. Strangleman argues that the 'end of work' literature ignores the agency of individuals, rendering all workers as "passive victims of globalisation ... waiting to be exploited by all-powerful global capital" (Strangleman 2007, 100). This view is shared by Bradley and colleagues (Bradley et al 2000) who in challenging prevailing 'myths of work' in the late 20th century argued that predictions of the lack of resistance to the negative effects of the changing nature of work usually associated with the end of trade-unionism, ignores sites of resistance which permeate everyday working life. Strangleman's (2007) argument is an important one as it offers a counter-argument to the prescience of the universal in contemporary thinking about the transformation of

the domains of the Self, Work, Place and Life in late-modernity. As argued later in this thesis, while such thinking does offer important insights they have much in common with 'old frontiers' of sociological inquiry which by virtue of binary thinking have rendered visions of the past and future as either utopian and dystopian. It is this point which is argued by Hakim (2000) in the context of work/life preferences of women, Hakim's binary interpretation of women as being either 'work' or 'family' centred has meant in addition to the fundamental impediments to engendering solidarity based on this division, employment and other policies targeting this cohort have been inherently flawed in their capacity to respond to the majority of women who are inherently adaptive.

4.1.1 Women and work

While claims as to the feminisation of labour in the new world of work may be rightly criticised as somewhat inflated (Bradley et al 2000), a defining characteristic of the scenario of work in the present era is the changed relationship between women and paid work by virtue of their increased participation in paid employment. The reasons for women's increased participation in employment are attributed to a number of factors, both individual and institutional. As noted, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1983, in Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002) and Hakim (2000) locate the process of the changed realities for women in relation to work as reflecting an individual choice brought about by a broader set of institutional changes that have reduced previous constraints, including the possibility of a career. For others, the increased participation is an economic necessity. Thus, at the household level the uncertainty brought about by the destandardisation of labour has meant the necessity of a dual income (Sennett 1998). At the societal

level, the realities of an ageing population and consequent shrinking tax base to support public expenditure has meant women's participation is essential to maintaining productivity.

As evidenced by the proportion of the Department workforce who are women (Chapter 3), this research is particularly interested in emerging theories that examine the relationship between work and family in late-modernity, and more specifically the relationship between women, work and family – including their potential value in examining and evaluating workforce strategies to attract and retain. The value of Hakim's thesis to this research is in explicit recognition of the heterogeneity of preferences, particularly among adaptive women, its potential application to flexible employment policies that are not predicated on family but life choices more generally.

While Hakim's preference thesis has been a central influence on the debate between women's relationship to work and family in the past decade (El Sawad et al 2006; Tomlinson 2006) it has also attracted criticism. Much of this criticism has pointed to Hakim's alleged over-simplified representation of earlier contributions of feminist scholars' conceptualisation of women's preferences in binary terms (Crompton & Harris 1998; Tomlinson 2006) and her relative lack of attention to the fluctuation of women's relationship to work across the lifecycle (Tomlinson 2006). However, more fundamentally criticism of Hakim's theory has centred on the issue of choice (Crompton & Harris 1998; Tomlinson 2006). In challenging Hakim's proposition of choice, critics have highlighted that for many women the agency implied by Hakim ignores the constraints that act on women exercising their preferences. Such constraints include the availability of work, and part-time

work in particular, knowledge and skills capabilities to fully understand and access the various policy instruments that would enhance their choice. Thus, as Tomlinson (2006) highlights in relation to women with children's take-up of part-time work, this generally represents a compromise between work that is available and a 'preference' not to work full-time on the basis of its potential conflict with family. Such arguments underscore the existing tensions between the reconciliation of agency and structure within sociology, including among feminist scholars (Crompton & Harris 1998; Tomlinson 2006).

Building on the work of Hakim (2000) and Crompton and Harris (1999, cited in Tomlinson 2006), and posited as responding to their limitations, Tomlinson offers an alternative typology for explaining women's relationship to work and part-time work that expands on Hakim's 'adaptive' category. Tomlinson's typology offers four trajectories which she argues respond to changes in one of more 'spheres' which impact on women's transition in and out of work: care networks (including access to both formal and informal care), work status, policy context (including disincentives to work) and work-life balance preferences.

Whether the 'new' scenario presented by women's participation in work represents the realisation of choice/preferences, including career (Hakim 2000), economic necessity (Tomlinson 2006) or coercion, as previously noted there is general consensus that this changed relationship has had a profound effect on the lives of all individuals and institutions implicated in this web of relations (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002). In the context of the domestic or family sphere, this impact is understood as largely negative not only due to the renegotiation of traditional domestic/family roles but where in the reality the domestic division of labour

remains relatively unchanged and thus women's workloads have not decreased but increased (El Sawad et al 2006). This has meant that women's increased participation in the labour market has been accompanied by a simultaneous increase in reported work-family conflict.

The recognition of this increasingly differentiated and more complex relationship between spheres of work and life may account for the different emphasis in the last decade on a discourse of balance, conflict or enrichment. As the discourses on the increasingly problematic relationship between the worlds of work and family emphasise, the conflict essentially rests on traditional models of both: where men are breadwinners engaged in (market) work, which is typically conceptualised as full-time, and women are engaged in (unpaid) care/domestic work or (paid) work and excluded or marginalised within the world of paid work (Tomlinson 2006).

4.1.2 Women and work: The case for becoming more family friendly or friendly?

The consequence of the 'care gap' – and therefore conflict between the spheres of work and family which have been exposed by women's increased participation in paid employment without the commensurate reduction in care/domestic work – has meant that the issue of work-life balance has taken on a different complexion and urgency in the last decade (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006; Drago, Pirretti & Scutella, 2007).

An examination of the literature on work-family-gender issues within sociology confirms Wright and Wysong's (1998) claim of its extensive treatment. They argue that two distinct themes are identifiable: those attending to micro-level issues of the gendered division of labour and those attending to macro-level issues. The influences on the increased attention to work-life balance as a subject of interest

and policy priority generally reflects the tension between the two themes, ranging from the realisation of greater gender equality in work (Baird, Williamson, & Heron 2012), to the changing zeitgeist around quality of life (Birch & Paul 2003) and strategies of control to ensure productivity (Wright & Wysong 1998). However, there is general agreement that the 'institutional lag' in accommodating this conflict has seen the escalation of work–life balance as a national priority across the globe (Crompton & Lyonette 2006; Wright & Wysong 1998).

The emergence of family friendly policies (FFPs) has been the main policy response by government and industry to ameliorate this conflict. These are generally understood as a form of flexible work arrangements that facilitate greater work–life balance by reducing the potential conflict between the spheres of work and family (Bagilhole 2006; Donnelly, Proctor-Thomson, & Plimmer 2012). While the unevenness of their development across the globe, including across post-industrial societies (Donnelly et al 2012; Wright & Wysong 1998) has been noted, so has the relatively uncritical evaluation of their success (Donnelly et al 2012; El Sawad et al 2006; Wright & Wysong 1998). Conceptualised as inherently positive, both for individual employees and organisations, including for attraction and retention (Bagilhole 2006), research has revealed that even within societies with 'model' approaches such as the Scandinavian countries (El Sawad et al 2006; Thornquist 2006), the universal rhetoric of their success is in contrast with the evidence. It is on this basis, that FFPs arguments constitute a form of policy 'mirage' (Wysong & Wright 1998) or 'shell' (Bagilhole 2006). Indeed, in their written summary on the findings of an international symposium on careers and family friendly policies, El Sawad and colleagues (2007) argue that that while the

concept of family-friendly careers may be 'rhetorically familiar', in spite of the widespread introduction of family-friendly policies by the state and industry across the globe there is little evidence as to their relative success in supporting family-friendly careers and they remain "empirically under-scrutinised and conceptually under-developed" (El Sawad et al 2006, 275). Across the USA (Wright & Wysong 1998), Europe, the UK (Bagilhole 2006) and New Zealand (Donnelly et al. 2012), research reviewed for this thesis reveals that utilisation of family-friendly policies is significantly lower than awareness, with the emphasis placed on individuals in the resolution of work-life conflict (Crompton & Lyonette 2006). This argument is supported by studies undertaken of Department initiatives (Binns & Todd 2010), presented in Chapter 8. Thus in spite of the appearance of choice, the research shows a number of barriers to accessing family-friendly policies, from management within existing workload to their perceived risks to job security and career development.

Reflecting the reality of the heterogeneity of life preferences in the present era the research has also underscored the inherent fairness of family-friendly policies. Noting their utilisation within a relatively narrow sub-population (women with children), their emphasis on enabling balance between the work and 'family' is reported as disenfranchising other cohorts, including women without children, and men. Thus, in terms of addressing gender equity issues relating to work, Bagilhole (2006) suggests that the axis of focus of family-friendly policies to women with children has not only overridden that of gender, but represents a more fundamental issue that presents the question of whether "family-friendly

policies and equal opportunities are a contradiction in terms?" (Bagilhole 2006, 327).

The issue of the narrow framing of family-friendly policies is of particular interest to this research in view of the increased recognition of the plurality and fluctuation of choices/preferences across the lifecycle and the potential of flexible work policies in supporting attraction and retention in an otherwise constrained labour market as argued in the context of public sector agencies such as the Department in Chapter 10.

4.2 Placelessness and belonging

As with the world of Work, expositions on Place in late modernity have pronounced its end. While this end is inextricably linked to technological developments in transport and communications, technologies of war that emerged in the 20th century have also been noted for their capacity to put an end to place in the literal sense by virtue of their capacity to annihilate the planet (Casey 1997).

As in previous epochs, the mobility of people across the globe in the present era has emerged from the imperatives of survival and opportunity, and effected a transmission of influences from one place to another, from the movement of people, to language, ideas and disease (Elliott & Urry, 2010; de Blij 2009; Urry 2007). Unlike previously, technological developments in the 20th century have meant this mobility or flow has occurred on an unprecedented scale (de Blij 2009; Urry 2007), including the reportedly largest peaceful movement of people across borders in human history (Urry 2007). Perhaps more significantly, the technologies of transportation and communication that have emerged in

modernity have bridged the distance between time and space: argued by Giddens (1991) as one of the defining characteristics of the period. Thus in the 'new' world connected by a global network of transport and telecommunications the qualities and relationships historically grounded in and bounded by place are no longer bounded by locality, but fundamentally global in nature (Beck & Willms 2004, 40; Giddens 1991; Harvey, 1989). The effect has been a transformation of place in both the material and existential sense, as Allen and Hamnett suggest (1995, x):

The world is shrinking, or so it seem. At the end of the 20th century distances are no longer what they used to be. True, 50 miles is still 50 miles, but our ability to cross such distances has altered greatly and so too has our notion of just how far is fifty miles.

The global and 'colonising' nature of these developments has led Bauman (2007) to assert there to be 'no terra nullius' in late-modernity. As argued for the process of change in late-modernity more generally, the transformation of place is argued as necessarily uneven but inevitable. Thus even populations previously disconnected from 'modernity', such as indigenous peoples in remote South America, are connected in this web (Giddens 1991). (This phenomenon is evidenced by the contemporaneous engagement of Aboriginal peoples of the Murchison District in traditional (customary) practices and social media reported in Chapter 3). Furthermore changes to place have invariably met with resistance and adaptation. Indeed, Brockelman (2003) argues that a renewed interest in place by Casey (1997) and others in sociology, philosophy and geography in the last two decades represents a nostalgic turn and is fundamentally tied up in questions of modernity.

The increased significance of capital – financial, cultural and human – and its relationship to particular places has meant that examinations of place in late-modernity have inevitably focussed on their relativeness attraction as sites of both production and consumption (Urry 2007). From the supply of cheap, skilled labour on the Indian sub-continent to support the support the information and communications technological needs of the globe, to the importance of iconic and unique landmarks to attract the global travellers, in an increasingly global marketplace where flights of capital are not only possible but common, characteristics which define the relative attractiveness of one place over another are themselves commoditised and traded. Thus, places are preserved or shaped in order to become what Urry (2007) describes as a 'loci of affect'. As discussed later in this chapter, this competition to attract capital of all forms underpins the concept of liveability that has emerged in late-modernity. Furthermore, as discussed elsewhere in this thesis, this concept is integral to practices of the Department, government and other decision-makers in enhancing the relative attractiveness of the District as a place to work.

The paradoxical effect of the preservation and manipulation of place that constitutes 'place-making' in late modernity is that they simultaneously become places of inclusion and exclusion, sameness and difference, and thus attraction and repulsion. Thus, while cities of the global north become economic and cultural havens for the global elite and meccas for what de Blij (2009) refers to as mobals, migrants who migrate for opportunity rather than forced relocation or displacement (de Blij 2009), they simultaneously become fortresses to repel

others, notably refugee and asylum seekers and 'undesirable' mobals (Bauman 2007; Davis 1992; de Blij 2009; Urry 2007).

The process by which these places are 'transformed' to appeal to the desired 'visitor' or resident is relatively universal. Thus, while the presence of iconic landmarks, both built and natural, may provide the locus by which to attract, for places without such attributes the challenge is to adapt or be left behind. However while the effects of the processes of globalization has meant that through the mobility of ideas and capital such as through global retail and cultural institutions, places geographically dispersed may share common characteristics, such as the ubiquitous presence of a McDonalds 'Café', in some places this sameness is the cornerstone of processes of place-making. Thus, originating in the thesis that it is through practices that the affective relations between people and places are built (Low & Altman 1992; Milligan 1998; Urry 2007; Tuan 1974), the 'sameness' becomes symptomatic of comfort, solace and certainty, where 'performances' can be routinised and interacted even while seemingly out of place. Whether by design or by as an inevitable consequence of globalisation, the phenomena of sameness has been compared to the 'theme park' by Sorkin (1992, xiii) who suggests that place "is a fully a-geographic: it can be inserted equally in an open field or in a heart of town". Thus, like any market, the challenge for 'place' in late-modernity, particularly those outside the global centres, therefore becomes a question of whether to diversify or occupy a niche corner of the market, with the inevitable risks posed by either scenario in achieving the desired outcome: the attraction of 'certain' strangers and repulsion of others (Urry 2007). As discussed in subsequent chapters, for locations such as the Murchison dependent on in-migration to meet

the demand for skilled, professional labour, the necessity of attracting 'certain strangers' becomes essential to supply. However, as Chapter 3 and the following chapter posit, the question remains as to whether the attributes of these locations are sufficient to engender the 'loci of affect' required to meet current and future demands.

4.2.1 Liveability

The increased competition between places in late-modernity has meant that new concepts and classifications have appeared within which to frame thinking about place. One such concept with particular relevance to this research is that of Liveability. While there remains some debate as to how to define liveability (Stevens 2009), and its application outside urban environments, in the Australian context it is generally understood to relate to attributes of a place that supports quality of life and wellbeing (Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (VCEC) 2008, 7). Liveable cities remain one of four pillars of the National Urban Policy for Australian Cities (Department of Infrastructure & Transport 2011).

Signifying the global and local importance of liveability to place, the relative liveability of places is consistently revealed as an issue in the competitiveness of places within Australia's regions, particularly outside metropolitan regions and in northern Australia (Hugo et al., 2010). This includes their ability to attract and retain (skilled) labour and capital. As evident from the Department's recruitment campaigns, discussed in Chapter 8, the liveability of the Murchison is a critical platform to attract forms of capital to the locality.

There are a number of 'instruments' by which liveability and related constructs such as amenity are measured. Examples of three such instruments are presented

in Table 7.2 and include that produced by the Economist's Intelligence Unit (EIU), 'global' human resource management company Mercer and West Australian bank, Bankwest.

Table 4.3: Measurements of Liveability and Quality of Life

| EIU | Mercer | Bankwest |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stability: Prevalence of crime, civil unrest • Healthcare: availability of public and private healthcare, quality of healthcare provision • Culture & Environment: climate (humidity/temperature rating), discomfort to travellers); recreation and availability of consumer goods • Education: availability of private education, general public education indicators • Infrastructure: transport (quality of road network, quality of public transport), housing (availability of good quality housing); Utilities (quality of energy provision, quality of telecommunications infrastructure) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political & social environment • Economic environment • Socio-cultural environment • Health & sanitation • Schools & education • Public services & transport • Recreation • Consumer goods • Housing • Natural Environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average taxable income • Employment rate • Owner occupation rate • Percentage of houses that are detached • Crime against property (per 100 000 population) • Proportion of 16 year olds enrolled in secondary school • Proportion of households with broadband internet connection • Proportion of the population in good health • Proportion of houses that are vacant • Proportion of persons (over the age of 15) who volunteer. |

Source: VCEC 2008

While not all of them focus on characteristics of place, as evident from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) *Better Life Index*²¹, as social constructs they inevitably reflect their intended purpose. This includes their scale or place type: focussed on urban areas and (major) cities in particular, they rarely accommodate the differentials of places at the geographical margins where those geographies are defined as rural and remote. Therefore, the

²¹ Available online: <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org>.

degree to which Liveability indexes published in international business and lifestyle publications *The Economist* or *Monocle* are useful for place-based interventions in regional and remote Australia is highly questionable. However, such indexes are important as examples of products that are used to represent place, and in this case their inherent liveability that pervade public discourses and therefore shape individual and collective perceptions of place. They also provide a useful frame by which the liveability of places within the Murchison District might be measured, as reported in Chapter 3 with reference to the Bankwest Quality of Life Index.

Chapter 5 ‘Loci of affect’: The enduring attraction of place

The Department’s selection of the Murchison as a site of this research meant that from the beginning the subject of place has been a central focus of this research. The adoption of an ecological framework to examine the research problem recognises the centrality of Place in view of the notion that all relationships and interactions whether in the work or ‘life’ domain are embedded in a place ‘world’ or setting. As revealed in by the treatment of Place in discourses of late-modernity in the previous chapter, even in the ‘new’ world where technological developments have transformed our relationship to place as on which is dis-embedded from time and space (Giddens 1990; Harvey 1989; Urry 2004), place matters. Indeed, some argue that the effect of increased mobility means that place matters more. Casey (1997) argues the effective lack of security engendered by the mobilities of late-modernity as “ever seemingly out of place ... behoves us to understand what place is all about and what it means to be in place in the first place” (xii).

This chapter seeks to explain outside the domain of the ‘new’ world’ why place matters, and what implications this may have for attraction and retention of child protection workers in the Murchison. Structured in two parts, it reflects the dimensions of the ecological model, moving from the particular to the general. The first part of the chapter examines the particularities of the broader geographical context in which the research occurs: regional and remote Australia. By looking at the specifics of Australia’s geography, the case for considerations of the additional dimensions to understanding the particularities of place in the Department’s attraction and retention strategies is made. Reflecting the influence of culture and

values occurring at the level of the Macrosystem, the first part of the chapter examines the ways attitudes towards place are shaped, and the relationships between place, attachment and identity. Drawing primarily on contributions within sociology, but also philosophy and human geography, the chapter reveals the complexity of our relationship to place and by extension solutions to the 'problems' of place.

The reference to 'old frontiers' in the thesis title serves to evoke not only a distinct geographical place, namely 'beyond' the metropole, in which the Murchison District is located, but also to locate the research inquiry within existing knowledge systems. The term frontier has been an important one in the history of Australia and other territories of the 'new world' (Alexander 1947; Greenway 1972; Reynolds 1987). In the Australian context the use of the term has largely been influenced by its use in the American context (Alexander 1947) to refer to the 'landscape beyond settlement' such as the wilderness or outback. Furthermore, as discussed later in this chapter, the iconic status which such 'landscapes' hold in the national story for some people, and places of trauma for others means that the use of the term in this research is to evoke the complex dynamics of the places in which District Workers practice.

A particular type of place, a particular set of challenges: regional and remote Australia

Australia's statistics mark it out as a geographic outlier or curiosity in the register of places. To view Australia from its 'place' on conventional maps of the world, inhabiting an island continent at the 'edge' of the world just above Antarctica, its relative isolation from the historically dominant centres of power and cultural

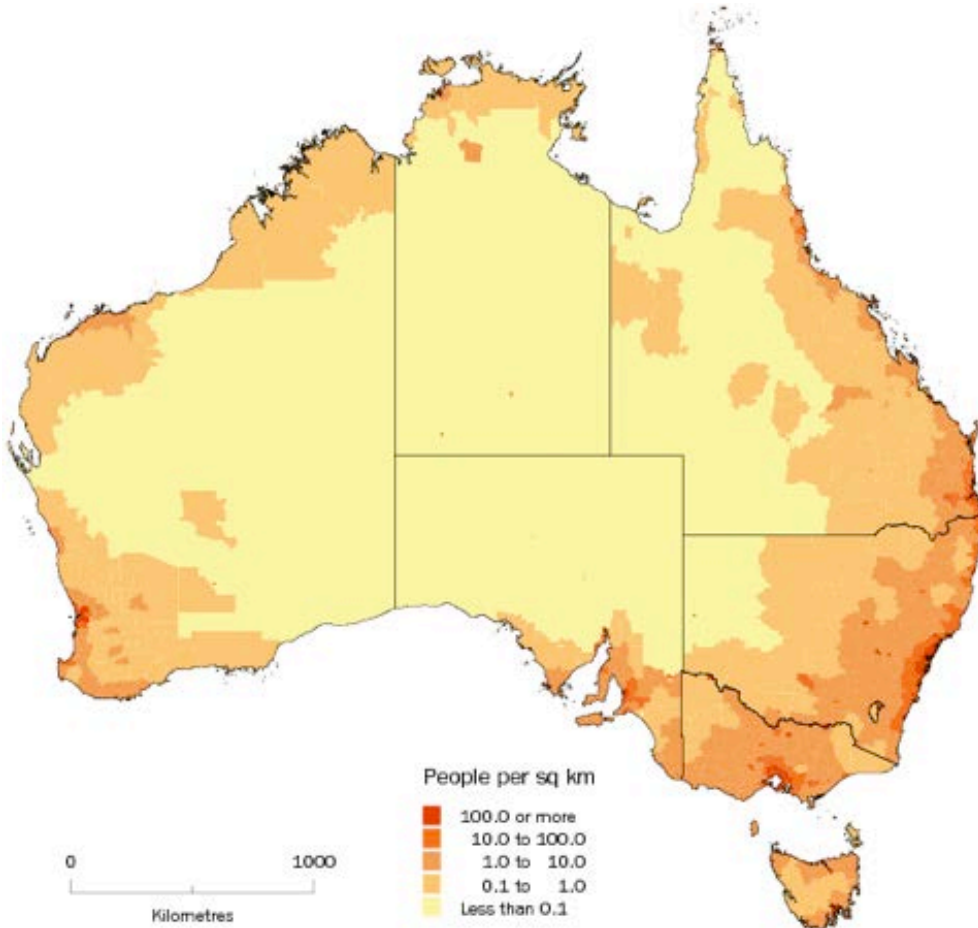
reference points of Europe and the United States have served to reinforce the sense of isolation and Australia's 'place' at the geographic margins. As Blainey (1966) remarked in his preface to *The Tyranny of Distance*, 'Distance is as characteristic of Australia as mountains are to Switzerland' (1966, x). Whether traversing the continent that is a country, or travelling further afield, distance remains an inescapable condition of mobility within and to and from Australia, as evidenced by the size of the Department's Murchison District (Chapter 3).

While advances in transportation technologies may have reduced the 'tyranny of distance', distances persist. Travelling by air, the flight time from Australia's capital city to its most northern capital city of Darwin is four and a half hours, from Perth to London no less than 17 hours. Furthermore, while pronouncements of the death of distance in 'late-modernity' bought about by expansion of information and communication technologies, telecoms and internet access across the Australian continent remains underdeveloped relative in contrast with its status as a 'developed' nation.

As the seventh largest country (by landmass), the vast size of Australia, comprising some 7.7 million square kilometres, contrasts with its population size, roughly 22 million people, or 2.9 persons per square kilometre (ABS Year Book 2012). Australia is not only one of the most urbanised countries in the world (Hugo et al., 2010), but its metropolitan-centric pattern of settlement means that outside of its capital cities, where more than two-thirds of the population reside, the next biggest population centres are disproportionately small in comparison (Bureau of Infrastructure Transport and Regional Economics BITRE, 2011). This is clearly illustrated in Figure 5.1a, a map of Australia showing the distribution of the

population. To put this in perspective: the remote areas of Australia²², which broadly comprise around 80% of Australia's land area (or 6.3 million square kilometres) are home to about 2% of the country's population (BITRE 2011).

Figure 5.1a: The distribution of the Australian population



Source: ABS (2013a)

The apparent imbalance between population and landmass is central to propositions of a 'big Australia', which periodically emerge in the national conversation (ABC Boyer Lecture Highlights, 2003). However, as the driest of continents (ABS, 2012), water remains one of the most significant constraint on

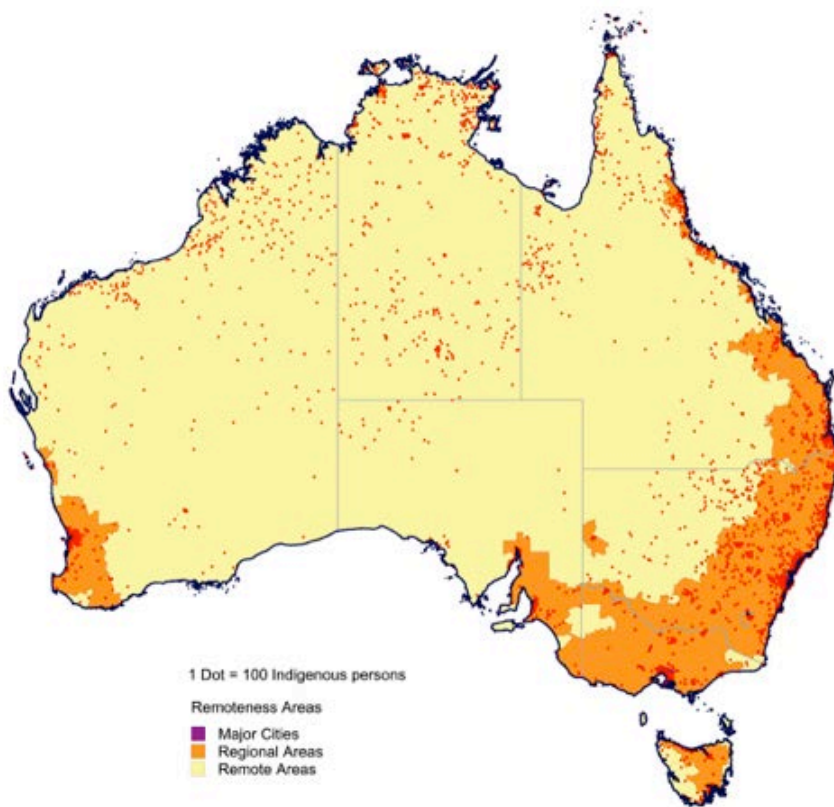
²² In this context comprising ABS statistical geographical areas defined as 'Remote' and 'Very Remote'.

population growth (Hugo et al 2010.) and, as argued below, the liveability and attraction of some places (Maru, Chewings & Sparrow, 2012).

The 'metropolitan primacy' structure of Australian settlement (CSIRO 2001, in Bureau of Infrastructure Transport and Regional Economics BITRE, 2011) is most clearly illustrated in the case of Western Australia and the Murchison (as indicated in Chapter 3). More than three-quarters of the state's population lives in Perth (ABS, 2012, 2013b). This metropolitan-centric structure of Australian settlement has inevitably led to the corresponding concentration of services and infrastructure in these localities, presenting a significant challenge to service and infrastructure development and delivery in (outer) regional and remote Australia (BITRE, 2011). Such challenges include the attraction and retention of skilled labour and professionals (Haslam-McKenzie, 2007), as discussed later in this chapter and Chapter 6.

Consistent with the general Australian population, the majority of Australia's Indigenous people are concentrated in the major cities. However, as illustrated by Figure 5.1b, relative to the general population Australia's Indigenous people are more geographically dispersed across regional and remote Australia. As reported elsewhere in this thesis (Chapters 3 and 6), the characteristics of this population combined with the particular geographic and population characteristics of Australia more generally present additional challenges for the provision of services and infrastructure to Indigenous communities as evidenced by the discourses on government regional policies in the WA and NT in Chapter 7.

Figure 5.1b: The distribution of the Australian ATSI population



Source: (ABS, 2013a)

New and old mobilities: why people move

The reasons why people move are of fundamental interest to this research in view of its concern with the attraction and retention to place. As canvassed in both Chapters 3 and 8, this interest in migration reflects characteristics of the place and work that do not at present support large-scale employment from within place. The consequence of the intersection of these issues is that migration models of employment are central to the Department's to attract and retain to its Murchison District.

The reasons why people move are complex. As argued elsewhere in this thesis in relation to other topics of interest, this complexity is argued as defying narrow

theoretical models of the multiplicity of reasons why people move (Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) 2011). As evidenced in the mobilities discourses examined in Chapter 4, the mobility of people in the current era reflects both real and perceived opportunities, choice and constraint. From increased opportunities for transnational employment from globalised labour markets, to displacement due to war, poverty and natural disasters, the mobilities discourses underscore the foundations of population movement in both voluntary and involuntary motivations. In the Australian context, five main influences are identified as drivers of contemporary population movement:

1. urbanisation;
2. age related;
3. lifestyle migration;
4. economic restructuring; and
5. government policies (BITRE 2011).

In view of the location of this research in (outer) regional and remote Australia, an examination of these influences with particular relation to these geographies requires attention.

While successive Commonwealth and state/territory governments have adopted decentralisation policies to counter the imbalance from the metro-centric settlement pattern, most recently evidenced by policy discourses examined in Chapter 7, Australians (including 'new migrants') continue to prefer to live along the coast in the major cities and hinterland/satellite regions (BITRE, 2011). Population trends for inland centres and remote areas of Australia are in stark contrast to the growth trend of its coastal cities and hinterland areas. Outside of

the fluctuations in population associated with mining activities, the population is in decline in both inland and remote centres (BITRE, 2011). Outside of Australia's coastal cities and inland areas as identified as 'high amenity' areas, inland and remote areas continue to experience net migration loss (BITRE 2011), as illustrated by population decline in the District locations of Meekatharra and Wiluna presented in Chapter 3.²³ As with the net positive migration of older people to coastal areas, this loss is attributed to lifestyle and lifecycle factors, including the longstanding issue of young people leaving for education and employment opportunities (BITRE 2011) as well as a decline in traditional industries such as the agricultural sector. Indeed, the net migration out of many inland towns as a result of declining traditional industries has been identified as compounding the ongoing negative effects of historical decline in service and infrastructure provision with the flight of capital, including cultural capital, resulting in further reduced amenity and increased disadvantage for those 'left behind' (Budge 2005; BITRE 2011).

The demographic pressures from increases in retirees and young Indigenous populations in (outer) regional and remote centres are identified as placing particular demands on critical services and infrastructure (Hugo et al., 2010). Population pressures on coastal centres – largely driven by the 'sea-change' phenomenon and the continued preference for coastal living – is identified as placing significant pressures on Australia's marine and coastal environments. This underscores the negative impact of current patterns of population growth on their sustainability as environmental, cultural and economic assets (Hugo et al., 2010).

²³ Note BITRE Table T33 (2011, 72), which identifies Carnarvon in the top five population declines.

Furthermore, the predicted effects of climate change on these regions imply that the climatic conditions will become more extreme in the future (Beer, Tually, Kroehn & Law 2012; Maru, Chewings & Sparrow, 2012).²⁴ While the impact of drought is a longstanding factor in the population decline of inland areas (BITRE 2011), the effects of predicted climate change are identified as not only identified as negatively impacting on the liveability and attractiveness of regional and remote Australian areas for migration (Maru et al., 2012), but a major issue in (sustainable) population and regional policy deliberations (Hugo et al., 2010).

Successive national and state/territory governments have initiated various policy instruments to support decentralisation of both population and employment, as evidenced by the 'super-town' development strategies for WA's regions and skilled migration schemes examined in Chapter 7. At the state/territory level instruments such as the district allowances available to District employees as WA Public Sector employees (see Chapter 8) illustrates the type of incentive designed to subsidise the costs of living. The common narrative of such incentives as 'hardship' allowances, suggest their role in compensating and/or offsetting the associated cost of living in regional and remote Australia as not only financial and but relating to relative quality of life.

While domestic migration to coastal areas, including inter-regional migration, accounted for most of this population growth, the migration was typically from major cities within their own state (BITRE 2011). As examined in Chapters 7 and 8, including in relation to the Department's own migration schemes, international migration continues to be a primary source of Australia's population and

²⁴ Drought on population decline of inland areas is well established.

employment growth. Drivers of international migration are identified as ranging from the increased employment opportunities due to the globalisation of labour markets, universalisation of education, reduced time and travel costs due to the expansion of mass global transportation networks, and relative economic and lifestyle opportunities in developed countries compared with less developed countries (Hugo 2004, in BITRE 2011). As evidenced by the attraction and retention of skilled professionals from overseas, particularly from less developed countries, to regional and remote Australia, the appeal to economic and lifestyle motivations opportunities have been central to attraction strategies.

Attraction and retention

The pattern of Australia's settlement is also implicated in the recourse to 'mobile' workforce models, as examined in Chapter 7 in relation to the mobilities for work in Australia's resource sector. The recourse to fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) models and their automobile equivalent, drive-in-drive-out (DIDO), is argued on a number of levels apart from the obvious issue of the distance between the location of the resources labour market and supply of labour. Such arguments include dynamics associated with work and capital in the new world, such as lower establishment costs from traditional town development, and lifestyle and mobilities – with the preference for FIFO purportedly driven by quality of life issues and a preference not to relocate and live in remote locations (BITRE 2011; Haslam-McKenzie 2008). As reported in Chapter 7, the effects of the resources boom are typically framed in binary opposites as either 'good' or 'bad'. Standing on the side of the good are the economic opportunities for both skilled and unskilled labour for locals, and Aboriginal 'locals', in places of few employment opportunities. The revenue from

the resource economy has been a major driver of regional development and planning in Western Australia, and Australia more broadly, directly benefitting District workers in enhanced benefits designed to attract and retain. Conversely, the effects of the boom, including proposals to develop the Mid-West region around residential and recreational opportunities, have been identified with compounding cost of living and housing affordability issues already negatively impacted by coastal migration. The net effect in many towns and communities adjacent to resource centres, such as that of towns within the Murchison, is one of both hope and despair: hope of benefitting from the boom in terms of investment in services and infrastructure and therefore 'competitiveness'; despair as to its colonising effects, including diversity and unique character of small towns.

However, as the discourses relating to regional and remote Australia presented in Chapter 7 reveal, the presence of Australia's Indigenous peoples mean that the historical legacies of settlement have far deeper effects than the distribution of the population. These effects, as examined in the next chapter, are central to the particularities of child protection work in the Murchison: the experience of Aboriginal Australians in a post-colonial landscape.

5.1 Thinking about place

The focus of the emerging disciplines of Sociology and Urban and Regional Planning in the 19th century encapsulated the scientific turn in an 'age of reason' to the key questions of their time: the effects of the massive social change brought about by the process of industrialisation and urbanisation. While the focus of each inquiry reflected the inherent orientation of each discipline, they were invariably preoccupied with the problem of transformation of place. For Planning, this focus

was on mitigating the effects through systematic planning of the urban form (Hall, 1975). For Sociology, the focus was on the effects of the massive social changes effected by these processes, in particular on relations within place (Tonnies, 2001²⁵; Van Krieken et al., 2005). The fields of 'urban' and 'rural' which emerged early in the discipline's history reflects the pre-occupation with the effects of social change on these places (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner 2000).

In spite of the power of Place (Cresswell, 2004), it has been considered to be devalued within philosophy (Casey, 1997), sociology and the social sciences (Gieryn, 2000; Low & Altman, 1992). This devaluation is largely attributed to the elevation of Time and Space (Casey 1997; Gieryn 2000). The influence of phenomenology on thinking about place means that there is considerable convergence across the disciplines (Casey, 1997; Cresswell, 2004). This is most clearly illustrated in definitions of place in relation to space: where place is essentially defined as a space transformed by meaning (Agnew 2005; Tuan 1974). Tuan's (1974, 92) concept of 'Topophilia', a 'love of place', is one term that has endured in geography to describe the depth of meaning that place can hold based on the (positive) affective relations between people and places. Reflecting that the opposite also holds to be true, the term topophobia has been used to describe the depth of meaning where these relations are inherently negative (Pocock 1994; Relph 1994).

Within Geography, Cresswell (2004) identifies three main approaches to thinking about place: descriptive, social constructionist and phenomenological. He argues that while each approach can be understood to offer a different level of thinking,

²⁵ Publication is the translation of Tonnies' classic work by Jose Harries

ranging from the superficial in descriptive approaches to the existential in phenomenological, all three approaches are essential to research on place to take into account “the “full complexity” of place to humanity (2004, 51). As evidenced by the treatment of place in this thesis, from the description of characteristics of the Murchison in Chapter 3, to perspectives of District workers in Chapter 9 and scholarly contributions to understanding our relationship to place in this chapter, this research takes into account Cresswell’s recommendation of attending to all three approaches.

Casey (1997) suggests it is the *a priori* nature of Place that has kept it largely hidden from view or trivialised within philosophical theory. To illustrate the power of place and its significance to human existence, Casey (1997) urges the reader to imagine a world without place. He suggests that for most people, this thought experiment is almost impossible as ‘to be’ in this world means to be ‘in place’. It is this foundational relationship between place and identity that informs a renewed interest in place within human geography in recent decades (Cloe & Johnston 2005).

As evidenced by the role of visual representations of place in individual and collective imaginations discussed later in this chapter, it has been argued that the privileging of the visual in our experience of place is a product of the dominance of the visual senses in the modern era. (Cresswell 2004; Tuan 1974). However, as suggested by the physical act of being in place (as opposed to the world of the virtual traveller), our experience is fundamentally one which engages with the totality of the dimensions of what it means to be human, as biological, social and individual beings. Our engagement is one that is mediated through the physical

responses of our bodies, with all our sensory faculties that we possess. From what we see, to what we hear, smell, taste and touch, our bodies are a fundamental part of the way we encounter and experience of place (Gibson 2012).

In view of the location of this research within an Indigenous landscape, contrasting thinking about place established in academic, (mostly western knowledge) traditions with indigenous knowledge systems is worthy of investigation. Across indigenous cultures, the meanings of places can be understood to reflect the connection between their creation and place, and maintenance of relationship based on their continuity of presence (Berndt & Berndt, 1980; Cresswell, 2004; Fryer-Smith, 2008).

Accounts of Indigenous peoples relationship to the land – often acknowledged by those 'translators' as wholly inadequate to convey the meaning - typically invoke a physical relationship that extends beyond 'being in' place:

The Aboriginal would speak of earth and use it in a rich symbolic way to mean his 'shoulder' or his 'side'. I have seen an Aboriginal embrace the earth that he walked on. A different tradition leaves us tongueless and earless towards this other world of meaning and significance.

(Stanner, 1979 cited in Fryer-Smith, 2008, p. 230)

This meaning of place reveals the extent to which these can differ across people and groups and the consequences this holds for attachment to places and the sense of identity to be derived from this relationship.

5.1.1 Attachment, identity and being out of place

Reflecting on the inherent asymmetry of binary thinking in how we define our place in the world (Cloke & Johnston 2005), the geographical foundations to our

sense of identity invariably means our frame of reference to place – for our self and others - is defined by our belonging (Cloke & Johnston 2005; Tuan 1974). This relationship is embodied in greeting 'where do you come from', which Casey (1993) argues is significant in its function as a measure, usually in relation to home, by which all other places are measured. In the modern world of nation-states, the significance of this place-identity is that it not only defines our relationship to place in the normative sense but also the legal sense, and therefore our right to belong. Thus across individuals and groups our identity as 'insider' and 'outsider', 'indigene' and 'settler', is generally accepted as having different and complex meanings, highlighting the power of place as inherently one of power imbalance (Massey, 1994; Cresswell, 2004).

Tuan (1974) posits that the difference in viewpoint towards place invariably reflects relationship to place. Contrasting the viewpoints of the 'insider' and 'outsider', Tuan argues that the view of the 'outsider' particularly that of the visitor, will invariably be more superficial than the 'insider' and largely derive from a visual and therefore aesthetic value in the absence of any deeper knowledge from immersion in the environment. The implied depth of relationships/connection to place suggested by immersion is a core principle of theories of place attachment (Low & Altman, 1992; Milligan, 1998). In a (post-) colonial landscape such as Australia, the distinction between 'settler' and indigenous peoples lends a further but important distinction to the 'insider' viewpoint.

In the same way that the origins of child protection systems are argued as being of significance to understanding their present form in Chapter 6, the origins of our

relationship to particular places are held to be equally valuable in what they tell us about contemporary attitudes. Accounts such as that of 19th century explorer Monsieur Arago in Chapter 3 and 'settlers' of the colonial world in 18th and 19th century are telling in what they reveal about their environmental values (Tuan, 1974; Hirst, 2005). Monsieur Arago's observations reveal the environmental values against which our judgement of place is made. For early settlers of the new world this value was inherently largely transactional but also moral and ideological (Hirst 2005; Tuan 1974) in view of the relationship to place being mediated through interaction with Indigenous people.

Writing in the context of the new world of the Americas, Tuan (1974) contrasts the attitudes to place of early explorers and settlers with its indigenous peoples. He argues, that the attitudes of the Spanish explorers and settlers invariably reflected their interest and motivation for being, which he describes as: "saving souls, private gain and profits for the King" (1974, 66). Hirst (2005) makes a similar assertion in the Australian context. Tuan (1974) asserts that where environmental values are expressed, they remain largely the preserve of the outsider and are absent from settler accounts. He attributes this distinction to the changed relationship to place that accompanies the transition from outsider to insider that as part of the settlement process, suggesting that the environmental values of the settler become "implicit in the people's economic activities, behaviour and style of life" (1974, 68). In distinguishing the difference in relationship with place between settlers and Indigenous peoples, Tuan (1974) posits that 'nature' is neither "something to be subdued for purely economic gain, nor as occasions for testing one's manhood" characteristic of the settler. Hirst (2005) supports this view by

considering the largely functional role of the land for early settlers (or 'pioneers') for economic gain and the consequent implication for improved social status. However, in contrast to this Fryer-Smith (2008) highlights Indigenous peoples imposed limits or access to specific places, which were understood to be 'sacred' due to their connection to creation myths.

The distinction between the viewpoints of the insider and outsider highlights two important points integral to environmental attitudes. Tuan (1974) argues that for the visitor, the valuation of the environment is inherently based on an aesthetic judgement in the absence of any deeper connection, hence its superficial nature. While such assessments are challenged in more contemporary accounts and questions of authenticity in the experience of place, particularly with the development of more embodied forms of tourism (Friedman 2011; Urry & Larsen 2011), Tuan's observations are of interest to this research in view of the power of superficial observations including the first impression which are important considerations in attraction and retention strategies.

Theoretical constructs of place attachment

While early theoretical thinking about place attachment recognised the relationship between people and place, Altman (1992) argued that while suggesting the affective relations between people and place they did not take into full account the person-to-person interactions and bonds that occur in place. He concluded that the original conceptualisation was a 'misnomer', and the more appropriate conceptualisation was "people/place attachment" (1992). By taking into account the interpersonal dimension, Altman's conceptualisation of place attachment recognised the 'temporal qualities' of the relationship, noting that this

could encompass both linear and cyclical time and therefore “yield qualities of stability and change to people/place attachments” (1992, 7). As noted earlier in this chapter, this cyclical dimension of time is reported as critical to understand the attachment of Aboriginal Australians to place. According to Milligan (1998), a major omission in theories of place attachment to date was their disregard for the process by which places are created and do not adequately distinguish between place and place attachment. Within sociology, Milligan (1998) argues that thinking about place attachment was primarily confined to interactionists and urbanists (Milligan, 1998). However, in spite of the recognition of the physical settings in which interactions occur, such inquiries have focussed on place attachment in relation to a ‘sense of community’, and its loss. Further, Milligan (1998) offers a theory of place attachment that approaches the subject from a symbolic interactionist perspective by defining characteristics of place attachment from which a universal definition may emerge. She points to the process by which meaning is constructed whereby a ‘space’ is transformed into a place, and by extension “something to which one is attached” (1998, 7). The implication from this is that the greater the meaning, the greater the attachment. Milligan cites the influence of Low and Altman’s (1992) definition of place and place attachment as closest to those used in her (interactionist) theory of place attachment, notably: “Place ... refers to space that has been given meaning through personal, group, or cultural processes” (1992, 5), and place attachment as “the bonding of people to places” (1992, 2). However, Milligan (1998) suggests that an interactionist approach to understanding place attachment requires a further separation of and relationship between space, place, and place attachment. This author (Milligan 1998) refers to space as a physical environment which is yet unknown or

undefined by individuals or groups, with place representing space that has been given meaning through the interaction. Milligan (1998) notes the set of conditions required for an attachment to form: first, that the site becomes a known space, thereby extending a space to a place. Once known, the place becomes an object to which an individual is emotionally bonded or linked, thereby transforming the place to one where an attachment has been formed. Milligan further argues that the degree of place attachment can be measured not only by the emotional link, but by the substitutability, namely that the higher the place attachment, the lower the substitutability. Milligan's interactionist theory of place proposes two interlinked processes that comprise place attachment: interactional past, and interactional potential. As noted, the meaningfulness of activities and interactions within a place are directly related to the attachment to the place as the interaction becomes associated with the place. Reflecting Altman's arguments as to the temporal qualities of these relationships, Milligan (1998) poses that this process creates an interactional past for the place, a "history tied to the experiences that have occurred within it (memories)" (1998, 18). Simultaneously, there are characteristics of the place that shape the interactions that occur within it, thereby influencing its interactional potential ("expectations"). Milligan identifies elements of the built environment, such as architecture, as one such form and suggests a number of characteristics of place that influence the patterns of interactional potential as outlined in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Influence of physical characteristics on patterns of interactional potential

| Physical characteristic | | Interactional pattern |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Layout of site | | Potential for sociability |
| Atmosphere of site | □ | Specific values embodied behaviours viewed as possible |
| Positioning of site | □ | Degree of accessibility perceived exclusivity |

Source: Milligan (1998, 18).

The significance of these processes and their relationship to place attachment is pronounced in cases where a disruption to place occurs. Milligan suggests that: “the individuals involved lose both a link to a past experienced as meaningful and a link to a future imagined as potentially meaningful” (Milligan 1998, 9).

Gustafson (2001) offers an alternative model of place that expands on meanings of home suggested by Sixsmith (1986, cited in Gustafson 2001) to different scales. His model addresses one of the limitations of Milligan’s theory (1998) of interpreting the environment in a broader sense than the built form to include personal, social and physical characteristics. These strategies are predicated on an attachment to place, both past and potential, as suggested by Milligan’s theory (1998). However, in focusing on the built environment, Milligan (1998) ignores the broader environmental context to interaction: notably, the natural environment. As noted in relation to place-making, the interest in (place) attachment to the natural environment by environmental behaviouralists and planners has been influential in natural resource management and tourism (Kyle, Graefe, Manning & Bacon 2004). As Kyle and colleagues (2004) note the different psychological properties of place identity and place dependence in attachment. In highlighting the different dimensions that influence place identity and dependence, these authors highlight

the spiritual associations with some places for their enduring appeal. There is the suggestion that the disappearance of remnant natural bushland in urban centres in Australia has diminished a sense of appreciation for these natural environments (Wheatley, 2008).

As discussed in the final chapter, the significance of Milligan's theory for this research is its attention to the interactional dimensions that engender attachment that need to be taken into account into attraction and retention strategies, particularly in view of the District workforce dependence on attracting people from outside of place to supply workforce demand.

Identity

While the invocation of a shared place of birth in narratives of the nation-state may constitute a form of "false Topophilia" (Relph 1976), as noted in the modern era our relationship to our country of birth is fundamental to our sense of identity (Cloke & Johnston 2005). Within traditional Aboriginal culture the importance of place to identity can be understood as twofold. First, kinship groups are defined by a bounded locality where relationships of Aboriginal people to places other than 'country' tightly defined by kinship ties, or affective relations with people of those places (Bourke & Edwards 1994; Rowley 1971a, b). Furthermore, unlike the sentiment of a 'common culture' invoked by nationalistic rhetoric, the continuity of 'occupation' of lands by indigenous peoples means that the sense of identity derived from place extends to a creation time (Tuan, 1974). Place represents more than a rhetorical device and constitutes sacred spaces created by and inhabited by their ancestors. Tuan (1974) cites the observations of early Australian anthropologist T.H. Strehlow's of the Aranda people's relationship to land to

illustrate the depth of feeling it holds for Indigenous peoples as the embodiment of their ancestors, and holds the prospect of their return "the whole countryside is living, age-old family tree" (Tuan 1974, 100). In view of the pre-occupation for ancestry/genealogy in late-modernity, Strehlow's observations highlight the importance of the person-to-person bonds of place for Aboriginal identity.

The role of place-making, particularly in terms of privileging of place, namely the bush and the virtuous qualities associated with such places, have become emblematic of the Australian national identity (Blainey 1996; Hirst 2005). However, in the late 20th century this narrative has been challenged by the emergent critical histories of Australia particularly as a consequence of the decision made by the High Court of Australia in *Mabo v Queensland (No.2)* in 1992 (Pearson 1995). The *Mabo* ruling established the pre-existing right of Aboriginal Australians to their traditional homelands in common law under the subsequent *Native Title Act 1993*. In recognising this pre-existing claim, Pearson (1995) asserted that it recognised that the "entitlement is different from other members of the Australian community", with the effect of the recognition of customary law within common law as that it "not just determines the relationship between people and the land, but between the indigenous people who hold title to the land" (1995, 146). For non-Aboriginal Australians, particularly those of 'settler' origins, the significance of the overturning of *terra nullius* or 'land belonging to no-one' was a fundamental challenge of the 'Australian' identity. As Pearson (1995) argues, *terra nullius* "not only had a legal and political force, but it set a moral and psychological tone... It provided the imprimatur for dispossession" (1995, 141). Further, Pearson (1995) describes the effect of *Mabo* as "throwing the country into a period of

moral and psychological turbulence” by confronting the ‘myths’ of our national history that continue to resonate in the present. In a post-Mabo world, the effect has been for many non-Aboriginal Australians a form of psychological displacement.

One being out of place

The importance of place to identity and its relationship to attachment inevitably provoke questions about the effects of being out of place, particularly where separation from place is forced or involuntary (Casey 1993). Casey (1993) emphasises that the effect of global mobilities has engendered a sense of dislocation. Apart from the consequences of this state for wellbeing, including the loss of identity derived from place, he argues that it poses the risk of further mobility, compelled by the need to find and secure a ‘more enduring or at least a more reliable place’ (1993, xii). Important for this research, Casey distinguishes the different feelings evoked for people ‘out of place’ by choice and compulsion. Returning to Casey’s challenge to imagine a world without place, he suggests that the thought and/or prospect of ‘being out of place’ for many people is ‘deeply unsettling’ and induces a form of ‘place panic’: ‘the prospect of there being no place to be or no place to go’ (1993, ix). This author argues that the ‘place-separation’ is most ‘poignantly felt’ by people forced to move out of place, particularly where this (dis)placement represents a homeland and the people are a group. In reflecting on the significance of displacement, generally and particularly for people displaced from their homeland Casey (1993 xiv) states:

While we acknowledge the suffering occasioned by personal or collective displacement, we tend not to trace it back to the loss of a vital connection with place. But that the disorientated and dispossessed are bereft of such a connection...More

than homesickness ensues; a profound sense of placelessness in the new society may lead to profound despair.

The reported effects of the dispossession of Aboriginal people following colonisation and their subsequent exclusion to transitory places, such as the towns in which this research is located, suggest Casey's words hold a particular resonance for considerations of place in the research context. Furthermore, the resettlement of Aboriginal peoples from different descent groups in such transitory places, and the attribution of this dynamic to violence within Aboriginal communities reinforce the importance of the history of place to this research.

5.1.2 Enduring landscapes and making place

Prior to the current fascination with the process of place making, speculation on the enduring appeal of some landscapes has been a consistent theme in the place literature (Casey 1993; Riley 1992; Tuan 1974), examined in detail by Tuan (1974) in his recognised classic of human geography *Topophilia* (Pocock 1994; Relph 1994)

Highlighting the cultural dimensions to our environmental value, Tuan (1974) asserts that "what we choose to attend (value or love) is an accident of individual temperament, purpose, and of the cultural forces at work at a particular time" (1974, 113). Thus as noted earlier in this chapter, while some places elicit an almost universal appeal conversely others provoke an almost universal repulsion. The universal appeal of some landscapes has been suggested as their perceived hospitality based on their capacity to sustain life (Casey 2009). Consistent with the binary approach that has typically characterised thinking about place, the relative appeal of a place can be understood in the context of their emergence in antithesis

to another place including its construction as ideal landscapes (Casey, 1993; Cloke & Johnston 2005; Tuan, 1974). In view of the location of the Murchison amid landscapes and 'wilderness' of regional and remote Australia and the invocation of such landscapes in attraction and retention strategies, and the particular hold of enduring landscapes in the human imagination, a consideration of such landscapes is important to this research.

Landscapes of ideal

Tuan asserts that some places hold an innate power to engender 'topophilic' sentiments, contending that all humans 'dream of ideal places' (Tuan, 1974). Understanding what constitutes an ideal place enables us to understand what type of environment may engender 'topophilia' outside of the bonds affected in place. Rather than a representation of where people live, such landscapes have been argued as reflecting types of places deeply embedded within our psyche and culture including those associated with the concept of the afterlife (for those who 'believe') (Tuan 1974). Recent contributions to thinking about place relating to the growth in film/media tourism have underscored the power of TV and film in promoting place in the imagination including the idealisation of represented places (Rijnders 2010).

Acknowledging the heterogeneity of 'landscape' preferences, Tuan highlights how the places in which people choose to live and visit are often markedly different. Thus while some people may choose to live in deserts, most people choose a more "accommodating environment" for their home, with a visit to the desert reserved for stimulating more aesthetic pleasures. Like Casey (1993), Tuan (1974) underscores the biological factors which may inhibit settlement in landscapes of

environmental extremes such as deserts, positing that their relative unattractiveness reflects something more innate, with their “taut geometry and harshness [which] seem to deny the idea of shelter” (1974, 114). In view of the location of Meekatharra and Wiluna on the edges of the Western Desert region of WA and reported environmental conditions of these places and those in remote Australia reported in Chapter 3 and discussed earlier in this chapter, Tuan’s observations are supported by the reported preference of some types of places over others in the Australian context (BITRE 2011).

Bucolic landscapes: The country idyll

The emergence of the ‘countryside’ as a bucolic landscape and its contrast with the city in the modern era can largely be traced to literary and artistic accounts in response to the effects of urbanisation and industrialization (Bunce, 1994; Hall, 1975; Pugh, 1990; Tuan, 1974; Waterhouse, 2005). Tuan argues that the representation of the countryside as the (positive) antithesis of the city can be traced to processes of urbanisation dating back to ancient Greece. In the modern era, this representation of the countryside coincided with the emergence of the ‘Romantic’ movement and the industrialisation and urbanisation of the late 18th and 19th century (Casey 2002; Pugh 1990; Waterhouse 2005). Tuan argues the veneration of nature by leading intellectuals and artists of the Romantic movement led to nature becoming a symbol of moral and spiritual purity. Reflecting their ‘cultural’ roots within European thinking, the effect of such attitudes was to shape the construction of the rural ideal in both North America and Australia. In the American case, Tuan traces its transition from its embodiment of the rural ideal, in contrast to its European colonial masters, in the whole, to the subsequent division

between the 'virtuous country' and 'corrupt city' that followed the increased urbanisation and industrialisation of its eastern seaboard. Tuan asserts that the enduring legacy of this belief is its embodiment in the national narrative and disproportionate power held by rural constituencies in American politics. Reflecting the passage of four decades since Tuan's observations, the extent to which the latter remains valid is contestable. Waterhouse (2005) has noted that even in the Australian context, where the process of urbanisation and industrialisation was almost non-existent compared to Europe, this idealised version of the countryside as the antithesis of the city dominated discourses. The paradox of the countryside ideal is largely the fabrication of city-based intellectuals (Tuan 1974; Waterhouse 2005; Wheatley 2007). In Australia, the influence of the conservative publication *The Bulletin*, and writers such as Henry Lawson, whose work is canonical to the role of the 'bush' and country in the national story, was emblematic of this 'intellectual' tradition (Waterhouse 2005).

The ideal of the countryside, and its 'virtuous' people, is the central theme of one of the most enduring studies of Sociology, one that it has been argued has served to conflate community with place (Agnew & Duncan 1989; Pugh 1994). Writing in response to the unprecedented scale of social change brought about by the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation in Germany, Tonnies' treatise on *Community and Civil Society* (Tonnies trans. Harris 2001), offered a typology to describe the different nature of social relationships in rural and urban/industrial communities: *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, translated as 'community' and 'association' (Tonnies 2001). *Gemeinschaft* relations were conceived as organic, in that they were based on kinship ties or proximity. The moral cohesiveness of

Gemeinschaft relations reflected a common belief system. In contrast with the Gemeinschaft relations, Gesellschaft relations were seen as inorganic or artificial constructs, based on looser affiliations or associations, such as those of occupation. The process of individualism as a result of the division of labour was associated with the dissolution of Gemeinschaft relations and replacement by Gesellschaft relations, which by the nature of their origins were understood as competitive and self-interested (Abercrombie et al., 2000). The longevity of Tonnies' 'theory' of community reflects its value in providing a conceptual framework to understand the changing nature of interpersonal relationships from 'traditional' (i.e. rural) to 'modern' (i.e. industrial, urban) societies in a time of massive social change (Bernard 1973). However, Tonnies' concepts have been criticised for their inherently moral value (Bernard, 1973) and idealised conceptualisation of the nature of relations in types of place, the latter at odds with the realities of social life (Bell & Newby, 1979). Here Tonnies' ideas can be understood as part of the movement of reformers and romantics whose opposition and animosity to the city reflected the deep level of anxiety of modern life (Bunce 1994). Thus, the city symbolised all that was evil – a 'demographic vampire', a place of physical, moral and social disorder (Bernard 1973; Casey 1993; Tuan 1974). However, as Bauman (2007) has argued, the contrary view among 'progressives' was the city came to represent the village writ large - a haven from the insecurities of life beyond the village, and symbol of modernity (Bauman 2007). Thus, the nostalgia for community and its association with place remains an enduring theme in late-modernity, in spite of the complex realities of life in either environment (Bell & Newby 1979; Tuan 1974).

Frontiers of desolation, refuge and violence: The wilderness

Consistent with the tendency for dichotomous thinking, considerations of place which have typically placed the urban (or city) and the rural ('country') on polar opposite sides of a spectrum (Tuan 1974; Urry 2004) and therefore antithetical to each other have ignored the heterogeneity of places that fall outside and within either type: including places that remains in a state of nature beyond the landscapes of human habitation and cultivation such as the 'wilds' or wilderness (Tuan (1974).

As with the construction of the idyllic 'rural' or country landscape, the framing of the wilderness in literary and artistic traditions particularly within the Judeo-Christian tradition have been recognised for their construction of the wilderness as paradoxically a place of rebirth, restoration and refuge or desolation and death (Casey 1993; Tuan 1974). Reflecting the antithetical value served by place throughout history, and its remoteness from the lived experience of the majority of people Tuan (1974) suggests that 'the wilderness' is as much a state of mind as a real place. Casey (1993) suggests that the literal meaning of the word wilderness as 'place of wild beasts' combined with biblical depictions have served to reinforce the dominant image of the wilderness as a place of hardship. In settler societies such as those of Australia and North America, the concept of wilderness is inextricably linked to the 'frontier' (Alexander, 1947; Greenaway, 1972).

Thus, in Australia the term 'bush' or 'outback' has served as a broad term to describe places beyond the city or town, including and beyond the middle rural landscape that typically occupies the space in between the city and the 'wilderness'. In settler societies, the prevailing attitude towards the wilderness

among early settlers is argued as being complex, and largely reflective of the origins for their purpose of being 'in place' (Hirst 2005; Tuan 1974). Thus, for missionaries in the Americas, Tuan (1974) argues the wilderness was the home of the 'profane' and preserve of 'demons'. By the end of the 19th century, this view – though still prevalent - stood in contrast with more accommodating emergent perspectives where the wilderness was synonymous with nature. As Tuan (1974, 111) asserts:

A confusion of virtues was attributed to wilderness in America. It stood for the sublime and called man to contemplation and the temptations of 'Mammon' [in the city]...it has come to be associated with the frontier and pioneer past, and so with qualities that were thought to be characteristically American: and it was an environment that promoted toughness and virility.

This confusion of virtues attributed to the 'wilderness' of frontier geographies still echoes in current histories of such places. While the story of the Australian frontier, like its American equivalents, have largely emphasised the adventure and sacrifices of the settler population in nation-building (Alexander 1947; Greenaway 1972; Tuan 1974; Willis 1993), the emergence of more critical histories in recent decades has meant that the frontier has become synonymous with the violence against Indigenous peoples which accompanied dispossession and the on-going effects of these processes (Haebich 2000; Kociumbis, 2005; Moses, 2004; Reynolds, 1987). In spite of the traumatic effects of the processes of colonisation on indigenous peoples across settler territories/societies, as reported in Chapter 6 for Aboriginal Australians, it is the special relationship between indigenous peoples and place that illustrates the enduring power of place against all odds.

Sacred spaces: the relationship between Indigenous Australians and place

Acknowledged as being among the world's oldest surviving cultures, for Aboriginal Australians the significance of the land or 'place' is not just one of historical continuity but what is embodied in this continuity which is understood to extend to creation time (Berndt 1980; Edwards 1994). The complex relationship between both the spiritual and the everyday in giving meaning to place – as articulated in western philosophical and sociological traditions by Heidegger and Bourdieu (Armstrong 2004) – is long understood by Australian Aboriginals. Anthropologist of Aboriginal peoples of Western Australia²⁶ Ronald Berndt (1980, 9) offers the following description of the significance of the relationship with place:

Every person belonged, through patrilineal descent²⁷...to a local group which owned and held in trust, in perpetuity, a specific stretch of country. All of them, men and women were, and in traditionally orientated areas still are closely linked to their land through birth and mythological association²⁸. Moreover, each area contained traditional and sacred sites, and it was the responsibility particularly of the men to look after these. This focus on specific land and its mythology was expressive of the true significance of the groups' members. The land was sacred because within it were manifested mythic beings of the Dreaming. Through these being it was possible for me to perform land-renewing and land-sustaining rituals which were believed to ensure continuation of natural species. This kind of unit, then, was primarily religious. It enshrined for particular persons, males and females, their real

²⁶ It should be noted that I refer to Aboriginal peoples who are indigenous to the area known as Western Australia

²⁷ While in most cases this relationship was through patrilineal descent, for Aborigines of the 'west' the Djalendji-Djiwali-Maia, of the Ashburton-Gascoyne Rivers in the Murchison, emphasised matrilineal descent (Berndt 1980, 9).

²⁸ Such a relationship to the land is typically ascribed to aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture (such as in Fryer-Smith 2008), the general reference to the relationship to the land for all Aboriginal Australians rather than a reference to within 'traditional' Aboriginal culture accepts those arguments which point to the fact that 'traditional' culture is not static or a thing of the past, the present (Berndt 1980).

identity derived from spirit beings who continued to occupy, in a spiritual sense, sections of their territory. It was religious too, because belonging to such a unit were concerned with maintaining, through ritual endeavour, through direct and indirect aid from spirit beings, the status quo of the socio-natural environment.

The inadequacy of non-Indigenous knowledge systems to adequately convey or 'translate' the deep significance that relationship to place holds for Aboriginal peoples is argued by Edwards (1994) as the common misinterpretations of Aboriginal creation time as 'the Dreaming'. Emphasising the contrast between the particular terminology given by each language group to refer to this 'creation time', rather than the universal term of 'the dreamtime' or 'dreaming' by which it has largely become to be known, Edwards (1994) points to the recognition by early anthropologists such as W.H. Stanner of the inability of western philosophical and knowledge frameworks to adequately convey the essence of this relationship: a complex interrelationship between place, law, religion and culture. For Stanner (1979, cited in Fryer-Smith 2008) such inadequacies were evidenced by comparisons between the concept of time and language. The irreconcilability between Aboriginal and 'western' concepts of time Stanner argued hinged on western understanding of time as linear that could not accommodate the relationship between past and present within an Aboriginal concept of time as cyclical (Edwards 1994; Stanner 1979 in Fryer-Smith 2008). In comparing the inadequacies of the English language to articulate the complexity of this relationship, with the possible exception of poetry, Stanner (1979, cited in Fryer-Smith 2008) was convinced that the complexity of the relationship with the land defied easy explanation (1979, 230):

The Aboriginal would speak of earth and use it in a rich symbolic way to mean his 'shoulder' or his 'side'. I have seen an Aboriginal embrace the earth that he walked on. A different tradition leaves us tongueless and earless towards this other world of meaning and significance.

Stanner's observations emphasise the limits of 'traditional' methodologies, understood here as 'western' rather than indigenous systems, including the inherent potential for what is as much lost as transmitted in translation. Thus as evidenced by the historical descriptions of early exploration to the Murchison which introduced Chapter 3, the absence of material markers such as architectural monuments and other measures which signified 'civilisation' through the cultivation of place and practices in place which were synonymous with notions of ownership meant that early explorers and settlers of Australia and other places of the 'new world' were largely (and arguably, wilfully) ignorant of the significance of place to Indigenous peoples (Cresswell 2006). Thus, sacred waterways were navigated with impunity; mountains climbed and excavated; and waterholes used as cattle troughs (Cresswell 2006; Wright 1980). As discussed in successive chapters, attempts to confront the contemporary equivalents of such misinterpretations have meant the embedding of competencies across expert systems such as child protection systems to bridge the cultural divide, as illustrated by the critical role Aboriginal employees play in the Department in promoting cultural awareness (Chapter 8).

The on-going significance of the relationship to place for Aboriginal people in the context of this research is that the effects of dispossession are identified as a key factor in their over-representation in the Australian child protection system (HREOC 1997), as examined in Chapter 6. It is beyond the scope of this research to

provide an adequate overview of this history. However, as suggested in preceding and subsequent chapters it is an experience that has rendered the relationship between Aboriginal people of Australia and their non-Aboriginal occupants of Australia past and present deeply problematic. Hence for Aboriginal Australians, the fundamental relationship between identity and place illustrates why accommodations to remain close to the land, including the ongoing occupation of places of trauma and exclusion on the fringes of towns such as Wiluna and Carnarvon (Rowley 1971a, b) have been preserved in order to maintain connection. For Aboriginal peoples the 'sense of place' is everything: their connection to the land is sacred, and can neither be traded nor lost (Berndt 1980; Fryer-Smith 2008) in contrast with the reported experience of migrant cultures (Armstrong 2004). Writing of the last known Aboriginal people of the western desert to make contact with white Australians in the 20th century which occurred just outside of Wiluna, Peasley (1983) explicitly describes the significance of the loss of this connection to ancestral lands for Aboriginal people:

The land was the very essence of their being. The creators had trusted it entrusted to them at the Dreamtime. They were born of the spirits that inhabited the land and they knew that on death they would return to the soil to await rebirth. They could not leave and take up residence anywhere else, for to live away from their country was to live without substance. The world was meaningless without the spiritual bond of their own land.

Peasley, W.J. The last of the nomads (1983, 17)

In spite of the normative and legal reconciliation of Aboriginal Australians' relationship to place in contemporary Australia (Pearson 1995), the on-going inability or refusal of contemporary western knowledge frameworks to understand this relationship is evident in contemporary political discourses

presented in Chapter 7 on the transferability of rights between Aboriginal peoples outside of the territories of their cultural and language group (Murray 2010) and closure of discrete Aboriginal communities across remote W.A. and the NT.

As suggested in Chapter 3, the significance of these events for this research is that this is the space inhabited by District workers, one in which they are not only required to negotiate a relationship rendered problematic by cultural practices (Trotter 2006) but also the role of child protection practices in the colonisation process (van Krieken 1991). Furthermore, the performance of these practices takes place in the sites of trauma in which they originated; hence, they encounter the realities of this dispossession, including the “post-colonial amnesia” of locals who may care to forget (Garbutt 2011, 3). For the reflexive social workers of child protection in the 21st century, putting the more general challenges of 21st century technologies of practice aside (Chapter 6), the ‘post’ colonial context is inherently problematic for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike where encounters of shame and guilt are implicated in obfuscating circumstances of the present (Kowal 2011; Kowal & Paradies 2005; Lea 2008). This is examined in Chapter 7 in relation to the discourses surrounding the Northern Territory Emergency Response (the Intervention).

Shaping place: imagining ‘remote’ Australia

The enduring mythology surrounding the countryside and wilderness illustrate the power of representations of place to shape attitudes long after their initial use. The expansion of global media networks in the late 20th century, has meant that the visual mediums of TV and film have become a mass form of shaping attitudes to

place on a scale unimaginable to the writers and landscape painters of the 18th and 19th century.

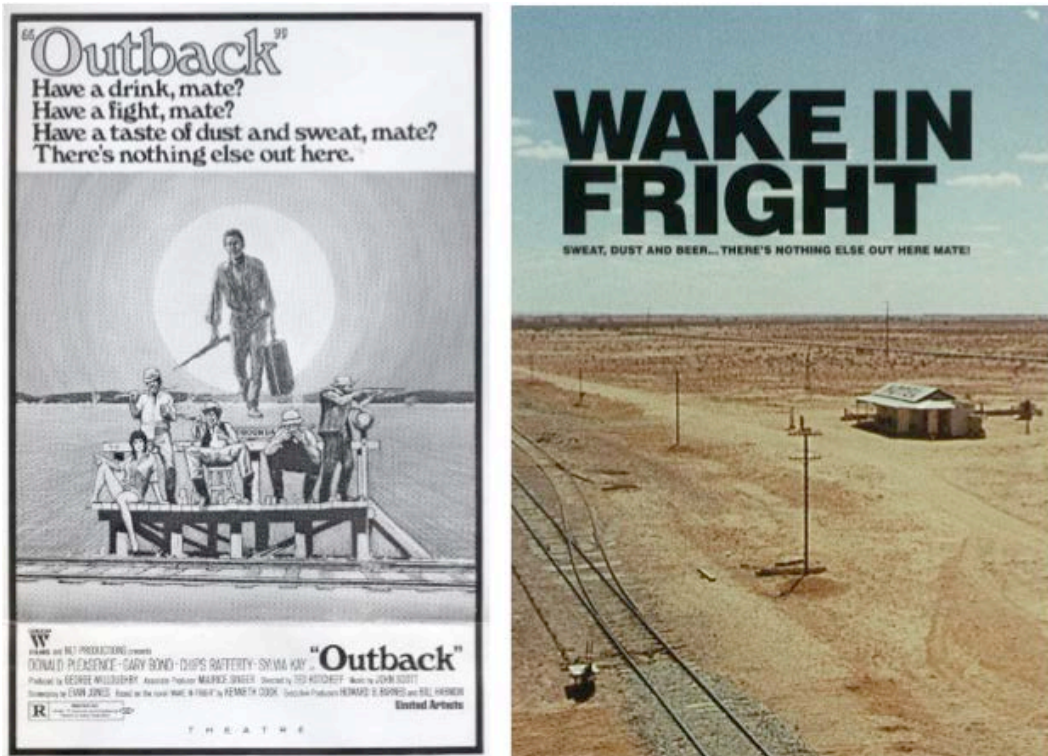
The emerging phenomena of film and television inspired tourism (Reijnders 2010) reveal the power of the creative arts and visual media in imagining place. From the sacred texts of the world's religions, to the poets and philosophers of Ancient Greece, writers and landscape painters of the 18th and 19th century and photographers and filmmakers of the 20th and 21st centuries, literary and visual depictions of place have played a critical role in affecting attitudes to place (Crang, 1998; Macneil, 2001; Tuan, 1974; Waterhouse, 2005; Willis, 1993). Reflecting the influence of culture on environmental perceptions and attitudes, they have invariably reflected the dominant culture and therefore can be read as important ideological devices in shaping attitudes towards place.

In the context of colonisation, representations have served as an important tool in the remaking of place to support the process of colonisation (Crang 1998; Macneil 2001). Macneil (2001) has argued that consistent with the (then) contemporary influence of the 'Romantic' movement in literature and art, early colonial landscapes depicted the majesty of nature, that including 'indigene' inhabitants living in a 'state of nature'. However, he argues such "picturesque views" (Macneil 2001, 51) served two purposes outside of the purely aesthetic, both in the service of the colonising process. First, by rendering the 'space' as existing in a state of nature, it reinforced its normative status as *terra nullius* - and therefore ready for colonisation. Second, in representing a 'domesticated' landscape in a way that was 'familiar and compliant to settlers, it presented a less threatening vision of place to approach the task of its physical and psychological domination' (Macneil 2001, 51).

While the visual imagery evoked by the written word may still provide a powerful device for the representation of place, the ubiquity of visual media in late-modernity has been particularly influential in shaping attitudes (Pink 2001). Willis (1993) points to the use of landscape in iconic Australian films of the latter part of the 20th century which served to reinforce the centrality of the 'bush' to the national story both domestically and overseas, most notably in such films as *Crocodile Dundee*. Of particular interest to this research is the sub-genre of place-based Australian film and television which has played an important role in shaping public discourses on attraction and retention of 'city' professionals to the 'country'. The representation of living and working in the Australian 'countryside' can be described as encompassing the romantic, dramatic and horror genres. While the 1980s commercial television series *A Country Practice* presented a romanticised (arguably, melodramatic) view of rural life for medical professionals, series such as 'Remote Area Nurse' and 'The Circuit' produced for public and community television portrayed some of the harsher realities and ambiguities of living and working in remote Australia, and Aboriginal communities in particular more consistent with evidence from the research literature (Cramer 2005). The iconic Australian film *Wake in Fright*, re-released to much acclaim during the research period, perhaps best illustrates the construction of a 'post-modern' narrative of 'outback' Australia at odds with more idealised portrayals. As evident from the playbills for the film shown in Figure 5.2, the representation invoked connotations that reflected the literal meaning of wilderness. Consistent with the power of literary accounts to perpetuate an image of place long after its initial publication, the effect of narratives such as *Wake in Fright* is that it represents a view of

outback Australia²⁹ remains in the public discourse to the present. The movies was interpreted at the time and following its release as a realistic commentary on outback culture that simultaneously acknowledged and challenged prevailing narratives on its virtues (Galvin, 2009).

Figure 5.2: *Wake In Fright* playbills



Source (from left to right): www.tabula-rasa.info/AusHorror?WakeinFrightAd.html and DVD brochure.

Like their 19th century visual counterparts, television has played an integral part in the reinforcement of normative landscapes of the ideal - the Australian coast and suburb - and to some extent idealised representations of community through long-running soap operas such as *Home and Away* and *Neighbours*. Representations of place have also served an important purpose in engendering an appreciation for

²⁹ The movies was released internationally as 'Outback', evident from the playbill on the left hand side of Figure 5.1.

different landscapes, with the appreciation for nature among the emerging leisure class of the European middle and upper classes in the late 18th and 19th centuries attributed with nurturing the nascent conservation movement of the 19th century (Tuan 1974). The development of new transportation and visual technologies not only allowed for 'realistic' and pervasive images of distant places to circulate but also brought them into closer contact for people to 'discover'. As noted in Chapter 4, the availability of mass tourism and mass (including new) media in the late 20th century has enabled this discovery on an unprecedented level (Elliott & Urry 2010). In the 21st century, the development and pervasiveness of new media and the potential for dissemination on global social media platforms has meant that representations of place are no longer the controlled images of the dominant culture and present almost unlimited potential in their global reach. However, while the nature of the engagement with place is debated on the grounds of its authenticity due to the perceived superficiality of interaction (Gibson 2012; Tuan 1974; Urry & Larsen 2011) the strength of the tourist or 'outside' gaze is that it offers a fresh perspective, one that remains unseen or unable to be seen by insiders. This fresh perspective may include an immunity to the "ugliness" of some places, or not, a point taken up by Winton (2009) in the context of 'small town' Australia:

Places, like things, are not always what they seem. The first time visitor commonly feels that a place is hiding itself from view, retreating behind camouflage...And yet at other times a creature simply is what it seems to be...When you have to convince yourself that a place cannot possibly be as awful as it looks, remember it's wise to remember that sometimes a suspension of judgement is a kindness wasted... Sometimes what you see is what you get.

Tim Winton (2009, 16)

Observations such as Winton's (2009) point to the limitations of idealised portrayals of place for engendering attraction, in addition to the weight of expectations of levels of 'liveability', in the face of reality.

Chapter 6 Work and life changing careers

It is a difficult task to describe the child protection system in Australia as there is not one unified system but eight different systems.

(FaHCSIA 2008)

Child welfare has been described as an 'ideological battleground' (Wolff 1997), an arena where fundamental differences in values about children, family, and society are contested. In considering possibilities, we are not engaged in a neutral exercise.

(Cameron, Freymond, Cornfield & Palmer 2007)

As is consistent with the ecological model as the organising structure for this thesis, this chapter moves from the level of the exosystem to the macrosystem of work to examine the influences that bear on the microsystem of the District office and the Department in which the workers are embedded.

The chapter begins by examining the broader context to child protection practice in Australia to examine the particularities of practice including those elements identified as negatively impacting on the work, before moving overseas to identify the particularities and universal nature of these challenges. In doing so, it examines interventions to attract and retain used in overseas jurisdictions which may be useful in addressing the issue of attraction and retention in the Murchison and the wider Department. The chapter concludes with an examination of the common occurrence of problems in child protection work to the general world of work and examines generalist approaches to these problem which provide a useful lens through which to examine the problem of attraction and retention as conceptualised and reported in this thesis and suggest alternative strategies to address these problems in future.

6.1 A particular type of work, a particular set of challenges: child protection in Australia

While child protection may be ‘everyone’s business’ (Council of Australian Governments 2008, 2009), Australia’s system of government means that the administration and operation of child protection services is the responsibility of each state and territory government (Bromfield and Higgins 2005; Holzer & Lamont 2009; McArthur & Thomson 2012). With broad responsibility for the care and protection of those children aged 0 to 18 years who are identified as being at risk of harm, the core elements of each of Australia’s eight statutory child protection agencies, the ‘purpose-specific government departments’ (Bromfield and Higgins 2005) responsible for administering child protection in each jurisdiction, are recognised as generally similar in design, comprising an intake, investigation and case-management function (AIHW 2013). An overview of this system is included in Appendix 13. While the common elements present a degree of uniformity in approaches across jurisdictions, Australia’s child protection system is distinguished by the variability across states and territories, as evidenced by the use of the plural in describing the ‘system’ as ‘eight different systems’ (Bromfield & Higgins 2005; FaHCSIA 2008). The different legislative and operational frameworks that govern and guide child protection in each jurisdiction mean those common elements of service delivery are operationalised differently in each state and territory in practice (AIFS 2011; FaHCSIA 2008; Holzer & Lamont 2009). Aside from the principal (state) act and (Commonwealth) *Family Law Act 1975* in each jurisdiction, Holzer & Lamont (2009) list 27 additional Acts or pieces of legislation that govern child protection across Australia’s states and territories. Noting the variability in intake processes across jurisdictions in view of it being the

most 'procedural' component of the statutory service model, Bromfield and Higgins (2005) note that:

... what is similar is how services are managed/delivered to statutory child protection service clients; what differs are the types of situations that get a family into the statutory child protection service system in each state/territory (2005, 23).

Noting the range of influences, including geographic, social and political on the evolution of different systems across Australia, Bromfield and Higgins (2005) underscore the implications of these differences – particularly for children and families as 'children in different parts of Australia may be subject to similar adverse circumstances but experience a different response dependent on where they live' (2005, 23). Such 'fragmentation' across Australian systems (Higgins 2011), which has resulted in difficulties in cross-national comparisons due to differences in definitions, standards, monitoring and reporting (FaHCSIA 2008), and combined with common challenges across jurisdictions, has led to increased advocacy for an integrated, national approach to child protection (Babbington 2011; FaHCSIA 2008). As examined earlier in relation to policy developments during the period of this research, the result has been a National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children (hereafter 'the National Framework') (Babbington 2011; COAG 2009), a development which Higgins (2011) suggests represents a landmark moment in the 'evolution' of statutory and support systems for protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect in Australia. As discussed later in this chapter, the significance of the National Framework for this research is its attention to elements of system design implicated in challenges in the sector, and also its attention to attraction and retention (FaHCSIA 2008, COAG 2009).

Beyond the challenges posed by fragmentation across states and territories, reports on Australia's child protection sector over the last decade have highlighted a number of problems/challenges that have led to its characterisation as a system in crisis (Bromfield – nd; Tomison 2004; AIFS 2008). Such challenges include:

- increased demand for services due to a significant increase in the rates of abuse and neglect;
- over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) children;
- increased representation of families with complex problems and needs;
- successive inquiries and reviews resulting in increasingly risk averse culture and practices; and
- difficulties in attracting and retaining a qualified workforce.

Child protection data for the period of this research (2009-12) (AIHW 2013) reveals that while the overall trend has been one of a decline in the number of notifications, investigations and substantiations, increases in notifications and substantiations were reported for most states/territories between 2010–11 and 2011–12, including a significant increase in WA. In acknowledging the story behind the data, the AIHW note the number of possible factors contributing to this outcome, from real increases in abuse and neglect, to changes in legislation, and increased public awareness of child protection – including further inquiries into child protection processes (AIHW 2013,19). Such factors underscore the systems of influence in which child protection is embedded and reinforce the value of an ecological approach to an examination of the system.

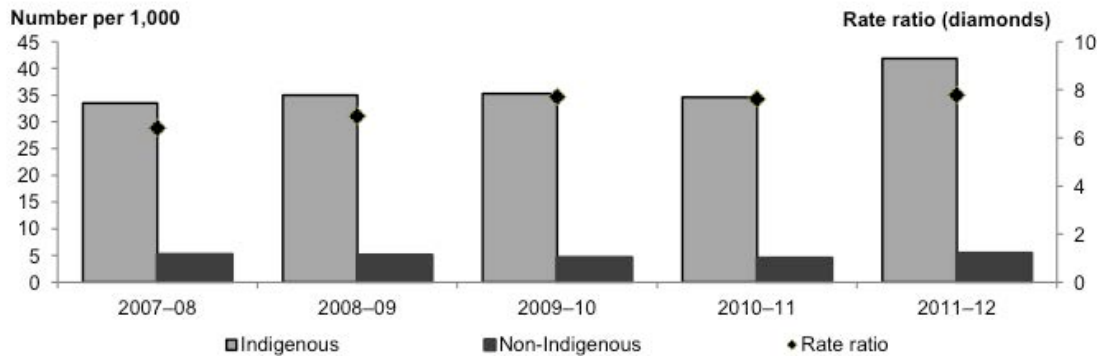
Tomison (2004) argues that, in common with other 'western countries', as early as the late 1980s and early 1990s statutory child protection systems across Australia were struggling to cope with the increase in reports of 'suspected maltreatment' and reduced resources (2004, 1). This increase in reporting reflected not only broadening definitions of abuse but also the design of child protection systems, resulting in statutory child protection services increasingly working with families with complex needs with an increased investigatory function (McArthur & Thomson 2012; Tomison 2004).

6.1.1 The over-representation of ATSI children: that most wicked of problems

If, in the policy sense of the term, Indigenous issues in Australia constitute a 'wicked problem' (Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) 2007), reflecting the use of the term to describe problems of an intractable and complex nature (Conklin 2008; Rittel & Webber 1973), then as Hunter (2007) argues the relationship between Indigenous communities and child abuse also constitute 'one such problem' (2007, 35). It is argued here that the over-representation of ATSI children in the Australian child protection system indeed could be characterised as the 'most' wicked of problems, not only on the basis of the rate by which ATSI children are over-represented in the system relative to non-ATSI children (see Figure 5.1) but also in the complex needs of this population and its correlation with their status as first nations people in a post-colonial landscape (as explored in Chapter 5). Most recent estimates for the period of this research (AIHW 2013) reveal that, compared with non-Indigenous children, ATSI children are:

- eight times more likely to be the subject of a substantiation of child abuse and neglect (41.9 children per 100 children compared with 5.4 per 100 for non-Indigenous);
- ten times more likely to be on care and protection orders (54.9 children per 100 children, compared with 5.6 per 100 for non-Indigenous); and
- ten times more likely to be in out-of-home care (55.1 children per 100 children, compared with 5.4 per 100 for non-Indigenous)

Figure 6.1: Rate and Ratio of Child Protection Substantiations by Indigenous Status: 2007-08 to 2011-12



Source: AIHW (2013, 24: Figure 2.12)

Across Australia the most common type of substantiated abuse was emotional (36%) followed by neglect (31%). Perhaps not surprisingly, given the identification of neglect as a key indicator of broader measures of disadvantage such as poverty, and access to poor quality food, shelter, and health care (Bromfield, 2006), this order is reversed for ATSI children. In this group, neglect (40%) followed by emotional (33%) abuse was the most common type of substantiated abuse. Consistent with the general population, sexual abuse was the least common type of substantiation for ATSI children (9%) in all jurisdictions with the exception of WA (25%). Illustrating reported problems with reliability of

data based on inconsistency in definitions, standards and measurement, the higher figure for WA is attributed to differences in mandatory reporting requirements for sexual abuse (AIHW 2013, 18).

There is general consensus that the origins of the over-representation of ATSI children in the Australian child protection system are complex and require attention to both historical and current issues (Stanley, Tomison and Pocock 2003). Chronic levels of disadvantage are experienced by ATSI peoples across a range of domains: from life expectancy, to income, health and educational inequality, and the associated social problems of alcohol and substance abuse, family violence, and child maltreatment. These factors have led to a coordinated response by all states and territories through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to address this disadvantage through a range of policy measures commonly referred to as 'Closing the Gap' (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP) 2009). While the antecedence for this response by Australian Governments can be understood to reflect a response to domestic and international criticism of the living and life conditions of Australia's Indigenous peoples, characterised as 'third world', and campaign for change (Georgatos 2013; Gilbert, 2001; HREOC 2008; Sharp & Arup, 2009), its coordination through the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision also locates the response in productivity discourses and reviews of public sector expenditure.

While child protection data, such as that for reported substantiations mentioned above, may suggest the scope of abuse in Indigenous communities, Stanley et al. (2003) emphasise that this rate reflects only known reports to statutory child

protection agencies, with the true extent of abuse likely to be far greater. They argue that a number of factors are likely to contribute to under-reporting: shame and fear of reprisal (from within the community); isolation from child protection and family support services and therefore limited opportunity to initiate a report; and perceived inaction from authority further to a report. Stanley et al. (2003) suggest a number of factors identified as contributing to inaction on the part of child protection authorities and other 'reporting' individuals and agencies, which may account for the lower number of substantiations relative to the number of reports. Such issues range from fear of personal safety to conflict over what constitutes the 'best response', particularly in view of the legacy of historical child protection policies, and (for Indigenous workers) conflicts of interest.

If there is general agreement of the influence of both historical and current factors in child maltreatment in Indigenous communities, the causes of child abuse in Indigenous communities remains contested, as evidenced from discourses examined in Chapter 7. Stanley et al. (2003) acknowledge their own position as non-Indigenous academics amidst criticism of academic discourses as a racially biased account of Indigenous 'reality'. Thus, beyond questions of 'who speaks for whom', which challenges the assumed truths which underpin the rhetoric of child protection as being 'everyone's business' (Dodson 2003), and the implied bias in competing standpoints, there lies a fundamental difference in the conceptualisation of the 'reality' or issue at the centre of the debate. Thus, with reference to the increased recognition of the effects of family violence on child wellbeing, and consequently in notifications of child abuse, Stanley et al. (2003) point to the different perspectives of non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples on

the nature of such violence, and its origins in individual or social problems respectively, and its relationship to differential concepts of family.

Stanley et al. (2003) – with reference to Memmott’s causation model of violence (2001, cited in Stanley et al 2003) – highlight the need for a more holistic approach to working with Indigenous communities in a child welfare context in order to account for the multi-dimensions to its causes. Stanley et al. (2003) underscore how underlying factors, such as the effects of the intergenerational trauma from colonising practices (including the breakdown in family and community from the forced removal of children, together with situational factors such as chronic levels of disadvantage) have created the conditions for ‘maladaptive behaviours’ on a community-wide scale. These conditions create fertile conditions for child abuse.

6.1.2 The ‘stain’ of history

The legacy of history remains a dominant influence on child protection policy and practice (Briskman 2007; HREOC 2007; Libesman 2004; McCallum 2008; Sanderson, 2008; Stanley et al 2003), with Bromfield (2007) suggesting the effect as ‘imbuing everything with a stain’ (2007). As the examination of the particularities of post-colonial places such as Australia reveal (see Chapter 4), the past is critical to an understanding the present relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (Briskman, 2007; Reynolds, 1987; Russell, 2001).

For many Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, Pearson argues that this relationship has been radically redefined in the legal if not normative sense post-Mabo (Pearson, 1996). However, as evidenced by the so-called ‘history’ and ‘culture’ wars of the last two decades, for many Australians, including among the

political, intellectual and cultural elite, a critical reading of the past remains deeply contested (Hinkson, 2010; Moses, 2004; Manne, 2001; 2004. For professions operating in the fields of social work, this has inevitably led to a re-examination of the effect of the care and control of Indigenous peoples in contemporary practice (Briskman, 2007). Bromfield's (2007) assertion of the indelible effects of historical child protection policy and practice on the present refer to the role of both Church and state authorities in the break up of Aboriginal families in the service of the 'civilising' functions of the colonisation process (Kidd, 1997; van Krieken, 1991). It is beyond the scope of this thesis and this researcher's expertise to provide an extensive overview of this history for the Murchison, the state and Australia more generally, which is more than adequately canvassed in depth in the academic literature, including that reviewed for this thesis. However, in view of the reported impact of this legacy on contemporary child protection practice – and consequently its relevance to a foundation question of this research – some key elements are worth noting here.

In WA, both the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADC) and the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families (HREOC, 2007) have served critical roles in confronting this history and its legacy for Aboriginal children and families in recent decades. Through both reports and, more recently, literary/cinematic adaptations of some of the stories of children of the stolen generation (such as the film *The Rabbit Proof Fence*), have brought a previously forgotten or hidden past into the foreground. This includes figures such as AO Neville, the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Australia from 1915–36 (Jacobs, 1990) and one of the chief

architects of the *Aboriginal Act 1905*, which shaped the 'care' and control of Aboriginal families for much of the 20th century. The effects of dispossession, colonisation and exclusion from settler society are generally acknowledged as causal factors in the chronic levels of disadvantage of Aboriginal peoples (Lonne et al., 2009; Stanley et al 2003; Zubrick, Lawrence, Silburn, Blair, Milroy et al 2004), and the over-representation of ATSI children in the child protection system.

The effect is that, when working with Aboriginal people in a social work context, and child protection in particular, historical and current issues are inextricably intertwined (Bennett Zubrzycki, Bacon 2011; Briskman 2007). As noted in Chapters 3 and 8 in relation to the Department, at an organisational level this has included the design of services to become more culturally 'responsive' through mechanisms such as the increased representation of Aboriginal people in the child protection workforce (DCP, 2009 a or b; Ford, 2007; Gordon, 2002).

Both reflexive practice and cultural 'competencies' have become central to social work education and practice around working with Aboriginal people (Bennett et al. 2011; Briskman 2007; Healy 2012). In this vein, the social work literature is replete with examples emphasising the need to understand the historical relationship and how this informs current practice ('reflexivity'), and the importance of a defined set of skills and knowledge to work with this group ('cultural competency'). Within the literature, there is a general consensus about the elements important for working with Indigenous populations: the importance of history, and acknowledgement of the past and its influence on the present; the importance of relationships; valuing Aboriginal knowledge; and a commitment to community development models of practice (Bennett et al., 2011; Briskman, 2007;

Gilbert, 2001; Walter, Taylor, and Habibis 2011). The importance of improving knowledge in Aboriginal history is understood to be essential to both (Bennett et al., 2011; Gilbert, 2001) with the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) assuming a leadership role in encouraging its inclusion in the social work curriculum (Gilbert, 2001).

In understanding the personal motivation for working with Aboriginal people, particularly of 'helping white' (Lea, 2008), both social work and anthropology have increasingly turned to concepts of whiteness, white privilege and post-colonialism (Kowal & Paradies, 2005; Lea, 2008; Walter et al., 2011). However, Walter and colleagues' (2011) assert that the relatively low prominence ascribed to 'whiteness' in both principle and practice within social work education reinforces arguments that emphasise the inherently 'white' epistemological foundations of social work. Working with Aboriginal people, as in other welfare contexts, has increasingly been problematised in the context of the ethics of intervention (HREOC 1997; Sutton 2009). As noted in the analysis of contemporary discourses on child protection and Indigenous Australia later in this chapter, this debate has become particularly pronounced in the Australian context in relation to the Northern Territory Emergency Response (known as 'the Intervention') and extension of its welfare reform measures to jurisdictions outside of the NT, including Western Australia (Sutton, 2009). The framing of these interventions as 'colonisation by stealth' (Merlan, 2010) has meant that just as the fields of social work, and child protection in particular, confront the past in their work with Aboriginal children and families (Briskman, 2007), they are confronted by a present that challenges the legitimacy of their reflexive and cultural practices.

In spite of positive developments in the recognition of Indigenous rights (Gilbert, 2001) and the surfeit of reports and inquiries in Indigenous health and wellbeing (Stanley, 2008), including the reviews of child protection services, there is general consensus that there has been negligible improvement in the outcomes for Aboriginal people (Chesterman & Galligan 1997, in Gilbert, 2001; Stanley, 2008). In reflecting on this failure, Stanley (2008) underscored the disconnect between policy and practice, emphasising how the relative ease of the former stood in stark contrast to the difficulty of the latter, and the unintended consequences of policy interventions. Quoting senior child protection academic and advocate, Professor Dorothy Scott, Stanley (2008) highlighted concerns around the disconnect between the intent of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle and the reality of its practice in view of the chronic levels of disadvantage of most Aboriginal families and issues related to standards of care for children placed in care. Noting the tension between maintaining culturally responsive practices and protecting children from harm, the public expression of such concerns has become more vociferous and frequent by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal activists, as examined later in this chapter.

Discourses on child protection issues in Indigenous and remote communities presented in the following chapter highlight the disjuncture between the principles of working with Indigenous people conveyed in formal education and training and realities of practice (Gilbert, 2001). In the remote context of areas of WA, the NT, South Australia and Queensland, this experience not only involves working with culturally and linguistically diverse peoples, many of whom have maintained strong connections to traditional Aboriginal cultural life, but being confronted with

the inequities of the 'third world' living conditions of Aboriginal people (Cramer, 2005) (Gilbert, 2001; Sharp & Arup, 2009), the prevalence of high levels of family and community violence (Dodson, 2003; Pearson, 2006; Lloyd & Rogers, 1993), risks to personal safety (Fisher, Bradshaw, Currie et al. 1996), and limited resources to support interventions. The outcome of this experience, whilst acknowledged for its capacity to challenge existing values and beliefs, has been promoted by Gilbert (2001) as essential for social work practice with Indigenous people:

It requires soul searching, forgiveness, and preparedness to challenge our potential for racism. At both the individual and societal level it also requires a rethinking of our history (Gilbert 2001, 48).

Gilbert (2001) notes the calls within the profession in relation to the role of social work in contemporary practice with Indigenous peoples, as articulated by (then) President of the AASW Jo Gaha in 1999:

'The personal is political', what is individual is social ... Social work is the profession committed to the pursuit of social justice, to the enhancement of quality of life and the development of the full potential of each individual, group and community in society...Social workers pursue these goals by working to address the barriers, inequalities, and injustices that exist in society ... this is done by working with individuals towards the realisation of their intellectual, physical and emotional potential...and by working with [them]... in the pursuit and achievement of equitable access to social economic and political resources (AASW 1997a, 3, cited in Gilbert 2001, 55).

Professional frameworks, policy and practice in both the government and non-government sector have meant that working with Indigenous Australians has

increasingly been shaped by state and Commonwealth agreements under the Closing the Gap initiative (discussed in Chapter 7).

As stated in the introduction to this thesis, the significance of the over-representation of ATSI children in the child protection system for this research is the high proportion of Aboriginal people living in Murchison District and the particular set of challenges associated with working Aboriginal peoples beyond those presented by child protection work more generally.

6.1.3 Review and reform

While Babbington (2011) notes the origin of the National Framework in a number of child wellbeing and welfare campaigns over the past decade, he underscores the contribution of successive inquiries at both the national and state/territory level into failings of child protection systems to protect children from harm as instrumental in national action to develop a national, integrated approach. The 'lateral, whole-service system' approach to reform suggested by the National Framework is in stark contrast to the reform of individual state/territory systems that followed successive inquiries in the last decade (Bromfield - nd). Lonne, Harries and Lantz (2012) identify 32 such inquiries since 1997. A list of inquiries identified for the decade leading up to the end of this research period (2012), presented in Table 7.1 (Chapter 7), reveals four inquiries which have reported and/or been established during the period of this research (2009–12).

The effect of this reform has been described as initiating a form of 'reform fatigue' which, combined with changes in the structure and nature of the work in statutory services from a therapeutic focus to more investigatory focus, has negatively impacted on the morale of child protection workers. As per the Ford' Review

(examined in Chapter 8), each inquiry and review has identified workforce issues as central to failings in the system, from the negative effects of increased reporting on child protection worker workload to the effects of turnover on workload and client-worker relationships (FaHCSIA 2008; McArthur & Thomson 2012). The effect has been for the escalation of workforce issues in the review and subsequent reform of state/territory systems ranging from a focus on increasing the number of (frontline) child protection workers, to a review of workforce skills and knowledge requirements, and attention to attraction and retention more broadly.

The significance of workforce issues across the sector is evidenced by the identification of 'attracting and retaining the right workforce' as a core priority in the National Framework (FaHCSIA 2008, 15). Furthermore, and importantly for this research in view of the problem it seeks to address, the National Framework recognises the additional and 'particular issues' for attraction and retention in 'regional and remote area' (FaHCSIA 2008, 27). In response to the recognition of workforce issues as a priority under the National Framework, an analysis of workforce trends was undertaken of the sector toward the end of the period of this research (McArthur & Thomson 2012). The findings are important to this research in terms of the generalisability of this research's findings and potential 'solutions' to the Department's problem of attraction and retention. Consistent with the review of the literature undertaken for this research, McArthur & Thomson (2012) report that the attraction and retention of statutory child protection workers has been well canvassed in both the Australian and international research. (This is particularly evidenced from the North American literature reviewed later in this chapter.) Furthermore, the particular costs of turnover identified and the

disruption of service delivery (and its consequent impact on workers who remain and cost in recruitment) reflects similar findings to the research McArthur and Thomson (2012). McArthur and Thomson (2012) report the difficulty in sourcing and obtaining reliable turnover data which not only prevents an examination of the real extent of the problem for individual agencies, but cross-sector and cross-occupational comparisons.

Certainly, the significance of staff turnover in the Australian child protection sector is evidenced by the inclusion of 'continuity of caseworker' as a performance indicator for future national reporting requirements in recognition that 'effective interventions requires a productive working relationship between the worker and the child and family' (Report on Government Services: Protection and support services, 15.9, Commonwealth Government 2012). McArthur and Thomson's (2012) suggestion of an 'implicit agreement that 25% turnover is too high' based on its negative impact on services in relation to service disruption and recruitment costs is particularly interesting for this research in view of the Department's problematisation of attraction and retention in the Murchison District and reported levels of turnover presented in Chapter 8.

McArthur and Thomson (2012) identify four main reasons for workforce issues in the Australian child protection sector:

1. demand;
2. the impact of the media;
3. organisational issues; and
4. supply.

A brief examination of each is given here before turning to an examination of these issues in the international literature. As previously reported in this chapter, the increase in child protection reports in all Australian states/territories is identified as a key challenge for the sector, not least in its negative impact on worker caseload and workload more generally (Tomison 2004). Factors influencing demand range from changes in policy and legislation to the effects of public inquiries and increased awareness of child protection issues (AIHW 2013; McArthur & Thomson 2012). As argued in this research, and evidenced by the reporting of child abuse and child protection issues presented in Chapter 7, McArthur and Thomson (2012) identified the important role of the media in shaping child protection discourses to both positive and negative effect. The positive effect is seen in the increased awareness of child protection issues and the corresponding increase in demand for services, while the negative effect is the emphasis on failings of the system and the responsibility of child protection workers for this failure. Like demand, the supply of statutory child protection workers highlights the extent to which external influences impact workforce issues (AIHW 2013). The emphasis on 'attracting and retaining the right workforce' in the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children is one of the critical challenges for the sector and has centred on the delineation of skills, knowledge and qualifications required for child protection work, which has varied considerably across Australian jurisdictions. McArthur and Thomson (2012) highlight how the supply of suitably qualified workers, notably from the disciplines of social work, psychology and human services (from which the child protection workforce has historically been recruited) has been unable to meet demand, resulting in the recourse to alternative supply chains through the broadening of

the qualification requirements outside of these disciplines (Health & Community Services Workforce Council 2011) to international recruitment (Zubrzycki, Thomson & Trevithick 2008). The expansion of the health and community services sector – the largest and fastest growing sector in Australia – and the effects of an ageing population and workforce, has meant that in addition to an increase in demand from within the sector, the demand for workers with the commensurate qualifications for child protection work exceeds current supply. While this demand has precipitated calls for a national workforce strategy to meet these challenges (Healy & Lonne 2010), it has emphasised the pre-eminent role of social work in human service work and child protection work (Healy 2010). As evident from the child protection literature, the social work profession continues to assert its historical position as the dominant professional discipline within the child protection system both in Australia and abroad (AASW 2008, 2009, 2010; Healy 2010). This pre-eminent position of social work is illustrated in the AASW’s statement to coincide with the 2008 National Child Protection Week, which read:

No other professional discipline is so immersed in the areas of knowledge that are essential for quality relationship based child protection practice. As a result, Social Workers are recognised throughout the world as the core professional group in child protection policy, management and practice.

Reinforcing such claims, Healy (2010) contends that the profession needs to actively ‘agitate’ for reform within the sector, including the support and creation career pathways (2010, 143). However, as McArthur and Thomson (2012) note, the position of the social work profession has come under increased scrutiny: from questioning of the relevance of the profession in the review of workforce qualifications in some jurisdictions (Queensland Department of Child Safety 2007)

to criticism of schools of social work in preparing graduates for statutory social work (McArthur & Thomson 2012). Indeed, mirroring findings reported for this research (see Chapter 9), McArthur and Thomson (2012) report Vardon's (2004) findings from the ACT of the disconnect between frontline child protection workers and managers of their capacity to 'do the job'. However, in response to such criticism and calls for specialist qualifications more broadly, Healy (2010) highlights the response of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) in extending the qualifying requirement for social work curriculums to include child wellbeing and protection in recognition as a core field of practice for the social work profession. Healy (2010) suggests that questions as to the fundamental relevance of the social work profession to child protection systems in Australia owe more to the shift away from therapeutic family service approaches to child wellbeing typical of Scandinavian child protection systems to the increasingly forensic or investigatory functions of the child protection approach in Australian systems.

The contribution of organisational factors to workforce issues has been particularly underscored in child protection reviews (Ford 2007) and early analyses of the future directions for the sector under a more national approach (AIFS 2008). McArthur and Thomson (2012) identify four organisational factors negatively contributing to retention and attraction:

1. job stress and supervision;
2. workload;
3. workplace culture; and
4. job design.

As discussed elsewhere in this chapter, child protection work is generally characterised as being demanding but rewarding, with high stress levels a recognised feature of the work (Healy & Oltedal 2010; Russ, Lonne, Darlington 2009) but one positively correlated with turnover in the sector. Furthermore, changes to the nature of the work associated with a shift away from therapeutic to a more forensic and bureaucratic focus are suggested as aggravating existing pressures (Tomison 2004) and negatively impacting on its appeal to disciplines traditionally associated with child protection (Healy 2010). However, as Gillingham (2011) highlights in relation to inquiries into the NSW (Wood 2008) and Victorian (Ombudsman 2009) child protection services, criticism of information systems has also featured prominently, with the Victorian Ombudsman underscoring the failure of the Client Relationship Information System (CRIS) as hindering effective service delivery.

6.2 The universalities and particularities of Australian child protection practice: an examination in the context of the international literature

Australia's child protection system shares similarities and differences with international child protection systems. As with the changes to the delivery of statutory child protection services in Australia (examined earlier in this chapter) reveals, the organisation of child protection work has emerged as a major challenge in contemporary child protection practice. Cameron et al. (2007) identify three main features relating to the organisation of the work as problematic:

1. the design of child protection systems;

2. the location of the work within the 'state' and incumbent bureaucratic structure; and
3. expansion of the work due to increased knowledge about risk factors.

With reference to systems across post-industrial economies/societies of Europe and North America, the literature typically identifies two distinct approaches to the care and protection of children: the child protection approach in Anglophone countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand; and the family service approach in western and northern European countries of Sweden, Belgium and Norway (Cameron, Freymond et al 2007; Healy 2010; Lonne et al 2009). Elsewhere, the description of this difference as one of judicial and therapeutic systems denotes the distinct orientation of each broad jurisdiction in terms of legal measures (Hill, Stafford & Green Lister 2002). While the Australian literature typically locates itself within an Anglophone approach, as evidenced by Cameron, Freymond et al.'s (2007) framing of 'Anglo-American' approaches without reference to Australia and New Zealand, the construction of these typologies may vary as much according to geographic location as much as the ideological sense. An overview of the features of these different approaches is presented in Table 5.1 (below), revealing the particular focus of each approach along the continuum of care and control that has typically been used to frame the dual mandate of child protection/welfare services.

Table 6.1: Features of different approaches

| Characteristic | Child protection orientation | Family service orientation |
|--|--|---|
| Framing the problem of child abuse and neglect | The need to protect children from harm. | Abuse and neglect is most often a result of family conflict or dysfunction stemming from social, economic and psychological difficulties. |
| Entry to services | Single entry point; report or notification by third party. | Range of entry points and services. |
| Basis of government intervention and services provided | Legal, investigative in order to formulate child safety plans. | Supportive or therapeutic responses to meeting the needs of children and families or resolving problems. |
| Place of services | Separated from family support services. | Embedded within and normalised by broad child welfare or public health services. |
| Coverage | Resources are concentrated on families where risks of (re) abuse are high and immediate. | Resources are available to more families at an earlier stage. |
| Service approach | Standardised procedures; rigid timelines. | Flexible to meet clients' needs. |
| State–parent relationship | Adversarial. | Partnership. |
| Role of the legal system | Adversarial; formal; evidence-based. | Last resort; informal; inquisitorial. |
| Out-of-home care. | Mainly involuntary. | Mainly voluntary. |

Source: Allen Consulting Group (2008).

Locating the different systems that have emerged in different countries in the modern period, Cameron, Freymond et al. (2007) underscore the importance of cultural and institutional contexts, both historical as well as contemporary, in shaping the evolution of systems (2007, 2). Thus, at the most fundamental level they argue about differences in values orientated towards individualism versus collective responsibility. and therefore conceptualisation of the role of the family and that of the state distinguish the Anglophone approach of England and North America to that in most European countries. Emphasising the general agreement

around the complexity of child 'maltreatment' and contributing factors to family breakdown, Cameron, Freymond et al. (2007) suggest that it is the different way systems are organised that prevents an equal consideration of the 'full range' of factors in their understanding of families in the design and delivery of interventions to ensure the care and welfare of the child (2007, 31). Thus they argue while both Anglophone and European systems have a dual mandate of care and control, which they broadly define as 'to provide assistance for and to exercise legal authority over families' (Cameron, Freymond et al. 2007, 17), the approaches can be distinguished by how these mandates are managed based on the relative primacy of the individual (i.e. child) and family and the role of the state in any intervention (Cameron & Freymond et al 2007, 38). In their comparison of Australia and Norway, Healy & Oltedal (2010) locate the respective and varied influences on each child protection system according to Esping-Anderson's typology of liberal-welfare or social-democratic models. Thus, consistent with other liberal-welfare states, Healy & Oltedal (2010) characterise Australia's system as orientated towards prioritising risk over welfare compared with Scandinavian countries such as Norway that emphasise universal and holistic services (2010, 259). Whichever terms are used to describe the difference in approaches, there is generally agreement that the increasingly legalistic context to 'threshold' systems in Anglophone countries related to the evidential requirements to satisfy the intervention of the state is inherently problematic. The problematic nature of the approach is generally argued on the grounds of both the workload it generates and the resources, including human, that are absorbed in these activities, and the corresponding withdrawal of focus and resources on supporting families (Cameron, Freymond et al. 2007; Howe 2010).

While Cameron, Freymond et al. (2007) argue that the specific contexts to the evolution of systems in each jurisdiction present ‘a barrier to transporting “good” ideas from one culture to another’, this would appear to contradict their own observations of the cross-fertilisation between jurisdictions such as that of England and the United States on the Canadian systems before and after the Second World War. Indeed, Healy & Oltedal (2010) and Tham (2007) note how the effects of neoliberal influences on system change in Scandinavian countries have given rise to problems more commonly associated with Anglophone systems, such as turnover. The review of the literature shows the inherently globalised nature of child protection policy, research and practice as evidenced by the number of Australian academics publishing in international publications (Gillingham 2011; Healy 2010) or collaboration with their overseas counterparts (Healy & Oltedal 2010; Lonne et al 2009). These discourses reveal the universal nature of some of the dimensions to contemporary child protection practice that are identified with particular challenges of the work – such as risk and the relationship between client and worker – that suggested the increased convergence across systems and jurisdictions which defy binary classification as ‘family-centred’ or ‘child protection’ common to prevailing typologies. It is argued there that this provides another illustration of Beck’s ‘zombie’ categories and effects of the ‘new world’ of late-modernity on traditional boundaries.

6.2.1 Different, yet similar: working with Indigenous peoples in international contexts

Australia is not alone in its problematic relationship between child protection systems and Indigenous peoples. In addition to commonalities in their approach to child protection/welfare, a common characteristic of the Anglophone countries of

Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States is a troubled history with Indigenous people as a consequence of colonisation processes. Libesman (2004) argues that while the experience of colonisation has been different for different Indigenous peoples around the world, there is general consensus around some of the common impacts, including notably those specific to child protection and family policies. This includes the intergenerational trauma from forcible child removal and the consequent breakdown in systems of family and community, and exclusion from (non-Indigenous) society. With particular reference to Canada, Mantel, Clouston Carlson, Fine and Blackstock (2007) underscore the effect of child removal on Indigenous communities as a 'disruption to traditional relationships' by virtue of the concept of family and community among Indigenous peoples where kin networks (not biological parents per se) have responsibility for the care and education of Indigenous children. Furthermore, the disruption to these traditions of care and transmissions of culture and language that occurred as part of this relationship effectively ruptured a fundamental sense of identity due to its foundation in community.

With reference to their review of the literature on the over-representation of Indigenous children in child protection systems, Hudson and McKenzie (1981) identified three explanations that focus on psychosocial, cultural and socio-economic dimensions, all of which they deemed problematic on the basis of their 'ideological commitment to assimilationist ideal of Native-white relations' (Hudson and McKenzie 1981, 128 cited in Mandell et al. 2007, 131). Armitage (1993, cited in Mandell et al. 2007) goes further and identifies six types of explanation:

1. the psychological argument;

2. the cultural change argument;
3. the economic deprivation argument;
4. the historical argument;
5. the racial argument, and
6. the colonial argument (Mandell et al 2007, 131).

Not surprisingly, Armitage's (1993) typology highlights the complexity of issues implicated in approaches to child protection/welfare with Indigenous communities. As for Australia's Indigenous peoples, this complexity has manifested in the higher rates of alcohol and substance abuse, family violence and chronic poverty (Libesman 2004). The result, Libesman (2004) argues, has been for system responses to be inherently problem-focused, an approach that has been repeated in Indigenous-operated programs to equally negligible or worse, negative, effect and in opposition for repeated advocacy for 'whole of community' models advocated by many Indigenous peoples. In spite of the almost universal recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples across the globe in the latter part of the 20th century (including increased calls for greater self-determination) (Mantel, Clouston Carlson, Fine & Blackstock 2007), Libesman (2004) notes the varying degree of real autonomy of Indigenous peoples across Anglophone countries, most notably in relation to the 'transfer of legislative, judicial and administrative functions' (2004, 3). The extent of these differences between jurisdictions is illustrated in the control of child welfare for Indigenous peoples of the United States where the *Indian Child Welfare Act 1978* has effectively transferred such functions to (Native American) Indians where children are living on a reserve

(Libesman 2004), compared with the Australian Government response to reported child abuse in the Northern Territory examined in the next chapter of this thesis.

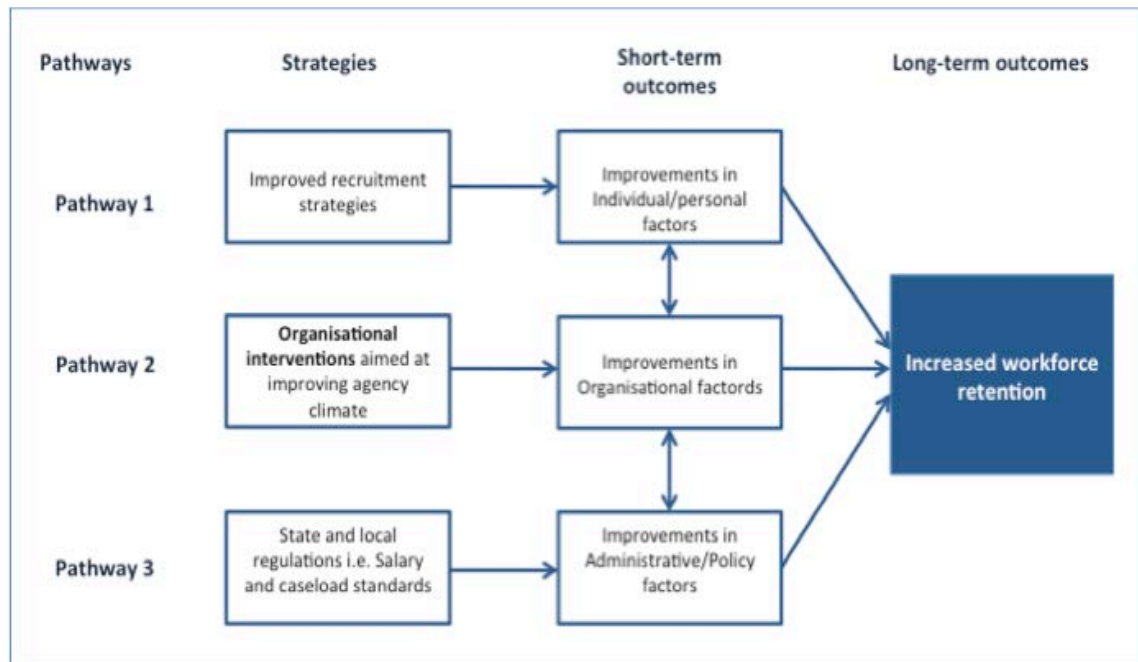
Not surprisingly, consistent with the 'transporting' of 'good ideas' across systems (Cameron, Freymond et al. 2007), approaches such as that enshrined in the US Indian Child Welfare Act and NZ family group conferencing have been identified as 'model' approaches for child welfare in Indigenous communities across jurisdictions (Libesman 2004). In her comprehensive review of child welfare legislative frameworks and service delivery in Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Australia, Libesman (2004) identified a number of policy and practice recommendations to improve child welfare systems of support for Indigenous children and families that include:

- whole-of-community rather than individualised responses;
- reconstitution of the historical relationship between the state (through statutory agencies) and Indigenous organisations that include the transfer of power to enable real autonomy;
- development of 'culturally competent' models of service delivery that embed Indigenous knowledge systems across service delivery frameworks beyond that suggested by the employment of Indigenous workers; and,
- a focus on flexibility in provision that recognises and responds to the need for healing and primacy of family preservation in systems of support.

6.2.2 Attraction and retention: a universal problem?

The issue of attraction and retention of child welfare workers is identified as a critical challenge for Canadian (Harvey & Stalker 2007) and US child welfare systems. The United States identifies the issue as one of state and national priority (Faller, Masternak, Grinnell-Davis et al 2009; Strolin-Gotzman, Lawrence, Auerbach 2009; Zlotnik, Strand & Anderson 2009). As reflects the relativism by which attraction and retention is conceptualised as problematic, US research indicates a variation in levels of turnover rates in child protection services, ranging from 20% to 60% with rates for some communities far exceeding this range (Faller et al 2009). As further evidence of the nature of the problem relative to other public services, US turnover rates for child protection workers are 2.5 times that for other government employees. Furthermore, data from the American Association of Social Workers estimate the average length of time 'on the job' for child protection workers as two years (Faller et al. 2009). Consistent with reports for broader international experience, the significance of turnover to the sector is reported both in relation to its material and non-material cost, but its differential impact on both clients and co-workers (Faller et al. 2009; Strolin-Goltzman et al 2009; Zlotnik 2009). For co-workers, the effects of the consequent increase in workload on stress levels and the reduced satisfaction and morale of those who remain are reported as the primary impacts. For clients, the significance of turnover is identified not only in relation to the breakdown in relationship with the children and families with whom the departed worker worked, but the secondary effect of the increased workload on co-workers on the frequency and quality of contact with clients and correspondingly increased risk of children and families falling through the service gap.

Unlike in Australia, in the US the longstanding recognition of the crisis as a national priority has instigated a number of research and policy responses to address the issue, ranging from comprehensive studies of the 'aetiology, antecedence and consequences' (Strolin-Goltzman et al 2009), cost-benefit analyses, state and national workforce strategies (Zlotnik et al 2009), and investment in attraction and retention grants to support innovative solutions (Faller et al. 2009). Based on a review of US cross-national research, Strolin-Goltzman et al (2009) identified three factors in the problem of attraction and retention of US child protection workers: individual; organisational; and, administrative. They argue that the identification of such factors, which can be both mutually independent and interdependent, present 'pathways by which child protection agencies can address the problem, with the solution laying in strategies that address all three pathways'. An overview of these pathways, as conceptualised by Strolin-Goltzman et al (2009) is presented below as Figure 5.2.

Figure 6.2: Pathways to retention: The US experience

Source: Strolin-Goltzman et al (2009, 151).

Reflecting the range of factors influencing attraction and retention, strategies to address the problem have also ranged in scope. As in Australia and elsewhere, education and training remains a cornerstone of US strategies to reduce turnover. Based on the fundamental premise that the more educated the workforce, the increased capability to weather the challenges of the job (this is discussed in this thesis in relation to the Department's response to the problem of attraction and retention; see Chapter 8), the interests of professional associations traditionally aligned to the child protection sector mean such strategies cannot be viewed uncritically.

Other responses include improvements to supervision (Collins-Camargo, Sullivan, Washeck & Sundet 2009; Renner, Porter and Preister 2009), realist job previews (Faller et al 2009) and the development of in-house response units (or 'design teams') drawn from across the child protection agency using a 'problems-based'

approach to address both the causes and consequences of turnover (Strolin-Goltzman et al 2009). While the issue of supervision is well canvassed across the literature, the identification of realist job previews is particularly interesting in view of the reported particularities of child protection work.

6.2.3 Realist job previews

Noting the well-established use of realist job previews (RJPs) in US industry for the best part of the last four decades, and child welfare since the late 1990s, Faller et al. (2009) claim that child welfare is 'ideally suited to an RJP' where the rewards and demands of the job are tempered by the 'heart-wrenching tragedies', and 'crisis' level rates of turnover have necessitated alternative methods. Although consisting of a number of formats, from job tours to verbal presentations, Faller et al. (2009) identify the use of new media such as video in RJPs as being particularly appropriate to child welfare as 'much of what is challenging to child welfare work is what workers see and hear' (2009, 25). Faller et al.'s (2009) study revealed how issues of resourcing and the undocumented impact in early examples have subsequently been overcome through the systemic funding of RJPs across a number of jurisdictions where research and evaluation was a condition of funding. Their study revealed that while the characteristics and content of RJPs varied across jurisdictions they generally reflected the varied tasks within child welfare, from working with children, to scenarios a prospective child protection worker is likely to encounter in their work. Faller et al. (2009) note that many RJPs canvass those aspects of the job identified as problematic, such as administrative workload and stress (although they point to the varying degree in which both are canvassed across the RJPs). Pointing to the participatory nature in which most RJPs have

emerged, from their partnership with local universities to the participation of former clients and current workers, they identify a number of issues. Such issues include the portrayal of the cross-cultural dimensions to the work, which are largely ignored except in showing diversity in the workforce, to their conflation of child welfare work with social work. While they highlight the latter as reflective of the dominance of the social work profession in the sector, I would argue (based on evidence from the Kansas example, which can be accessed online) that this reflects the support of schools of social work in their production and their use in graduate recruitment. Faller et al.'s (2009) study reveals that in spite of some resistance and the cost of production, RJPs were generally found to be beneficial to attraction and retention, although the extent to which they had positively assisted attraction and retention was inconclusive, with no systematic evaluation of their impact on attraction, job satisfaction or retention outside of Michigan. The Michigan findings suggest the original proposition by the US General Accounting Office (Faller et al. 2009) that RJPs represent 'promising practice', with the rate of turnover among workers who had left the job after one year who had viewed the RJP significantly lower (6.2%) than among those who had not viewed the RJP (21.6%). Reporting on the potential value of RJPs in attraction and retention, Faller et al. (2009) underscore the findings of their study and within the broader literature which emphasise the use of RJPs as part of a 'comprehensive and realistic recruitment and selection process'. Reflecting their increasingly common use in the US and the national approach to workforce challenges within the sector, the US Child Welfare Information Gateway, an initiative of the US Government, provides detailed advice and resources to access online. As examined in the context of the Department's recruitment campaigns in Chapter 8, while it is not clear to what extent the

Department's campaigns might be understood to constitute an example of a RJP, Faller et al.'s (2009) findings offer some important lessons for the Department in relation to the potential in attraction and retention strategies in the Murchison.

US responses to the problem of attraction and retention drew on an established and extensive body of research and practice outside the sector and its allied disciplines. While such responses could be interpreted as reflecting commercial imperatives associated with reducing the financial cost of turnover and the role of the state and more efficiency-driven considerations in the delivery of public services in the US, as evidenced by the stated origins of approaches such as RJPs in recommendations of the US General Accounting Office (GAO) (Faller et al. 2009), they highlight the potential of inter-disciplinary perspectives in finding innovative solutions to the universal problem of turnover in child protection systems and potential positive contributions of some 'managerialist' practices more typically noted for their negative contribution to the sector.

6.3 Universal particulars: key challenges in contemporary child protection work

Lonne et al. (2009) argue that the changed 'mandate' in recent decades has seen child protection systems move towards and beyond the 'differential response' of the early 1990s (which sought to move beyond narrow, forensic and investigatory focus of earlier periods) to an integrated approach that has sought to go beyond 'integrating' child protection and family approaches, to one where child health and wellbeing is central, has perhaps exacerbated existing pressure and tensions of the work. They argue that, apart from the sheer scope of the task involved in the integration of a variety of systems and agencies, the concurrent influence of a

'managerialist' approach (including systems of management such as information systems) has radically impacted the nature of the work (2009, 37). This is perhaps most clearly illustrated in the introduction of risk management measures.

6.3.1 Risky business

Risk has been a central theme in child protection discourse in the last decade, both in Australia and overseas. What is less clear is whether this is a consequence of the 'discovery' of risk attributable to Beck's 'risk society' thesis or as a response to the almost universal adoption of risk assessment measures in child protection systems both in Australia and overseas (Gillingham 2006; Pryce-Robinson & Bromfield 2006; Tomison 2004). Indeed, risk has been a feature of child protection since the earliest days of the child rescue movements (Lonne et al. 2009) and, as Ferguson (1996) argues, the increasingly legalistic nature of child protection in the 20th century and the application of scientific rationality to child protection work can primarily account for the emphasis on risk in contemporary child protection systems. Many within social work, the discipline most associated with child protection, may dispute Ferguson's account of their complicity in the ascendancy of risk. Nevertheless, some social worker authors do agree that the pervasiveness of technologies and practices for assessing risk in child protection (Johnson & Petrie 2004; Pryce-Robinson & Bromfield 2006) has emerged from scientific claims and subsequent managerialist practices of the predictability of abuse (France & Utting 2005; Lonne et al. 2009; Pryce-Robinson & Bromfield 2006). Lonne et al. (2009) argue that, in spite of their purported benefits, their association with political responses to failings in the child protection system (Lonne et al. 2009) and association with managerialist approaches has meant that discourses

on risk assessment measures have largely been overwhelmingly negative. While the proclamation of a 'risk assessment war' (Northern Territory Government 2010, 691; White & Morgan 2006, in Pryce-Robinson & Bromfield 2006) may appear exaggerated, risk assessment procedures (such as those to common to many intake processes in Australian child protection systems) are increasingly identified as not only problematic on 'ideological' grounds but in their operationalisation. This has led Gillingham (2006) and others to highlight their paradoxical capacity for abuse. Certainly, much of the opposition to the use of risk assessment measures outside those of validity (Tomison 2004) and reliability (Gillingham 2006) emphasise their damaging effect on both (child protection) worker and client.

For clients, this damage is framed in terms of the increasingly intrusive nature of these 'procedures', which (supported by the concurrent expansion of information technology systems) encircles them in an expanding web of surveillance, raising issues of fundamental liberties and human rights (Parton 2011, in Lonne et al. 2009). For workers, the damage is reported as not only the corrosive effects of their collaboration in the enforcement of such (surveillance) systems, on their beliefs/motivations and increasingly administrative function of their role, but their disempowerment in decision-making and de-skilling more generally (Freymond & Cameron 2006; Lonne et al. 2009; Tomison 2004). It is this development, which – while positively framed as reducing 'arbitrary' decision-making in case-management (Tomison 2004) – has led to the claim that the child protection practice is 'no longer about trust in professionals/individuals, but confidence in systems' (Power 1994, in Lonne et al. 2009, 52). Gillingham (2006) argues that it is their very centrality in child protection practice that creates many of the problems.

In 'structuring child protection systems around prediction of future risk' Pryce-Robinson and Bromfield (2006) argue that this reinforces a 'widespread belief that risks to children are measureable and manageable', with the inevitable consequence that any failure to do so leads to blame on the individual workers.

In stark opposition to such criticism, others have highlighted the positive effects of the increased emphasis on promoting greater accountability (Ferguson 2006) and improving service delivery. Noting their reported strengths, Tomison (2004) points to three catalysts for adopting risk assessment: improved decision-making; increased accountability; and targeted allocation of (finite and diminishing) resources to where they are most needed. In highlighting the reported advantages of standardised risk measurements to promote consistency in service delivery, including reducing subjectivity in decision-making, Tomison (2004) reports that in spite of claims to the contrary, research has revealed that the lack of specialist postgraduate education among workers has meant a lack of reliance on research and theory in decision-making in the case-intake and assessment process. Further, Tomlinson points to De Pantilis' claim (1996, in Tomison 2004) of broadening skills and knowledge of maltreatment and risk factors in addition to assisting case-management by the identification of priority cases, producing case-record history and providing a basis for training and supervision. What is clear is that arguments for or against are grounded in competing ideologies. This is emphasised by Ferguson (2006) who, in an early contribution to the 'conversation', suggested that while child protection provides an illustrative example of Beck's thesis like 'few other social practices' (1996, 222), opposition to risk management in child protection is a produce of post-structuralist (particularly Foucauldian)

frameworks which have not only seen such technologies as instruments of power and control, but have also obfuscated the relevance of Beck and Giddens' theses of risk and reflexive modernisation. This includes the logical consequences of reflexivity in challenging all expert systems, including those of child protection professionals, in their co-construction of child abuse.

6.3.2 Working with 'the other': The client–worker relationship

The conceptualisation of child protection work as complex work is a common theme in child protection discourses. Like other human service work, the complexity of the work is attributed to both its human-centred practice (Hasenfeld, 1992), including the complex needs of the clients of child protection services, and in the design of its systems (Cameron et al., 2007). The challenge presented by the client–worker relationship has tended to centre on two elements: the relationship as shaped by practice; and the behaviours of the client. As noted below, current approaches to child protection have meant that in spite of the 'child as client' suggested by the child-centred model, in the context of families the client (or care giver) may also be the perpetrator (Trotter, 2004). Trotter (2004) further argues that the inherently non-adversarial approach is not without its negative impact on child protection workers who, in spite of efforts to establish the required professional objectivity, may be further conflicted by the taboo behaviour of the 'parent' client, such as in cases of child sex abuse (Maslach, 2003). As previously noted in the context of burnout in the helping professions (but in child protection in particular), such behaviours are understood to present additional challenges to the already emotional dimension to the work.

As previously explored, the over-representation of Indigenous people in the Australian child protection system and their occurrence in the general population of the geographic area that comprises the Murchison District identifies a distinct or particular cultural dimension to practice for District workers. However, as examined earlier in this chapter, while not confined to Indigenous populations, but ethnic populations more broadly, the cultural dimensions to practice have been identified as a key challenge of the work (Briskman 2007; Libesman 2004; Stanley et al 2003). While in relation to the worker the cultural competencies of the child protection practitioners has been identified with the deficits of existing service models to delivery culturally sensitive and appropriate services, Trotter (2004) argues that it is the coexistence of cultural practices within such populations that are antithetical to accepted cultural norms, such as circumcision, and/or are in breach of child protection laws present a source of conflict between the client and the worker (Trotter, 2004).

The care and control function of child protection work, and the consequent dual role of child protection worker as 'helper' and 'investigator', is identified as a fundamental challenge of contemporary child protection practice (Freymond, 2008; Howe 2010; Trotter, 2006). This tension has been exacerbated by the suggested change in relationship between the worker and 'client' in the new moral economy, which by virtue of the increasingly bureaucratic nature of the work reduces the face-to-face contact between client and worker, but also by virtue of the way the investigatory or forensic function sets up the work in conflict with parent/family in the 'best interests of the child' (Howe 2010). Trotter (2004) argues that that the real nature of the work in such a climate renders meaningless

the notion of autonomy implicit in the term 'client' when in reality workers 'simultaneously work collaboratively to assist, assess risk and exercise authority' (Trotter, 2004, 13). Such perspectives serve to reinforce arguments highlighting the coercive function of child protection work (Rose, 1999). The paradoxical nature of the relationship is reinforced in the context of discourses that highlight the importance of trust in this relationship. Current approaches, which emphasise the 'best interests of the child' and importance of a positive relationship between service providers and families for effecting positive outcomes, are understood to be inherently contradictory, not least because of the involuntary nature of the relationship within statutory child protection work (Trotter, 2004). Research findings from child protection work with First Nations people in Canada highlights the perception by parents that service providers – while supportive of their children – are not supportive of them as parents (Fine, Palmer & Coady 2007). It is not clear whether this reflects the identity of these families as non-clients, secondary interests or perpetrators, or something more problematic: their cultural identity. Trotter (2004) argues that the impact, as noted in the context of taboo behaviour, is inherently negative for child protection workers.

6.3.3 Support and recognition of the work

The historical stigma associated with social work can be understood to reflect the profession's work with people conceived as 'problem' populations antithetical to established community ideals. The stigma of child protection work in the present era is increasingly attributed to the media representation of child protection issues and expectations on child protection workers arising from increased media scrutiny and increasingly political and risk-averse work environment. In the

Australian context, Bromfield and Holzer (2008) identify community education, and the role of the media in this process, as a key challenge for the sector. From its 'discovery' in the 19th century, and emergence of 'modern' child protection work, the media has been acknowledged for its historically important contribution in reporting child protection issues (Butler & Drakeford, 2005; Trotter, 2004). Conversely, media representations of child protection issues have also been identified as creating the conditions detrimental to positive outcomes in child protection work. Butler and Drakeford (2005) point to the damaging consequence of sensationalist approaches, particularly for evidence-based and informed responses to child protection policy, noting that the role of the media in the construction of the 'scandal' and its subsequent effect on shaping committees of inquiry and policy directions. In their 'anatomy' of the (welfare) scandal, Butler and Drakeford (2005; 2003) suggest that a number of phenomena constitute the process by which scandals are constructed: Inflation; Fatigue; Saturation; and Context. They suggest that scandals arise in specific circumstances shaped by policy and practice measures prevailing at the time (2005, 233). Consequently, the meaning that is subsequently made must be examined in its context: 'If scandals are constructed, they are manufactured with a purpose' (Butler & Drakeford 2005, 238). These authors suggest that scandal does not originate in a change of policy direction or alter the course of a policy that is well established. They further argue that the concept of a scandal itself is problematic as it implies the exceptional nature of the event in question - flaws in an otherwise sound system.

Successive reviews of child protection services in Australia and overseas have identified the negative framing of child protection issues as detrimental to the

sector. The pressure of public expectation on the treatment of perpetrators and the role of the media in this process are implicated in creating the conditions for a lack of sympathy and/or negative attitudes towards perpetrators (Cameron et al., 2007). However, criticisms of the negative effects of media representation about failings in the system have also pointed to its role in devaluing the contribution and relative attraction of the work. This includes unrealistic expectations being placed on child protection services, and on individual child protection workers by association (Butler & Drakeford, 2005; Trotter, 2004; Tomison, 2001). While Tomison (2001) argues that media representation of child protection issues is fundamentally based on self-interest, and therefore emphasises the sensation rather than raising public awareness of the issue(s), Merlan (2010) presents a contrary argument in the context of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (the Intervention) suggesting that, for all its negativity, media discourses elevated awareness of child protection issues.

The relative status of child protection work and its corresponding valuation in the allocation of resources to support the work and industrial recognition for child protection professionals has tended to be subsumed into discourses relating to key interest groups implicated in the problem: the social work profession and the marginal status of the client population. In the context of the valuation of social work, Healy (2010) argues that the persistent emphasis on its vocational dimension has undermined its professional and industrial recognition. Furthermore, the 'care' function and predominance of women in the workforce has reinforced its status as 'women's work', with a correspondingly lower valuation (Healy, 2010). In the context of residual child protection systems in Australia, the

relative value accorded to child protection may reflect the conceptualisation of the behaviours of the client population as owing less to a social problem and more to a 'problem' population (Jamrozik & Nocella, 2000). Furthermore, the value of the work has been understood to reflect the relative marginal status of children in terms not just of their political rights but of their economic rights (and their relative power as 'consumers').

6.4 Similar, yet different: The universal and particular of types of work and places as challenges to attraction and retention.

Contributions from outside the field

Whilst not specifically linked to attraction and retention, there has been considerable research on the particularities of social work and other human service practice in locations at the 'geographical margins', including rural and remote areas and those with high Indigenous populations (Allan, Ball & Alston, 2008; Briskman, 2007; Green & Gregory, 2004; Green & Lonne, 2005). Australia and Canada share characteristics of geography and demography, specifically the distribution of Indigenous peoples in remote locales. Hence, the Canadian research offers some important insights for this thesis. For some, practice in remote areas has been implicated in highlighting the existing tensions between the principles and practice of social work (Briskman, 2007; Martinez-Brawley, 2000). For others, a more nuanced change in practice is required to accommodate the differences in context, not least the organisational environment (Martinez-Brawley, 2000), boundaries of practice (Delaney, 1999), and challenges of geography and demography (Delaney, 1999; Martinez-Brawley, 2000). However, such claims to the 'unique' nature of remote practice are not uncontested (Brownlee et al., 2002).

Brownlee and colleagues (2002, 130), in their examination of burnout, suggest that one of the biggest differences, and inherent challenges, of social work practice in 'northern' locales is associated with the stress of meeting expectations of the job in view of the extended boundaries of practice which are often beyond the competencies of the practitioner. Noting the work of Ginsburg (1976, cited in Delany & Brownlee, 1999), and his profile of unique characteristics of rural areas, Delaney and Brownlee (1999, 46) argue that this environmental context provides particular ethical challenges for the northern social worker in relation to isolation, visibility and role conflict (including professional drift). Citing the importance of peer support in facing this challenge, Brownlee et al, (2002) suggest that the lack of this factor is one of the most significant influences on employee burnout. Zapf's (1993) examination of adaption and the issue of 'culture shock' in social work practice in remote Canada further highlights the challenges of practice and place, and the influence of 'trigger' factors in turnover. However, critics point to the distinct geographic and demographic characteristic of remote versus rural areas that challenge the transferability of such findings (Hall et al., 2007). In the context of the international experience, notably North America, Delaney (1999, 9) suggests that:

... the issues of living and working in rural and northern communities may differ depending on proximity to urban areas or other intervening factors, such as access roads, towns and industrial location (Delaney 1999, 9).

In Australia, research findings suggest the proposed solutions to the problem of recruitment and retention in remote communities are not without their challenges (Le & Kilpatrick, 2008; Denz-Penhey & Murdoch, 2009; Henry Edwards & Crotty, 2009; Eley & Baker, 2006; Latham et al., 2009). Findings suggest that strategies

targeting graduate programs, internships and scholarships, offer 'no guarantee', noting the difference between 'intent' and outcome in the choice of rural practice (Eley & Baker, 2006; Henry, et al., 2009; McAuliffe & Barnett, 2009). Whilst changing career aspirations and practices of generational cohorts, particularly Generation Y, are used to inform current recruitment strategies, there is little evidence to support such responses. Rather, Levy, Carroll, Francouer and Logue (2005, 27) suggest that the evidence may be attributed to 'lifecycle and situational phenomenon rather than discrete generational groupings'. Of particular interest to this research, findings from the literature in relation to the effects of physical and professional isolation in remote areas, and the importance of local professional and social networks in attraction and retention, emphasise the importance of place as a key factor in recruitment and retention.

6.5 Particularities in context: the problems of work and search for solutions in the modern era – a potted history

The building of new worlds was also the building of markets.

(Ogburn, 2008)

As asserted by Ogburn (2008), to understand the significance of work in modernity – the relationship between 'productivity' (through work) and the project of nation and empire building, for much of the modern period the meaning and value assigned to work has been its relationship with (economic) production. The relationship between work and production has reinforced the conception of work for much of this period as paid work (Giddens, 2009). The relationship with labour has been an important factor in the value of work (Arendt, 1958; Grint, 2005). The distinction between productive and unproductive work has historically

distinguished work and labour (Arendt, 1958), imbuing them with a corresponding value. However, work has always been valued for both its extrinsic and intrinsic values (Cherniss, 1995; Grint, 2005). As the history of the value of work reveals, the antecedence of the valued tradition of public service in the demos of ancient Greece has accorded public service a particularly high status in modernity partly on the basis of its association with the democratic and civic project. Similarly, the dominance of religion on individual lives until relatively recently has emphasised the importance of good or charitable works that, with increased participation of individuals and organisations in the economy, has extended from the private or personal realm to the public or professional realm. The relationship between the framing of some types of work in terms of their moral value and their economic reward has been critical to understanding the behaviour of individuals in their work choices and the economy more broadly, and the broader recognition of some types of work.

The concept of work as a 'calling' has been central to the framing of the moral value of work in modernity. The *Oxford Dictionary* provides a number of meanings for the word 'calling' in relation to work, reflecting both its general and particular contexts as an occupation and vocation. In the sociological analyses, the concept of work as a calling is a critical element in Weber's Protestant (Work) Ethic (Weber, 1992). Weber locates the origins of the word 'calling', and its connotation with a 'life-task' or 'definite field of work' (Weber 1992,79) in the work of Martin Luther and the (Protestant) Reformation. The significance of Weber's thesis is its enduring influence within the political and moral economy throughout modernity. Grint (2005) notes that, prior to Luther, spirituality – not work – was the path to

salvation. He argues that this development was critical to the transformation of work from a 'necessary chore' to a moral duty (2005, 16). In relation to the social significance of work the consequences of the moral and religious connotation with work had profound consequences for the world of work and of family that continue into late-modernity. In the discourses of the helping or care professions, the concept of a calling and a vocation remains prominent and highly contested (Cherniss, 1995; Healy, 2005). The contestability of the terms in the context of the 'helping' professions reflects both the positive and negative attribution. The significance for this research is the employment of the language and ethos of the concept of calling in the Department's workforce strategies and the problematic nature of this in relation to negative attributes associated with this valuation of child protection work in general, and that occurring in regional and remote Australia in particular.

The challenge of how to secure a supply of skilled labour has been a central occupation of thinking about work in the modern era. Prior to the Industrial age, as illustrated in feudal society, the problem of maintaining the supply of labour was largely a 'private' matter between master and servant. While the co-location of capital within proximity to labour in the earliest stages of industrialisation ensured a steady supply of labour, the increased demand for labour (and skilled labour in particular) and mobility of capital to take advantage of the economies of scale offered by larger population centres meant that increasingly the preoccupation became about ensuring productivity (Hall 1975). A number of elements became critical to ensuring productivity: the organisation of the work and the regulation of the worker. Consistent with its role in the responding to the challenges brought

about by the process of industrialisation, sociology was to play a critical role in responding to the challenges the 'new' world presented for the organisation of work and the regulation of the worker. Reflecting the epistemology of modernity and the faith in rational solutions to solve the problems of the day, the problems of work inevitably became the subject of inquiry among the new and emerging sciences. Giddens (2009) points to two approaches to the problems of work that emerged in early modernity – one technical/rational, the other sociological – that sought to examine work at the individual, organisational and societal levels. The emergence of the human relations movement, from which contemporary professions such as human resources and management have their foundation, is a direct consequence of the belief in technical solutions to the problem of work. Feminist critiques of work in the 1970s revealed the gendered construction of work and how this has reinforced a narrow definition of work as paid work (Giddens, 2009; Grint, 2005; Hasenfeld, 1992) and reinforced inequalities in professional and industrial recognition for some occupations (Healy, 2005). They also revealed interventions in the workplace as being less individual aspirations and more about organisational objectives, notably those of efficiency and productivity.

A special type of problem: burnout

The focus on retention issues in the human services sector has highlighted the ongoing issue of burnout associated with the helping professions (Cherniss, 1995). Current research, where available, continues to reflect historical trends that the incidence and risk of burnout, and the factors associated within burnout, remain higher for human service professionals, and sectors within the industry such as

child protection, compared with other sectors (Tham, 2007). The higher risks are associated with the increase in workload and reorganisation of the welfare provision associated with reform of the sector, particularly with its emphasis on risk management and higher accountability of individual human service professionals. Indeed, the emergence of burnout in the latter part of the 20th century led to assertions of its relationship to changes within the world of work (Edelwich & Brodsky 1980; Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Anticipating current commentators by three decades, Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) attributed the increased attention on burnout to the economic reforms in the period since the 1970s and consequent changes to welfare and public policy. They suggested that the new approach, with its emphasis on efficiency, not only meant getting more done with less, but with 'less turnover'. Citing the prevalence of burnout in the United States for some occupations, Maslach and Leiter (2003) contend that traditional conceptualisations of burnout as a personal or occupational problem are no longer valid, arguing instead that it represents a social problem reflecting changes in world of work in late-modernity.

Burnout is generally understood to be a particular, chronic form of job stress. Involvement with people is identified as a key causal factor in the susceptibility of the helping professions to burnout (Cherniss, 1995; Edelwich & Brodsky, 1980; Maslach, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 1997). There is general consensus around the characteristics of burnout. Research has increasingly highlighted the situational context in order to take into account the personal, interpersonal and organisational level at which burnout can occur (Edelwich & Brodsky, 1980; Maslach, 2003). Maslach (2003), whose work with Leiter (Maslach & Leiter, 1997)

has been highly influential in burnout research (her Burnout Inventory has become the universal standard by which burnout is measured) argues that in order to understand and respond to the causes and consequences of burnout, an examination of all three dimensions is essential. Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) define burnout as 'a progressive loss of idealism, energy, and purpose experienced by people in the helping professions as a result of their conditions of work' (1980, 14). Their 'stages of disillusionment' model of burnout is a five-stage process, one which begins with enthusiasm, but is followed by stagnation, frustration and apathy and ends with intervention or resolution (Edelwich & Brodsky 1980). Maslach (2003) identifies three distinct characteristics of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (or dehumanization), and decreased personal accomplishment. Highlighting the relationship between personal and 'occupational' fit, Maslach (2003) suggests that burnout can be understood as a 'mismatch' between the job and the people involved. Similar to findings by Edelwich and Brodsky (1980), Maslach (2003) identifies six areas in which this mismatch occurs: work overload; lack of control; insufficient rewards; breakdown of workplace community; absence of fairness; and value conflict.

In view of the findings of this research, and Edelwich and Brodsky's thesis that disputes the universalism of burnout being highly correlated with turnover, some elements are worthy of a closer examination. Maslach (2003) highlights how the structure of the relationship between the helper and recipient, or professional and client, which is inherently problem-centred, provides fertile ground for burnout to emerge. She further posits that conditions for burnout may be more pronounced where the origins of the problem are in 'taboo behaviour', such as child sexual

abuse and/or maltreatment (Maslach, 2003). Maslach contends that care work inherently involves some 'moral evaluation', typically reinforced by the institutional environment that largely defines the relationship. She therefore argues that the helper's view of the client, reinforced by institutional environment, may reinforce certain negative characteristics of the client, facilitating a shift to a negative attitude of the client, and the process of depersonalisation that follows. Maslach (2003) argues that the disregard of the situational context in early conceptualisations of burnout, which placed emphasis on the individual for its causes and consequences, likely reflect an idealised view of the helper-recipient relationship which has obscured the realities of the relationship. This argument is particularly important in the context of the reported tension between maintaining professional 'standards' of objectivity in the context of conflicting negative emotions where perpetrators are also clients (Trotter, 2006). In the Australian context, the complex dynamics of the interpersonal relationship between the client and worker are identified as a potential source of stress and burnout for Aboriginal workers (Duraisingam, Roche & Trifonoff 2010).

The lack of recognition for the work is associated with the 'taken-for-granted' nature of care work, often reflected in the expectations of the client and public (Cherniss, 1995; Maslach, 2003; Schein, 1972, cited in Cherniss, 1995). In spite of the critical function provided by the helping professions to society and their proxy role by which society deals with its major (social) problems (Schein 1972, cited in Cherniss 1995), Maslach (2003) has argued that the stigma associated with 'dirty work', a phenomenon historically associated with social work (Powell, 2001), reinforces its relative devaluation, particularly where and when the work falls

short of expectations. Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) point to the inherent hypocrisy that underpins the 'contract' between the worker and public, and public and 'recipient' of care, and identify visibility and reputation as a further influence on potential burnout. As noted below, the increased media scrutiny of child protection is identified as a cause of stress for child protection workers and a key challenge for the sector (Bromfield, 2008; Tomison, 2001; Trotter, 2004, 2006). In view of the reported stress of living and working in small, isolated communities (McAuliffe & Sudbery, 2005) such arguments are particularly relevant for this research.

The taken-for-granted status of work in the helping/human services has been correlated with its vocational orientation (Edelwich & Brodsky, 1980; Healy, 2005; Maslach, 2003), as well as its conceptualisation as women's work and extensions of domestic labour (Dominelli, 1997). Cherniss (1995) contends that the vocational nature of the work, or 'calling' that brings people to the work, provides an antidote to burnout. In the context of the extensive research on burnout, and recognition of it as a process, it is argued here that such assertions are potentially problematic, as discussed further in Chapter 9.

Maslach (2003) points to the compound effect of the emotional responses to working with clients with chronic and complex problems. She argues that the enduring nature of the problems is ultimately connected to burnout due to the relative powerlessness of the worker to effect change. Maslach (2003) highlights that the emotional responses to the problems, including conflicting emotions relating to antithetical behaviours, can compound the stress of the work and further exacerbate the risk of burnout. Both arguments find support in

documented challenges of child protection work, with Pearlman and Saakvitne (1995) emphasising the high risk of secondary traumatic stress disorders for professionals working with child sexual abuse.

The cost of burnout and turnover more generally on the organisation is often framed in relation to its impact on interpersonal relationships, and disruption to the workplace community that include its effect on staff morale. As noted previously in relation to turnover, internal relationships play a significant role in retention. Maslach (2003) highlights the importance of relationships within the workplace, including individual and organisational supports as key conditions that influence burnout. Maslach (2003) identifies the breakdown of community within the workplace and the insensitivity of the organisational environment to the human-centred nature of the work in the helping professions as negatively influencing burnout. She suggests that the relationship with peers or co-workers contributes to burnout in two ways: firstly, in providing a source of emotional stress that, secondly, compounds stress brought about by the job (Maslach 2003, 69). The latter highlights what Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) refer to as the 'contagion effect' of burnout. However, challenging the inevitability of burnout being correlated with turnover, they argue that its most damaging effects are in cases where burnout is correlated with retention. Reflecting their concept of burnout as a process, rather than representing an isolated incident, burnout becomes a state of being that is compounded by the continued embeddedness in the conditions that have been its cause. These authors argue that the process of withdrawal characteristic of burnout for individuals who remain in the organisation have negative consequences for interpersonal relations both within

and outside of the workplace ranging from their effect on clients, colleagues and family. In the context of the reported effects of negative socialisation particularly during the 'newcomer entry' process (Wanous, 1992) and the potential effects for these to be amplified in small and/or isolated offices, such arguments highlight potential risk conditions for supporting burnout and/or turnover in the research context. This is further argued in the context of the reported positive effects of turnover in offices with long serving employees.

The problem of turnover

As with the origins of the Hawthorne Studies in the early 20th century with the 'problem' of productivity (Grint 2005), the economic costs of turnover is given to account for its increased attention from researchers in recent decades. Mitchell et al. (2001) suggest the most fundamental questions that challenge social scientists in organisational research are 'Why do people leave?' and 'Why do people stay?' While the research on turnover for much of the last half century has emerged from the work of March and Simon (1958, cited in Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski & Erez 2001) and their focus on ease and desirability of movement, recent models have looked beyond the traditional psychological or market orientation of these models, which have traditionally been conceptualised as 'push' and 'pull' theories based on their origins in factors either internal or external to the employee (Harvey & Stalker 2003; Lee & Mitchell 1994; Mitchell et al 1999; Morrell, Loan-Clarke & Wilkinson 2004). Such models, including those grounded in attachment theory (Mitchell et al., 2001) and more complex, hybrid models which extend 'push and pull' theories (Lee et al., 1999) are of interest to this research due to a number of considerations, not least as noted in relation to the problem of turnover in child

protection (Harvey & Stalker 2003). The following turns to a brief examination of two such models – job embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001), and unfolding (Lee et al., 1999) – based on their value in providing a useful framework through which to analyse the findings of this research presented later in the Discussion chapter of this thesis.

Job embeddedness

In stating their case for their job- embeddedness model Mitchell et al. (2001) suggest that the relative merits of their construct lays beyond its empirical foundations to its capacity to offer a conceptually new way of thinking about turnover that captures ‘the heterogeneous totality’ of influences that keep people from leaving their employment (2011, 1115). The model examines three dimensions in relation to ‘on-the-job’ factors (i.e. the organisation) and ‘off-the-job’ factors (i.e. community):

1. the connections or ‘links’ that people have with other people (both formal and informal);
2. the compatability or ‘fit’ based on personal and professional values, goals and plans; and
3. the cost or ‘sacrifice’ of leaving including both material and psychological costs.

Importantly for this research, and given the structural constraints that negatively impact the Department’s capacity to attract people from within the locations where its work is based, Mitchell et al. (2001) emphasise the additional importance of off-the-job embeddedness where relocation is involved. The significance of Mitchell et al.’s (2001) job embeddedness construct to this research

is its accommodation of complexity, including the different microsystems in which the individual is embedded, which is central to the ecological model adopted for this research. (The influence of Lewin's field theory on the development of Mitchell et al's (2001) model is interesting in view of Lewin's influence on Bronfenbrenner (1979).

Furthermore, its foundations in attachment theories to make sense of the relative strengths of bonds which contribute to job embeddedness has many parallels to contributions within the Place literature, as previously examined in Chapter 4. As argued in the Discussion chapter, whilst often taken for granted in the day-to-day management practices of organisations such as the Department, attachment models offer the potential for a deeper understanding of the issue of attraction and retention and suggest new directions that address the particularities of both practice and the place. In remarking on the limitations of their model, Mitchell et al. (2001) note the challenge of time in turnover research, particularly studies such as theirs which examined actual turnover rather than just intention to leave, which means that constructs emerging during this period already suggest additional dimensions and directions for future research. Noting the similarities between their concept of 'stuckness' with others around social networks, including those within sociology (Granovetter 1985), Mitchell et al. (2001) argue the distinction is their narrow rather than broader focus on individuals staying in their jobs (2001, 1105). As discussed later in this and the Discussion chapter, it is also not clear what influence the development of online social networking technologies have in supplementing or distracting people from developing links that foster embeddedness.

Unfolding model of turnover

Presented as an alternative to single-process theories, which Lee and Mitchell (1994) argue were a consequence of the binary classification of turnover into either 'psychological-push' or 'market-pull' approaches, their Unfolding Model emerged from evidence of distinct and systematic psychological and behavioural paths which characterise the process of leaving an organisation (Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, Daniel and Hill, 1999). While drawing on established constructs such as job satisfaction from earlier models of turnover, the unique contributions of the model as reported by Lee and Mitchell (1994; Lee et al. 1999) is their incorporation of the concepts of Shock and Script and recognition of 'different psychological foci' beyond the 'staying or leaving' focus of earlier models. While the shock is not always the event that precipitates the path to leaving, their model posits that it is typically the case in most paths. Defined as a 'jarring event' (Lee & Mitchell 1994; Lee et al 1999). Lee et al. (1999) describe the concept of a shock as one which initiates a process of psychological evaluation in which the shock and their circumstances is compared to the person's self image and, if found, precipitates thoughts of leaving. Describing the event as neither a positive nor negative experience, nor necessarily originating in the individual, they cite examples that range from unsought job offers, to marital conflict and company restructures as examples of typical shocks. While this stage of the process points to the potential for an 'image violation' to occur Lee et al. (1999) posit that the pathways precipitated by the shock will differ according to the presence of a script or plan of action. As suggested by the typical use of the terms, the model's concept of search and job satisfaction relate to the search for and evaluation of alternatives to the current job and fulfilment provided by their job across a range of domains,

from the psychological to the financial. Where considerations such as attachment to the organisation may act as a mitigating factor in the decision to leave in spite of its origins in a shock, low job satisfaction may eliminate other considerations in the decision-making process. While Lee and Mitchell et al. (1999) argue the complexity of the model could be interpreted as a limitation of the approach they emphasise its value, particularly for management, is in improving both the understanding and prediction of turnover, including enabling timely responses based on the knowledge of these pathways. Though offered as a general model of turnover the value of the Unfolding Model for this research is its capacity to articulate and respond to aspects of turnover identified with key challenges of child protection work. As the findings of the primary research presented later in thesis reveal, the presence of such pathways identified in the model are clearly discernable among workers offering real world examples which could be utilised by the Department in formulating future investigations and interventions to reduce turnover.

Solutions to the problems: attraction and retention – a tale of two choices

The fundamental approach of this thesis and the rationale for a conceptual model that accommodated the implied complexity of this approach, is that attraction and retention is essentially a tale about two choices: that of organizations as employers and that of individuals as employees (prospective and current). This process is illustrated in Wanous' depiction of the four stages of (organizational) entry presented in Table 5.2.

Table 6.2 Individual and organisational issues at four stages of entry

| Phase of Organisational Entry | Whose Perspective? | |
|--|---|--|
| | The Newcomer Individual | The Organisation Being Entered |
| 1. Recruitment: The process of mutual attraction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding sources of information about job openings • Determining the accuracy of information about particular organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding sources of effective job candidates • Attracting candidates with appropriate strategy (“selling” vs. “realism”) |
| 2. Selection: The process of mutual choice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coping with job interviews and other assessment methods • Deciding whether or not to apply • Choosing from among job offers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing candidates for future job performance and retention |
| 3. Orientation: The process of initial adjustment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coping with the stress of entry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing both emotional and information needs of newcomers |
| 4. Socialization: The process of mutual adjustment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving through typical stages • Detecting one’s success | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influencing newcomers with various tactics • Using the psychology of persuasion |

Source: Wanous (1992, 3 - Table 1.1)

Thus, Wanous (1992) argues, the importance of organisational entry is essential to ensure an appropriate match between individual (employee) and organisation (employer) to minimise the risk of mismatch or conflict associated with reduced job satisfaction and, in worst cases, turnover. It is this ‘dual-matching process’ that – when successful – can lead to satisfaction and ultimately retention. In exploring the potential reasons for mismatch and conflict at organisational entry, Wanous (1992) (with reference to Port, Lawler and Hackman 1975; cited in Wanous 1992, 23) identifies four conflicts, two internal to both the individual and organisation and two between the individual and organisation. Those conflicts between the individual and the organisation centre on the information provided to individuals about the organisation and the issue of accuracy or ‘realism’ contained in this

information in order that the individual's choice is made on the basis of the 'full information', not just the 'positive' information (Wanous 1992, 22). The emergence of realist recruitment strategies, designed to present as realistic a picture as possible of the job and organisational environment, is suggested as an antidote to the problem of unrealistic expectations which are correlated with (voluntary) turnover, what McGuire (1964, cited in Wanous 1992 48) referred to as the 'vaccination effect'. While Faller et al. (2009) suggest realist job previews are the most appropriate form of recruitment for child welfare Wanous (1992) identifies four conditions which warrant their use:

1. a problem with retention, and retention of valued employees;
2. favourable labour market conditions to employees (i.e. low unemployment);
3. low position to recruitment pool selection ratio; and
4. the type of job, where there exists a low level of accurate information available to assist the prospective employee.

While the use of video and other new media post-dates Wanous' original exposition, the recourse to his approach across the US child welfare sector suggest the potential value to this research in realising the applied outcomes of this research, the identification of strategies to attract and retain District workers.



This chapter has sought to contextualise the reader to the particular types of work in which the research is embedded, child protection, including challenges within contemporary child protection practice may be understood to constitute the

particularities of practice and therefore an important source of knowledge to inform a key question for this research.

The review of the literature revealed that while there are some distinct challenges confronting the Australian child protection sector, notably the over-representation of ATSI children, it shares as much in common with child protection systems in international jurisdictions including on this point. One such commonality is the problem of turnover in the child protection sector with figures reported for the US suggesting a much more acute problem than that in Australia. By turning to the problems of work and turnover and burnout research in particular, this Chapter has provided some useful frameworks through which to consider the Department's problem of attraction and retention in the Murchison District examined in the Discussion chapter (Chapter 10). As theories of place attachment presented in Chapter 5 have been identified for their value to this research in view of the Department's interest in attracting to a place, the Murchison, so are organisational attachment theories examined which consider both on- and off- the job factors and their relationship to embeddedness of value.

As suggested, the simultaneous rise of the mass media and systems of care and protection for children in the modern era has meant that the media has played an integral role in the construction of child abuse. In view of the role of the media in shaping public attitudes, the next chapter turns to the analysis of public discourses on particular dimensions of place and work that are central to this research: regional and remote Australia and child protection.

Chapter 7 Discourses of Place and Work: A review of selected policy developments and media discourses 2009-2012

On 23 August 2006, *The West Australian* newspaper printed a 'white' front page devoid of text to signify the alleged whitewash by the (then) WA Government on the findings of an inquiry into the death of toddler, Wade Scale a child known to the Department. As the only daily newspaper in the state, 'The West' not only demonstrated the power of (mass) media in 'telling' the news, but in shaping how the story would be told. In doing so it provided a classic illustration of the role of the media in the construction of the latest local child protection scandal including in its search for 'answers' the individuals to blame (Butler & Drakeford 2005; Gillingham & Bromfield 2008; Goddard & Saunders 2001).

Common to the processes precipitated by such events (Butler & Drakeford 2005), the 'public' inquiry into the death of Wade Scale led to the initiation of the Ford Review of the Department (Ford 2007), whose recommendations are germane to this research in view of her identification of attraction and retention as a key workforce issue and its prioritisation under the subsequent reform agenda which followed under the newly established Department for Child Protection (the Department) (see Chapter 8).

The significance of Wade Scale's death to this research is complex. In life and death Wade epitomises the complexity and human tragedy of child protection work. However, the relationship between the origins of this research in the Ford Review and the reform processes it initiated, means that the significance of the media representation of Wade Scale's death were as much its demonstration of the

reflexive relationship between media, politics and public policy (Bessant et al., 2006). This reflexive relationship is articulated in expositions of Bronfrenbrenner's ecological model (Garbarino 1982) as critical interactions that occur at the levels of the Exosystem and Macrosystem.

The power of mass media has long been debated in the 'modern' era, particularly in its role in the shaping public opinion (Bechhofer & Paterson 2000; Macnamara 2005; Neuman 2011). While in recent decades debates about newspapers has centred on the effects of increased media concentration and their decline relative to new forms of digital news media, they remain an important medium for the dissemination and production of news and the public discourses on policy. Anticipating changes in the reporting of child abuse at the turn of this century in view of (then) emerging digital media, Goddard & Saunders (2001) observed that the media influence was unlikely to diminish, as evidenced by the reporting of Wade Scale's death and more recently the coverage of the Northern Territory Emergency Response revealed by the media analysis presented in this chapter.

Consistent with the ecological framework this research is interested in the broader settings in which the research is located. It therefore has looked beyond the particularities of the Department and its Murchison District, as both a place to live and place of work, to examine the broader institutional and geographical contexts in which they are embedded. In view of the reflexive relationship between media, policy and public discourses, this chapter gives an overview of developments at the national and state level in relation to politics and practices associated with children and family, Indigenous, regional and remote issues. Within these contexts, the chapter discusses relevant developments associated with the particular

geographical and organisational context to this current research; that is, the Murchison District, and the Department itself.

7.1 Race, resources, royalties and rights

While Baird, Williamson & Heron (2012) suggest 2011 represented a significant discursive moment in women's work issues and workforce participation, a review of public discourses on regional and remote Australia between 2009 and 2012 could equally suggest that the period represented a watershed moment in regional and remote policy development. Across the social, economic, environmental, cultural and political arena, a set of conditions propelled regional and remote Australia to the centre of the national and local (state) 'conversation'. A consideration of key developments for the period are worthy of examination here due to both their impact on District workers, as well as background information on the broader context to the places, and their people, of interest to this research.

While the broader discourse on regional and remote Australia encompassed the effect of ongoing economic and social change and the causes and consequences of extreme weather events, it was the effects of a few key policy developments that dominated public discourse. In social policy, the legacy issues of the Australian Government's Northern Territory Emergency Response (the Intervention), introduced by the Coalition government in 2007, and the continuation and expansion of its key welfare reform measures by the Labor Government following the 2007 and 2010 federal elections, dominated the conversation and reignited old debates about the causes of Indigenous disadvantage, the ethics of intervention, and the role of the state in Aboriginal lives. On economic issues, the scale of the resources boom and contribution of the sector to the regional, state and national

economies, particularly during a global recession, underscored the ongoing importance of regional and remote Australia to Australia's prosperity (Cleary, 2011a; Megalogenis, 2011). The introduction of policies such as Royalties for Regions in WA and the Australian Government's Minerals Resources Rent Tax highlighted the potential of the boom to return a windfall for the public good, both for the present and the future. The demand for labour and potential royalty streams were extolled for the unprecedented employment and economic opportunities they presented for 'closing the gap' on Indigenous disadvantage (Langton, 2011; Macklin, 2011). However, the negative effects of the boom, evident in contrary discourses, underscored the social, environmental and long-term economic costs (Cleary, 2011).

In the political arena, the period witnessed historical developments in local governance with the planned amalgamation of shire councils in regional and remote WA as part of the ongoing reform of local government.³⁰ However, it was the outcomes of the State and Northern Territory elections that elevated regional Australia as a priority on the State and national policy agenda. As evidenced from the following, the discourses surrounding each highlighted the divisions between Australia's metropole and periphery that extended beyond the geographic divide.

7.1.1 The politics of regional policy

While Beer, Maude, & Prichard (2003) proclaimed at the beginning of the century the 'new' importance of Australia's regions, the role of the 'bush' in the outcome of state/territory and federal elections immediately prior to and during the research period highlighted just how important they had become by the end of the decade.

³⁰ These are now scheduled to occur in July 2015.

In the WA election of 2008, the federal election of 2010 and NT election of 2012, the outcomes were inextricably linked to the issues of regional and remote Australia. The historical agreements between the WA Nationals and Liberal Party in the 2008 state election and Labor Party and 'country' independents in the 2010 federal election to form coalition governments were on the basis of a commitment to address and respond to regional issues. This commitment included an increased investment in regional and remote Australia outside of existing budgets and the elevation of regional policy on the national and state policy agenda (McAuley, 2010). In the case of WA, the WA Nationals, responding to previous electoral losses and consultation with people from across regional areas, successfully campaigned on a platform of Royalties for Regions: a proposal to reinvest 25% of annual royalties from revenues derived from the resources boom – to a maximum value of \$1 billion, over and above government obligations and commitments – 'back' to the regions (Grylls 2008). In the 2010 federal election a commitment to regional Australia was a key principle of the Better Deal for Regional Australia agreement signed between independent members of parliament Tony Windsor and Rob Oakeshott with the Australian Labour Party to form a coalition government (Gillard, Swan, Windsor & Oakeshott 2010). The consequences of this, which included the establishment of a new Commonwealth government department with cabinet level ministerial leadership (the Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government) and commitment to access for regional Australia to the National Broadband Network (NBN), were heralded as signifying a 'renewed focus on regional Australia' by the then minister (Crean 2011). Highlighting its new status, regional Australia was said to be 'enjoying a higher profile than has been the case in the past' (Crean 2011). As further evidence

of the effect of policy developments in regional and remote Australia in decisive electoral outcomes, changes to local government structures and welfare reform measures introduced under the Intervention, were given as the basis for splitting the party political vote along the geographical divide of 'city' and 'bush' in favour of the Country Liberal Party (CLP) in the 2012 NT elections (Mackerras 2012).

7.1.2 Resources, regional and remote and economic futures

The economic growth of India and China in the last decade, particularly the urbanisation and industrialisation of China, and consequent demand for natural resources has meant that resource-rich Western Australia and Australia have benefitted from this transformation (Cleary 2011a; Economist Intelligence Unit 2013; Haslam-McKenzie 2011b; Milliken 2013a). The level of demand for minerals and resources, unprecedented in history, was credited as representing a 'one in a hundred year' opportunity and 'super-cycle' (Cleary, 2011a), with Australia's resources production identified as a key factor in Australia avoiding the worst of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and Australia being one of the few global economies to report growth during that period (Milliken 2013a). In the resource-rich state of WA, mining was proclaimed as a cornerstone of the economy on account of its contribution to employment and gross state production (GSP), contributing 8% of all employment and 35% (or \$83 billion) of GSP (2013) (Department of State Development DSD 2013).

In this context, the location of its natural resources in regional and remote Australia has meant that geographies otherwise conceived as being at the margins have become central to the economy and national conversation about Australia's present and future (Walker, Porter & Marsh 2012). The resources boom has been

credited with transforming regional and remote Australia both positively and negatively. In addition to the change affected on the physical environment from extraction processes, which has heightened tensions between developmental and environmental imperatives, the resources boom has transformed the state and the Murchison in several ways. The demand for skilled labour from the resources sector has led to population migration to WA, contributing to this state reporting the fastest population growth for all states/territories between 2006 and 2011 (ABS 2012). Revenue derived from the resources sector has funded major infrastructure projects at both the state and national level. This investment has included funding of housing for public sector workers through the scheme's 'GROH 400' program (Department of Regional Development and Lands, 2012) and the District Allowance (The Nationals WA, nd). At the national level, the boom has also been credited with contributing to long-term economic prosperity through the funding of major national infrastructure projects such as the NBN and Building the Education Revolution (BER) scheme.

The resources boom has effected a major development in Place thinking and making. While the visions for the Pilbara as the 'New Dubai' (O'Brien 2011) might be hyperbole, visions for the Pilbara and Geraldton and WA's regions outlined in the SuperTowns framework (Department of Regional Development and Lands, DRDL 2011) present an alternative vision of WA's regional cities beyond historical metro-centric approaches. The new thinking is further reflected in discourses relating to the east-west divide. Western Australia has historically been divided from the east-coast states on a number of counts. The state was established as a free colony, in large part as a defence against French colonial interests, with the

cities of Perth and Sydney separated by 3,300 kilometres in distance and three hours in time. The West has always set itself apart, reflected in periodic calls for secession since Federation (Stannage 1981), and has been seen as a largely foreign place within the dominant Australian narrative. The unprecedented population growth of the state during the research period, combined with the importance of its economy, has been heralded as signifying a major shift in the status quo of the geo-spatial dimensions of the Australian political economy in favour of the West (Salt 2011). While it may account for just over one-tenth of Australia's population, WA accounted for 16% of the national economy in 2011–12³¹ (DSD 2013). No longer at the geographical margins of Australia's far west shoreline, WA has emerged as a place of national strategic importance.

The case for FIFO on workforce lifestyle preferences has emphasised the tension between increased urbanisation of the population, particularly in coastal areas, with the desire for greater decentralisation and ongoing concerns with supporting sustainable growth (Haslam-McKenzie 2011a; Morris 2012; Hugo et al 2010). The increased prevalence of and preference for FIFO across the resources sector has challenged assumptions about the historical role of industry in regional development through support for 'new town' or residential models for workers, such as the towns of Pilbara (Committee for Economic Development of Australia 2009; Storey 2010; Morris 2012), and role of the state in regional development (CEDA 2009). While the impact of FIFO on residential communities (those which serve as permanent bases for FIFO workers) has centred on the effects at the family and community level from periods of absence and income inequality

³¹ Alternative reference is DFAT Western Australia Factsheets (December 2012). Accessed online: www.dfat.gov.au/geo/fs/.

(Pilbara Association of Non Government Organisations Inc. [PANGO], 2012), the impact of 'host' communities on existing towns has been a prominent theme in discourses. In addition to the structural effect of the lack of investment in service infrastructure historically associated with new town/residential resource communities, discourses have focused on the pressure on existing services and infrastructure due to population fluctuation and lack of corresponding return due to the land-use agreements between mining companies and the WA Government and associated procurement models (Bradley 2011; Haslam-McKenzie 2011a). Furthermore, the scale of the boom and the corresponding population growth has placed additional pressure on regional housing markets. The demand for accommodation in places in close proximity to the resource centres, particularly during the construction phase, has had a pronounced effect on both supply and affordability of housing (Morris 2012; Rowley & Haslam-McKenzie 2011). The effect of the overflow of workers accommodated within temporary accommodation, including holiday accommodation, has not only negatively impacted on amenity levels but on growth industries such as tourism (Harradine 2012; Morris 2012). The effect of the latter, together with the increased competition for skilled labour and the high Australian dollar, have been charged with creating a 'two-speed' and mono-economy (Cleary 2011a; Haslam-McKenzie 2011a; Milliken 2013b).

The scale of the revenues derived from the resources boom, and the effect of practices within the sector, has renewed debate about the relative contribution of regional Australia and the relative returns. Discourses around 'who pays' have highlighted the clear role for the state, and failure of the market, to provide

services and infrastructure to support the development of Western Australia's and Australia's regions (CEDA 2009; Grylls 2008; Murray 2010a). The introduction of Royalties for Regions in WA (Grylls 2008) and the Minerals Resource Rent Tax (MRRT) at the national level ('Rush to Riches' ABC Four Corners 2010) has heightened this debate. The opposition from mining companies to the proposed Resources Super Profits Tax, the forerunner to the MRRT, and its purported role in the removal of Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister in 2010 underscore the different positions on the extent to which the resources sector 'pays', and political consequences and limits of government interventions to secure a public return from the boom (Davis 2011).

7.1.3 Regional futures

Amidst the turbulence of the period, discourses have invariably included deliberations on the future of regional and remote Australia. The discourse on the future of Australia's regions can be characterised as a narrative of opposites. While the future of places such as Karratha (WA) and Darwin (NT) have been proclaimed as the 'new' Dubai (O'Brien 2011) and Brunei (Adlam 2012), and the 'true potential' of WA's regions remains 'yet to be undiscovered' (DSD 2012), elsewhere regional and remote Australia has been described as a 'failed state' (Walker et al. 2012). The effects of the two-speed economy attributed to the boom (Cleary 2011; Megalogenis, 2011), and the real and symbolic effect of the ban on live cattle exports in 2011 (Rothwell 2011), underscored new vulnerabilities and the ongoing effect of structural change in the economies of regional and remote Australia contrary to predictions as to its bright economic future.

The visions articulated in the SuperTowns framework (Department of Regional Development and Lands 2011) and Sustainable Population Strategy (Commonwealth of Australia 2011) highlighted the traditional role of regional policy in balancing the effects of population growth (Hugo et al. 2010; SEWPaC 2011). While discourses on population and regional development underlined the perennial issue of the need for services and infrastructure to attract capital (including the human kind) (CEDA 2009; Rothwell 2012), the capacity of all regions to support this growth due to economic and environmental sustainability and lifestyle preferences is contested (Daley & Lancy 2011; Rothwell 2012). Daley and Lancy (2011) argue that in spite of increased investment in Australia's regions, this has not led to a corresponding economic growth across all regions. Pointing to the concentration of growth in regions identified as having 'real' economic opportunities, such as the resource centres of the Pilbara, and heterogeneity across satellite, coastal and inland cities, the study recommends that the investment in the regions would be better spent in satellite cities.

The resources sector was a principle driver of growth across regional and remote Australia, particularly in WA regions such as the Murchison. Current strategies to enhance the future competitiveness and liveability of regional Australia, such as the Murchison, are largely predicated on a resources future. It is not clear what effect the reported slow down in the resources sector and other mitigating factors will have on the renewed focus and investment in services and infrastructure which occurred across regional and remote (Western) Australia during the research period. The popularity of the Royalties scheme, described as the most lucrative regional development scheme in Australia's history (Daley & Lancy

2011), has given the WA Nationals 'a profile like never before' (Kerr & Wilson 2011). However, the architect of the policy, WA Nationals Leader and WA Regional Development Minister Brendan Grylls expressed doubts about the future of the policy in a Liberal-majority government after the 2012 WA election (Burrell 2013). With the federal Coalition opposition anticipated to form a majority government after the 2013 federal election, it is not clear whether the current level of commitment to regional and remote Australia will be sustained beyond the current election cycle.

The Opposition has expressed a clear interest in 'northern Australia'. However, criticism of the Royalties schemes and MRRT within conservative discourses (Salusinsky 2011), slower economic growth, budget deficits and a changed political landscape, may relegate the relative level accorded to regional and remote policy observed during the research period to another example of the political opportunism which critics argue has been characteristic of regional policy in Australia (Tonts & Haslam-McKenzie 2005).

The geographical and cultural divide between the metropole and the periphery that characterised discourses on the Intervention and Indigenous policy was further echoed in those of environmental and animal welfare issues. The cause and effect of the introduction of a ban on live cattle exports (Rothwell 2011) and reported animal cruelty during traditional Indigenous traditional hunting practices (Elks 2012) revealed a deep disconnect between the life preferences and livelihoods of people living in remote Australia and those within its major cities. In the words of Country Liberal Party parliamentarian, Dave Tollner:

There's a complete disconnect now between southern Australia and the north, and above all its pastoral industry ... Of course the ban was a disaster, of course even with the export trade reinstated the damage is done. Small family stations will go to the wall; the corporates will make it through. A key part of the economy of the north has been undermined. But it was the lack of interest in the cities that was the striking thing. The animals came first. And nothing's being done to change attitudes down south. It's so sad this disconnect is there and seems so entrenched.

(Cited in Rothwell 2011)

Discourses on the environment reveal a further divide among traditional allies. Developments such as the proposed uranium mine in Wiluna (see Appendix 8), the storage of nuclear waste at Muckaty Station in the Northern Territory and proposed Indigenous economic development within the Three Rivers catchment in Cape York in northern Queensland (Pearson 2010; Yunupingu 2010), and natural gas development at James Price Point in WA (2010; O'Brien 2010; Prior 2010) reveal how identity politics is not only challenging traditional alliances between environmental groups and Indigenous communities, but those within Indigenous communities, when confronted with divergent interests/priorities (Langton 2012). The location of many natural resources in areas of pristine wilderness and on lands subject to and/or possessing Native Title suggests the potential for ongoing conflict between economic, cultural and environmental imperatives in the future. The latter is highlighted in the debate which questioned the 'untapped potential' of royalties by Native Title owners for the development of Aboriginal communities under the Royalties for Regions scheme for 'all' Aboriginals, which ignored the complex political and cultural dynamics of Aboriginal communities which distinguished the use of such monies for traditional owners only (Murray 2010a-e).

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the period of economic growth which marked the research period, the discourses reveal a future of regional and remote Australia premised on its economic development, with the resources sector a critical part of this future in WA. While the liveability of the regions is seen as a critical complement to this future, the resources sector is identified as a key driver of this growth including in its provision and/or funding of services and infrastructure. Cases such as the Woodside liquid natural gas development at James Price Point in the remote Kimberley region of Western Australia have highlighted the tensions between economic, cultural and environmental objectives, with the WA Government expressing a clear intent to override cultural and environmental imperatives in support of economic objectives in the case of James Price Point. Ironically, while the resources sector is seen as a key driver of economic growth and liveability, the effects of resource development are implicated in the degradation of the physical environment. The consequences of this degradation are identified as not only impacting negatively on the region's other main industries of (eco)tourism and fisheries, but the very essence of what makes them attractive places to live and visit.

7.2 Population, participation and productivity

In advanced economies in the last two decades, economic discourses have been marked by their focus on the profound structural adjustments occurring in the population and the economy caused by an ageing population and a transition to a 'post-industrial' or knowledge economy (Business Council of Australia, [BCA] 2008). While economic discourses during the research period have largely centred on the causes and consequences of the GFC, particularly its implications for the

'capitalist' model, this period has also been marked by an ongoing conversation about the demand and shortage of skilled labour and its consequences for economic productivity (BCA 2008).

In Australia, policy responses to meet the demand for skilled labour as a consequence of an ageing population have been based on the '3 Ps' of economic growth: population, participation and productivity (The Australian Productivity Commission, 2005). The Australian Productivity Commission (APC) (2005) has previously advanced that there remained considerable scope to lift labour force participation from within the existing population to address anticipated shortages. Such scope includes policies to delay or deter retirement, which have found favour in the WA Public Sector and the Department. While training and employment strategies targeting Indigenous Australians, both within the public and private sector, reflect a recognition of the role of skills attainment and employment in 'closing the gap' on Indigenous disadvantage, they also reflect a recognition of the under-utilisation of this 'reserve' in the labour market (BCA 2008). However, in recognition of the limited capacity to meet current demand for skilled labour through domestic population solutions, employers both within the private and public sector are increasingly looking to alternative models to meet demand.

7.2.1 Meeting the demand: 'Foreigners' and FIFOs

While a shortage of labour has been reported across most sectors of the labour market, the resources boom, – and dependence on the boom to the national economy – has meant that discourses on the shortage of skilled labour have centred on this sector. The location of resource activity in regional and remote Australia has underscored not only the issue of labour supply for the sector, but its

effects on other sectors and (importantly for this research) the shortage of and problem in attracting skilled and professional labour to regional and remote Australia. Discourses have invariably focused on current policies to address such issues, notably the use of skilled migration programs and the FIFO workforce models. In view of the prevalence of both models to meet demand for health professionals in regional and remote Australia and influence of Health workforce policy on child protection policy, it is anticipated that such models will feature in responses to meet future workforce demands (Kilpatrick, Vitaris, Homisan & Johns 2009).

The utilisation of skilled migration has been a key policy response to address skilled labour shortages, particularly within regional and remote Australia in the last decade. In addition to the incentive of offering permanent residency, skilled migration programs targeting highly qualified professionals, such as medical practitioners, have increasingly emphasised the lifestyle benefits of living and working in Australia in addition to incentives such as the reimbursement of higher education costs in exchange for employment contracts through indentured scholarship arrangements (Department of Health and Ageing 2011). While discourses on labour shortages during the period emphasised the reliance on migration models to meet labour shortages, the reliance of the medical and health sector on such models including through the International Recruitment Scheme administered by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing (Deloitte Access Economics 2011) was reported as growing (Parnell 2010a, b). While criticism of schemes for health professionals has been minimal, in contrast with other sectors (as examined below), opposition has focused on two aspects:

questions of competency, and the impact on the 'originating' country in the context of migration from developing countries. While the former has been minimal and confined to a few individual cases of malpractice, the latter has received considerably more attention due to its impact on both the host/exporting country, specifically the loss of scarce human capital, and the importing country in not building further capacity within the existing population (McIntosh, Torgerson, Klassen 2007). In the context of developments within the child protection sector, such concerns are particularly relevant.

The main scrutiny of skilled migration programs has focused on the Australian Government's 457 visa program. Introduced in the late 1990s, the 457 program came under particular attention during the research period for its utilisation within the resources sector and alleged breaches of industrial relations policy (Burrell 2012; Kelly 2013). Stone (2010) argues that of all the industrial relations issues of recent years, the Commonwealth's 457 visa program remains the most controversial. He notes the role of interest groups – including those within the originating country – in their support or opposition (Stone 2010, 66). Opposition to the 457 scheme, particularly from within the trade union movement, has focused on equity issues, including the adequate protection for migrant workers and current and future employment conditions for local (Australian) workers (including those unemployed) (Stone, 2010).

The demand for skilled labour as a consequence of the resources boom (and the limits to meeting demand from the existing population, and demand from industry to meet such shortages from overseas migration) has been a dominant theme of the conversation on skilled migration and employment policies more generally. In

WA this led to an historic agreement between the federal Labor Government (which had previously opposed the relaxation of rules to extend the program to unskilled workers) and a major resources company that allowed the recruitment of temporary workers from overseas in occupations outside those authorised under the 457 program (Burrell 2012). Such developments have been argued as illustrating their potential for undermining current and future employment conditions and opportunities (Burrell 2012). While discourses on the 457 visa program towards the end of the research period have centred on allegations of abuse, including by the Australian Government, these remain strongly contested and have been cited as politically motivated (Kelly 2013).

As examined further in Chapter 8, the Department has sought to utilise skilled migration programs to meet workforce shortages in regional and remote WA. In doing so, the Department has sought to benefit from austerity measures in the UK, and resulting cuts to public sector workforces, in recruiting qualified child protection professionals seeking to relocate or return home to Australia. However, as examined in subsequent chapters, current findings in the literature point to the need for a closer critique of such policies in the context of the geographic domain of 'remote' practice.

7.2.2 Fly-in-fly-out and drive-in-drive-out

As previously examined, mobile workforce models such as fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) and drive-in-drive-out (DIDO) have become a standard response to the demand for skilled labour and professionals in regional and remote Australia (Morris 2012). Their prevalence within the resources sector, and recent exponential growth as a result of the resources boom, has meant that such models have come under

increased scrutiny on the basis of their wider social impacts. It is estimated that between 90,000 and 100,000 FIFO and DIDO workers are active in WA (Trenwith 2011; Radio National, 2011). The reported impact on communities has made them particularly conspicuous, with the degree of resentment within some parts of the population leading to a redefining of the FIFO acronym in the vernacular: 'fit-in-fuck-off'. The recognition of the opportunities and challenges presented by FIFO and DIDO models has led to reviews of the models and practices: at the state level, by the West Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) (WALGA, 2010); and more recently by the Australian Government House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia in 2011 ('the Committee'). It should be noted that the literature that informs this discussion has been primarily drawn from submissions to the Committee and media discourses rather than definitive data. Furthermore, the prevalence of FIFO in the resources sector has meant that discourses have largely focussed on this sector.

The case for FIFO/DIDO has typically centred on economic and social factors. As previously noted, the organisational case for FIFO has focused on the cost efficiencies to fixed 'new town' options in a changed regulatory and financial environment, and the flexibility it provides to meet changing demand and phases of activity (CEDA 2009; Evans 2011; Haslam-McKenzie 2011a; Morris, 2012). At the community level, the increased investment in transport infrastructure, particularly upgrades to regional air transport, has been identified as having a positive flow-on effect for industries such as tourism and horticulture in the Murchison (Bradley 2011). At the individual level, FIFO has been promoted as a response to and accommodation of the lifestyle preferences for city and coastal

living within the wider population (Haslam-McKenzie 2011a³²; 'Survey refutes FIFO claims', Australian Mining³³). Such arguments emphasise the flexibility FIFO offers households and families to remain embedded in established arrangements around employment, education and social networks that have historically been disrupted through relocation (Haslam-McKenzie 2011a; Morris, 2012). The importance of FIFO in simultaneously creating employment opportunities and maintaining connections to home, or country, has been highlighted for Aboriginal communities in view of the importance of both to wellbeing (Evans 2011). Ironically, the benefits of FIFO in the regulation of behaviours of mining workers echoes early model workforce interventions (Rose 1999). Haslam-McKenzie (2011a) notes that FIFO has served a role in minimising the potentially negative social impacts associated with mining communities and lifestyles due to the control of the workforce through camp-based living and regular health screening.

The case against FIFO (and to a lesser extent, DIDO) has been the dominant theme in public discourses. In presenting a case for the negative impacts of FIFO, discourses have framed the effects in relation to the individual (FIFO worker), their household/family and the 'host' and 'residential' community. While the benefit to individuals has been a strong argument presented in support of FIFO, the contrary argument is that it presents high risk factors for individual and family wellbeing. At the individual and family level, FIFO practices have been associated with the increase in risky behaviours by FIFO workers (Mills & Collins 2012; Trenwith 2011), as well as relationship and family breakdown (Trenwith 2011). At

³² ABC interview.

³³ Accessed online: <http://www.miningaustralia.com.au/news/survey-refutes-fifo-claims>. Last accessed: 29 March 2012.

the community level, the negative effects of FIFO have been attributed to the changed dynamics across both host and residential communities (Bradley 2011; McKenzie 2011a; PANGO 2012) although at the stage of writing this area remains under-researched. These dynamics include the effect on social capital within communities from reduced availability of people for volunteering and lack of embeddedness and therefore attachment to place and communities of place. The effects of the two-speed economy has also highlighted the income disparities between FIFO workers and the wider population, particularly in communities which have been negatively impacted by the swelling of the local population and housing demand and costs as a result of the migration of FIFO workers (Haslam-McKenzie 2011a; Morris 2012). The reported negative effects of FIFO are subject to claims and counter claims. The WALGA review noted the distinction between the academic and mainstream literature on the reported negative effect of FIFO (Lenny, cited in WALGA 2010). The reported negative effects on individual wellbeing are the most contested, notably from within the industry (Clifford, cited in CEDA 2009; Queensland Resources Council cited in Australian Mining 27 February 2012). Arguments which centre on the reported negative effects on personal and family relationships have emphasised the lack of disruption to family life from relocation which reflect the changed realities of family dynamics, including dual career households in contrast to traditional 'residential' models where spousal careers which historically were sacrificed in the relocation process (Rhodes 2005).

As the submissions to the Committee clarified, FIFO and DIDO workforce models are not confined to the resources sector and are common practice within the

health sector (National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) 2011) and Commonwealth public service in regional and remote Australia, particularly northern Australia. The presence of District offices in towns such as Mullewa that are staffed on a part-time basis, and the location of the District administrative team in Geraldton, reveal how current workforce practices within the District and Department demonstrate elements of the FIFO/DIDO workforce models. Furthermore, the location of the Department's training base in Perth has meant that historically workers have flown in and out of the Murchison to participate in professional development opportunities. Findings from previous research undertaken with the Department in the District revealed the negative effects of this movement on embeddedness and cohesion within the work and life setting resulting from the periodic 'disembedding' of workers from their place of home and work (Alcoa Research Centre for Stronger Communities 2006).

However, the further significance of FIFO for this research is its effect on the supply and demand side issues. The identification of places within the Murchison as host and residential communities for FIFO workers presents both opportunities and challenges for child protection workers with regard to place-based strategies such as those proposed for the Gascoyne (SGS Economics & Planning 2012). One of the paradoxes of the reported benefits brought about by an increased demand within the resources sector and availability of FIFO working arrangements for Aboriginal employment is the unprecedented competition it presents for public sector agencies in regional and remote WA, such as the Department, who have been traditional employers of Aboriginal people in these locales. As examined in

Chapter 8, the consequences of this for the Department's aspiration to become an 'Employer of Choice' for Aboriginal people in principle remain to be seen.

7.2.3 The reform of the state

The ongoing effects of the GFC, and coincidence of negative or negligible economic growth in most advanced economies and large (public) deficits has meant that public sector expenditure has come under increased pressure. Talk of 'efficiency dividends' and 'managed budgets' has dominated discourses across international, national and regional economies (O'Flynn 2012; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 2012). In spite of the relative economic success of the Australian economy, the slowdown in the resources sector, the reported large public deficits and aspirations for budget surplus financial models, has meant that such debates became a dominant theme in Australian political and public discourse, particularly in the approach to the 2013 federal election and anticipated Coalition victory. This public debate becomes difficult to reconcile with the different emphasis relating to public sector workforce issues at the commencement of this research, noted below.

The period has coincided with a program of review and reform of the WA Public Sector. While the election of the WA Nationals to a Coalition Government in 2008 led to substantial support for public services in regional and remote areas, notably investment in government regional officers housing and review and increase in the district allowance for public sector employees, the Liberal-National Government under Premier Colin Barnett has progressively implemented efficiency savings across the sector. In its blueprint for the 'reform' of the public sector in late 2009 (Department of the Premier and Cabinet 2009), the Government called for 'radical

change' in the delivery of public services in WA, including the increased involvement of the community sector in service delivery:

The public sector will increasingly act as a facilitator of services, rather than a direct provider, with all areas of service delivery open for competition.

(Department of the Premier and Cabinet 2009)

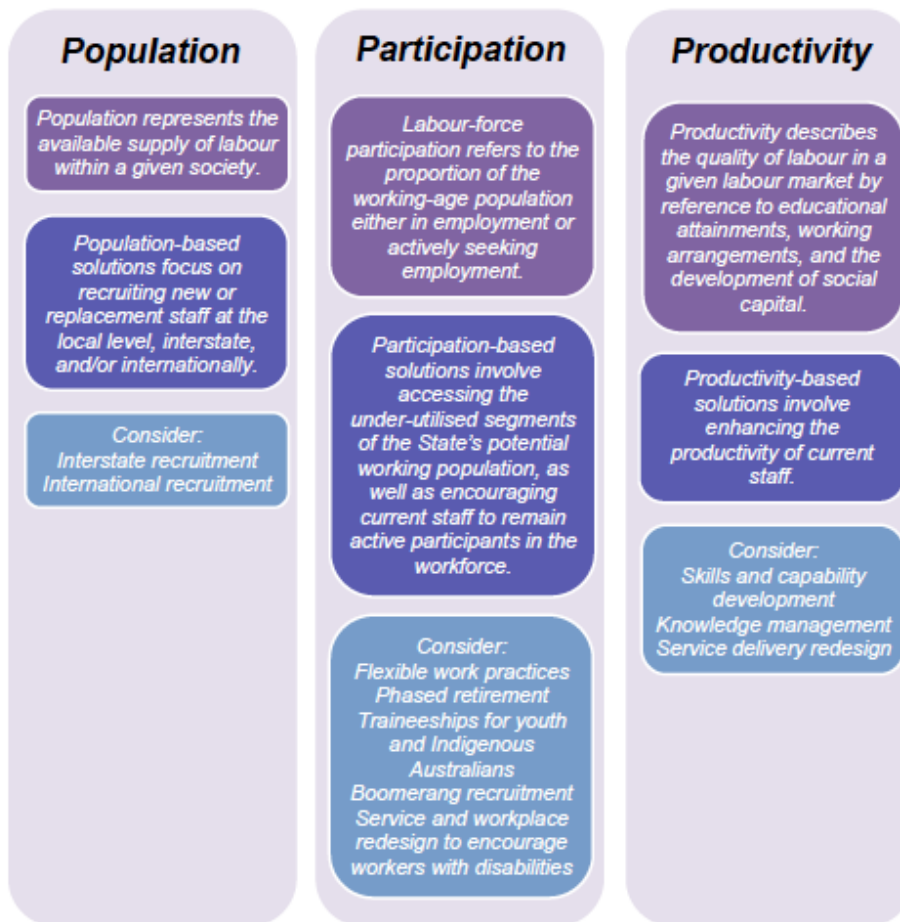
The lead agency responsible for the reform of the sector is the Public Sector Commission (the Commission). Further to its establishment in 2008, the Commission has led a reform agenda that included directing agency and sector-wide responses to workforce challenges. A review of the annual State of the Sector reports for 2009 and 2012 are instructive in revealing the issues and emphasis, which have driven developments in the sector and their change over time. In 2009, the main issues and challenges for the WA public sector were framed in terms of social, economic, technological and environmental factors. In outlining the future challenges for the sector, the Commission identified the convergence of an increased demand for services and infrastructure, 'complex demand issues' (particularly from growing Indigenous and overseas born populations) and increased resource constraints present ongoing serious challenges. The Commission noted additional challenges from the geographical context to the delivery of public services in the state, as well as increased public scrutiny and corresponding increased expectations. In noting the geographical dimension, the Commission highlighted the constraints on service delivery from existing telecommunications infrastructure and predicted costs of investment in new infrastructure and population resettlement due to climate change (WA Public Sector Commission 2009, 22). The Commission envisioned 'innovation' as critical to meeting these challenges. In view of the diminished pool from which to recruit,

and essentialism of migration to meeting not just replacement but forecast demand, the Commission underscored the importance of innovation across all areas of operation: from service delivery, to (professional) practices and workforce planning (including attraction and retention). Technology was identified as a key tool to address service delivery requirements for regional and remote areas of the state. The Commission acknowledged the corresponding (financial) investment in infrastructure and skills development to support such innovation, including in response to the impact of climate change on settlement patterns.

In looking at employment requirements for the decade, the Commission identified recruitment demand at 47% of (then) current headcount, representing an additional 44,512 people.³⁴ Similar levels were identified for the state's regional areas, with demand relatively even with the exception of the Kimberley. The occupations of Welfare Support Workers, Nursing Support and Personal Care Workers and Office Managers were anticipated to account for the highest growth (based on 2007–08 headcount). In outlining the approach within the WA public sector to meet workforce challenges, the Commission also adopted the framework of the '3 P's' (population, participation and productivity). An outline of the principal responses for each area is illustrated in Figure 7.1.

³⁴ The estimate reflects both replacement demand caused by attrition through retirement and other separations, and new demand from increased demand for public services.

Figure 7.1: The three aspects to addressing workforce challenges



Source: WA Public Sector Commission (2009, 31).

Noting the external pressures impacting on the competitiveness of the sector and ability to attract and retain quality staff, the Commission pointed to wages growth from the resources sector and relatively low education participation rates among the population for both further and higher education as further constraints on supply. The Commission also identified the limited scope of agencies to offer competitive financial incentives to attract and retain quality staff as a critical issue for the sector (PSC 2009).

The Commission's report for 2012, reflecting the focus on workforce planning and development in preceding years, confirms the universalism of workforce planning

initiatives developed and implemented across the sector, which have grown from half of the sector in 2009 to nearly all (99%) in 2012. The Commission lists the streamlining of recruitment processes and flexible work arrangements as the main responses implemented as part of workplace planning initiatives. The consequences of an ageing workforce continue to remain a priority in 2012, reflected in the emergence of workforce planning initiatives, such as delayed retirement, to manage this transition. The Commission (2012) identified succession planning as a major focus of future workforce planning activities. The retention of both people and knowledge are identified as core components of succession planning, with managers a key target group of retention strategies.

UnionsWA and the state's two unions for public sector employees, the Public Sector Union (PSU) and Civil Service Union (CSU), launched successive campaigns in opposition to the reform of the sector, and the introduction of efficiency dividends more specifically. The principal platform on which both union campaigns centred was the challenge to austerity arguments made by the WA Government in view of the strong economic growth reported and forecast by the Department of Treasury in its *Annual Report on State Finances* (2010). These forecasts include an estimated doubling of mining royalties from 2007–08 and 2010–11 to \$4.2 billion in 2010–11 (UnionsWA, 2011) and a \$1.6 billion surplus for the state in 2011. The campaign highlighted the impact on child protection to underscore the effect of 'efficiency dividends' on service delivery of core services (Rainnie & Fitzgerald 2011). In view of the caps on full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, the campaign highlighted the reality of current caseloads, where 700 of 3,519 children in care are reported as being without a case-worker (UnionsWA 2011;

'Union calls for more child protection workers', ABC News, September 4 2012). The campaign underscored the importance of competitive pay and conditions for attraction and retention, both generally and from the ongoing crowding effect from the resources boom. Findings of the community survey undertaken as part of their Save our Service campaign indicated the majority of respondents (85%) believed the proposed cuts would make attraction and retention more difficult (UnionsWA 2011).

In 2012, public sector employment cuts and recruitment freezes were announced at the federal, state and territory level across Australia. In the 2012 WA Budget announcement, the WA Government confirmed 'ongoing efficiency gains' across the public sector, with efficiency dividends of 2% and a freeze of full-time equivalent employees with the exception of Education, which will attract a 1% dividend (Chamber of Commerce and Industry [CCI] of Western Australia 2012). The dividend is cumulative, with 1% increases per annum. In its analysis of the WA state budget for 2012-13, the WA Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) credits the WA Government 'fiscal discipline' in its imposition of 'efficiency dividends on agencies ... and capping growth in the public sector workforce' (CCI 2012, 2). However, the response to the cuts has been less fulsome in other quarters. The WA Government attracted criticism from the shadow minister for Child Protection and Community and the Public Sector Union/Civil Service Union in WA (CPSU/CSA) for the lack of funding in the budget for child protection, particularly in view of reported levels of cases without caseworkers and increased workload (Unions WA nd). Further to the efficiency dividend announced in the May budget, the WA Treasurer subsequently announced an additional \$330 million

of cuts to public sector spending, which included a lowering of FTE positions across the public sector, with more cuts expected to be announced in the mid-year review by calendar year's end. In his announcement, the WA Treasurer dismissed claims it would affect frontline services, but emphasised their necessity in avoiding the level of cuts undertaken in other Australian states and territories ('Buswell shaves \$330m off public sector', *The West Australian*, September 26, 2012). In qualifying those areas where it intends to achieve efficiency dividends, the Department for Child Protection identified areas that include information technology, training and a review of general operating and administrative budgets.³⁵ The significance of this is discussed in Chapter 10 in the context of its implications for the Department's response to attraction and retention.

The discourses relating to the public sector has reignited old debates about the role of a 'big' state. The European sovereign debt crisis and subsequent introduction of austerity measures has challenged entrenched attitudes about the public sector and the welfare state in the face of large public debt, and the consequences of an ageing population for increased pension liabilities and a shrinking tax base. Critics of austerity measures and the public sector expenditure cuts have argued such developments represent the long and ongoing movement of economic rationalism or neo-liberalism, with its consequent dismantling of the welfare state and transition to new public sector management (Mitchell, Cook & Quirk 2012; Rainnie & Fitzgerald 2011). Contrary to prevailing discourse in the

³⁵ Letter from the Department for Child Protection to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations re 2012/13 Efficiency Dividends in *The Government's Efficiency Dividend and the 2012/13 Budget* (Report No. 39), Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, 38th Parliament of Western Australia, November 2012. Accessed online: <http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Test/Tables.nsf/screenLCTabledPapersByDate?open&orm>

national print media on the 'saving' of public sector cuts, research released recently has emphasised the cumulative effects of such cuts (O'Flynn 2012; Mitchell et al. 2012; Roxburgh 2012). Mitchell and colleagues (2012) highlighted that cumulative effect of cuts to public sector employment in the last two decades are particularly negative for regional communities where the public sector remains in many instances a major employer ('Report reveals impact of public sector cuts', ABC News (Online), 16 August 2012). He argued that the 'broader effect' of such cuts, such as the social impact on families, are at odds with 'narrow', fiscal considerations. It is not clear whether such employment represents 'real' public sector jobs, as opposed to 'soft' public service jobs that are akin to another form of 'welfare', an alternative argument presented in the national media (Salt 2012). An evaluation of the Australian Government's national Building the Education Revolution (BER) scheme revealed that in spite of media reports of the relative inefficiency of the public service, state government's such as Western Australia and Queensland – which utilised existing expertise within the public sector to manage BER projects – delivered better outcomes in terms of value for money and customer satisfaction over and above states/territories that engaged the private sector (Roxburgh 2012). Roxburgh (2012) cites the positive function of public sector management in the BER as an example of the unintended consequences of public sector reform that has progressively stripped expertise out of the public sector that will ultimately in the long term 'cost more money than saved'.

The scale of the European sovereign debt crisis and liabilities on public accounts as a consequence of the ageing population have also lent support to counter

arguments for reform of taxation and public sector expenditure to maintain productivity and avoid European and US-style austerity measures (Dusevic 2012; Maher & Creighton 2012; Megalogenis 2012). Contrary arguments to economic rationalism have suggested the 'reform' of the public sector presents opportunities for innovation and transform the organisation of the work of the public sector to reflect 21st century realities rather than 19th century philosophical/ideological constructs, including the organisation of work (and presumption of bureaucracy efficiency) (Bartos 2012). In reflecting on the evolution of child protection systems in Australia, Higgins (2011 5) points to the growing awareness among policy makers, critics, researchers and politicians that one of the main challenges is how to manage 'a juggernaut of a system' that has 'grown beyond all expectations'. He argues that the multiplicity of stakeholder interests and jurisdictions, which has been a major impediment to change and innovation in the child protection sector, has precipitated the increased role of the Commonwealth through instruments such as the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, in order to effect reform. However, others have pointed to the role of public sector reform and neo-liberal policies more specifically in expansion of 'markets' previously the domain of the State, including human services in contributing to this multiplicity (Connell, Fawcett, Meagher 2009).

7.3 Scandal and reform

As noted in relation to the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, (Commonwealth of Australia 2009), this research has coincided with a number of critical developments in the evolution of systems of care and protection of children in Australia. The beginning and end of the research period (2009 and 2012) were

marked by two significant milestones relating to child protection: the National Apology to the Forgotten Australians and former Child Migrants made by the prime minister on behalf of the Australian Government in November 2009 and the announcement by the prime minister of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in October 2012. Both milestones are significant in their recognition of the failures to protect children from harm, and within the context of late-modernity, the unintended consequences of policy interventions and legacy of the state and Church in child protection well into the late 20th century. The focus on faith institutions as part of the Royal Commission is particularly significant, not only in terms of addressing historic cases of child sexual abuse that remain unprosecuted and largely private, but in its challenge to the continued exceptionalism shown to faith institutions in the reporting of sexual abuse.

The discourses surrounding the establishment of the Royal Commission and its coincidence with scandals in the United Kingdom surrounding the alleged paedophile activities of television personalities and alleged complicity of the BBC and others in failing to respond to reports have propelled child protection issues into the national and international media spotlight. The discourses have inevitably centred on the conspiracies of silence within institutions and highlighted the changing social and cultural norms regarding to the awareness of child sexual abuse. An opinion piece in *The Australian* at the height of this debate showed the passion and rhetoric that such discourses aroused as one commentator (a former political adviser) asked 'why child protection did not attract the same attention as animal cruelty as the *cause celebre* of parliamentary backbenchers' (Wilkinson

2012). Referring to the estimated incidence of abuse and neglect and further to committees of inquiries into child abuse, she lamented that despite its importance child abuse continued to attract relatively little public attention and ‘fewer political champions than sheep and cows’ (Wilkinson 2012). The monitoring of print media confirms child protection attracted significantly less *sustained* attention than the areas of education, health, police and housing at both the local and national level. However, as evident from the effect of reforms within the WA public sector on child protection (reported above), child protection issues have not been absent from state and federal political and policy agendas and within the broader public discourse. However, while the period witnessed the launch of the first national policy initiative to address child protection, discussed in detail below, the main focus of public discourse was the reported failings of the child protection system to protect children from harm. As evident from Table 7.1, there have been five inquiries across Australian states and territories which have reported and or been established in the period 2009–12 (AIHW 2013). This follows six during the period 2005 to 2008. The list is not exhaustive. The report of the (Tasmanian) Select Committee on Child Protection noted that 12 reports into child protection with more than 400 recommendations have been released since 2005 and, after the announcement of the inquiry into child protection services in Queensland in July 2012.

Each inquiry in each jurisdiction has led to the review and reform of child protection services and each inquiry, without exception, identifies workforce issues, particularly those of attraction and retention, as critical in the reported failure and required reform of child protection services.

Table 7.1: Child Protection Inquiries in Australian States/Territories 2002 to 2012

| YEAR | STATE/ TERRITORY | INQUIRY TITLE (Short title) |
|---------------|---------------------|---|
| 2012 (Nov) | Australia | Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse |
| 2012 (Apr) | Queensland | Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry (Carmody Inquiry) |
| 2012 (Feb) | Victoria | Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry |
| 2011 | Tasmania | Select Committee on Child Protection |
| 2010 | Northern Territory | Growing them Strong Together: Inquiry into the Child Protection System in the Northern Territory 2010 |

Source: AIHW (2012: Appendix I: Inquiries into child protection services).

The number of inquiries undertaken in the sector in the last decade shows and consequent reviews of statutory child protection authorities which have followed underscore arguments that have highlight the increasingly reactive (Butler and Drakeford 2005) and reflexive (Ferguson 1997) forces shaping contemporary child protection policy.

7.3.1 Aboriginal children and failings of the child protection sector

In 2007, the Howard Coalition Government launched an Emergency Response in the Northern Territory (the Intervention) following reports of widespread sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities after to the release of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report by the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry (2007). As noted in the context of discourse on regional and remote Australia, although the Intervention occurred prior to the period of this research its effects were to reverberate throughout the research period in areas not only relating to child protection, but regional and remote and Indigenous politics and policy. Seen in the context of the number of inquiries that have been undertaken in the past decade, the *Little Children Are Sacred* report could have served as yet another footnote in the cycle of

inquiries and reports that have shaped child protection policy and 'reform' of the child protection system in the last decade. Instead, it precipitated one of the most significant developments in the recent history of child welfare and Indigenous policy and reinforced arguments that pointed to the exceptionalism applied to child welfare policy for Aboriginal children and families both in the past and in the present. Just as the concept of *terra nullius* had created disquiet among early settlers as to the 'bad' title (Reynolds 1987), the suspension of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* in order to enforce the Intervention meant that its 'title' was 'bad' from the beginning, regardless of its stated intentions.

Walker et al. (2012) argue that the crises that typically define discourses on remote Australia tend to focus on the issues of Indigenous disadvantage. The scale of Indigenous disadvantage has led to historic national agreements between the Commonwealth and all states and territories on Indigenous reform through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). Across a range of indicators – such as infant mortality, life expectancy, burden of chronic disease, educational attainment, risk of violence, employment status and income level – Indigenous Australians are significantly worse off than non-Indigenous Australians. The United Nations has proclaimed the health of Indigenous Australians as poorer than that of indigenous peoples in other developed countries and some 'third world' countries (Anderson 2012; Sharp & Arup 2009). The complex set of issues which underpin the causes and enormity of the challenges presented by this disadvantage has led to the framing of Indigenous policy as a 'wicked' (policy) problem (Australian Public Service Commission (APSC 2007). As stated at the

outset, the over-representation of Indigenous children and families in the child protection system reflects this disadvantage.

In welfare and Indigenous policy, the extension of welfare reform measures introduced under the Intervention to Western Australia and Queensland, universal occurrence of this disadvantage and increased policy attention to 'close the gap' sustained a focus on Indigenous issues in remote Australia (Franklin & Elks 2011; Wilson 2011). While the focus on Indigenous disadvantage was a central theme of public discourse in both state and national media it was the ongoing repercussions of the Intervention that continued to dominate the national conversation (Franklin & Elks 2011; Wilson 2011). While the implications of the Intervention for child protection work in regional and remote Australia is discussed in the next chapter, the discourses surrounding it provide a revealing example of the divide between Australia's metropole and periphery on thinking about place, and Indigenous peoples in particular.

The suspension of the *Racial Discrimination Act* (RDA) and utilisation of the Australian army as part of the declaration of the Intervention highlighted for many the particularism or exceptionalism of policy responses targeting Aboriginal peoples. The power to enact such a 'place'-specific measure itself lay on the peculiar status of the NT as a type of place: as a territory, not a state, and the legislative power of the Commonwealth over the NT (Greenwood 2009). As well as exposing the geographic dimensions to 'vulnerability' (Merlan 2010), the conditions and events that resulted in the Intervention highlighted additional spatial dimensions to critical issues at the heart of reports of abuse and neglect, including the location of remote communities outside the critical gaze of

government and the wider community (Langton 2007; Toohey 2008). As illustrated by the sources used to compile this analysis, the media has played a key role in bringing non-Indigenous Australians into contact with Indigenous issues in regional and remote Australia (Langton 2011; Merlan 2010; Sutton 2009). The national print and broadcast media has been cited as playing a particularly critical role in the events leading up to and following the inquiry that precipitated the Intervention (Altman & Hinkson 2010). Merlan (2010) has argued that one effect of the representation of the Intervention in the national media has been to raise the prominence of issues. However, Langton (2007) has previously compared the media representations of the violence and dysfunction of Aboriginal people of regional and remote Australia as analogous to a form of 'war porn' and 'Aboriginal reality show' (Langton 2007), which fails to show the context of the reality of living in a remote Aboriginal community devoid of 'services, infrastructure, opportunity and social fabric'.

While support for the Intervention was divided across the NT, discourses originating outside the Territory revealed a distinct spatial dimension to the discord. Critics of the most vocal opponents to the Intervention noted they were mainly academics and commentators living in Australia's metropole. The 'liberal consensus' (Altman & Hinkman 2010), 'Aboriginal protestariat' (Langton 2011) and 'inner city-intelligentsia' (Franklin & Elks 2011), cushioned from the harsh realities of living in remote Aboriginal communities, (Langton 2011; Rintoul 2011), came under particular criticism. Langton (2011) argued that as well as exposing gender and cultural divides, the discourses revealed a 'romanticized view of the mythological natives' (Langton 2011). Contrary arguments which highlighted the

exceptionalism of the Intervention pointed to historical discriminatory policies enacted on Aboriginal peoples by the state, with some suggesting the response was a Trojan horse, politically motivated, and a ploy to seize control of Aboriginal lands and communities (Merlan 2010, 119). Such views reveal the level of mistrust that permeated discourse and attitudes towards Indigenous issues and the role of the state more broadly. While not universal, the calls for 'grog bans' and other welfare reform measures from within Aboriginal communities highlighted a growing gender divide in remote community leadership and challenge to dominant rights discourses (McKenna & Owens 2011; Price 2011, in Langton, 2011; Sutton 2009). Reflecting the depth of emotions engendered by the Intervention, Aboriginal people who supported it were vilified by their city 'brothers' and 'sisters' as 'pet aborigines' (Wilson 2011) co-opted by the 'neo-liberals' who supported the Intervention (Langton 2011; Rintoul 2011 2012; Ferrari 2011). Central Australian Aboriginal woman, community leader and Member of Parliament Bess Price came under particular criticism (Rintoul 2011, 2012; Rout & Ferrari 2011). The response of Marcia Langton to fellow academic, public intellectual and Aboriginal woman Larissa Berendt's criticism of Price in the national press captures the geographical and cultural divide that underpinned discourses relating to the Intervention. Further to Berendt's Twitter posting following Price's appearance and comments on a national current affairs program in which she declared, 'I watched a show where a guy had sex with a horse and I'm sure it was less offensive than Bess Price' (cited in Langton 2011), Langton (2011) printed a rebuke in the national press, contrasting the lives of Price and Berendt. The former raised in a remote Aboriginal community, beset by its own problems with violence, fluent in several Aboriginal languages, and Berendt in suburban Sydney, a human

rights lawyer and academic, the daughter of a white mother. While criticising Berendt for the disrespect she had shown Price as a person and elder in conflict with traditional Aboriginal cultural norms, Langton also reserved criticism for the deeper divide from which she attributed such views as emanating. In reflecting on the view of Berendt and fellow commentators in their contempt for Aboriginals in remote Australia, such as Price, who had supported the Intervention and ‘interventionist’ policies to reduce violence in Aboriginal communities, Langton (2011) suggested the view of remote Aboriginal people was one where:

... the natives are simply not smart or sophisticated enough to know what is right for them. Once upon a time this was the role of the patrol officers, now it’s the turn of the city slicker Aborigines with an axe to grind.

While the reported level of sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities that accompanied the Intervention remains strongly contested, reporting remains relatively low in Aboriginal communities, as illustrated in the case of joint Police and Department initiatives in the Murchison in Chapter 3.



Reinforcing the temporal limits to any research project and the aphorism that time changes all things, the review of the media demonstrated by the changed fortunes of the economy and resource sector in particular, and renewed attention on regional and remote Australia³⁶. The review of the print media for the period reveals, the sites in which this research is located are contested sites and reveal not only the institutional lag between changed realities of family and work and

³⁶ This effect of time is also illustrated in the withdrawal of the (Federal) Coalition Government’s Paid Parental Leave Scheme at the time of writing (March 2015), a key family/work policy which they took to the 2013 Federal election.

policy measures that recognise and respond to this change, but also the resistance to such change.

Further to the conceptualisation of attraction and retention as a dual process involving both organisational and individual choice (Wanous 1992), the next two chapters present the issue of attraction and retention from these two different perspectives. Chapter 8 presents the findings from the parallel convergent phase of the research involving and collection and analysis of organisational documents to identify the extent of the Department's problem with attraction and retention in the Murchison and describe the Department's response to attraction and retention both in the District and more broadly during the research period. Chapter 9 presents the findings from the interview and survey of District Workers undertaken as part of the exploratory sequential phase of the research. Largely descriptive, a critical examination of these findings in the context of the literature is presented in Chapter 10.

Chapter 8 To have and to hold: The organisational perspective on attraction and retention (2009–12)

This research emerged from the WA Department for Child Protection's identification of and response to attraction and retention as a 'problem' issue in its Murchison District. Drawing on material produced by the Department, this chapter describes the organisational conceptualisation of this problem and their response for the research period (2009 to 2012): from the identification of the problem, to its responses both for the District and across the Department's operations more generally. The chapter is structured in two parts. The first part reports on the status of the 'problem', with a report on vacancies and turnover in the District during the period. The second part presents an overview of the Department's response to attraction and retention according to the five main strategies under which they have responded:

1. Aboriginal Attraction and Retention;
2. Qualified Workforce;
3. Regional Attraction and Retention;
4. Promotions and Innovative Recruitment; and
5. Workforce Planning and Profiling.

The data for this chapter has been drawn from sources provided by the Department, including strategic planning documents, workforce data, marketing materials, and correspondence with Department contacts. A critical examination of the Department's response is deferred to Chapter 10, the discussion chapter.

8.1 The status of the ‘problem’: vacancies and turnover rates

The Department’s recognition and response to the issue of attraction and retention for the Murchison demanded an examination of the actual rather than reported nature of the stated problem. Examining two basic measurements of attraction and retention, vacancy rates and turnover rates, reveal that both attraction and retention remained an issue for the District throughout the period. The extent of this ‘problem’ is illustrated in Table 8.1, which presents vacancy and turnover rates for the District for key census periods from 31 December 2009 to 30 June 2011.

Table 8.1: Workforce Dashboard Report – Murchison District (period ending 30 June 2011)

| Indicator ³⁷ | DCP | Murchison | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Year end 30-Jun- 11 | Year end 30-Jun-11 | | 6 mth end 31-Dec- 10 | Year end 30-Jun- 10 | 6 mth end 31-Dec- 09 |
| Workforce Data | No. | No. | % | No. | No. | No. |
| Total Funded FTE | 2,343 | 95.1 | | 93.00 | 75.3 | 74.40 |
| Actual FTE 1 | 2,219 | 71.7 | | 72.34 | 68.41 | 61.58 |
| Average FTE 2 | 2,141 | 70.9 | | 68.84 | 60.91 | 55.22 |
| | | | | | | |
| Vacancy Rate | 7.9% | 24.4 | 25.7% | 28.8% | 14.3% | 14.5% |
| | | | | | | |
| Voluntary Turnover | | | | | | |
| Annual Turnover Rate | 12.4% | 12 | 15.7% | 13.4% | 15.9% | 17.5% |

Source: Excerpt from Workforce Dashboard Report – Murchison District, (DCP 2011).

³⁷ FTE denotes full-time equivalent.

The picture revealed by the data indicates that vacancy rates fluctuated considerably during the period, from a low of 14.3% in June 2010 to a high of 28.8% in December 2010. Data for June 2011 shows that the vacancy rate for the Murchison had decreased from the previous census period (December 2010) by 3.1 percentage points to 25.7%. However, the rate remained over three times the Department average of 7.9%. Reported vacancies for the period reflect both a growth in the District Workforce and turnover in the Workforce. Data for number of persons by cost centre (broadly corresponding to each location) presented in Table 8.2, reveals that by actual headcount the District grew in size by 60% during the period: from 68 persons in 2009 to 111 persons in 2012. This growth shows the District has been successful in attracting people to its workforce.

Table 8.2: Size of district workforce and year on year change by location

| Number of persons | | | | |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Location | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
| Carnarvon | 13 | 14 | 13 | 15 |
| Geraldton | 26 | 30 | 28 | 41 |
| Meekatharra | 7 | 8 | 6 | 8 |
| Westview | 14 | 12 | 23 | 32 |
| Murchison | 8 | 9 | 13 | 15 |
| Wiluna | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 68 | 74 | 83 | 111 |

Source: Derived from Annual Workforce Data reports from 2009-2012.

Annual turnover rates reveal the Department has had variable success in retaining members of its District workforce, with a decrease between 2009 and 2012, ranging from a high of 17.5% in 2009 to 15.7% in June 2011.

The data presented in Table 8.2 shows that in real terms each location within the District grew during the period, although this was negligible in the satellite offices of Carnarvon, Meekatharra and Wiluna. The main growth occurred in Geraldton, in the District headquarters and Westview Hostel. While the data shows that the size of the Geraldton office almost doubled during the period, the reported growth for the Murchison largely reflects the expansion of administrative roles and District-wide appointments allocated to this cost centre. The reported growth for the Westview Hostel largely reflects the casual nature of its workforce.

The turnover data in Table 8.1 does not indicate the number of persons who have left the District workforce during the period. An examination of the annual list of employees between 2009 and 2012 produced for this research indicates that 148 persons employed in the District. An analysis of these lists for all periods (2009-12) indicated 46 people – approximately one third of all people employed in the District during the period – as no longer employed in the District³⁸. Subsequent primary research reveals not all persons had left the District, and not all ‘departures’ from the District resulted in organisational turnover. Advice from the Department shows that eight people have remained with the Department in the Murchison, and nine have remained employees with the Department but relocated outside the District. Of those employees who have remained employees of the Department but relocated outside the District, two in three (n=6) people relocated to the Perth metropolitan area with the remaining third (n=3) relocating to other country districts.

³⁸ Removing persons employed in the Department’s Westview Hostel (n=11), thirty-five (35) people were drawn from the Geraldton, Carnarvon, and Meekatharra offices.

Just over half (54.5%, n= 36) of the 67 personnel working in the District in 2009 were still working for the Department in the Murchison District in 2012. This finding points to the considerable churn in the District workforce, and its variability of this churn across locations. For example, by March 2012 the Meekatharra office, historically a location with high turnover, had lost five of the six personnel identified in 2009. Such figures confirm that some locations in the District, such as Meekatharra, continue to experience high levels of turnover. Although the reported change for sites may be small, as the turnover literature presented in Chapter 6 reveals the effects are not necessarily proportionate to the number of people, particularly in small, discrete offices such as those found within the District. This is confirmed by findings from the survey of the District workforce, presented in Chapter 9.

The attraction and retention of Aboriginal people remains a priority objective of the Department and has been a major focus of efforts to improve attraction and retention during the period (Department for Child Protection, 2009a). The analysis of District workforce data reveals that the Department has been less successful in retaining its Aboriginal workers. Close to half of Aboriginal persons (44% or n=4) employed in the District in 2009 (n=9) were no longer employed in 2012. Based on reported length of service, the average for Aboriginal workers employed in the workforce in 2009 was three and a half years. The interviews confirmed at least one member of this cohort had left and returned to the workforce after a period of absence. These figures suggest that the turnover of Aboriginal workers in the District remains a problem for the Department, in spite of the relative success of their recruitment of this target group in the past as evidenced by Figure 9.8 ('Only

black office in the state'). The findings from the interviews and survey of the District workforce, presented in Chapter 9, suggest possible factors for this turnover.

8.1.1 The problem in context: vacancy and turnover rates across the Department

The continued experience of higher than Department average turnover rates has meant attraction and retention remained a priority workforce issue for the District in both 2010 and 2011. In her review of the Department in 2007, Ford (2007) identified attraction and retention as a workforce issue and one inextricably linked with other workforce issues such as caseworker qualifications and rural and remote factors. Acknowledging the universal nature of the problem of attraction and retention in the sector across both Australian and international jurisdictions, Ford (2007) made particular reference to both universal and locational drivers impacting supply within the sector pointing to both the mobility of young professionals and demand from the resources sector on increasing competition for qualified workers.

As the general prioritisation of attraction and retention under the reform agenda implies, the problem extends beyond the Murchison. An examination of data for all Department business units reveals the extent to which the experience of attraction and retention is highly variable across the organisation. The *Workforce data for Country Districts* (unpublished) for the three census periods up to and including December 2010 reveal the District reported consistently higher vacancy rates than all other country districts for each census period, and double the average vacancy rate of 11.5% reported for all Country Districts. However, an examination of

turnover rates for the period shows the Pilbara, South-West and East Kimberley all reported annual turnover rates in excess of the highest rate for the Murchison of 17.5% (December 2009) between December 2009 and December 2010. While the relatively higher vacancy and turnover rates reported for the Murchison would appear to suggest factors particular to the District and therefore 'place', correspondingly high vacancy and turnover levels in these other country jurisdictions. This suggests that factors other than those peculiar to the District are also likely to account for this phenomenon such as those relating to the work and organisational environment. Such findings have important implications for the Department's responses to attraction and retention, and are examined next.

In responding to the issue of retention in rural and regional locations the Ford Review qualified the ultimate objective as maintaining 'functional retention rates' (Ford 2007, 72). It is important to note that while the Department has identified levels of vacancies and turnover as being at problem levels in the Murchison, there is no established benchmark as to what constitutes a reasonable, functional or problem level. Requests for clarification on this issue for this research were unsuccessful. In the context of the turnover literature (Chapter 6), notably that within the US child welfare sector, it would appear that the Department's experience of vacancies and turnover is considerably less than the experience of other organisations and other locations. As examined in the Chapter 10, it is suggested that the Department's conceptualisation of attraction and retention as a problem may exhibit some of the characteristics of a zombie problem where the substance of the issue as named is at odds with the actual reality (Beck & Willms, 2004).

8.2 Organisational responses to attraction and retention

This section is structured into five parts, corresponding to the five strategies under which the Department has responded to the problem of attraction and retention. As noted throughout, the coincidence of the early part of this research with the latter stages of the reform of the Department following the Ford Review (2007) has meant that the Department's response is inextricably linked to the findings and recommendations of the Review. However, as examined in Chapter 10, considered in the context of the literature and discourses presented in early chapters of this thesis, the Department's responses can be understood as largely reflecting broader trends.

8.2.1 Aboriginal attraction and retention

The attraction and retention of Aboriginal workers has been a cornerstone of the reform of the Department and Australian child protection sector in the last decade. In Western Australia, both the Gordon Inquiry (Gordon, 2002) and Ford Review (Ford, 2007) identified the attraction and retention of Aboriginal workers as critical to improving services and outcomes for Aboriginal children and families in view of the disproportionate representation of this group within the client population of the Department. The *Aboriginal Employment and Learning Strategy* (the Strategy) is the main policy and planning document that sets out the Department's approach to attracting and retaining Aboriginal workers. At a fundamental level, the Department has expressed its aim of improving the attraction and retention of Aboriginal persons by simultaneously increasing the number of Aboriginals in the workforce, and by reducing the number of Aboriginal workers leaving the Department. To assist in its objective of improving services for

Aboriginal children and families, particularly the delivery of culturally appropriate services, the Department has established employment targets for each business area and district. The targets, set out in Table 8.3, vary across the Department and reflect the objective of increasing Aboriginal employment in service delivery and planning roles.

Table 8.3: ATSI workforce targets by business area and district

| Target | Business area |
|---------------|---|
| 10% | Service delivery support directorates |
| 20–30% | Accommodation and Care Services |
| 20–50% | Pilbara Murchison and Goldfields Districts |
| 50% and above | Aboriginal Engagement and Coordination, and the Kimberley Districts |
| 10–20% | Other Districts |

Source: Aboriginal Employment and Learning Strategy (DCP, 2010).

Thus, the target of 20–50% of the workforce for the Murchison and other districts in (outer) regional and remote areas reflects the representation of the ATSI population as a proportion of the general population in these localities. The Department aims to increase the proportion of its total workforce that is Aboriginal to 20% by 2014. The Department identifies these targets as an important measure in the development of evidence-based responses for attraction and retention in communities with high Indigenous populations.

The Department aims to go beyond increasing and maintaining Aboriginal workforce participation rates to become in principle an ‘Employer of Choice’ (Lowe 2001) for Aboriginal people seeking to work in human services and/or to contribute to their community (DCP, 2009). The support of individual aspiration is the cornerstone of the Department’s approach to attracting Aboriginal workers

and becoming an employer of choice for this group. The Department identifies the provision of flexible work arrangements, learning and development opportunities and an organisational environment that respects and values Aboriginal values and knowledge systems, as key means to achieve its goal.

The Department has developed a range of materials to promote employment opportunities to Aboriginal people. In addition to advertisements for specific vacancies, the Department initiated a national promotional campaign in 2011, 'Our Kids, Our Future', to recruit Aboriginal people to the Department. An example of the promotional material for the campaign is included as Figure 8.1.

Figure 8.1: Aboriginal recruitment campaign (2011): 'Our Kids, Our Future'



Source: DCP (2011).

The details of this campaign are examined later in this chapter in the context of another approach by which the Department has responded to attraction and

retention, *Promotions and Innovative Recruitment Strategies*. The Department has utilised print, broadcast and online media in its promotion of employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. Its website has served as the main source of information to prospective recruits. Accessible at: <http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Organisation/AboriginalEmployment/Pages/AboriginalEmployment.aspx>, the advice outlines incentives available for Aboriginal recruits, including students. As examined later in this chapter in the context of the Department's use of promotions strategies, the style and content of this material has changed during and subsequent to the research period. Recognising the importance of local entry points in Aboriginal employment, the strategy identifies the targeting of established networks as an important pipeline for attracting Aboriginal people to the Department. As evident from the findings presented in Chapter 9, this approach to Aboriginal recruitment recognises the important role that local networks have played in recruiting Aboriginal people to the Department.

In addition to the availability of flexible work arrangements and learning and development opportunities, the Department identifies the provision of adequate support mechanisms for Aboriginal workers as critical to their retention. In addition to their role in building the cultural competency of the local workforce, the establishment of an Aboriginal Practice Leader within each district office is understood as integral to supporting Aboriginal workers, including the facilitation of meetings between Aboriginal workers and the local Aboriginal Practice Network.

The promotion of learning opportunities in the context of Aboriginal employment is consistent with that provided for the general workforce: as an incentive to

attract and retain, and a mechanism by which to build a 'competent' workforce. In the context of Aboriginal employment, the support for learning opportunities is understood as particularly critical in view of the Department's shift to a professional graduate workforce model and the relatively low levels of educational attainment of Aboriginal people in the workforce and the general population. The Ford Review (2007) recognised the importance of scholarship programs for Aboriginal workers to support the attainment of appropriate qualifications related to recommendations of minimum qualifications for caseworkers. In 2010, the Department established its Aboriginal Cadetship Program, which supports Aboriginal students undertaking tertiary degrees in the Department's preferred qualifications of Social Work, Psychology and specified human service qualification at West Australian universities. The learning component of the strategy is examined in more detail in the next section in the context of the response to a 'Qualified Workforce'.

8.2.2 Qualified workforce

The review of the skills and knowledge requirements, and the enhancement of its learning and development opportunities have constituted the two mechanisms by which the Department has sought to develop a qualified workforce. Consistent with the Department's response to attraction and retention more generally, the origins of both can be traced to the findings and subsequent recommendations of the Ford Review (2007), which underscored the competencies of the workforce with the capacity to protect children from harm.

Defining the skills and knowledge to do the job

The emphasis on attracting 'quality' staff by Ford and the associated recommendation for the introduction of minimum qualification requirements for caseworker positions highlighted a new direction in the type of candidates envisaged in the reformed Department. Two initiatives comprised the Department's response to defining the skills and knowledge requirements for employment in child protection roles: the reclassification of child protection roles as Specified Calling positions; and the development of the Child Protection Qualifications Framework (Qualifications Framework).

Specified callings

In 2009, the Department introduced Specified Callings for Child Protection positions. The effect of the designation of Specified Calling status is that, under the Public Service Award 1992, specified calling salary rates only apply to officers who hold the relevant tertiary level qualification. In the case of child protection roles, this meant the 'calling' of Social Work (Department of Consumer and Employment Protection, 2008)

The introduction of Specified Callings can largely be traced to Recommendation 22 of the Ford Review (2007), which proposed not only the introduction of minimum qualifications requirements for frontline caseworker positions, but designated that tertiary qualifications in social work, psychology or a relevant human service area should constitute the *minimum* qualification for these positions (Ford 2007, 71). The introduction of specified callings has changed the role set defined by the Department in relation to child protection. Further to the introduction of specified callings, the Department distinguishes between Child Protection (Specified Calling)

and other child protection and field support roles for which a degree qualification is not essential. A full list of roles, including Specified Calling positions, is presented in Table 8.4. The application of specified callings to child protection roles has meant that the policy change affects workers appointed to these positions under broader qualifications policies. In outlining the implications of this policy change for persons without a recognised qualification who currently occupy a specified calling position, the Department has instituted a ‘grandfather clause’ whereby the specified calling status may be maintained during employment with the Department where that employment is continuous; however, the qualifications of that person would be re-assessed against the Qualifications Framework if the employee were to resign from the Department and seek re-employment at a later date (Department for Child Protection, nd-a)

Table 8.4: List of specified calling and non-specified calling positions

| Specified calling | Non-specified calling | Field support |
|--|--|---|
| Child Protection Worker (SC Level 1) – Community, Parent Support | Residential Care Officer | Family Resource Employee |
| Senior Child Protection Worker (SC Level 2) – Placement Services, Community, ChildFIRST, Parent Support, Family Domestic Violence, Secure Care | Senior Residential Care Officer Level 3 Secure Care Officer Level 4 Manager Residential Care | Resource Employee Customer Service Officer Customer Liaison Officer Residential Care Officer |
| Psychologist (SC Level 1) | | |
| Clinical/Counselling Psychologist (SC Level 2 or 3) | | |
| Team Leader Child Protection (SC Level 3) - ChildFIRST, Parent Support, Residential Care, Secure Care | | |
| Senior Manager - Residential Care, Secure Care | | |

Source: Career and Education Pathways brochure (DCP, no date).

The significance of the introduction of specified callings is reflected in its emergence as a key issue in the research findings presented in Chapter 9.

The Child Protection Qualifications Framework

One of the first responses to the recommended review of caseworker qualifications was the examination of the process by which caseworker qualifications were assessed, specifically the determination of a *relevant human service qualification*. According to advice received by the Department, prior to the Ford Review the assessment of human service qualifications was based on a list of course offerings at Australian higher education institutions drafted at an earlier (unspecified) date. The Department has cited identified shortcomings with the list, including:

- the fixed nature of the list;
- the inclusion of programs not containing content relevant to child protection;
- the lack of capacity to assess interstate and international qualifications; and
- the lack of capacity to reflect new and changed program offerings within the Australian higher education sector.

The outcome of this subsequent review is the Child Protection Qualifications Framework (the Qualifications Framework).

The Qualifications Framework sets out the skills and knowledge requirements for employment in ‘professional’ child protection roles and serves as the framework by which relevant qualifications are assessed. The Qualifications Framework identifies areas of core and additional knowledge that serve as the foundations of required knowledge for eligibility for professional child protection roles. A list of

the topics for each knowledge area is included in Table 8.5. A complete copy of the Qualifications Framework is available in Appendix 9.

Table 8.5: Child Protection Qualifications Framework by knowledge area

| CORE | ADDITIONAL | |
|---|---|--|
| Individual Family Community and Society | Practice Skills Values and Ethics Theories of Practice Social Welfare Community | Legal and Justice Child, Youth and Family Mental Health Alcohol and Drugs Abuse and Violence |

Source: Derived from Child Protection Qualifications Framework (DCP, 2010)

The Qualifications Framework outlines the requisite breadth and depth of knowledge that qualifies applicants for entry, stipulating that applicants must have completed degrees that include at least five areas of knowledge, with a minimum of two subjects from core knowledge areas, during the second or third year of their degree. Other than specifying the year of study in the degree program, the Department does not qualify what is meant by ‘in depth’ outside of providing a guide as to the subjects/areas; for example, Family Lifespan for the core knowledge area of Family. In setting out the rationale for the Qualifications Framework, the Department is explicit in emphasising its function in meeting ‘the needs of the Department’ rather than any current university offerings (Department for Child Protection, nd-a).

Ford (2007) recognised the potentially restrictive effect of introducing minimum caseworker qualifications for people in designated positions and identified the importance of training and development pathways in supporting workers seeking to change or upgrade their qualifications. The development of such pathways has

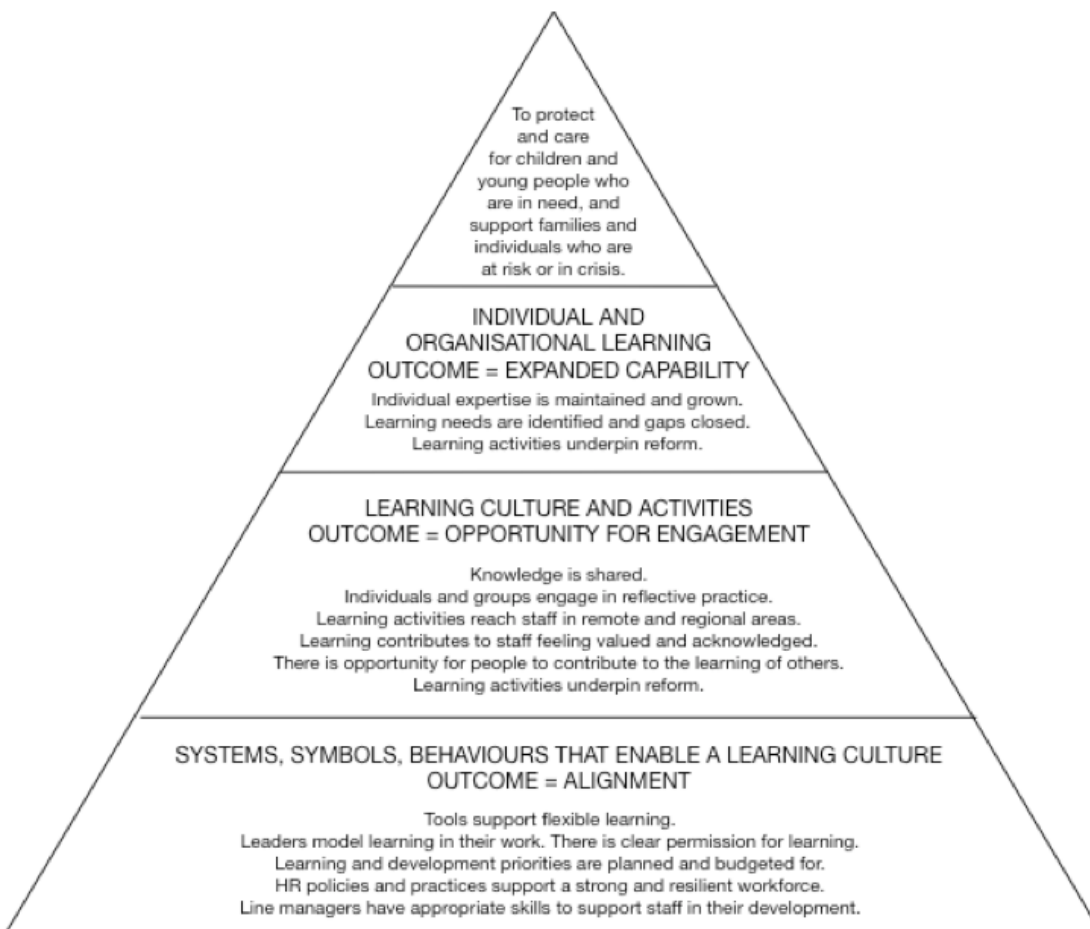
constituted the other main development in the institutionalisation of the qualified workforce: the enhancement of learning and development opportunities.

Learning as an incentive

The institutionalisation of a 'learning and performance culture' was a key strategic priority of the Department's during the research period. The prioritisation of learning and development largely reflected the emphasis on these priorities by Ford (2007), which saw their promotion and prioritisation as essential to the reform of the Department. Ford (2007) identified the relatively low priority accorded to learning within the organisation as hugely detrimental, undermining the quality and professionalism of the workforce. In 2010, the Department implemented the People Development Framework (2010–12) (the PD Framework), which provides the overarching strategic structure for the institutionalisation of a learning culture within the organisation. The implementation period for the PD Framework, from 2010 to 2012, meant it has articulated the learning and development activities of the Department for the duration of this research. In the PD Framework, the Department identifies a key objective in its institutionalisation of a learning culture as the transformation from 'passive' to 'active', from 'attendance' to 'participation' (Department for Child Protection, nd-b). An action learning cycle, with its principle of continuous and reflexive learning, serves as the foundation architecture for learning. The PD Framework sets out the levels and outcomes of learning in order to support the Department's mission: 'To protect and care for children and young people who are in need, and support families and individuals who are at risk or in crisis'. In the PD Framework, the Department identifies projects and activities necessary to build

individual and organisational capability that include: case practice supervision; identification of individual learning needs and development of learning plans; delivery of training to support qualifications pathways; leadership development; and the ongoing evaluation and improvement of learning offerings. Figure 8.2 presents the Key Levels and Outcomes of the PD Framework.

Figure 8.2: People development framework – key levels and outcomes



Source: Excerpt from People Development Framework (2010-2012). (DCP 2010).

As evident from Figure 8.2, at the level of Individual and Organisation Learning the PD Framework explicitly recognises the relationship between learning and reform of the Department. In the context of findings from the interviews and survey of the

District workforce presented in Chapter 9, there are a number of elements of the PD Framework that are worth highlighting. These include:

- individual expertise is maintained and grown;
- learning activities reach staff in remote and regional areas;
- learning contributes to staff feeling valued and acknowledged;
- leaders model learning in their work;
- there is clear permission for learning;
- Learning and Development priorities are planned and budgeted for; and
- tools support flexible learning.

The establishment of the Department's Learning and Development Centre (LDC) during the period represented an important milestone in the Department's institutionalisation of learning as a strategic priority. Located in the inner northern suburbs of Perth, the LDC serves as the hub for the delivery of the Department's learning activities. In its capacity as a registered training organisation (RTO), the Department has developed and delivers a number of accredited programs. This includes the nationally accredited Diploma of Child, Youth and Family Intervention. The Diploma supports entry to relevant degree programs for employees seeking to progress their career in child protection but who are currently without the required degree qualification. Completion of the Diploma qualifies graduates for advanced standing for enrolment in the second year of a Bachelor of Behavioural Science and Bachelor of Behavioural Social Work at

'selected universities' (DCP, 2012, Moodle Course Information. Accessed online: <http://www.cstc.moodle.com.au/course/category.php?id=164>).

As denoted by the identification of *access for staff in regional and remote areas*, universal access is a critical element in the operationalisation of a learning organisation. Ford (2007) recognised the limitations on the delivery of training and development opportunities for staff in country districts (Ford 2007, 72). Pointing to the investment in (regional) telecommunications infrastructure to support the delivery of health and education services, Ford emphasised the importance of collaboration with other public sector agencies and higher education institutions in the delivery of training and development through place-based and on-line delivery. Since 2011, the Department has increasingly made available learning and development offerings online, utilising the open source software learning management system Moodle. In addition to the delivery of the nationally accredited Diploma of Child, Youth and Family Intervention, the Department offers a range of self-directed learning modules, many of which are foundation or preparatory learning for workshops to be delivered 'in place'. These include training in: Cultural Competence, including Aboriginal Cultural Appreciation; Foster Care; General and Field Training; (relevant) Legislation. A full and up-to-date list of current offerings is available online via the Department's learning portal at: <http://www.cstc.moodle.com.au/>.

As noted in the context of Aboriginal attraction and retention, the Department has increasingly promoted learning opportunities as an incentive for working with the Department. The role of learning as an incentive is particularly important in view

of the findings to emerge from the interviews with and survey of the District workers presented in Chapter 9.

8.2.3 Regional attraction and retention

While recognising the universal problem of attraction and retention in rural and remote locations across government agencies, Ford highlighted the location-specific nature of the problem of 'difficult to fill' (2007, 69). As noted, the Murchison is not the only country district to report vacancy and turnover rates higher than the Departmental average. The Department's response to the particularities of attraction and retention in regional areas reflects both the general and particular nature of the problem. Its response has largely been implemented through three strategies: the development of targeted, location-based incentives; international recruitment; and the promotion of the benefits of living and working in regional WA.

Location-based incentives

In her review of the Department, Ford (2007) identified access to affordable and quality housing as the main issue for rural and remote locations, highlighting the impact of the resources boom on this, and cost of living pressures more generally for districts in the north of the state. As public sector employees, Department workers in regional and remote areas are eligible for a number of location-based allowances, from District Allowance to subsidised housing and utilities. As evident from the list of benefits promoted to prospective employees in Figure 8.3, such incentives form an important part of the Department's offerings for employees relocating to work in regional WA.

The development of location-based incentives has been a core response by the Department to the problem of 'difficult to fill' locations in regional (and remote) WA (DCP 2010 *Annual Report*). At the District level, this has included an exploration of a targeted attraction and retention strategy for Wiluna. In 2009, the Department explored the feasibility of replicating aspects of another Department scheme targeting a difficult-to-recruit location in the Kimberley, the Fitzroy Crossing Attraction Strategy. Developed under the auspices of the Director-General's Regional Development Opportunity program, in addition to a two-year contract and/or secondment, incentives under the strategy ranged from return trips to Perth (linked to professional development needs) and free Government Regional Officers' Housing (GROH) and utilities to formal fly-in mentoring (DCP 2009).

Figure 8.3 Benefits of working in country WA with the Department

Work benefits

A range of incentives are offered to people who are willing to work in rural and remote locations to promote and support child protection services in these communities.

Regional work incentives and benefits may include:

- A fortnightly district allowance depending on the location.
- Up to 5 days commuted time off in lieu.
- Up to 5 extra leave days in certain areas.
- Annual leave travel concession for employees (and their dependents) per annum in certain areas.
- Housing and utility (gas, water, electricity) subsidies.
- Air conditioning and gas subsidies.
- Zone tax offset allowance.
- Salary packaging.
- Employees may be eligible for paid study assistance and travelling time to attend educational institutions when enrolled in an approved course of study.
- Access to online induction program and further training and support.
- Opportunities for improvement and advancement.

Lifestyle benefits

Working in a rural or remote community can provide an unparalleled lifestyle with benefits which include:

- Developing relationships within a small community environment.
- Opportunities to pursue new activities and interests.
- The natural attractions of rural and remote location.

Source: Excerpt from Department Website, 'Working in Country WA'. Accessed online: <http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Organisation/employment/Pages/Working%20in%20country%20WA.aspx>. Last accessed: 28 September 2011.

As noted in Chapter 2, the visit to Wiluna in September 2009 with senior District and HR Unit personnel took place to explore the application of this model to Wiluna. Further to this visit, a submission to the Director-General was made to implement a version of the Fitzroy Crossing model for Wiluna. In spite of executive level support for the Fitzroy Model under the Director-General's Regional Development Opportunity program, the Wiluna proposal was not supported. The Department reported the rejection of the proposal as due to cost considerations,

with the implementation of 'efficiency gains' across the WA public sector further to the Review of the Economic Audit Committee by the WA Government in 2009 as the main impediment.

At the universal level, the Department has responded with the development of its Regional Incentive Scheme. Introduced in 2011, the Scheme has established a clear framework for the award of incentives to employees working in regional WA. A summary of the scheme is presented here as Table 8.6. Consistent with other classifications used in the determination of location incentives, the scheme incorporates measures of remoteness and access to services, including professional support, and the long-term vacancy rate for each location. In addition to cash payments and the universal reimbursement for utilities, incentives under the scheme also include eligibility for internal transfer. The variability of incentives within districts is illustrated in the example of locations in the Murchison in Table 8.6.

As well as distinguishing between locations in regional and remote, the scheme further recognises the additional dimensions to living and working in communities outside of established towns, such as the remote, discrete Aboriginal community of Burringurrah located 500 kilometres east of Carnarvon (or a 12-hour drive on unsealed roads).

Table 8.6 Regional Incentives Scheme: incentives by location category

| Category A | Category B | Category C | Category D |
|--|--|--|--|
| Albany Bunbury Busselton Collie Geraldton (M) ³⁹ Mandurah Northam | Esperance Kalgoorlie Katanning Manjimup Merredin Moora Narrogin | Broome Carnarvon (M) Karratha Kununurra Port Hedland | Derby Fitzroy Crossing Halls Creek Laverton/Leonora Meekatharra (M) Newman Onslow Tom Price Norseman Wiluna (M) Wyndham Roebourne Warburton |
| Incentives | | | |
| No additional incentives above current award provisions. | Reimbursement of 25% of officer's contribution towards utilities (gas, electricity, water) to a maximum of \$1000 per annum. | Reimbursement of 50% of officer's contribution towards utilities (gas, electricity, water) to a maximum of \$2000 per annum. | Fully subsidised GROH accommodation for those eligible for GROH. Home Garaging, subject to availability and/or on a roster system. Reimbursement of 100% of officer's contribution towards utilities (gas, electricity, water) to a maximum of \$3000 per annum. |

Source: DCP (2012, unpublished)

The Department has highlighted the dual function of the Regional Incentives Scheme in both attraction and retention. Reflecting the important issue of parity in remuneration between the Department and other public sector agencies identified by Ford (2007, 72), the scheme was developed in consultation with the departments of Health, Education, Commerce and Public Sector Commission, and the WA Police. Scheduled for review in mid 2012, preliminary advice from the Department confirmed the scheme had made a difference at the organisational

³⁹ Where (M) identifies locations in the Murchison District.

level in administering benefits/incentives based on the removal of individual-based determinations, and thereby reducing the timeframe for approvals.

Another key development relating to regional incentives during the period was the review of the Attraction and Retention Benefit (ARB). As explained in Chapter 7, the ARB (now ARI) is an incentive available to WA public sector agencies to offer additional remuneration for employees in difficult-to-recruit remote locations. Ford (2007) identified the (then) ARB as an alternative instrument to address attraction and retention in view of the constraints on public sector agencies in determining staff remuneration. The ARB has served an important role in the Department's response to regional attraction and retention in the District, particularly in maintaining parity in salaries between qualified and non-qualified persons following the reintroduction of specified callings for child protection roles. Workforce data at the commencement of this research indicates half of all child protection workers (n=17) were in receipt of an ARB (DCP, 2009, *Workforce Profile Data, September 2009*). The review of the ARB in 2010 and subsequent planned withdrawal meant that the ARB emerged as an important issue in the interviews with the District workforce, as evident from the findings presented in the next chapter.

The Department acknowledges the limits of remuneration and allowances in addressing the challenges of attraction and retention to country districts. The lack of infrastructure (access to quality housing and community infrastructure), isolation from social and support networks, limited opportunities for spousal employment, and the pressures of balancing work and life in a small community are all noted by the Department as presenting impediments to attraction and

retention. As evident from Figure 8.3, the Department has promoted intrinsic rewards for living and working in regional WA in its advice to prospective employees. These include lifestyle factors correlated with characteristics of place such as the sense of community and the natural environment. Such incentives have formed an important component of the Department's other main response to attraction and retention in regional WA, namely recruitment from overseas.

International recruitment

The Department initiated two international recruitment campaigns during the period to meet the demand for child protection professionals in regional WA: the first in New Zealand in 2009, the second in the United Kingdom in December 2011. Implemented just prior to the commencement of this research, the New Zealand campaign represented an important development in meeting vacancies in the District, with the campaign resulting in four appointments to child protection roles in the Murchison, including the recruitment of indigenous New Zealanders. In December 2011, the Department launched its second international recruitment campaign: 'Work and Play in WA'. The campaign directly targeted qualified social workers in the United Kingdom, including UK-based Australians seeking to return home. The campaign ran from 12 December 2011 to 3 February 2012. As evident from the marketing material for the campaign, the promotional material for which is included as Figure 8.4, the Department highlighted lifestyle factors in its promotion of the benefits of living and working in regional WA. The 'Work and Play' campaign represents an example of the role of promotions and innovative recruitment strategies in the Department's response to attraction and retention, examined next in this chapter.

Figure 8.4: International recruitment (UK): 'Work and Play in WA' (2011)



Source: Department for Child Protection (2011)

8.2.4 Promotions and innovative recruitment strategies

The Department sought to innovate in its approach to attraction and retention, identifying promotions and innovative recruitment strategies as two areas where it sought to break with traditional approaches. The following discusses three areas central to the Department's promotions and innovative recruitment strategies: targeted recruitment strategies; improved recruitment processes; and alternative working arrangements.

Promotions

The attraction of 'suitable staff' remained a priority for the Department throughout the period (DCP, Promotions Plan 2011, unpublished). The promotions' strategies

adopted by the Department reflect the general and targeted nature of these strategies.

The Department utilised a number of forums in its promotion of employment opportunities. These ranged from participation in university and industry career expositions, information sessions and presentations at local (WA) tertiary institutions, and liaison with secondary schools to promote school-based traineeships and future career pathways. For its recruitment campaigns targeting Aboriginal and UK social workers, the Department utilised mainstream and targeted print and broadcast media, as well as peak bodies and professional associations. The Department increasingly utilised commercial marketing techniques and new and social media in its promotions. This is illustrated in its campaigns targeting Aboriginal and UK recruits, presented earlier in this chapter as Figures 8.1 and 8.4 and replicated here as Figure 8.5. Both campaigns appeared in online and print media, from Indigenous media outlets across all Australian states and territories, to the Social Care Councils of Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Figure 8.5: 'Our Kids, Our Future' and 'Live and Work in WA' visual media



Source: Department for Child Protection

Such campaigns provide examples of the Department's use of visual media and marketing techniques in communicating its message as an Employer of Choice to prospective employees. The framing of the campaigns serve to appeal to key interests of the respective target cohort, namely the strong bonds of kin for Aboriginal people, and the mobility for work and lifestyle factors for UK recruits. Both campaigns contrast with that of the Department's previous campaign to appeal to general recruits, the 'Life Changing Career' campaign in 2008. As evidenced by the framing of the advertisement (presented here as Figure 8.6), in the 2008 campaign the Department emphasised the characteristics of the work, specifically its potential for change, including the prospect of mutual transformation. While the campaign was launched prior to the research period, its inclusion in this research illustrates its role in forging new directions in the Department's use of promotions to respond to attraction and retention and the potential implications of its emphasis on characteristics of the work in view of the literature presented in Chapter 6 (Bennett & Zubrzycki 2003; Bennett et al 2011). Additional images for the Life Changing Career are included in Appendix 10.

Figure 8.6: 'Life Changing Career' campaign

Source: Department for Child Protection

The Department's website serves as the principal medium for information for prospective employees.⁴⁰ The Department has increasingly refined its media during the period, moving from broad or generic information on employment opportunities to providing more detailed information on aspects of the role, the organisation, its offerings, and the locations in which it works.

⁴⁰ The website can be accessed at:

<http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Organisation/employment/Pages/Employment%20opportunities.aspx>

In addition to its targeted campaigns, the Department has provided promotional material on living and working in WA, particularly for regional locations. The advice has increasingly shifted from generic information on key attractions derived from and with links to the WA Tourism website, to location-specific (or place-based) material for each District. The promotional material for the Murchison, centred on the city of Geraldton, is included as Appendix 11. As illustrated by the excerpt reproduced below, the Department has highlighted the lifestyle benefits of living in Geraldton in its material, utilising testimonials from District workers:

Living in Geraldton is like country living in the city; Beachside alongside rural life; Thermometer friendly environment - between the hot North and cold South; A town where you can have your boat and horse as well; Murchison is the crayfish on the menu, banana of the fruit bowl and gold in the coin and has something for everyone.

DCP, 2011a

The significance of the emphasis of this campaign is further examined in Chapter 10 against the context of the literature and characteristics of Place presented in Chapter 5.

Innovative recruitment processes

Ford (2007) identified recruitment processes as an important aspect in attracting and retaining quality staff, highlighting the significant time delays associated with (then) existing, centralised recruitment process and its effect on District workload (Ford, 2007, 70). Reflecting the priority of improved recruitment processes as part of the reform agenda, Effective Resource Deployment was a priority objective of the Department's Workforce Development Project (DCP, 2009b).

Two developments emerged from the review of recruitment policies and procedures: the first was the decentralisation of its recruitment process, the second was the introduction of a (open) pool recruitment approach for frontline (Level 1) workers, the Child Protection Worker Pool Recruitment process (the Pool). The Department has increasingly embraced the use of online environments in its responses to attract and retain. This included a comprehensive review and expansion of information presented on its website over the course of the research and recruitment, the latter managed through the online portal for WA Government appointments, the WA Jobs Board. (Available at: <http://www.jobs.wa.gov.au/>, with information on the Department's website directing prospective applicants to the appropriate page using the search criteria of 'Child Protection Worker Pool'⁴¹.)

The establishment of an Aboriginal Employment Register has been a key innovation in the Department's shift to an open pool process and efforts to attract Aboriginal applicants. Enabling submissions of expressions of interest from prospective applicants, the Aboriginal Employment Register places prospective employees on an Aboriginal Employment Network through which they receive email notifications of current vacancies for positions for which they can apply. More recently, the Department has promoted the availability of its Aboriginal Workforce Development Centre to assist prospective applicants in completing their application.

In addition to the development of new information management systems to monitor and manage recruitment processes, the Department has developed resources to assist in the decentralisation of its recruitment to District offices. In

⁴¹ The page for the Child Protection Worker Pool is available online at: <http://search.jobs.wa.gov.au/page.php?pageID=160&windowUID=0&AdvertID=146191>)).

addition to the delivery of recruitment and selection training in district locations across the state to up-skill managers in District offices on recruitment and selection procedures, the Department has developed additional resources to support attraction and retention, particularly for target cohorts such as the Aboriginal Attraction and Retention Toolkit.

The Department has credited the streamlining of its recruitment process with improving timeframes for the recruitment-to-selection process and deployment of respondents on appointment, with the involvement of District offices in the process now seen as integral to successful implementation of retention strategies.

Alternative work arrangements

The Department has increasingly emphasised the availability of alternative work arrangements in its promotion of the benefits of employment to prospective employees. This range of alternative work arrangements includes part-time and job-share; flexible work hours, such as term-time working and flexi-time; and phased retirement. These policies and procedures – refinements for the Alternative Working Arrangements, including its Home Based Work Policy and resources for employees – have been a major focus of the Department during the research period.

The Department identifies alternative working arrangements as a key tool for increasing workforce participation (DCP, 2010a). In its *Procedures Manual* (DCP, 2011), the Department highlights the function of the Alternate Work Arrangements Policy in meeting both individual and organisation needs:

To assist employees to balance work commitments with personal commitments, without compromising the productivity, efficiency and effectiveness of the Department.

In addition to meeting the individual needs of current and prospective employees (including changed work–life preferences and choices based on lifecycle, lifestyle and generational factors, career breaks, parenting and family caring responsibilities and retirement) the Department has articulated its organisational benefits, notably supporting retention and reducing its associated costs, by enhancing employee wellbeing and satisfaction.

As noted in the context of its Aboriginal Employment Strategy, the Department identifies flexible work arrangements as a critical initiative in attaining its goal of becoming an Employer of Choice by supporting the aspirations of prospective Aboriginal employees seeking to balance work and life responsibilities/choices. However, the Department envisages the role of alternative working arrangements in supporting their aspiration to become an Employer of Choice more generally (DCP, 2010a , 2009 a or b).

As evident in Chapter 7, and discussed in more detail in Chapter 10, the Department’s embrace of flexible/alternative working arrangements is consistent with developments across the WA public sector and labour market more generally in responding to changing work–life preferences and their role in attraction and retention. This increased recognition of the growing importance of work–life balance to workforce development policies is reflected the Department’s participation in a 2010 study of work–life balance initiated by the WA Department for Commerce and Employment (the DCT). This study highlighted potential

impediments to the acceptance of flexible work arrangements within the Department (Binns & Todd, 2010).

Located in the outer south-east of the metropolitan region, the selection of the Armadale office for the DCT study reported high turnover and vacancy rates for the office relative to other metropolitan areas. In their report on the study's findings, Binns and Todd (2010) not only recognised the broader structural changes driving the provision of flexible/alternative work arrangements, but the direct stresses associated with child protection work. Their report found that while awareness of work–life balance issues and that the initiatives in response to these had increased, there still existed a gap between awareness and 'participation' among employees. Their report highlighted the critical role of leadership by senior managers in actively promoting work–life balance initiatives, including fostering permission for entitlements of employment. In the context of the reported importance of work–life balance, the study's findings were revealing in that staff reported they did not envisage the availability of work–life initiatives as effecting any substantive change in managing their own work–life balance. Rather, staff reported the continued difficulty in enabling flexible work practices to meet personal commitments due to the demands of the work (Binns & Todd 2010). The significance of these findings in the context of the reported challenges of the work and heterogeneity and changing nature of work–life choices in the literature are examined in Chapter 10.

8.2.5 Workforce planning and profiling

As evident from the use of workforce data in the reporting of the vacancy and turnover levels, the Department's profiling of its workforce has served as an

important source of data for this research. The Workforce Dashboard reports represent just one example of the increasing formal and regular reporting which has emerged during the period. As noted in the context of the establishment of workforce targets for Aboriginal employment, such initiatives constitute important developments in the formulation of evidence-based responses to attraction and retention. However, as noted in Chapter 2, gaps remain. The presentation of findings from interviews and the survey of the District workforce in the following chapter is evidence of one area in which this research has sought to respond to such gaps, in particular the perspective of the District workforce on issues central to attraction and retention.



This chapter has presented findings from the analysis of organisational documents produced by the Department to contextualise the problem of attraction and retention in the Murchison in its broader organisational/institutional context. From the commencement of this research the exact origins of the Department's identification of the Murchison as a 'hard to recruit' (and retain) location was not clear. The analysis of workforce data revealed that the District reported higher vacancy and turnover rates than the Department average over the period of the research. However an analysis of workforce data for other jurisdictions not only reveal similar levels of turnover, but in some periods higher rates of turnover suggesting the 'problem' such as measured by the identification of the Murchison as problematic is not confined to the District. The data also reveals turnover due to internal church, with employees remaining in the Department's employment but relocating outside the District.

While the Department has sought to innovate in its approach to attraction and retention, the responses can be understood to reflect typical attraction and retention strategies available in the broader labour market and public sector. These include support for learning and development and flexible work arrangements (Chapters 4 and 6). An analysis of both offerings by the Department identifies problems unique to the Department and common to other sectors. The Department's attachment of learning and development opportunities to its qualifications framework mean that these 'opportunities' relate to the attainment of core qualifications and therefore the Department's preferences not individual learning preferences a point highlighted in the interviews. While the Department's offering of flexible work arrangements can be understood as reflecting the general recognition within public sector agencies in particular of mechanisms to support work/life balance, the review of the pilot trial of these policies in a metropolitan site reveal the common problem between the availability of flexible work arrangements and active support of their utilisation within the workplace.

The analysis of Department's response to attraction and retention not only reveal the origins of its prioritisation of attraction and retention in the 'reform' of the Department post the Ford Review but the WA public sector (Chapter 7) and Australian child protection system (Chapter 6). In addition to denoting the broader, external influences the outcome of a number of the Department's responses reveal the limited extent to which it can exercise choice in the determination of attraction and retention strategies. This is evidenced in the rejection of the targeted strategy for Wiluna and capacity to offer enhanced remuneration due to the general nature of the award under which Department

employs. While these reflect the legislative, political and economic constraints under which it operates as a statutory agency, others reveal the normative influences of 'expert systems'. Paradoxical to its introduction to compensate for the lack of flexibility in setting remuneration, the introduction of specified callings for child protection workers with narrow qualifications requirements which is likely to negatively impact on supply is a choice of the Department but one which was heavily influenced by the social work profession.

While the privileging of Social Work and Psychology reflect historical and contemporary claim to child protection from the professional associations such as the AASW (Chapter 6), they also can be understood to constitute a form of privileging of expert systems associated with late-modernity. As reported for the interview findings, this development alone is anticipated on negatively impacting on retention particularly for Aboriginal Workers. Contrary to the Department's aspiration to become an Employer of Choice for Aboriginal workers and reportedly high historical participation rates, the District had variable levels of success in attracting and retaining Aboriginal people. While the Department identifies the importance of a range of measures to support the attraction of retention of Aboriginal workers, the findings of the interviews suggest this is only part of the story that belies a complex set of issues including those where the Department's attraction and retention strategies such as the introduction of specified callings to child protection roles have the paradoxical effect of supporting Aboriginal attraction and retention which predetermine the educational aspirations of Aboriginals looking to work in child protection.

The recourse to marketing techniques previously unused by the Department but common to the private sector can be understood to reflect the need to innovate in responding to the competition but increased recognition of the value of marketing more indicative of the private sector. Drawing on themes associated with attraction to the locations of work and place examined in the literature, the

Department's campaigns underscore the generalist and particular function in appealing to their target cohort: the powerful relationship between child and helper at the centre of child protection work, and the lifestyle attributes of WA and its coast. However, as examined in the Discussion chapter, in the context of the particularities of the Murchison presented in Chapter 3, Department

Whether the Department's strategies are effective remains to be seen. However, they provide a useful point of departure to examine the actual experience of living and working in 'regional' and remote WA by District Workers and their perspective on attraction and retention as the 'subjects' of the Department's interventions presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 9 Country practice and attraction and retention: The experience and reflections of District workers

The conceptual framework for this research places individual workers at the centre of the WA Department for Child Protection's interventions to attract and retain. The previous chapters sought to illuminate the multiple settings in which these subjects are embedded in order to communicate the complexity of the web of influences that act on their attraction and retention consistent with the ecological framework. This chapter examines attraction and retention from the perspective of the individual 'subjects' of the Department's interventions to attract and retain, the District Workers through the presentation of findings and results from the Interview and Survey. A critical examination of the findings in the context of the literature and other data that has emerged from this research is reserved for Chapter 10.

The chapter is organised in four sections. The first section presents workers' reflections on country practice, from its perceived difference from metropolitan practice to the requirements of practice. The second section presents the findings from the survey for factors reported by workers as influencing their decision to come to the Murchison and join the Department, and those which they anticipate will influence their decision to leave either setting. Reflecting the separation of Place and Work in this thesis the survey instrument, the findings are reported according to the particularities of Place as well as Work. The third section presents findings from the survey and interviews on characteristics of the work setting to explore aspects of practice that support or inhibit practice. Further this section

presents findings for the organisational environment and intersection of work and life associated with working and living in the same location, and reveals the extent to which interpersonal relations inside and outside the work setting act as supportive/inhibiting factors on practice and retention. The fourth section explores the ways that a retrospective analysis of survey and interview data can reveal the relationship between reported intentions for remaining with the Department and the Murchison and subsequent actions.

Throughout this chapter the (capitalised) term Worker is used to denote those members of the District workforce who participated in the interviews and survey, the primary research activities undertaken for this research, otherwise understood in the research vernacular as (interview) 'participants' and (survey) 'respondents'. Where findings for a particular issue or question is reported as 'one in four workers' this denotes the number of participants/respondents. For this reason, in reporting the findings of the survey the numerical value (indicated as 'n') indicates the number of respondents. In the presentation of the quotations from individual participants, the number allocated to participants is used to protect their anonymity. Where the findings are reported for Aboriginal workers this identifier has been changed to provide a second level of protection, with the numerical identifier used to distinguish between the voices of the different participants represented.

The use of quotes is consistent with that in interview based research to both illustrate a key theme/findings and to give voice to the views and experiences of the people who participated in the interviews (Kvale & Brinkman 2009), with the aim of balancing the voices of all participants. However, consistent with the

realities of interpersonal interactions some participants were more detailed in their response than others, often serving as 'key informants' in the level of details they provided about the local District operations. Where such detail captured the essence of what was expressed in other interviews their responses have been included which may account for their over-presentation in the text.

9.1 The practice of similarities and differences: an exploration of 'country practice'

Further to the literature, the interview aimed to establish whether child protection practice in geographies outside of metropolitan settings were different to that undertaken in metropolitan areas or city centres, and how it differed. The term 'country practice' to frame discussion reflects the Department's classification of its operations into Metropolitan and Country, as well as the representations of living and working in the 'country' within Australian popular culture, as referenced in Chapter 5.

9.1.1 Country practice as 'different'

Workers generally perceived country practice as being different to metropolitan practice, although some Workers acknowledged this was based on opinion and not personal experience. The reported difference related to five main areas:

1. access to services to support clients;
2. the organisation of the work;
3. access to professional learning and development opportunities;
4. the proximity of interpersonal relations and separation of work and family/life; and

5. the degree to which country/metropolitan practice were reported as being different.

These different aspects are discussed in detail below.

Workers pointed out that the infrastructure to support practice was often not available within country locations or within a reasonable distance, including support services such as out-of-home and crisis-care facilities, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, and specialist child protection services. The lack of services and infrastructure was highlighted as particularly inequitable given the equal (and in some cases) more complex needs of clients in country locations, and was identified as compounding existing barriers to clients seeking assistance:

We're stretched in terms of resources. [Worker referred to one colleague in another agency] ... They're not active. We have a few families we'd like to refer... [it's] becoming a stumbling block ... same with alcohol services. Something like rehab you can't access in a country town ...

Interview, Worker 4

They have so many more services than we have e.g. Drug Rehab ... People don't want to go away to Perth and other places for help, which makes it less likely for them to get help ... I make a case note where I can't refer a client ...

Interview, Worker 20

The reported effect of this lack of supporting service infrastructure was the need for individuals and organisations to accommodate the limitations imposed by the location.

Workers reported that the organisation of the work was a main difference between country and metropolitan practice. The difference was understood to reflect the size of operations as well as the environmental context. Practice was

understood to be more generalist in country districts, partly because of the limitations on accessing specialist services 'locally', but also due to the generic functions of the Department that in other settings would not appear to intersect. The latter was illustrated in the case of the location of the Murchison in a cyclone zone and the role of the Department in emergency response:

The Department takes on a lot. You could be preparing financial assistance in the morning, investigating a case of sexual abuse in the afternoon and [taking] a kid into care in the evening...[during] cyclone [you're] off to set up a welfare centre ...

Interview, Worker 1

I would say there would be. A lot of offices are structured into teams – intake. Here, due to limited staff everyone bogs in and assists. [*Noted part of Emergency Response team covering the Exmouth cyclone*]. I wondered whether I was mad and guess it's part of the job. I have a laugh about it...

Interview, Worker 19

Interviewees reported that professional support was another key distinction between country and metropolitan practice, pointing to the lack of educational services, infrastructure and flexible learning offerings in country districts. Some workers recognised that this was more acute for people working in smaller and more isolated places. Workers pointed to the availability of a range of learning and professional development activities available for metropolitan Departmental employees compared with the requirement to travel outside of the Murchison, mainly to Perth, to attend training. Further restrictions imposed on accessing such opportunities related to the impact of the District budget and their own workload.

Workers reported on the ways that the small size and isolated nature of country towns meant that being able to separate work and home was difficult due to being located in the same, physical 'space' or place. While this proximity was reported as

generally positive for relationships with colleagues, it was also highlighted as increasing the possibility of conflict between the two settings:

You get to know and become part of each other's lives... [the] city is more individualistic.

Interview, Worker 4

They want you to care every hour of the day and I guess I should... [in] Metro, [you] don't know your people. [Country] You can't be judgemental, because you'll see them again... and it will come back to haunt you.

Interview, Worker 20

Different dynamic perhaps to city practice – they [clients] may know you, see you around. Interesting with different hats on. People generally [are] able to distinguish. I try to keep them fairly separate. For example, attending a funeral, as a private individual even though [I've] assessed them through the Department.

Interview, Worker 19

The experience of District workers in navigating the intersection between 'work' and 'life' is examined later in this chapter in the context of the exploration of characteristics of the work environment as potential supporters or inhibitors of practice.

A number of individual responses revealed some interesting, if less universally agreed or communicated, differences to practice. One such perspective related to the characteristics of the clients, the other to relationship between local offices and the organisation:

[In] Perth, [things] are a lot more underground: where people drink, housing. Here, [there's] more transition in coming to the country and adapting to new way of life. For example in Meekatharra, [people] coming out of communities into town, and then coming to Geraldton – a lot of learning for them. I see a lot of men playing a traditional role and not working and mums do a lot of the work ... a lot of pressures

on women. A lot of young men are walking the streets and not contributing to families and themselves ... [they] want to look good but one thing not taught [is] rights and responsibilities.

Interview, Worker 2

Directors and hierarchy – we don't see them. We don't get many visitors from Head Office.

Interview, Worker 17

While the reported differences between country and metropolitan practice highlighted the relative deficits of services and infrastructure in country districts, Workers also reported opportunities presented for practice within different environments. Some Workers highlighted the presence of unique physical environments in country districts as providing useful tools to support practice. Beaches and deserts were identified as providing neutral space in which to engage with children and families. This was seen as particularly important in working with Aboriginal people. Workers discussed the ways that interactions with clients in everyday activities presented opportunities for normalising relations. The chance meeting in the aisle of the shopping centre, while something to be 'dreaded' on occasion, was also reported as providing an opportunity for a casual, social interaction with clients with the potential for both parties to be reminded of the shared experiences rather than their inherent differences. However, as revealed in the context of reported requirements of country practice, both individual and organisational factors were recognised as important in confronting both the opportunities and challenges of country practice, including its 'differences'.

9.1.2 The requirements of practice

The phrasing of the interview question was intentionally general to ascertain what Workers believed to be the requirements of country practice. Some Workers focused on individual attributes, while others identified organisational factors or a combination of both.

At the individual level, Workers identified a number of attributes that they recognised as being essential requirements for ‘effective’ and ‘successful’ practice in country settings. These ranged from flexibility or openness to new situations and people, including fixed notions of roles and ‘boundaries’ of professional practice and resilience and coping skills. Working independently and an ability to successfully manage the isolating aspects of practice were thought to be particularly important for people working in more remote locations. Good interpersonal skills were deemed essential in view of the proximity to clients and colleagues as a result of the worlds of ‘work’ and ‘life’ located in the same place:

You need to be flexible, not too rigid – move for change or you’ll just find fault in country practice ... You need to like working with people, get to their level and understanding. If that means helping the family with budgeting ... you have to have a few boundaries as clients come up to you [in non-work settings].

Interview, Worker 4

Good at your role but have good people skills ... without [them] you don’t get anywhere. If you sit down and talk with them they’ll clam up and say zip ...

Interview, Worker 5

People wise – you need to be more conciliatory. You can’t even leave the office without running into a client. [In the] city, [you do] not run into clients ...

Interview, Worker 20

Workers also identified supportive networks, particularly within the home, to manage the tension between work and family life in view of the 24/7 nature of practice, travel requirements, and proximity between 'work' and 'home' in those settings, particularly in schools and community organisations where both clients and family intersect and interact:

[The] ability to put in extra time when need to – can't pull out at 4.30pm ... it comes back to teamwork, to hopefully provide support, including responding to crises on Friday afternoon. A willingness to travel for work and training, [it's] harder for families ... We cover Burringurrah, Shark Bay and Exmouth – it can take a fair amount of time.

Interview, Worker 19

The anonymity [lack of] at the school, bottle shop can be good and absolutely terrifying. Impacts on confidentiality ... friends at school may see me with children [clients]. My children know well enough not to ask ...

Interview, Worker 11

One Worker referred to the preparedness of 'to go underground' to find a private space which was interpreted as retreating to more private and less public spaces and increased solitary life.

The interviews also revealed that identities based on innate attributes – such as gender, age, race and experience of parenting – was reported by Workers as positively serving practice, whether young graduates working with young people, women working with mothers, or men working with men in family violence cases. As one Aboriginal worker reflected on the two roles which they embodied – as an Aboriginal person, and as an employee of the Department and child protection worker – and how these served each other in their daily work:

[I'm] Not just talking about my work but there's a dual role as part of my involvement being an Aboriginal ... I see my role [as Aboriginal] as being part of my job, getting involved in the community.

Aboriginal Worker

The effect of the intersection of roles assigned or embraced by individuals in one setting to those in another is examined in greater detail in relation to the characteristics of the work environment and the discussion chapter (Chapter 10). Reflecting on the attributes of a country practitioner and asked whether there was such a thing as an archetypal country practitioner one Worker provider offered the following profile:

Older, middle aged ... No new grads ... possible not a bad thing. Having a family: single people more difficult due to social expectations unless possibly outdoors type. [People] prepared to get 'out there'. Most people from the city, they're not country people.

Interview, Worker 14

Considered in the context of the literature on job embeddedness in Chapter 6, and discussed in the next chapter, the Workers' remarks are particularly prescient.

At the organisational level, Workers identified a culture of support and adequate and appropriate training to support practice as being essential for country practice. Workers raised three main areas of training for country practice: specialist 'child protection'; orientation to the sites of practice; and working with Aboriginal families/communities including information related to the particularities of place and their communities (e.g. peoples, history of place).

Issues regarding the provision of adequate resources also extended to equipment, with some workers highlighting concerns regarding access to satellite phones, and

the use of them, essential for travelling across the District due to the lack of mobile connectivity outside of major towns.

The value of local knowledge in supporting country practice was a key question. While many workers believed that prior knowledge of the local practice context was not essential before entering 'the field (i.e. child protection practice)', openness to learning and support from the Department, peers and the community were essential. Workers' identified the importance of local knowledge, particularly in supporting engagement with Aboriginal families, with awareness of family networks particularly valuable and necessary for building and maintaining relationships. As evidenced by the following report with reference to child placement, particularly emergency placement, local and Aboriginal workers in particular are seen as vital to both facilitating this knowledge and the relationships to support engagement:

[It's] Huge, Massive. Without [contextual knowledge] you could step on quite a few toes ... need to get background for your whole case. It's proved vital to have key people in the office who save you 30 minutes to an hour ... telling you who's related to who. The advantage of having staff who know the local relationships ... you try to place in a 'safe' family local knowledge of [the] community supports this ... [it's] priceless if it works out.

Interview, Worker 14

[I] thought training was going to be about working with Aboriginal people but we're picking it up from colleagues, not from start-up training. That's why it's good to have people like [gave name of Aboriginal co-workers and co-workers from the local community].

Interview, Worker 4

The ability to foster and manage relationships at both the individual and organisational level was reported as being particularly essential due to the size of

the organisational teams and communities more generally in country districts and the consequent interdependence of both personal and professional relationships, as highlighted by the following interviewee:

[The] ability to work in a team, especially a small team ... People have to pull more closely together, particularly filling gaps, [things] usually blow-up when people are away. Ability to work collaboratively and have your head around what's going on most of the time ... [you have] a rough idea of cases – you're not just 'cold', fairly good understanding whole office work role, who we're working with, families we're involved with, to [be able] to fill someone's shoes.

Interview, Worker 19

Workers noted the extent to which historical and reputational factors determined the Department's approach to engagement with its communities of interest and practice, and therefore the skills required to support this. Many workers believed that as 'agents of change' the Department and its workers are responsible for increasing awareness about its role in child protection, including its limits, and modelling practice behaviours that challenged negative perceptions of the Department and child protection workers.

Workers highlighted the importance of interventions in the organisational entry phase, particularly during recruitment and orientation, to manage expectations in the face of the realities of practice which are often far apart from perceptions as highlighted by one interviewee:

Very important, but wouldn't expect anyone to come up here and have that. It's about knowing who to make contact with. Police, Education, Health, and to be prepared to go out, meet them and educate them, share information .. it's been incorporated into Section 23 Exchange of Information. You need to train partners, e.g. context to Domestic Violence. [We've] worked hard at developing – give them intelligence. For example, we ask about history...Most staff on first name basis...In

the city there's more hang-ups and resistance to sharing information ... We now provide a form. [So is collaboration more out of necessity? More necessity ... you've got to socialise with these people. You need to watch your professionalism. Coppers are the same.

Interview, Worker 14

9.2 Factors in joining, staying and leaving

As explicit by the separate treatment of Practice ('Work') and Place in the foundation research questions and subsequent treatment within the review of the literature presented in Chapters 4 and 5, the design of the survey instrument (see Chapter 2) also facilitated a separate examination of Place and Work. Thus, in being asked about influences on attraction and retention, Workers were asked separately about the relative influence of both 'work' and 'social' factors on their choice of the Murchison as a place to live and the Department as an employer

9.2.1 Influences on attraction

The particularities of place

The interviews established that there was a range of connections to place. For many Workers the relationship to the Murchison preceded their employment, while for others it was inextricably linked to their employment and was the reason for their relocation to the Murchison. The survey established the extent to which this applied to the wider District workforce. As examined in detail in the next chapter, the significance of the relationship to place for job embeddedness (Mitchell et al. 1999) has particular implications for attraction and retention strategies.

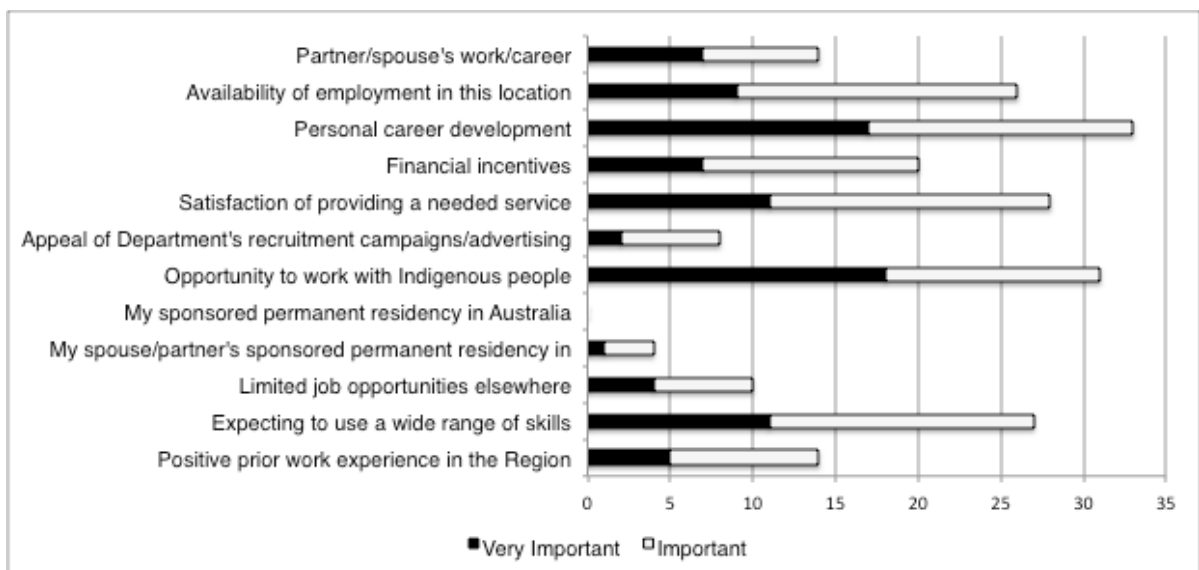
As identified in interviews, the District has been successful in attracting people from within and outside of the Murchison. This has included attracting current and former Department employees. The following section discusses the results of the study survey. On being asked about their place of residence prior to their current role (Question 6), the survey confirmed that while a considerable cohort of the workforce was living in the Murchison (n=19), the majority had relocated from elsewhere, with approximately three in five workers (n=27) indicating they had relocated from outside the District/region. Of those relocating from outside the Murchison, three in five workers (n=16) were living in Western Australia, with the remainder living interstate (n=7) and overseas (n=4). The overwhelming majority of workers living in the Murchison prior to their current role were living in their current location (n=17). The phrasing of the question specifically allowed for people who had occupied more than one role during their employment including in their current location (Question 22). In total, two in five of the 22 Workers who reported working for the Department prior to their current role were living in their current location. While the survey findings reveal some Workers had been employed on a continuous basis, other Workers had been employed on a discontinuous basis and then returned to the Department after periods away outside of registered leave. The finding indicates the Department has been successful in attracting former employees back to its workforce, an important factor in the Department's aspiration to become an employer of choice.

The survey findings revealed that both work and social reasons were the primary influence for choosing the Murchison as a place to live. Over half of workers (n=23) indicated that work/professional considerations were the main reason for coming

to the Murchison, with approximately one in 10 (n=6) indicating that this related to their partner/spouse’s employment. In total, three in five workers indicated they had come to the Murchison for reasons other than their career/employment, with 55% indicating the reason was social/personal.

Asked to indicate the relative importance of a range of work related factors on their decision to live in their current location (Question 8), responses reveal both the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards that attracted people to the Murchison. The findings, presented in Figure 9.1, show that *personal career development* and *opportunity to working with Indigenous peoples* were the most influential factors (by number of responses) for the decision to live in the Murchison.

Figure 9.1: Relative importance of work factors on attraction to current location (Question 8)



The reported importance of the opportunity to work with Indigenous people and *satisfaction of providing a needed service* identifies characteristics of the work, and the client population, in attraction. The relatively negligible influence of the Department’s recruitment campaigns in the decision to come to the Murchison is

of particular interest in view of the Department’s emphasis on promotions and innovative recruitment strategies in their response to attraction and retention.

In reporting on the relative importance of *social* factors in their decision to live in their current location (Question 9), lifestyle and relationship factors emerged as the most important. Figure 9.2 shows the relative importance of each factor reported by Workers.

Figure 9.2: Relative importance of social factors on attraction to current location (Question 9)

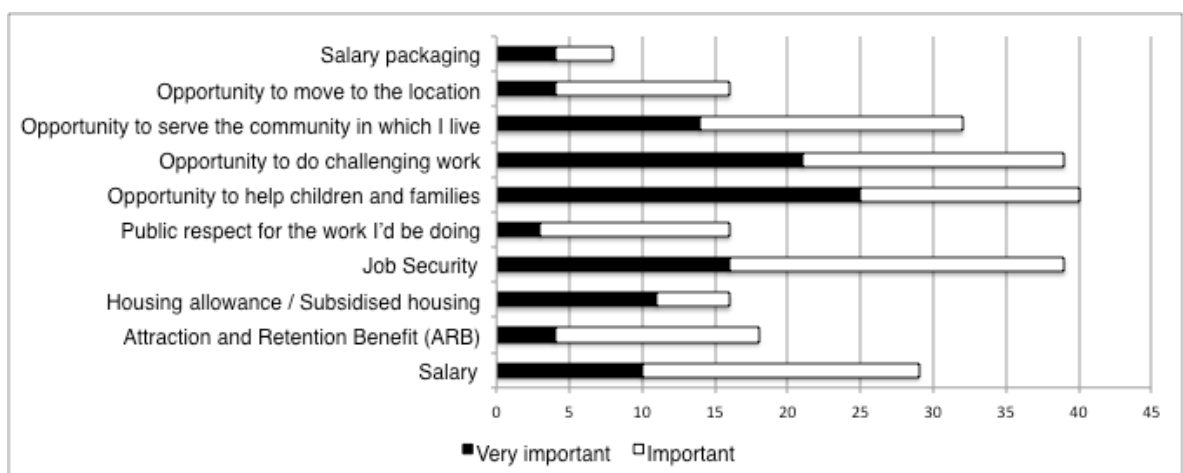


The findings reveal *opportunities for new experiences* as the most important factor (by number of responses) in attracting people to the location. While lifestyle factors such as climate/weather and access to housing also emerged as important considerations, interpersonal relationships, specifically *access to family and existing social networks* and *increased chance to engage with Indigenous people* were reported as the most important factors in attracting people to the location.

The particularities of work

Asked about the relative importance of factors in their decision to join the Department (Question 15), four in five Workers (n=40) indicated that the *opportunity to help children and families* was important. The findings, presented here in Figure 9.3, reveal the relative importance of personal-organisational fit on the decision to join the Department. For the majority of Workers, the challenging nature of the work factored in its attraction: four in five (n=31) workers said *the opportunity to do challenging work* was important to their decision. Further emphasising the intrinsic rewards of the work, Workers reported that the *opportunity to serve the community in which I live* was an important influence. An analysis of findings by place of origin (Question 6) suggests for workers relocating to the Murchison for work, this encompasses a broader concept of community. However, responses also reveal the relative importance of extrinsic rewards: four in five workers (n=39) reporting *Job Security* as an important influence.

Figure 9.3: Relative importance of influences on decision to join the Department (Question 15)



9.2.2 Influences on retention

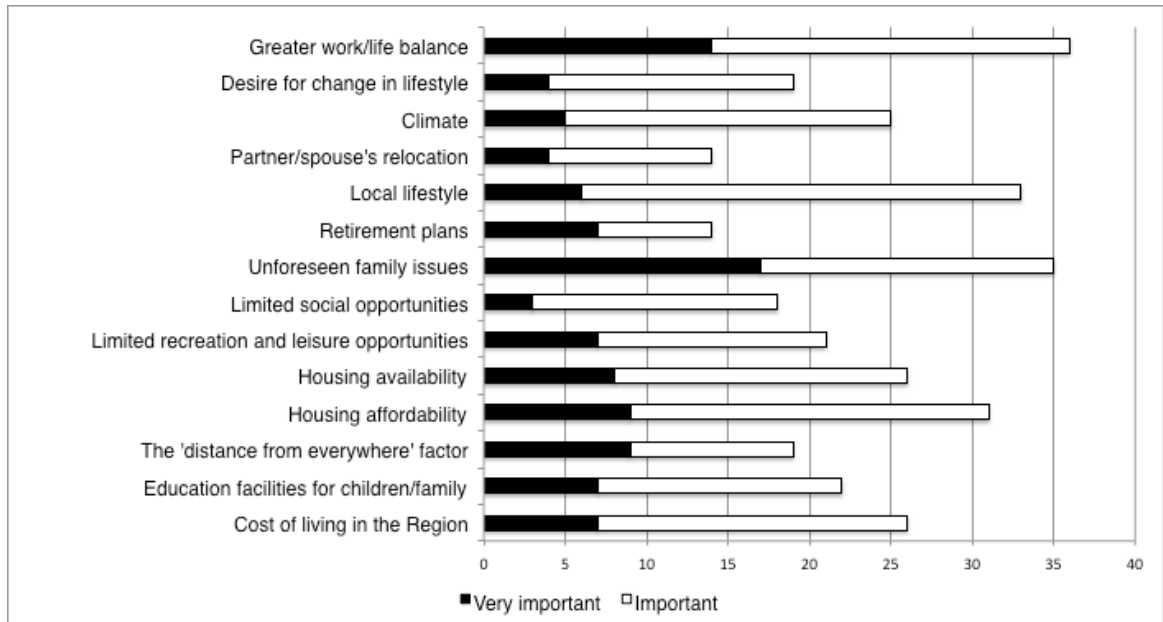
Workers were asked to rate the importance of a series of both positive and negative influences on their decision to remain with the Department and to continue to live in the Murchison. On being asked about their location and employment intentions, Workers who indicated their intention to leave were asked to indicate a timeframe for their departure. The question was an important one in the context of the turnover literature and reported correlation between intentions and behaviour.

The particularities of place

On being asked to rate the relative importance of social factors on their decision to continue to live in the Murchison (Question 51), *Greater work/life balance* (n=36) and *Unforeseen family issues* (n=35) emerged as the most important factors that would influence the decision to stay. Such findings underscore the potential impact of transitions in the non-work setting upon the work setting. The relative importance of some factors invariably reflected the diversity of the workforce in their life choices and associated responsibilities, such as parenting and caring responsibilities. This is illustrated in the context of the reported importance of education, with 22 Workers indicating access to education facilities for children and family as important, while 15 Workers reported that this was not a consideration. Similarly, while considerations relating to retirement and *spousal relocation* were identified as important for some Workers (n=14), they were neither important nor applicable for remaining survey respondents. The findings reveal access to services and infrastructure as an important consideration in the decision to continue to live in the Murchison: from the affordability (n=31) and

availability (n=26) of housing, to opportunities to access leisure and social infrastructure.

Figure 9.4: Relative importance of social factors to remain living in the Murchison (Question 51)



While the majority of Workers (n=23) expressed their intention to remain living in the Murchison for the foreseeable future, an equal number of Workers reported their intention to leave the Murchison within the next five years (n=17) or being unsure (n=5) as to their future intentions. Highlighting the relationship between place, attachment and embeddedness (Milligan 1998; Mitchell et al. 1999), approximately two-thirds (n=14) of respondents who indicated their decision to remain in the Murchison for the *foreseeable future* were living in the region prior to being employed in their current role with the Department.

The particularities of work

Asked about the influences on their decision to remain with the Department (Question 50), the findings reveal the relative importance of work and non-work

factors in Workers' deliberations. Figure 9.5 shows the importance of the work environment for retention. Approximately four in five Workers (n=39) reported the *quality of the work environment* as an important factor in their decision. Both the *stress of the work environment* (n=35) and *lack of management support* (n=31) were reported as negatively impacting on the decision to remain with the Department. Such findings are particularly important to subsequent discussion of attraction and retention strategies in view of the reported levels of satisfaction with aspects of the work setting outlined later in this chapter.

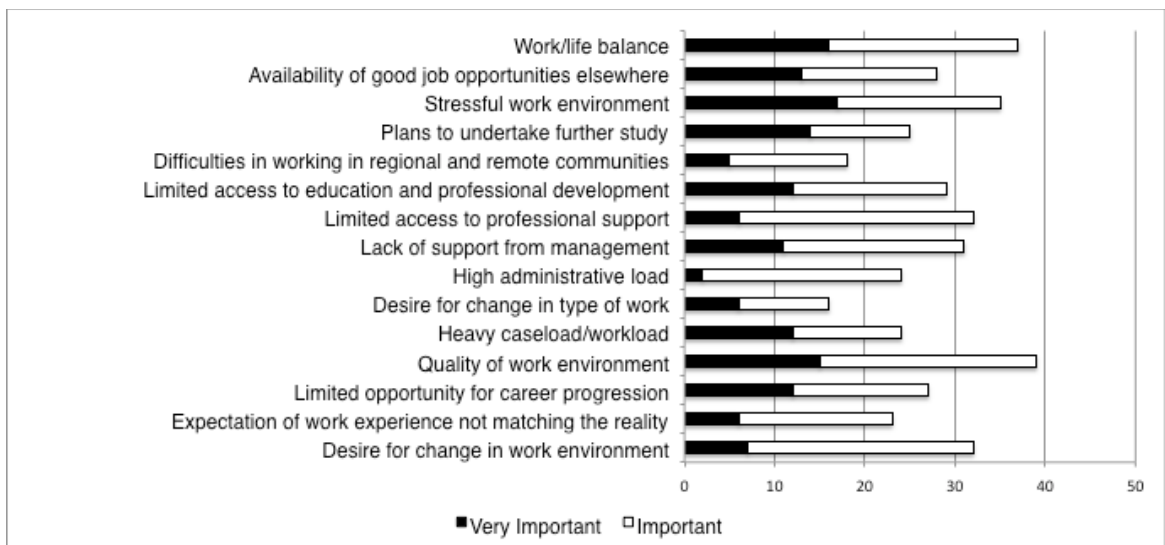
The pursuit of education and learning opportunities also emerged as an important consideration in the decision to remain with the Department. Here, the findings confirm those from the interviews. Workers identified both *limited access to education and professional development* (n=24) and *plans to undertake further study* (n=23) as important in their decision to remain. More than half of workers (n=26) reported a lack of access to educational opportunities where they live. These findings highlight the potential problems presented by access to education opportunities for retention: 23 of 24 workers (92%, n=23) who reported they were interested in further education related to their work disagreed that they were able to access these opportunities where they live.

Reflecting the increased emphasis on balancing the demands of work with 'life' outside the work setting, *work/life balance* emerged as an important consideration in the decision to remain with the Department.

Asked about the importance of the *difficulties of working in regional and remote communities*, more than half of the workers (n=13) indicated a neutral or negative response. The findings suggest that relationship to place factors in responses for

this option, with responses likely to reflect both the current location choice and place of origin of the workforce in regional and remote communities. This is also somewhat reflected in the analysis of responses from Workers who did report *difficulties of working in regional and remote communities* as an important issue. Of the one-third of Workers (n=18) who reported such difficulties as important for their decision, two out of three were living outside of the Murchison prior to assuming their current role. Reflecting the variability in environmental conditions across District locations, and implied relative hardship, responses were higher for inland and remote locations than for the regional centre and coastal city of Geraldton.

Figure 9.5: Relative importance of social factors to continue working for the Department (Question 50)



Reflecting theories of turnover presented in Chapter 5 that correlate leaving and job search behaviour with turnover (Lee et al., 1999), Workers were asked to indicate to what extent they had explored the idea of leaving the Department in the past year. Almost two in three Workers (n=25) reported they had discussed the idea of leaving with a colleague in the past year, with one in five (n=9) reporting

they were actively seeking other employment. The overwhelming majority of Workers who reported actively seeking other employment were in child protection roles (n=7). The main reason reported for their deliberations were work reasons (n=24). However, reflecting the influence of non-work factors on retention, one-third of respondents (n=14) indicated they had considered leaving the Department for personal reasons.

9.3 Characteristics of the work setting: supporters or inhibitors of retention?

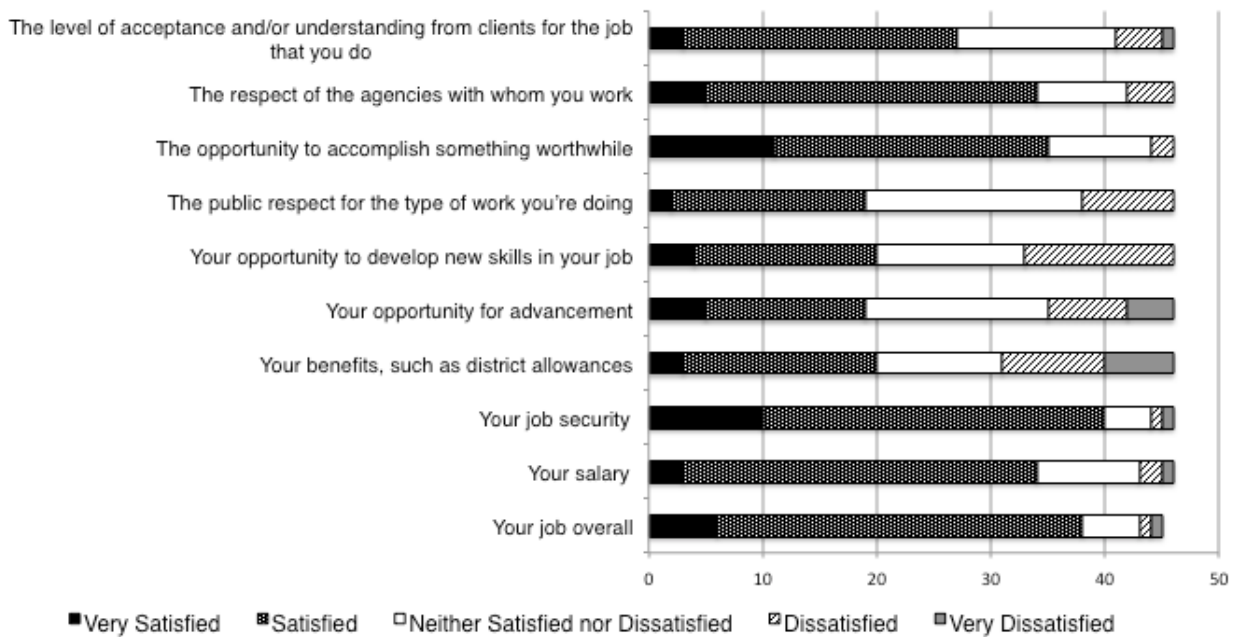
Further to the literature and the reported importance of the work environment in retention, the survey explored characteristics of the work setting to identify factors that support or inhibit practice, and potential remedial responses and risks to factors such as burnout and turnover. Workers were asked a series of questions relating to the organisational environment that covered supervision arrangements, access to resources, personal–organisational fit, quality of interpersonal relations and general levels of satisfaction. The following also presents selected findings from the interviews which provided a rich source of thick data on workforce responses to key developments in the Department’s attraction and retention strategies and insights into the intersecting worlds of work and family/life for statutory child protection Workers in the Murchison.

9.3.1 Organisational environment

The survey findings revealed a number of positive attributes about the work and the organisational environment. Figure 9.6 shows responses for *Overall Satisfaction with the Job and Work* (Question 42), suggesting Workers were generally satisfied. Workers reported being particularly satisfied with the intrinsic

rewards of the work, with three in four workers (n=35) reporting positively on their satisfaction with *the opportunity to accomplish something worthwhile*. Workers also reported high levels of satisfaction with extrinsic rewards of the job such as *Job Security* (n=40) and *Salary* (n=34)

Figure 9.6: Overall satisfaction with the job and work (Question 42)



The findings suggest that Workers perceived a strong fit between themselves and the organisation in terms of common goals and skills match. Workers generally agreed that there was a good match between the duties of the job and [their] skills and interests (n=41) (Question 24), and believed their *work reflects the purpose of the Department* (n=42) (Question 38).

Workers also generally reported positively on the interpersonal relationships within the work environment. At the team level, four in five Workers (n=37) said that *people in their office were willing to help other employees with their skills* to a great extent or somewhat (Question 31). In describing the relationship with their Supervisor (Question 37), three in four Workers (n=29) reported positively on the

support they received, from providing *encouragement to the team* and *caring for them as a person*. The interviews revealed this was more pronounced in some offices than others and partly reflected the size of the office, and relative autonomy, and stability of the workforce in this location.

We have a good crew, great Team Leader. [We] de-brief when having a tough day...[there's] always someone you can talk to in this office

Specified Calling (Qualified), Town B

However, both the interviews and survey revealed a number of aspects of the work and work setting that were less than positive, including areas related with turnover and burnout, as examined in Chapter 10.

Recognition and reward

On being asked about *Salary and Benefits* (Question 25), responses generally confirmed overall levels of satisfaction with remuneration reported in Figure 9.6: two in three Workers (n=31) either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they were *paid fairly for the responsibilities they have*. However, as indicated by the overall levels of satisfaction with *benefits, such as District allowances* in Figure 9.6, not all Workers expressed satisfaction with the benefits they received. On being asked about their satisfaction with the benefits and allowances received (Question 25), one in three Workers (n=15) reported that they were overall Dissatisfied with the benefits and allowances. The interviews provided a useful insight into the causes (and consequences) of this dissatisfaction.

The reported level of dissatisfaction among workers largely reflects the impact of withdrawal of the Attraction and Retention Benefit (ARB). District workforce data at the commencement of this research (DCP, 2009 unpublished) revealed that 17

Workers – half of the (then) District’s child protection workforce – were in receipt of an ARB. Some workers perceived the loss of the ARB as evidence of the lack of recognition of the additional costs of ‘country practice’. The interviews revealed that the negative impact of the withdrawal of the ARB on attitudes towards the Department was reinforced by the introduction of specified callings, resulting in some Workers questioning their future with the Department. This finding is particularly important in retrospect in view of the subsequent departure of these employees from the Workforce, as examined further later in this chapter. Workers generally reported the difference between places justified the attraction of different benefits/allowances, reflecting both the levels of amenity and relative appeal of some locations compared with others and sacrifices related to relocation. Some Workers argued that there was no overwhelming incentive for prospective staff to move to country and remote locations, rather they identified distinct financial and professional disadvantages in doing so. The interviews also revealed that some workers were less than satisfied with the process by which benefits and allowances were allocated, including availability of information and assessment of eligibility. The latter was highlighted for those workers ‘returning home’ to the Murchison after periods of absence who were determined as ‘local’ (that is, not relocating) and ineligible for access to relocation expenses and other benefits. In the context of the reported higher cost of living pressures in some locations, such findings highlight the potential disadvantage confronted by local workers relative to workers from outside of place.

Asked about the characteristics of the organisational culture relating to recognition for the work (Question 26), Workers were relatively evenly divided between those who agreed and disagreed that they received adequate feedback on

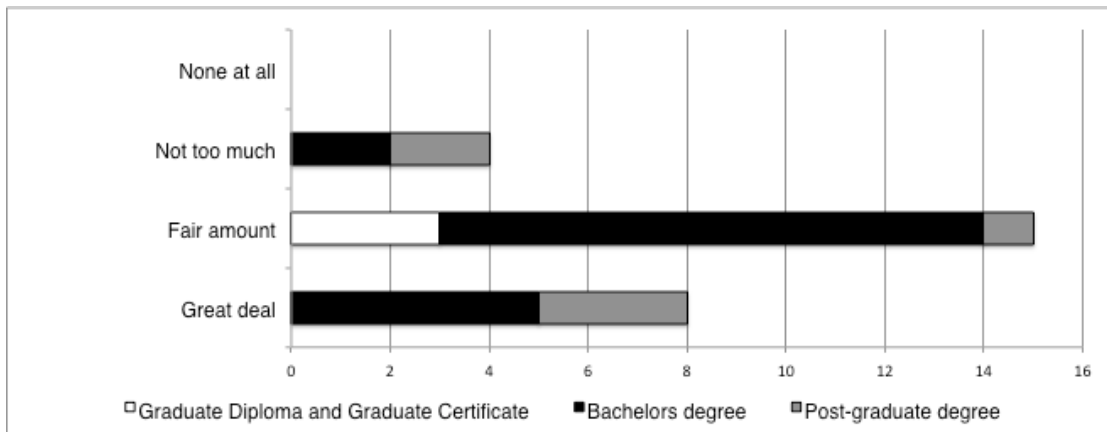
their performance. A total of one in four Workers (n=13) disagreed that they *received timely recognition or acknowledgement for my work*, with another one in three Workers reporting ambiguity (neither Agreed nor Disagreed) with this statement. The interviews revealed that many workers considered that there was little recognition by senior District management and head office for the everyday contribution of frontline Workers.

Skills and knowledge

The profile of the workforce by level of educational attainment and qualification suggest that Workers possessed a high level of skills and knowledge (Question 1), with four in five Workers reported holding a post-school qualification (n=43) and half of this cohort holding a degree-level qualification (n=26). Half of all Workers who held a tertiary qualification held either a Social Work (n=17) or Psychology (n=7) qualification.

Both the interviews and survey findings were revealing in the extent to which education and training prepared them for their work, including the particular challenges of 'country practice'. While the majority of Workers believed their field of study had prepared them for working in child protection (Question 30), only one in five (n=10) reported that it prepared them a 'Great Deal'. This included Workers with degree level qualifications, as shown in Figure 9.7.

Figure 9.7: Reported Preparation of Field of Study for the Role by Type of Qualification (Survey Question 30)



The interviews revealed the extent to which the introduction of Specified Callings to child protection roles had been interpreted as reflecting a narrow interpretation of the skills and knowledge for the work, undervaluing a range of skills and knowledge and contributions of Workers in Specified Calling roles without the required qualification. Described by one Worker during the interview as rewarding ‘qualifications over competency’, many Workers interpreted the policy as imposing a monetary penalty on individuals not in child protection roles without the requisite qualification and limiting future career opportunities within child protection. Furthermore, the policy was interpreted to be particularly detrimental for Aboriginal Workers and Workers who had transitioned to child protection roles from field support roles. While the negative feeling toward the policy change was most strongly expressed by Workers adversely impacted by its introduction, many of whom had been employed under broader qualifications policies, criticism of the policy and its effect were also recognised by senior management, including those with approved qualifications in Social Work. As evidenced by the comments of Workers presented here, criticism of the policy change highlighted the inherent assumptions that formal, academic qualifications – and Social Work qualifications in

particular – would guarantee the skills and knowledge and general levels of competency required for child protection work:

Professionalization ... I support it, [however] it excludes people who'd be great working in the Department. The Department's changed [in terms of requiring] different skills/experience/qualifications which is good in theory but what has it done for practice? Put Social Workers and non-Social Workers on opposing walls – there's equal good practice and equal duds on both sides.

Social Worker Graduate and Senior Manager

The best recruits aren't [necessarily] going to be your best practitioners ... for example, [recruits] offered fast track because they've got their Masters.

[Senior Manager, Town C].

It's hard for me because I'm here (i.e. local). Because they've moved to Specified Callings it's harder to recruit locals, particularly Aboriginal people. You need a Social Work or Psychology degree. People that do go to Uni, a lot do not want to come out to the country. [Noted limited career opportunities for staff as SC also prevents current staff from applying for other, senior roles in the office].

Specified Calling (Non-Qualified)

One Aboriginal Worker said, irrespective of supported education pathways to gain a Social Work qualification:

[There's] no recognition of prior education and what I know ... I sometimes feel just [indicated despair] ... [the] White mentality [is you need] a Social Work degree ... [I have] great respect for Social Workers and degrees, however my priority was my Aboriginal identity and my degree. [There's] a number of people with higher skills ... if falling short of mark [the Department] recognise, not penalise e... [and] Value skills [such as] analytical. I've never stopped learning.

Aboriginal Worker 1

The research found that senior social workers within the Department, and the learning and development unit, had been active in preferencing Social Work

qualifications for Specified Calling positions, leading a number of Workers to remark on the apparent privileging of professional interests in the policy change. One worker highlighted the apparent contradiction between support for the policy change by Social Workers within the organisation and the professional principles of Social Work:

It seems strange to me that the very people who are supposed to champion social justice within our community [Social Workers] all seem to be in favour of these changes that place so many fellow staff at such an obvious and unfair disadvantage

Aboriginal Worker 2

Both the interviews and survey revealed an apparent disconnect between the type and availability of training required for the work and that provided by the Department. On being asked about the *level of training* they had received for their job (Question 29), Workers were relatively evenly divided between those that reported they had received a Great Deal (n=1) or Fair Amount (n=23), with those who reported receiving Not Too Much (n=19) or None At All (n=4). Responses to the question about *access to training or professional development to do the job well* (Question 27) resulted in less than one in four Workers reporting either Always (n=4) or Often (n=9), with the remainder reporting Sometimes (n=20) or Rarely (n=13). The interviews revealed how the training provided by the Department was not perceived as adequately reflecting the particularities of the work context, specifically working with Aboriginal people:

[I] thought training was going to be about working with Aboriginal people but we're picking it up from colleagues, not from start-up training. That's why it's good to have people like [gave name of Aboriginal co-workers and co-workers from the local community]

Interview, Worker 4

[The Signs of Safety Training] Doesn't reflect practice. [My] cultural awareness from [named Aboriginal colleague] informally, during passive smoking break. [Referred to invaluable for caseworkers to do a stint in remote locations – possible 3-6 month period. Noted different Indigenous people in areas e.g. metro, Murchison, Meeka, Broome etc. Would help where parents are out of the area

Interview, Worker 11

The survey findings confirmed those of the interviews in relation to the problems associated with the delivery of the majority of training off site and out of the District. As noted in the context of the differences between country and metropolitan practice, workers reported having limited opportunity to access a comparable range of training to their colleagues in the Perth metropolitan area. Furthermore, as a result of training being delivered outside of the Murchison, both the financial and workload imposition on the District/local office posed additional impediments to accessing training. As a result of these impediments, some Workers believed that access to training had become discretionary, raising issues of equity in the approval for training. Some Workers perceived the District as missing out on training and professional development opportunities that were available in other country districts, with the research findings highlighting the difference between the Murchison and the Pilbara as attributed to the role of the respective District directors in facilitating learning opportunities. The findings are particularly important in the Department's commitment to instituting a learning culture and the identified importance of leadership, universal access, access for regional and remote staff articulated in the Department's PD Framework (Figure 8.2 in Chapter 8).

9.3.2 The particularities of work–life conflict in the Murchison

On being local and being out of place

The Department's success in attracting people from the local community to work in its District offices has meant that it has positively benefitted from local employment in a number of ways, from maintaining relative stability and continuity of staffing, to recruiting through local social networks and engaging with individuals and communities in their communities of practice. The attraction of Aboriginal workers from the local community was reported as being particularly valuable in engaging with this community of practice in view of the complex cultural dimension to engagement with this group. However, the interviews revealed how the additional level of intimacy due to the proximity of relations added to the already complex nature of the interpersonal aspects of the work. This includes claims to 'expert' or unique knowledge and ways of knowing and doing in relation to the local community. Both the findings of this and previous research undertaken in the District reveal the actual and potential resistance of local and long-serving personnel in embracing new and/or different approaches to practice especially from 'newcomers' coming from outside of place.

For Aboriginal people working on country, this level of intimacy is underscored by the additional cultural factors, notably the relationship with kin and country as outlined in Chapter 5. The interview findings confirmed that Aboriginal Workers, especially those working on country, often 'acquired' or were assigned informal roles around engaging with Aboriginal peoples, such as broker or mentor, in addition to their substantive role. The findings revealed that while valued by colleagues, the additional roles assumed a 'taken-for-granted' status within

everyday practice within the work environment. The findings for this and the reported stresses on Aboriginal Workers due to their 'membership' to the local (Aboriginal) community illustrates the complexity of practice, including pressures associated with role expectations.

The research revealed that the Department has had considerable success in attracting Aboriginal workers to some District locations and achieving high levels of Aboriginal employment, as indicated in Figure 9.8.

Figure 9.8 'Black office - the only one in the State'⁴²



Source: *Yamatji News*, 9 December 1995

⁴² Remark by Aboriginal worker who gave me a copy of the press cutting

In reflecting on the realities of working in and off country, Aboriginal workers revealed the complexity of the cultural dimension to practice both for themselves as Aboriginal people, including for some as non-traditional owners, and for their non-Aboriginal colleagues. In addition to the challenge of simultaneously balancing ethical and professional standards of practice while meeting the obligations and expectations of kin, Aboriginal workers were also acutely aware of the historical dimensions to relationship between the Department and Aboriginal families, including within recent history and within their own families, and the conflicted nature of their employment within the local community. For some Workers, the importance of being 'up-front' in confronting historical issues, while simultaneously challenging misinformation about the present relating to the Department's policy and practices, was an important part of their role.

I may know Aboriginal people. If not family or even if are connected I declare a conflict of interest. [It's] Important my mob knows there's ethics. It might be upsetting at first ... eventually it comes around.

Aboriginal Worker 1

[They're] not my people ... I don't like to tell another mob to shit ... No support, no staff, very complex issues ... [It's] a very small community. No opportunity for partner and baby, no attractive salary. The community perception of Indigenous [people] feuding ... the schools and Police are very racist. People come out to the area and don't know what it's like.

Aboriginal Worker 3

Aboriginal workers can be attacked for betraying the community. They know they're doing the right thing, that they're making a difference and they have to believe that otherwise it would be difficult.

Non-Aboriginal Worker

While the particular insight of local Aboriginal people was deemed invaluable in supporting practice, the appointment of Indigenous workers from outside the Murchison and from interstate and overseas suggests the Department is increasingly looking outside the local Aboriginal population to meet its Aboriginal employment targets and demand for qualified child protection workers. It is not clear how this is viewed by local Aboriginal Workers and local Aboriginal people, although as previously quoted by Workers the particular protocols determined by kin relations suggests this is somewhat problematic for aspects of the work.

Intimacies and maintaining boundaries of ethical and professional practice

Some workers reported that the cost of maintaining boundaries of ethical practice in view of the intimacy of relations was to limit social interactions with colleagues both from the Department and the wider human services community outside of work. Acknowledging the potential risk of blurring professional boundaries and ethical codes of practice, Workers were acutely aware of the potential for 'barbeque talk', where social interactions between professionals degenerated into discussion of clients with the consequent breach in privacy and confidentiality of client information.

The employment of spouses and partners, particularly within the same office, highlighted other examples of the tensions in maintaining clear boundaries between the personal and professional in the context of competing organisational priorities. The employment of spouses in the District office was generally perceived as negative and illustrates the perceived compromise to ethical and professional standards of practice by pragmatic responses to the difficulties of attracting people to regional and remote practice. In the identified cases of spouses

employed in the District workforce, colleagues reported their lack of credibility within and outside the office, which in one case was underscored by seniority of the Worker's partner and perceived compromise of the response to legitimate criticism of the Worker's performance. Conversely, the findings revealed the frustration and disappointment of such spouses for acceptance within the workplace. One such Worker put forward a contrary view of spousal employment where 'perceptions were just perceptions', where value judgements overrode actual experience. They reported the impediments often imposed on spouses due to the relationship which limited the employment and career opportunities for many spouses relocating for their partner's employment and limited the opportunity for organisations to benefit. The findings revealed that, due to the small size of the human services sector in many places, the employment of family members, including spouses, in other parts of these sectors was a common characteristic of the community. The blurring of occupational, social and family/kinship networks was a common element of everyday professional practice.

Modelling behaviour and reputation management

Workers were acutely aware of the potential negative consequences posed by the behaviour of District Workers in the 'private' sphere to the work setting due to the relative level of intimacy of relations between the two domains.

While the findings revealed extreme behaviours it also revealed seemingly 'normal' behaviours which, when viewed from within the prism of the work, appeared more problematic. This is illustrated by the scenarios presented by two Workers in relation to their purchase and consumption of alcohol in public places.

One worker described how going out for drinks and night-clubbing assumed a greater significance when the likelihood of 'bumping into clients' occurs. The worker was acutely aware of how 'private' behaviour, such as having had too much to drink, could impact on their professional credibility, particularly given the prevalence of drug and alcohol abuse as factors contributing to the basis for the Department's relationship with the family. In places such as Wiluna and Meekatharra, the relative lack of social/leisure infrastructure means that the pub remains the only centre of social interaction in the community outside of work hours. The consequence is that in some instances, Workers reported withdrawing from socialising in the wider community on the basis of this potentially complex interaction with clients and 'going underground' to find a 'private space'. One worker reported how the potential for conflict associated with the proximity of relations and the type of relationship went beyond them as individuals and extended to their wider family, with children of District Workers being classmates of children under the care or attention of the Department.

The interviews revealed the potentially damaging effect of the proximity of relations in small communities where real or perceived transgressions of Department workers negatively impacted the credibility of the Department both within the local office and the wider community. Describing a series of ongoing incidents involving alleged mental health issues of a former Worker, which involved serious child protection concerns about the behaviours of the Worker's children, District Workers described how the concerns of their office, including those arguing for the prioritisation of the removal of the worker appeared to be ignored by the Department. (Workers conceded they were not sure that the matter

was raised with senior management at 'Head Office'). Workers' reported that due to the proximity of relations in the community, Department clients were either aware of and/or witnessed the behaviour of the Worker and the Worker's children. Consequently, the perceived inaction by the Department to events which occurred, such as the continued employment of the Worker, led to a questioning of the credibility of both the Worker and Department by clients, colleagues in the local service community and the broader public. Workers' argued The effect of the latter was argued as reinforcing entrenched negative perceptions of the Department, which workers considered they had worked hard to 'turn around'. The potential consequences of the case for the reputation of the Department and its Workers at the local level and beyond was emphasised by a number of Workers with one remarking:

"I'm just waiting for [this] scandal to reach the newspaper".

Interview, Worker 17

9.4 The relationship between reported intentions and behaviours of District Workers: survey responses for former employees

The completion of both interviews and the Survey by a relatively large cohort of employees identified as having left the District during the research period and exploration of issues relevant to attraction and retention in these instruments identified both as potentially rich sources of data to determine the extent to which expressed intent and behaviour is correlated with turnover.

By 2012, one-third (n=22) of the sample population (n=68) for the Survey were no longer working for the Department, with eighteen (18) 'former' workers having completed the Survey. In the absence of post-departure interviews with Workers

who left during the period of the research the reasons for their leaving is largely speculative. However, an analysis of interviews undertaken of Workers identified as having left the District, including those that have remained with the Department but relocated outside the Murchison, expressed intentions of leaving the Department and/or reconsidering a future with the Department.

However, as the analysis of Survey findings reveals the extent to which the intentions expressed in the interviews could have reliably predicted actual behaviours is far from clear, with reported intentions (of leaving) not strongly correlated with behaviour.



This chapter has presented findings from the interviews and Survey to convey a perspective on attraction and retention as told and experienced by the research participants at the centre of this research, the District Workers. The responses for influences on attraction and retention, and their reported importance, reveal the messy reality of the decision making process on employment decisions. The Survey findings generally confirm the findings of the interviews and the literature for influences on attraction and retention: the importance of intrinsic rewards (of both Place and Work), and the relational or interpersonal dimensions of the work. Changing life choices as individuals and as members of family units – both voluntary and involuntary –influenced decisions to remain with the Department and in the Murchison. This included the pursuit of greater work/life balance, and caring responsibilities. The reported negative influence of the limited opportunities for spousal employment and education for children and Workers on

decisions to remain in the Murchison underscores the importance of non-work factors, or events occurring within the life setting on retention.

The findings of both the Survey and interviews revealed a number of positive attributes about the work and the organisational environment. However, the findings revealed some less positive and potentially problematic findings in the context of reported causes of turnover presented in Chapter 6. These included events within the work setting that were reported as negatively impacting on workers' perceived 'fit' with and subsequent future in the organisation. The significance of these events is discussed in the next chapter with particular reference to unfolding models of turnover.

Chapter 10 The ecology of the attraction and retention of Statutory Child Protection Workers in the Murchison District

This study set out to examine the attraction and retention of statutory child protection workers in the Department's Murchison District to provide evidence-based responses to this problem.

In assuming an ecological framework, the research has attended to the institutional and individual dimensions to the problem. It has achieved this by considering phenomenon in relation to the 'worlds' in which they are embedded. Thus, District Workers have been considered in relation to the 'microsystem' of the District office, as well as those outside of Work, in the "life' microsystems of family and community. It has also considered them within the context of the broader settings in which they are embedded: from the organisation to the societal. This has been critical to understanding the links that attach District Workers to the Murchison as a place of work and place to live in the context of the attachment literature (Milligan 1998; Mitchell et al 2001). Similarly, the framework has enabled a consideration of the Department in relation to the 'Exosystem' in which it is embedded: the social, cultural, legal, political and economic contexts. In examining the Department's strategies to attract and retain *in context*, this study has underscored the opportunities and challenges this presents for particularist and generalist strategies in view of the internal and external imperatives which impact this decision. On the one hand, this has been critical for understanding the limits of the Department's interventions as a public sector agency to predict and

control attraction and retention and on the other allowing for the autonomy to shape a response.

This chapter, Chapter 10 *The Ecology of Attraction and Retention of Statutory Child Protection Workers in the Murchison District*, presents a discussion of the findings in relation to the literature and responds to the questions first postulated for this research, as well as those that have emerged subsequently. The discussion is presented in two sections: in response to the research questions and in the context of the ecological framework.

10.1 The findings in the context of the research questions

This research set out to respond to three questions:

- (1) Are the challenges for child protection workers in remote areas different from those in non-remote areas?
- (2) What are the particularities of place that support/inhibit practice in the sites of interest?
- (3) What are the factors that influence the decision to join, stay and leave remote practice?

The following section presents a discussion of the findings of the research for these questions.

10.1.1 The difference and challenges of remote practice

The findings reveal that challenges for child protection workers in remote areas are both similar and different to those in non-remote areas. The interview and Survey findings confirm the impact of both individual and institutional factors in the challenges reported in the literature (Bennet & Zy Brownlee et al 2002;

Delaney 1999; Zapf, 1993). Most notable among these is the impact of deficits in the environmental setting and the conflict between work and non-work roles.

An examination of the Department's responses and those within the broader public sector and labour market highlight the ways in which the challenges of remote practice are explicitly and implicitly defined.

The Department has developed a number of both particular and general responses to the challenge of remote practice. These ranged from the development of the Regional Incentive Scheme (RIS) to targeted recruitment strategies, including placed-based propositions for Wiluna and provision of 'cultural competency' training and location of the Aboriginal Practice Leader in District Offices.

The variations in these strategies both explicitly and implicitly recognise the difference across 'remote' areas. As indicated by the variability of incentives for District location available under the Regional Incentives Scheme (RIS) (see Table 8.6), such policy instruments explicitly recognize the differences between places that might be understood as sharing common characteristics, such as a 'shared' location within the Murchison District. This 'objective' assessment of difference in the RIS is endorsed by the subjective assessments of District Workers. However, in reflecting this subjectivity, the findings reveal the limitations of such instruments to adequately echo the attitudes of individual workers. This highlights the extent to which one person's enduring landscape is another's frightful abode. While District Workers in Geraldton and Carnarvon identified Meekatharra and Wiluna as presenting greater challenges than other locations, and reported the inadequacy of current incentives to compensate for the sacrifices of living and working in these

locations, this view was shared by District Workers in Geraldton in relation to Carnarvon.

In presenting the particularities of the Murchison in Chapter 3, and particularities of regional and remote Australia more generally in Chapter 5, this research has endeavoured to highlight how the geographic characteristics of 'place' present some of the greatest challenges for attracting and retaining child protection workers. As evident from the climatic conditions for the Murchison and availability of air-conditioning or 'cooling' subsidies, the conditions present not only physical challenges to the amenity or 'liveability' of the work and living environment but financial ones before taking into account the emotional, social and/or cultural costs

As the interview findings for the perceived requirements of country practice reveal, the reality of living and working in remote areas was reported by District Workers as being in contrast with expectations, with some Workers noting the negative effect of this disconnect on retention. As examined later in this chapter, the 'image' of the Murchison presented by the Department in its promotional material stands in contrast with that presented by primary and secondary data collected for this research. This disconnect is illustrated when juxtaposing the Department's framing of the relational benefits of living and working in regional communities, as presented in Figure 8.3, with some of the relational aspects of living and working in the Murchison reported in Chapter 3 and 9. The reported conflict due to the proximity of relations in some District sites challenges discourses, including those within the Department's promotional material, of the cohesion of 'small' communities. As illustrated in Chapter 3, both historical and

contemporary events expose the extent to which many communities in the District are characterised by division. The towns of Carnarvon and Mullewa (managed through Geraldton office) have been places of exclusion for Aboriginal people within living history and are associated in public discourses and those reported by District Workers as 'racist towns'. As evidenced by the oral histories of elderly Yamatji people in Chapter 3, the consequences of historical events continue to negatively define the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in these places.

The identification of the impact of the deficits and stresses of the environmental setting by District Workers underscores the multidimensional nature of the challenges of remote practice for individual practitioners. As examined later in this chapter in the context of the ecological framework, it also locates the challenges of remote practice firmly within the intersection of Work and Life at the level of the Mesosystem. District Workers reported that the deficit in services and infrastructure of remote areas presented a major challenge to both living and working in the Murchison. In the context of their work, this deficit meant that resources to support practice and improved outcomes for clients, such as drug and alcohol services - easily accessible within metropolitan practice - compounded pre-existing challenges of the work, namely resource levels and compliance. In the context of their Life, District Workers reported that deficits in education services to support their and their children's learning would negatively impact on the decision to remain in the Murchison in the future.

The interviews revealed the actual and potential negative effects of spillover between roles in Work and Life. This spillover was attributed to the nearness of

relations and 'settings' and was particularly pronounced for District Workers local to their community of practice and Aboriginal Workers 'on country'. As the profile of towns such as Meekatharra and Wiluna in Chapter 3 suggests, the size of the towns (both in area and population terms) and their relative isolation from other population centres, means that the proximity of the microsystems of Work and Life is closer than in other, larger population centres. It is the consequence of this proximity, where the domains of Work and Life are intertwined with limited opportunity to separate the two domains that District Workers identified as presenting some of the biggest challenges for child protection workers in remote areas. District Workers not only reported the challenge of 'confronting your mistakes in the street' (McAuliffe & Sudbery, 2005), but confronting those of their colleagues and the Department. The latter included the reported impact of events both specific to the site and the time but also the past and more generally. Here, the reported challenge of remote practice in the research context, and working with Indigenous peoples more generally, highlight both the significance of the past and present in challenges of practice. As the literature on working with Indigenous people in a child protection context in Chapter 6 reveals, this is generally framed in relation to the historical impact of colonisation and historical child protection policies on the relative disadvantage of this population cohort (HREOC 1997). However, as argued below in the context of the research findings this would appear to ignore other aspects of this particular context to remote practice that are suggested as presenting a challenge to District Workers. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Workers reported confronting the legacy of historical events in their role as both Department employees and as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. For Aboriginal Workers this has meant managing both internal and external

conflict. Thus, Aboriginal Workers are also imbued with the “stain” (Bromfield, 2008) of child protection’s history with Workers reporting the hostility directed at them from some family due to their professional role, as captured in the reported naming of Workers as “Black Tracker” and other derogatory terms with equally strong connotations. Anecdotal evidence from the field suggests the real impact on Aboriginal Workers working in child protection ‘on country’ in remote areas includes the potential for deep fracturing of relationships that remain largely hidden to non-Aboriginal Workers. The findings suggest a reconceptualization of the dimensions of spill-over between Work and Life in the research context, particularly for Aboriginal Workers. Further, the findings suggest the propinquity of Work and Life and reported awareness of the negative effects of how behaviours in ‘Life’ impact on Work meaning that a number of District Workers are engaged in a form of regulation of the Self with its own set of stresses.

The findings highlight the paradoxical effect of the relationship to place as a challenge in remote practice. As noted in Chapter 1, a consequence of the dependence on migration employment models to meet demand for child protection workers and other professional workforces in remote Australia is that the majority of Workers will be ‘outsiders’. As discussed later in this chapter, in the context of theories of place attachment (Milligan, 1998) and job embeddedness (Mitchell et al 2001) the challenge from this relationship is that the person-to-person bonds that are integral to linking people to place are ‘outside of place’. The findings reveal that for the majority of the District workforce these bonds are outside the Murchison. However, as suggested by the reported conflict of Aboriginal Workers working ‘on country’ and negative relationship between

attraction and retention of this cohort in the District, the findings reveal paradoxical effects of relationship to place which challenge elements of place attachment theories and present a challenge to organisation responses to attract and retain this cohort. The significance of this latter point cannot be understated in view of the Department's aspirations to be an Employer of Choice for Aboriginal people.

Working with Indigenous peoples

In the Linkage Project, the identification of large Aboriginal populations as a characteristic of hard to recruit sites implied a relationship between attraction and retention and the population characteristics of 'place'. The coincidence of the distribution of the Indigenous people across regional and remote Australia (see Figure 5.2b) in environments acknowledged as some of the most extreme on earth, combined with the reported negative effects of the isolation and deficits in services and infrastructure of these places in attraction and retention suggests the presence of multiple causal factors in the problem. However, as evidenced by the literature (Bennett & Zubrzycki, 2003; Bennett et al 2011) and interview findings on the challenges for Aboriginal Workers working on country, characteristics of the population are identified as a challenge. For Aboriginal Workers this may be understood to stem from complex dynamics arising from the relationship to place and kin and reported role conflict between Work and Life, in the context of the reported challenges of cross-cultural practice, other characteristics are implicated as presenting challenges for remote practice particularly "outsiders" (Zapf, 1993). These included those relating to the characteristics of the 'client' and the broader environmental setting.

The conceptualisation of the challenges confronting Indigenous Australians and therefore policy makers with ‘responsibility’ for Indigenous policy as a “wicked problem” (APSC 2007) suggests that the characteristics of these population present additional challenges for practitioners and services engaged in remote practice. The complex needs of the Aboriginal population and their higher representation in the client, and general population means that relative to non-remote areas, District workers are likely to be in closer proximity to the lives of Aboriginal people than their counterparts ‘down south’. As the literature presented in Chapter 6 reveals, cultural factors are identified as presenting particular challenges in locations outside major urban centres due to the inadequacy of existing frameworks to accommodate the cross-cultural contexts (Zapf, 1993). However, as Zapf (1993) emphasises, the cultural context is not only one of ‘Indigenous’ and ‘non-Indigenous’ typical of remote geographies in Canada and Australia, but between the ‘metropole and periphery’, ‘inside-outside’ and other culturally bound relationships. While the vast majority of the Aboriginal peoples in the District may not be understood to be living a traditional life by Berndt’s (1980) definition, many live a life that is distinctly different to non-Aboriginal people and Aboriginal people in non-remote areas. In the case of Wiluna and Meekatharra, this includes speaking Aboriginal languages and maintaining traditional cultural practices. However, as the media discourses on Aboriginal communities in Chapter 7 and deficits in basic infrastructure in Wiluna in Chapter 3 reveal, it also means simultaneously living in “third world” conditions but also consumers of 21st century material culture. The incongruity of these conditions, illustrated by the reported use of Facebook in family feuding in the District referenced in Chapter 3 underscores the degree to which the expectations

of behaviour by outsiders may be challenged by the reality of Aboriginal people living remotely (Povinelli 1993, in Lea, 2008, 7).

If Indigenous issues present a “wicked problem” for policy makers (APSC 2007), the question remains: what do they present for the people working with this population? The reported challenge presented by the lifestyle of Aboriginal workers by one Aboriginal Worker (as reported in Chapter 9) underscore a characteristic of the work that is identified as its most challenging: client behaviours and cultural practices at odds with ‘dominant’ practice frameworks. Noting not only their relative proximity to a more traditional way of life, but also the visibility of some of their behaviours which often remain hidden from view in non-remote settings, the Worker suggested that not only did the ‘behaviour’ present challenges to their own practice but also an unfamiliar image or experience for Workers coming from outside the region. While the interviews did not explore the dynamics of practice, as evident from the findings of previous research undertaken by the Linkage Team in the Murchison and other country districts (Alcoa Research Centre for Stronger Communities, 2006), traditional cultural practices such as circumcision and promised marriages have challenged the practice frameworks of District Workers in ‘remote’ practice in the past⁴³. In view of the findings from the literature on the particular challenges associated with the cross-cultural aspect of working with Indigenous populations in remote settings⁴⁴ presented in Chapter 5 (Kowal & Paradies, 2005; Zapf, 1993) an exploration of the effect of this dynamic is identified as an areas of future research, as examined in more detail below.

⁴³ Interview with Community Capacity Builder

⁴⁴ This aspect is the subject of PhD research undertaken in connection with the Queensland element of the Linkage Project.

While the Department may emphasise the relationship benefits of living and working in small communities, both the literature and the findings underscore the challenges they present outside of the spill-over between Work and Life. This includes the cohesiveness of the community. As the discourses on the dynamics of communities in remote Australia presented in Chapter 3 and 7 reveal, there are issues at play both separate from and connected to those within the domain of child protection practice that impact on living and working in locations, such as the Murchison. These include the legacy of historical events as well as the impact of the present. The resolution and division around Native Title claims, the perception of Aboriginal people in the non-Aboriginal community, the changing role of men and women in Aboriginal family and community life, and the individual and institutional reconciliation of the effects of historical and contemporary welfare policies (including by Social Workers), are some of the additional subtext to working with Aboriginal people in remote Australia. In view of the grounding of social work education in reflective practice, it is argued here that Social Work professionals are particularly sensitive to this context. In the context of the implications presented by such challenges to child protection workers in remote settings, Zapf's (1993) hypothesis and findings on the correlation between narrowness of qualifications and resilience to the potential shocks affected by these challenges is particularly relevant to the study.

Addressing the challenges of remote practice

As the literature on strategies to attract and retain to remote areas (presented in Chapter 5) reveal, service providers and professional associations have increasingly looked outside the 'market' to higher education institutions in

recognition of the need for pipeline solutions to remote practice. (In this sense, they can be understood as the counterpart to preventative or 'protective' strategies deployed in child-focussed interventions). As with other incentives to encourage students to relocate or return to 'remote' practice highlight, the efficacy of interventions such as the inclusion of 'remote' content in Social Work programs in preparing potential Workers for meeting the challenges of remote practice or in attracting them to remote practice in the first place is not clear. The Survey findings confirm those from the interviews that there is a disconnect between education and training, including among Social Work graduates, for the particular geographical domain of practice. This disconnect includes the 'realities' of the cross-cultural dimension to practice in this domain. A review of the Social Work literature on remote practice reveals an almost pathological emphasis on a strengths perspective that appears contradictory with emerging realist discourses within the public domain (presented in Chapter 7) and the health literature (Duraisingam et al., 2010). In view of the reported 'whiteness' of Social Work (Walter et al., 2011) contributors such as Lea (2008) and Kowal (2011) offer a perspective on the paradoxical effects of white anti-racism in the Health Sector that may offer some important insight into future directions in 'realist' education and professional development programs focussed on remote practice.

The findings reveal that there is general consensus around the challenges of remote practice, but how individual and institutional actors interpret these challenges vary. As examined in the next section in relating to Reasons for Leaving, some factors such as the deficits in the environmental setting related to the Life domain are reported as sufficient reasons for some individuals to leave remote

practice. For others, they are 'part of the job'. Similarly, while organisations such as the Department may offer incentives to compensate for some of the challenges, such as deficits in housing, the findings highlight the subjectivity of the evaluation of the adequacy of these incentives. Thus, some individuals reported that the sacrifices of staying with the Department in the Murchison do not compensate for the challenges they confront in remote practice. As discussed elsewhere in this chapter, this offers insight into potential strategies to address challenges of attraction and retention in remote areas particularly where they are negatively correlated with attraction and retention. They importantly underscore the limits of organisational responses to resolve some of the reported challenges, notably the services and infrastructure provision and separation of work and home, whilst simultaneously pointing to areas where the Department could be doing more to minimise the negative effects.

10.1.2 Influences on joining, staying and leaving

In reminding us that the decision to join an organisation is a two-way process, involving both an individual and organisational choice, Wanous (1992) stresses the importance of understanding the organisational entry process in view of its implications for organisational commitment (and consequently, retention).

The reported influences on the decision to join the Department reflect the range of needs and motivations reported in the literature: from a perceived person-job fit, extrinsic rewards, the opportunity for employment and the relationship between organisational choice and vocational choice.

The reported importance of working with children, and working with Indigenous children in particular, imply a fundamental match between personal motivations

and opportunity within the organisation that is integral to individual choice of organisation (Wanous, 1992).

The findings reveal that the climate of the organisation to support this match was critical to this choice, with District Workers highlighting the importance of changes to the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* that placed the best interest of children at the centre to their organisational choice.

The strong vocational base of the District Workforce implies the choice of the Department is closely linked with occupational choice. In considering that parameters for entry to the Department have reflected a relatively narrow qualifications requirement (typically drawn from the 'helping' and social professions/disciplines, notably Social Work, Psychology and the Human Services, and the Social Sciences) it is not surprising that the influences on the choice of organisation are relational and people-centred. In the context of the reported correlation between vocation choice and organisational commitment (Cherniss, 1995; Healy & Lonne, 2010; Wanous, 1992), a consideration of the importance of the vocational orientation outside of any other consideration has critical implications for strategies to attract and retain. The interviews revealed the extent to which the choice of the Department, and the District, by many workers already living in regional and remote areas has been a relatively un-programmed decision and largely opportunistic. In such cases the Department's need to meet workforce demands and the Worker to find a job coalesced with a mutually beneficial outcome with the relative longevity of this outcome often a reflection on the relationship of the Worker to 'place'.

The factors that influence the decision to either remain or leave can be understood as being the opposing sides of the same issue. As suggested by the reported influences on the decision to remain, some factors negatively correlated with remaining are also factors that are influential in leaving.

The question can also be interpreted as both a reflection of Workers on the motivations that have kept them in the District Workforce and an examination of the world in which District Workers are embedded beyond the Work Microsystem. This research has revealed the complexity of the factors influencing the decision to remain and the relative influence of 'work and life' choices in the decision. This is particularly true for Workers who relocated to the Murchison to work for the Department.

This research has highlighted that for those who have relocated to the Murchison there was both a place and organisational dimension to the choice. As the Survey findings in Chapter p reveal, the reported influence of factors such as *Greater Work/Life Balance*, *Unforeseen Family Issues* and the pursuit of education opportunities for both family members and the individual Worker, point to both enrichment and conflict factors in the decision to remain and therefore, decision to leave, the Murchison. In the context of Work factors, the reported negative influence of deficits in the organisational environment, such as *Workload* and *Quality of the Work Environment*, not only underscore the relative impact of conflict factors in the decision to remain, but illustrate the effect of how the match or 'fit' between the individual and organisation changes over time. Responding to such pressure points is therefore critical for retention strategies while external environmental factors such as the proximity of Work and Home and availability of

services and infrastructure are outside the control of the Department to positively influence, the Department can minimise factors internal to the Work Microsystem.

The range of motivations within the workforce at any given point in time highlights the complex challenge for the Department to satisfy this plurality of motivations. However, the recognition of this plurality is important for organisational strategies to support retention particularly in understanding that while the influences of factors such as working with children may be universal across the Workforce, the commitment to doing this within the organisational environment may be greater where organisational choice is premised on vocational choice.

10.1.3 Particularities of place that support or inhibit practice

The adoption of a wider lens for this research offered by an ecological perspective reveals the extent to which it is not enough to understand how the particularities of place support or inhabit practice but how these particularities support or inhabit the choice of the Murchison as a place to which Workers locate to live. The interview findings in Chapter 9 identify positive attributes of the natural environment relating to their aesthetic, ideological and spiritual dimensions that support practice by providing spaces in which to engage with clients. In the context of the reported significance of Place for Aboriginal people (Chapter 5) and the literature on alternative ways of working in a cross-cultural context (Briskman 2007), the findings suggest the use of Place as an important resource in the technologies of remote child protection practice.

As reported earlier in this chapter, while the deficits of the environment were reported as presenting challenges to both living and working in the Murchison, the

interviews also revealed the positive effects of these 'deficits'. This included the potential for diversity in the role due to the more generalist nature of practice and emphasis on interpersonal relationships due to the proximity of relations.

10.2 The findings in the context of the ecological framework

The adoption of an ecological framework for this research, which placed the individuals who are the subjects of the Department's interventions at its centre, has sought to recognise the web of relationships and systems in which individuals and organisations are embedded. Thus, providing an understanding of both the internal and external forces which act on the decision making processes is central to attraction and retention.

10.2.1 Balancing individual, organisational and institutional imperatives

In recognising District Workers as being embedded in a 'life' beyond that of the Work microsystem, this research has considered the actual and potential impact of the different roles they embody in the different microsystems in which they are embedded. The interviews/Surveys revealed that outside their role with the Department the 'Workers' identified themselves as Mothers, Carers, Church-Goers, 20-somethings, Married, Single Parent, Aboriginals, 'Locals', Social Worker, and Yamatji. As implied by the interpersonal relationships intrinsic to some of these roles, the needs of the District Worker extend beyond them as individuals. In the context of recruitment to Place discussed later in this chapter, the recognition of such influences is particularly critical to understanding the complexity of 'off-the-job' (or Life) factors impacting on attraction and retention and limits of organisational responses particularly in view of increased democratisation of the Family in late-modernity (Giddens 1992). The WA Public Service explicitly

recognise in its advice for Attraction and Retention options for remote areas (PSC 2010) that recruitment is more than attracting the individual candidate but the “whole family”. However, it is not clear what additional incentives are available for families relocating to the Murchison with the Department. As the findings for the reported role conflict for Aboriginal Workers and negative impact on retention reveal, in spite of the motivations for working ‘on country’ and the implied positive effect of their attachment to place, in reality the conflict which originates in this relationship is not worth the sacrifice of remaining ‘in Place’.

For local people, their employment by the Department has appeared to satisfy a number of individual needs, including opportunities for employment, particularly in a field where they can serve their community. In ‘hard to recruit’ locations, this need has coincided with the Department’s difficulty in recruiting to these places.

As revealed by the introduction of Specified Calling classifications for child protection roles, in changing the requirements for organisational entry, the Department altered the fit between the Department and the individual District Workers who occupy roles without the requisite qualification. As reported in Chapter 9, this has set up a conflict relationship between the Department and individuals in these roles that is negatively correlated with their expressed intention to remain with the Department. The introduction of Specified Callings has provided an important illustration of the paradoxical effects of strategies to attract and retain. The introduction of a qualifications requirement for child protection roles may reflect an organisational imperative of improving competency of the Workforce to protect children from harm, but it has also reduced the *potential* supply of labour from which it can attract workers. This has

served to alienate a target cohort of its attraction strategies, Aboriginal Workers, for whom the Department aspires to be an Employer of Choice and another historically important source of labour and institutional stability in hard to recruit locations, 'local' people, in view of the relatively low educational attainment held by these cohorts. When viewed in the context of broader policies on 'Closing the Gap' on Indigenous Disadvantage through education and employment opportunities, the effect of the Department decision could be interpreted as having more serious consequences for the clients with whom it works. The potential negative consequences of this should be understood in relation to the changed work and life preferences for Aboriginal people, including those reported within the resources sector, which may mean that the Department will fail to meet its organisational objectives whilst also failing to support a key population group whose wellbeing it serves to improve.

As reported in Chapter 9, the tragic irony of this was not lost on one Aboriginal worker [repeated here below]:

"It seems strange to me that the very people who are supposed to champion social justice within our community (Social Workers) all seem to be in favour of these changes that place so many fellow staff at such an obvious and unfair disadvantage"

Aboriginal Worker 2

The research has revealed how both roles embodied in the Work Microsystem and other roles, such as an Aboriginal person, a mother, a person from outside the Murchison, or young graduate, have impacted on their attitudes to the work and their decision-making about joining the Department. The research revealed how the conflict between roles, such as for Aboriginal Workers working on country and for Workers who had relocated to the Murchison but whose social networks

remained elsewhere, had and were anticipated as negatively impacting on their retention. The research also revealed how the Department's changed expectations around roles, notably the skills and knowledge requirements for child protection roles, had negatively impacted on their perceived 'fit' with the work and the Department, where they were defined as not equal to their peers based on their qualifications but equal by definition of their occupying a child protection role.

This research has sought to highlight the complexity of potential influences and aspirations that shape job and organisational choices, the dynamic nature of these motivations which change over time, and the limits of organisation interventions to respond to this diversity and yet the imperative to do so in an era of changing work and life choices and increased demand and decreased supply.

The research revealed the extent to which the changing needs of the individual across the lifecycle, both programmed or un-programmed, meant that the mechanisms to support these changes where they impacted on their 'Work' role needed to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate these needs. In the case of Workers who reported the need to relocate outside the Murchison in order to meet the education needs of their children, the relative priority accorded to non-Work roles underscores the limits of organisations to compensate for all sacrifices. However, it also identifies risk factors associated with some cohorts and the potential of this knowledge to inform targeted recruitment strategies including incentives that are flexible enough to target lifestyle preferences across the lifecycle. As noted elsewhere in this chapter, this point is a critical one in view of the need for a diverse workforce particularly in view of historical issues associated with the dependence on young graduates in 'remote' practice (Ford, 2007).

As emphasised in the presentation of the Department's responses to attraction and retention in Chapter 8, when examined in *context* the responses can be understood to reflect a number of imperatives, including those external to the organisational environment. Most notable among these is the Ford Review of the Department in 2007 and subsequent reform agenda based on its recommendations. However, an examination of the Ford Review also reveals the extent to which it can be understood to be responding to imperatives other those that arising from the failure to protect Wade Scale from harm. The Review was also a product of the then Government's review of public sector agencies in response to budget imperatives (Ford 2007). An attendance to the economic and political context to the Department's responses enabled by an ecological perspective has highlighted the extent to which forces external to the Department and within the political economy shape their responses.

The introduction of Specified Callings reveals the extent to which organisational imperatives, ostensibly to address skills and knowledge requirements for the job, reflect other imperatives that included: a mechanism by which the Department could achieve parity in salaries for Social Workers with their counterparts in Health; and the assertion of professional domains of practice within the Workforce by the Social Work profession. In the context of the ecological framework, the latter can be seen to reflect not only the traditional influence of the Social Work profession in child protection but also the increased role of the expert system in late modernity (Giddens, 1990) and the paradoxical effects of increased specialisation on supply in an already constrained labour market.

As the media discourse on the economy during the research period reveals, the Department's efforts to attract and retain have both benefited and suffered from the changing fortunes of the economy and political responses to 'new' economic imperatives. District Workers have directly benefited from the review of and increase in the District Allowance and supply of GROH accommodation as a direct result of the resources boom⁴⁵. Conversely, the Department and District more specifically were reported as being negatively impacted by the resources boom in relation to the competition for skilled labour and the cost of living, especially housing, pressures in places such as Geraldton.

The rejection of the Wiluna Strategy on cost grounds reveals the severely limited capacity of the Department to determine the extrinsic rewards it can offer Workers as part of its strategies to attract and retain impacted in this case by the prevailing economic and political conditions. Ford recognised this limitation in her review and as revealed in Chapter 8, identified the ARB as one mechanism whereby the Department could achieve the organisational imperative of offering parity of remuneration to attract and retain to regional and remote areas.

An examination of the research from an ecological perspective has shown how approaches undertaken by the Department to respond to workforce challenges reflect imperatives across the WA Public Sector and the extent to which their efforts are 'guided' by central government. However, as demonstrated in the context of the changes to the District Allowance and GROH accommodation, in spite of demand and the declared universal 'problem' of attracting skilled professionals to regional (and remote) Western Australia the responses are

⁴⁵ And the political environment where the support of the WA Nationals was contingent on a State power-sharing agreement

inherently political and economic and reflect a particular set of circumstances that might be interpreted as exceptional⁴⁶.

The reported impacts on the resources boom on the Murchison presented in Chapter 3 shows that the impact of resources activity on places such as Geraldton present both opportunities and challenges for these locations and the region more generally in terms of the relative impact on liveability in the context of the subjectivity by which change is interpreted. As with the effect of the resources boom on District Allowances, the proposed development of locations such as Geraldton and Exmouth may have positively benefitted the Department in its efforts to attract and retain in view of the anticipated enhanced 'lifestyle' infrastructure and therefore perceived liveability of these locations for people relocating to the region. However, as the literature on enduring landscapes in Chapter 5 reveals, the degree to which such changes are perceived as positive or negative are highly subjective. While the prospect of a 'cappuccino strip' in Geraldton may be understood as positive for some cohorts, the search for a difference, including the promise of 'community' the Department promotes as being indicative of regional communities may mean such developments present a less attractive option for existing and potential recruits.

The imperative to support greater remuneration for child protection workers not only requires the political will of governments, but also the relative priority of child protection services. While the attraction and retention of child protection workers in regional and remote locations may be a workforce priority for the

⁴⁶ The exceptional circumstances are argued in relation to the likelihood of their occurrence: the coincidence of a resources boom, a commitment to investment in the regions by 'country' parties and the dependence on the country vote in election outcomes

sector, the priority of the sector relative to other public sector agencies means that in spite of the rhetoric, child protection simply is not accorded the same status and priority in the agenda of both State/Territory and the federal government compared with Health and Education. From an ecological perspective, factors as diverse as the current design of child protection services as 'residual' services, and therefore concerned with a problem population rather than a social problem, and the female profile of the sector all emerge as factors which impact on the relative priority of the sector. This also affects the relative priority accorded to its problems such as the resourcing of strategies to attract and retain. It is not clear to what extent the anticipated introduction of a national workforce strategy for the sector under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children (COAG 2009) will have on the future of individual State/Territory services, but it highlights the extent to which the Department is locked into a web of relationships that determine their responses to attract and retain.

10.2.2 Lessons from the 'marketplace'

As the overview of the Department's strategies to attract and retain presented in Chapter 8 reveal the utilisation of a number of mechanisms in the broader labour market to address workforce challenges. These include population, participation and productivity strategies (The Productivity Commission, 2005, Public Sector Commission, 2009) such as overseas recruitment, scholarships and alternative working arrangements. In looking to the 'marketplace' incentive schemes such as those outlined in the National Rural Health Workforce Strategy (Department of Health and Ageing, 2011) presents a number of potential options that the Department could employ. However, as the ecological examination of this research

has revealed the realities of the political and economic environment in which the Department is embedded means that these are not real options for the Department. Unlike Child Protection, Health is considered an essential service and workforce issues have been addressed at the national level. The following examines some of the options explored in the literature on strategies to attract and retain in remote contexts in Chapter 6 in light of the findings of this research.

WA Public Sector

In recognition of the universal nature of the problem of attraction and retention to regional and remote Western Australia across public sector agencies, the (WA) Public Service Commission (PSC) promotes a range of initiatives to support attraction and retention. Such initiatives for remote areas are outlined in the policy document, *Approved Procedure 7: Attraction and Retention Incentives of the Public Sector Management Act 1984* (Public Sector Commission, 2010a), and range from employee induction kits, to recommendation of spousal employment and secondment opportunities. The Department's strategies to address attraction and retention issues typically are commensurate with those available within the WA Public Service. However, as argued in this chapter, in their respective responses to attraction and retention in remote areas the Commission and the Department appear not be grounded in realist responses.

In its case, the Department website provides some information on localities across regional WA but these continue to be ones which represent overly positive images. The findings from the literature reviewed for this research on the importance of realist (job) previews (RJPs) to minimise the subsequent conflict which can lead to turnover (Wanous, 1992), is supported by the interview findings with District

Workers believing that a more realistic methods would assist in retention. The emphasis on idealised representations of the Murchison through the use of Tourism WA material suggests that the Department has yet to adopt such approaches in its information on the District. As evidenced by the findings, the District has benefitted from the employment of spouses in the wider service community and within the District Workforce. However, as reported, in Chapter 6 the dependence of embeddedness on third parties in the context of the theories of turnover (Mitchell et al., 2001) ultimately identifies this approach as particularly vulnerable.

As a statutory agency, the Department has clear constraints on its capacity to innovate in its responses, as illustrated in the rejection its Wiluna Strategy. It is reasonable to assume that the development of a National Workforce Strategy under the National Child Protection Framework (FaHCSIA, 2009) will assist in providing not only a more strategic approach to workforce issues such as attraction and retention in the sector, but more innovative ones from which the Department may benefit. In the meantime it is not clear outside of factoring in the choice of vocation with organisational choice, what 'edge' the Department offers in competing to attract and retain.

Realist recruitment

In highlighting the correlation between turnover and conflict arising from idealised representations of the organisation and organisational environment in the organisational entry process, Wanous (1992) underscores the importance of realist methods in organisational recruitment strategies. In reflecting on possible solutions to attraction and retention issues in remote areas, many District Workers

emphasised the need for realist recruitment strategies. However, the findings reveal that a number of assumptions which underpin approaches both within the Department and the WA Public Sector that do not reflect the realities of remote areas. This is illustrated in the WA Public Sector Commission's promotion of ICT as well as the implied universalism of 'Afterhours phone service or answering machine', local employment and job sharing activities (Public Sector Commission, 2010). In the Department's case, it is the use of idealised representations of Place and Work in its recruitment campaigns.

In its advice on attraction and retention options for remote areas the WA Public Sector Commission promote 'Universal Access to Information and Technology Resources' (Public Sector Commission, 2010a) for its: "potential [to] markedly reduce the isolation and disenfranchisement sometimes felt by regional and remote area public sector employees and their families". However, the "plethora of IT resources" (2009b) to which the Commission refers would appear to ignore the provision of ICT services and infrastructure in regional and remote Australia, including parts of the Murchison. As the discourses on the 'digital divide' reveal, many remote and outer regional areas remain effectively offline at least in the availability of bandwidth in these locations. Such advice highlights the flawed assumptions even in 'official' advice that informs attraction and retention strategies. However, the findings reveal that it is the assumptions that underpin the Department's promotions that are most problematic in terms of their suitability in view of the examination of the particularities of practice and place particularly in the context of realist recruitment.

The Department's deployment of promotional material has been an integral part of its strategy to recruit to Place. As presented in Chapter 8, in its promotions for the Murchison this has emphasised the lifestyle benefits of Geraldton (Appendix 10) and in the 'Live and Work in WA' (Figure 8.4) campaign, the lifestyle benefits of living in WA more broadly. Both examples highlight the interactional potential of living and working in the respective target locations. However, Geraldton is only one of four locations in which the Department seeks to recruit. It is also the least difficult in attraction and retention terms in the District. In the sense of 'selling' the most positive attributes of locations within the District, the Department is using traditional methods in its recruitment (Wanous, 1992). However, when examined in the context of aspects of the Murchison reported in Chapter 3, the Department's use of such methods is potentially problematic in its distortion of reality. In view of the District's dependence on migration models to meet demand, it is argued here that such recruitment strategies risk creating conflict between the aspirations of prospective recruits from the outset due to their misrepresentation of place alone. This is further illustrated in the 'Live and Work in WA' campaign where the Department has similarly been selective in the image it presents. While the campaign seeks to recruit to regional WA, the image in the campaign is of the Swan River foreshore adjacent to the city and central business district of Perth in an area with one of the highest land values in Australia.

As illustrated in Figure 8.6 for the 'Life Changing Career' campaign, the Department has evoked through both the use of image and language foundational narratives in child protection work: the rescue of children from harm, and the opportunity to meet self-actualisation needs fundamental to motivations in

vocation and job choices. However, as revealed in Chapter 6 the narrative ignores the degree to which these emotional elements of the Work, and the reality presented by the nature of the problems confronting clients, present some of the biggest challenges of the Work. In the same way that the Department's representation of Place is problematic, it is argued here that the Department's idealised representation of the Work sets up a potential source of conflict in the organisational entry stages. This is further argued in promotions for 'Our Kids, Our Future' (Figure 8.1) that targets Aboriginal workers. While evoking the language of self-determination, a central discourse in the search for Aboriginal identity in late-modernity, this research reveals the ties that bind Aboriginals to family and country paradoxically create a disconnect those between the Aboriginal Worker and the Department, illustrating how at the level of the mesosystem the difficulty the potential irreconcilability of roles and spheres of life.

The preference for coastal living among the Australian population (BITRE, 2011; Hugo et al., 2010) and the liveability of some locations within the Murchison suggest that attraction and retention strategies need to take into account lifestyle preferences and relative sacrifices that are grounded in reality and not ideals.

Flexible workforce models

While developments within the political economy during the research period indicated new directions in regional policy in Australia, it is unclear whether in the context of WA this will translate to the level of regionalization that will resolve the 'problems' of labour supply. Mobile workforce models have emerged in response to the need to reconcile the demand for labour in remote localities with its perceived relative low liveability. As revealed in Chapter 7, the increasing use of

mobile workforce models remains a contentious issue in Australia, principally due to the impact of FIFO workforce models in the resources sector. This is despite their relative ubiquitousness across regional and remote Australia, particularly in Commonwealth government funded and provided service provision and Flying Doctor and Chaplain services. The findings reveal the Department is already engaged in localised variations of DIDO and FIFO workforce practices in the District.

While the Murchison is not yet part of this approach, this research has found that the Department supports forms of DIDO service delivery in the District specifically from servicing outlying office locations and communities to training delivery. Australia's ongoing preference for coastal living, and the relative liveability of some places in the Murchison over others, appears to suggest a trend in the development of more formal DIDO models to address future attraction and retention, particularly to attract a diverse Workforce cohort. The proposed revitalisation of towns in the District under the Gascoyne Revitalisation Plan (SGS Economics & Planning, 2012) and WA Super Town Strategy (Department of Regional Development and Lands, 2011) identify the potential for the Department to benefit from increased investment in lifestyle infrastructure commensurate with these proposals. The issue of surveillance, often raised in the failings of the child protection system, highlights the need for consideration of the nuances of non-residential/mobile service models in a child protection context. However, this research has found that it is not unreasonable to consider that with appropriate learning from such examples, mobile workforces could be adopted that supported continuity in care for children and families in remote localities.

As the literature on traditional models of place attachment (Low & Altman, 1992a) and organisational attachment (Mitchell et al., 2001) suggests, the significance of relationship in place to attachment underscore the risk of recruiting from outside of place due to the absence of these ties. Furthermore, in the context of theories of job embeddedness and findings of this research for the reported difficulties in attracting and retaining Aboriginal workers, such bonds may not be sufficient to foster the required attachment to remain in place in view of competing factors such as perceived sacrifices in staying. In the context of the reported vulnerabilities posed by relationship to Place for retention, such findings highlight the need for organisational attraction and retention strategies to be sufficiently diverse. In view of the relatively limited flexibility available to the Department as a statutory agency to offer enhanced remuneration to support recruitment to 'hard to recruit' places, mobile workforce models may be appropriate in the short to medium term whilst more sustainable models, such as those supporting local employment, are developed and implemented.

Managing to retain...some other considerations

This research has revealed that in response to the problem of attraction and retention, the Department like other organisations has been relatively consistent in its responses in terms of its management practices. The increased emphasis on workforce planning and flexible work arrangements can be understood as reflecting a return to traditional development models and their more 'modern' equivalents in managing their human capital, including those that seek to balance both organisational and individual needs. The demand for qualified child protection workers and shortfall within the local (domestic) labour market will

mean that the Department will remain dependent on 'outside hiring' practices (Cappelli, 2008). However, as Cappelli (2008) underscores such practices are inherently flawed in the context of the changed realities of work in the 21st century due to its unsustainability. The deregulation of the child protection marketplace has already signalled the potential competition from the non-government sector. Similarly, the global marketplace from which the Department has sought to benefit has also encroached on the Department's and other statutory child protection agencies' traditional labour markets. This is most clearly illustrated in the employment of Australian Social Workers in the UK and more recently, the search for new 'external' markets for Aboriginal workers which is seeing Australian statutory child protection agencies recruit from outside their State/Territory and across the Tasman to New Zealand. For child protection workers looking to work in 'remote' environments, the relative competitiveness of place and the incentives offered by organisations as part of this competition may mean that the opportunity to work in the remote areas of Queensland and the Northern Territory may present a more attractive proposition than the Murchison for potential recruits. This is before considering the ethics of these practices and their impact on developing countries as they seek to build their own child protection services.

The Department's development of an online learning platform is a critical step in meeting its learning objectives for regional and remote workers, as articulated in its Professional Development (PD) Framework (Figure 8.2). However, the Department needs to consider preferences and suitability of this mode of learning for individuals in its ongoing learning and professional development strategies.

10.3 The localised effects in a global world

This research has drawn on key concepts within Sociology that have emphasised the changed nature of the Family/Life, Work and Place relative to previous eras.

The research has found that the possibility of preferences or choice in the 'new world' may mean that child protection, traditionally an attractive employment and career option for women, may not continue to present as an attractive proposition in the future. Changing work/life preferences are also critical factors for Aboriginal people considering their future employment options. In the context of changing work/life preferences for men (Hakim 2000), child protection may emerge as an increasingly attractive career option, something which remains unexplored by the Department at this time.

The child protection workplace is now a heterogeneous workforce based on age and lifestyle characteristics and the research found that this presents opportunities for learning for practice, mentoring and experience. Such a varied work environment also presents challenges to group cohesion due to conflicting practice paradigms and life experiences. This is a challenge that the Department will need to manage in the future to enable better integration and to facilitate and support opportunities for learning exchange.

This research has considered an understanding of modernity that has disembedded the demands of family from life preferences. This 'new world of work' means organisations, such as the Department will need to consider that work/life initiatives reflect the plurality in lifestyle choices and that their employment initiatives are aimed at supporting attraction and retention within

this new modernity. One obvious example is the changed scheduling of family to later years and the transition in and out of employment and career for many professional women who choose to become a mother to accommodate their caring responsibilities (Tomlinson 2006) at a critical, mid-point in their career lifecycle. In view of the potential risk to turnover and/or loss of experienced professionals, in female dominated workforces such as the Department, employment policies need to provide a range of options to support retention of personnel and/or knowledge, depending on the preferences of the individual worker. The research found that the Department in line with other public sector agencies is responding to such challenges through the increased offer of flexible work arrangements.

The increasingly global nature of the labour market for knowledge workers means that the Department is now operating in a more competitive labour market than previously. The reported increase in mobility for work and lifestyle factors offer real opportunities for places that can offer such opportunities. The stated liveability of the city of Geraldton, for example, may offer the essential competitive edge the Department needs to attract people to locate to the District, with the Live and Work in WA campaign and its UK target showing how the Department has sought to appeal to these motivations. When considered in the context of austerity measures and winter weather of the United Kingdom, the relative appeal of living and working in regional W.A. may offer sufficient motivation.

The reported increase in the importance of work as an alternative social system following the changes within family and preference of work suggests the need for organisations to manage intra-organisational relations to ensure group cohesion and therefore 'functioning' of the 'new' family. In the context of small, and isolated

offices, such as those found within the District, this is further argued as critical in view of their role in supporting the conditions conducive to retention, from organizational entry onwards. The realization of alternative identities for women – including outside of the traditional domains of Family and Work – may mean that child protection is no longer the attractive proposition it has been. In view of the changed preferences for Aboriginal people, this may also hold true for this cohort. In the face of increasingly narrower qualifications requirements for child protection roles, the Department may not provide the same employment and career opportunities as it has historically provided. For men, changed work/life choices may mean child protection could emerge as an attractive proposition. The prospect of multiple careers while precipitating turnover may also serve to benefit the Department. In view of both possible scenarios, the Department will need to create pathways that enable transition into the sector. In increased recognition of child protection as an interdisciplinary practice, the broadening of qualifications to support inter-disciplinary practice and offer of specialized offerings in child protection, may provide a policy that is responsive to changing demands of practice and support transition into the sector.

The increased inequality in the skilled and knowledge ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ facilitated by the shift to a knowledge economy and graduate workforce within the public sector will invariable impact on the employment and career opportunities for many households, and corresponding economic, social and health outcomes. In view of the Department’s role in supporting improved outcomes for children and families, the Department needs to be part of the solution, not the problem, by providing alternative pathways for people without the requisite qualifications

required under current policies notably recognition of prior on the job learning and experience.

The increased recognition of balance between work and lifestyle and for many, an increased preference of lifestyle factors, may prove to be a positive influence on attraction to some localities. This research concludes that the reality of perceived lifestyle of locations within the District should be better understood, and any plans to develop new Departmental relocation policies should reflect location preferences to support attraction and retention across a diversity of households. In addition, the predicted effects of climate change are also likely to further exacerbate the relative liveability of many locations in regional and remote Australia and in particular, in Western Australia. In view of such environmental challenges it is likely that national policies which limit population growth will mean that regional and remote localities will more than likely remain underdeveloped and will continue to depend on migration models to attract skilled labour.

The advance of information and telecommunications technologies in the late twentieth century has often resulted in a claim for the 'death of distance'. As evident by the absence of telecommunications infrastructure and services in many localities across the Murchison, there are limits. Unlike other professions, the use of telecommunications to 'manage' child protection may not be appropriate considering the critical importance of the client-worker relationship and the way in which the Department continues to see this as one which is managed face-to-face.

As the review of the Place literature in Chapter 4 reveals, one of the negative consequences of the process of globalisation in its effect on 'place' is their increased homogeneity (Sorkin 1992). This research has found that this fact may paradoxically support but also inhibit attraction and retention. For workers seeking an alternative lifestyle to existing 'city' living, the transformation of place synonymous with their development may work against attraction. For many others, such transformations are likely to enhance attraction and retention. The fluidity of the transition of place does suggest the need for nuanced responses to place making and highlights the subjectivity of place-attachment. It also means that for the Department, 'place' is both a moving and dynamic concept, and the strategy to adopt place as a means for attraction and retention demands an acceptance of its changing nature.

The research concludes that the effects of de-traditionalisation of social life and corresponding increased individualization may actually precipitate greater mobility for Aboriginal peoples, a trend more consistent with the wider population. The outcome for the Department of this change is that it is likely to affect both demand and supply issues in child protection employment in regional and remote localities. The research highlighted the increasing turnover of Aboriginal workers, and how the increase in education and employment opportunities and spill-over effect of work/life conflict in working on country may, impact on the supply of Aboriginal recruits.

Theories like Hakim's (2000) in relation to changing Work/Life Choices illustrate the significance of these changes for workplace interventions that seek to respond to these changes in order to attract and retain human capital. As the discourses on

the changed meaning of Work and its relative centrality to concepts of Self and Identity in late-modernity suggest, the roles that individual workers embody outside the Work environment (or Microsystem) may be of equal or greater importance to other roles. It is the potential conflict of the intersection of these often competing interests that is at the heart of Work/Life Balance initiatives that are increasingly employed by organisations such as the Department as part of attraction and retention strategies. However, as demonstrated by Hakim (2000), the assumptions which underpin such strategies are themselves often zombie categories that do not reflect the reality of the social life of individuals and are therefore inadequate to respond to the individual needs of Workers and in the Work context, their organisational choices – either as potential employees or existing employees. In the context of the increasingly democratic nature of the Family, decisions related to ecological transitions such as to relocate to ‘the country’ for work are no longer the preserve of the individual job seeker but reflect the needs and priorities of the family unit as a whole.

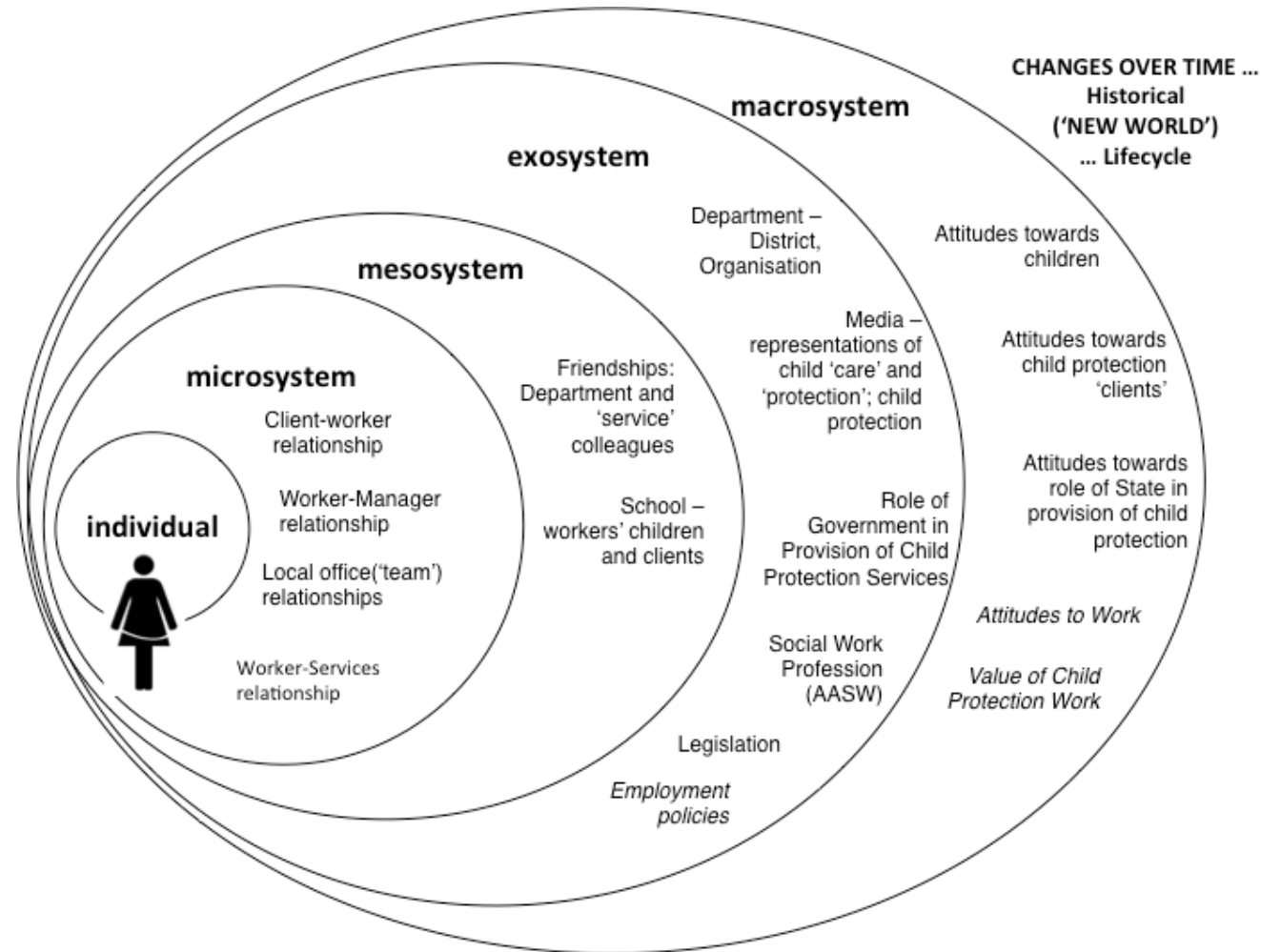
Nevertheless, as an ecological perspective on such issues has revealed, even where there exists the organisational willingness to accommodate such diversity, in the case of statutory agencies such as the Department there are limits on their capacity to do so in view of the political, economic and legislative environment in which they operate. As demonstrated by the discourses on the relative impact of the economy on the provision of public services, the fiscal and political environment may not be conducive to support the types of policy interventions that reflect these changed realities.

After Bronfrenbrenner

To aid this investigation, an ecological perspective adapted from Bronfrenbrenner's ecological theory of human development (Bronfrenbrenner 1979, 1992) was adopted with the proposition that it offered a potentially valuable conceptual framework through which to investigate the Department's problem of attraction and retention to its Murchison District.

It is argued here that the significance of this research is in its demonstration of the value of an ecological model to child protection settings beyond their typical application in child-centred interventions to 'practitioner' focussed/centred interactions such as those to attract and retain for many of the reasons it has proved successful in the former. This includes attention to the complex web of relationships not only in which individuals who the Department seeks to attract and retain are embedded, as illustrated in Figure 10.1, but in which the Department is embedded, and therefore an identification of potential opportunities and constraints imposed by these influences and therefore necessity of attending to this complexity in the development and delivery of interventions.

Figure 10.1: An ecological model of attraction and retention for the Murchison District: the Work context



Recommendations

The location of this research in a 'real-world' problem and consequently as a type of applied research (Gray 2009) has meant that both in principle and practice it has been undertaken with the objective of ensuring its findings are of practical relevance to the Department to address the problem of attraction and retention in its Murchison District. To this purpose, the following recommendations are offered:

- The adoption of realist job previews as the foundation framework of Department attraction and retention strategies;
- The engagement of District workers in attraction and retention processes, including development of formal and informal mentoring and local and District (i.e. off-site) buddy systems within each local office to support transition of newly appointed workers;
- The establishment of Geraldton as an optional residential base for workers recruited to the Meekatharra and Wiluna office and operation of rotating DIDO arrangements to support service delivery (e.g. 4 day week / bi-monthly weekend);
- The offer of time-limited appointments to country districts (e.g. four years) with a right to extend;
- The promotion and operationalization of flexible work arrangements as Work/Life Balance policies which recognise the heterogeneity of 'life' preferences as per Hakim's model and the active embedding of a culture which supports such balance across the workplace;

- To conduct a regular health-check of the Workforce in relation to signs of burnout and turnover through the implementation of a burnout inventory by independent assessors on a bi-annual basis;
- The introduction of specialist graduate level child protection qualifications and relevant experience as the essential qualification requirements for child protection roles, with options for the former to be completed within two years of appointment
- The recognition of the additional demands for Aboriginal workers working on country through the availability of an 'on country' benefit/loading
- To explore in partnership with other lead public sector agencies and not-for profit organisations the establishment of a Government relocation specialist in key regional locations (e.g. Geraldton) who provide practical, tailored support for relocation to regional areas including local community introductions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview instrument

Appendix 2: Participant information sheet

Appendix 3: Survey instrument

Appendix 4: Human Research Ethics Approval

Appendix 5: *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (Part 2, Division 2)

Appendix 6: Murchison District Offices

Appendix 7: AEDI data

Appendix 8: 'Local' perspectives on the Murchison

Appendix 9: Child Protection Qualifications Framework

Appendix 10: Murchison District Promotional Material

Appendix 11: Media images from 'Life changing career campaign'

Appendix 12: Handwritten transcription: example

Appendix 1 Interview instrument

List of Questions – Key Informant Interviews (*By Theme/Respondent*)

Relationship to Place

- Were you in the Murchison prior to your current role? (If so, How long? Were you in your [current location])
- Were you with the Department prior to your current role? (as above)

Influences on Attraction and Retention

- What attracted you to the role? (NB: work and non-work/social factors)
- Do you intend to stay in the Murchison in the medium-long term (i.e. 5-10 years)?
- What would impact on your decision to remain in the role?

Experience of 'Country' Practice

- Have you previously worked in a regional, rural/remote location? (NB: region)
- Have you previously worked in a metropolitan location?

Differences in Practice

- Do you think there are differences between metropolitan and non-metropolitan/country practice? *See previous question: Has this been your experience*
- What do you think are important requirements of 'country' practice?

Local Knowledge

- How important do you think local/community knowledge is for practice in regional/remote locations?

Reputation – Relationship Management

- What do you think are the main influences on the Department's reputation with (a) the local service community, (b) local families? What would it take to change this?

Generational Issues/Change

- Do you think there are generational issue at play in relation to (a) approaches to practice, (b) expectations of the employer and/or work?

Professional Networks

- Do you work closely with professionals/services outside of the Department? (If so, which ones)
- Does the role require you to participate in any inter-agency forums? (If so, which ones? What's been your experience of this/these)

Overseas Recruits only

- What attracted you to the position?

Have your experiences to date have met your expectations? How?

Appendix 2 Participant information sheet

RESEARCH CENTRE FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES
CURTIN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

T (08) 9266 3713 Fax (08) 9266 2098



CURTIN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH CENTRE FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Maree Collins and I'm currently completing a piece of research for my PhD at Curtin University of Technology.

Purpose of the Research

The 'problem' of recruitment and retention of child protection workers has been identified at both a national and local level as a priority challenge for the child protection sector (Ford 2007; FaHCSIA 2008). The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) children in the child protection system, and concentration of aboriginal populations in remote areas suggest there are additional challenges for child protection services outside of metropolitan areas and the child protection workers in these locations.

This research aims to identify reasons why child protection workers decide to join, stay and/or leave the workforce. Whilst the research will focus on statutory child protection workers in the Murchison district, the research will also examine whether the influences on these decisions are common to other service professionals in the district and the wider Department for Child Protection (DCP) workforce.

The research is part of a broader investigation into recruitment and retention issues for child protection workers in rural and remote locations in W.A. and Queensland as part of an Australia Research Council Linkage Grant (ref: LP0082806). The Department for Child Protection has provided support for this research in their role as the W.A. industry partner for this grant.

Your Role

You are invited to participate in an interview and/or focus discussion as part of this research. Each interview and focus discussion will take between 30 minutes and 1 hour, respectively.

If you agree to participate in this research, I will ask you a number of questions that relate to your practice, and experience of living and working in a rural/remote location. In addition to being asked to provide some basic demographic information on you and your household, you will be asked questions relating to:

- The Influences on your decision to come to and remain in your current role and place of work – including professional (i.e. work) and personal (i.e. social/non-work) factors, and
- Your practice, including your experience of 'country' practice.

I will be conducting both face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews over the duration of this research which is due to be completed by November 2012. If you agree to participate in the research you will be given a list of interview questions before your interview.

RESEARCH CENTRE FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES
CURTIN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

T (08) 9266 3713 Fax (08) 9266 2098



Consent to Participate

Your involvement in the research is entirely voluntary. This means that you may:

- Choose not to participate and do not have to provide reasons for your decision.
- Withdraw from the research at any time.
- Decline to answer particular questions during your interview/discussion.

If you are a DCP employee, the Department's involvement in the ARC Linkage Grant which supports this research does not mean that you are required to participate in this research.

If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to complete a Consent Form. The consent form details your rights and expectations as a participant in the research, and the details of your involvement (e.g. Research Method = Interview).

Confidentiality

The information you provide will remain confidential unless you provide written consent to disclose this information. Your personal details will be kept separate to the information you provide so that you cannot be identified from the information you provide. For example, the interview transcript will not have your name or any other information which may identify you as the person from whom this information was obtained. The access and storage arrangements of this information are in accordance with the University's ethics policy which means that they will be kept in a secure location (i.e. locked cabinet) for up to five years after which they will be destroyed. Only myself, the PhD student, and my supervisor, Professor Daniela Stehlik, will have access to this information.

Further Information

This research has received approval by the Curtin University of Technology Human Research Ethics Committee (RD-33-09). If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please feel free to contact the following people:

Questions about the research:

Maree Collins
PhD Candidate
Research Centre For Stronger Communities
Curtin University of Technology
Tel. (08) 9266 3248 / M 0418 620 472
E Maree.Collins@postgrad.curtin.edu.au

Professor Daniela Stehlik
Research Supervisor
Chair, Stronger Communities
Curtin University of Technology
Tel. (08) 9266 3248

Concerns or complaints about the conduct of the research:

Linda Teasdale
The Secretary
The Human Research Ethics Committee
Curtin University of Technology
Tel. (08) 9266 2784

Appendix 3 Survey instrument

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

1. About this Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Your responses are entirely confidential.

The survey should take approximately 25 minutes to complete.

The survey will be open from Monday, 9 August, to Monday, 23 August 2010 (inclusive).

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Why am I being asked to undertake the survey?
The survey is being undertaken as part of a PhD research project which is examining the influences on recruitment and retention of child protection workers, with a focus on practitioners working in rural, regional, and remote Western Australia.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED?

You will be asked a series of questions relating to seven (7) key areas:

- Your Education
- Your Reasons for Coming to the Murchison
- Your Recruitment to the Department for Child Protection (DCP)
- Your Employment with the DCP
- Reasons for Staying in the Murchison
- Reasons for Staying with the DCP
- About You

In addition to findings within the general literature, the survey questions have been based on findings from interviews with a sample of the child protection workforce in the Murchison undertaken in September 2009.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE ME TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY?

The survey will take approximately twenty-five (25) minutes to complete.

Ideally, you are asked to complete the survey in one sitting. The survey will be open from Monday, 9 August, to Monday, 23 August 2010 (inclusive). Once the time period for the survey has closed you will not be able to access the survey.

ETHICS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

By completing this survey you have indicated your consent to participate in this aspect of the research.

Your responses are strictly confidential. You will not be identified in any way in the analysis or reporting of the data. The survey has used an Email Invitation Collector function to send and collect responses. This function acts as a unique identifier in the collection phase to ensure only one survey is completed for each employee. This information will not be used beyond the collection phase.

The Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at Curtin University of Technology (RD-33-09) has approved this research and the instruments used in the collection of data and information such as this survey.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the research please contact the PhD student, Maree Collins on (08) 8981 7576 or U4881126@anu.edu.au

Note: Whilst the survey will refer to the 'Department' as the DCP, this is an inclusive term and encompasses previous incarnations such as the Department for Community Development. Therefore, when you are asked when you joined

Page 1

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

the DCP this should be read to include previous incarnations of the DCP.

Page 2

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

2. Instructions on Progressing through the Survey

In order to progress through the survey, please use the following navigation links:

- Click the Next >> button to continue to the next page
- Click the Previous << button to return to the previous page
- Click the Submit >> button to submit your survey

Page 3

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

3. Your Education

This section asks you to provide some background information on you in relation to your Education. You are asked to indicate your highest level of post-school qualification.

1. What is your highest level of post-school qualification?

- Certificate
- Advanced Diploma and Diploma
- Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate
- Bachelors degree
- Post-graduate degree
- I have no post school qualification

Other (please specify):

Page 4

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

4. Your Qualifications

The following section asks you about your post-school qualifications. You are asked about your field(s) of study, and the institution and location at which you undertook this study.

The choices allow for where you may have completed more than one qualification and/or attended more than one institution.

2. When did you graduate?

Last year
 In the last two years
 Between 2 and 5 years ago
 Between 5 and 10 years ago
 More than 10 years ago

3. Please indicate the field(s) of study in which you undertook your post-school qualification(s):

| | Certificate | Advanced Diploma and Diploma | Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate | Bachelors degree | Post-graduate degree |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Social Work | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Psychology | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Social Science (e.g. Sociology) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Social Welfare | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Community Development/Services | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Education | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Criminology/Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If 'Other' please specify

Page 1

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

4. Where did you complete your study?

Australia
 New Zealand
 U.K.
 Europe
 Asia
 South Africa
 North America (USA, Canada)
 Other (please specify):

5. At which institution(s) did you complete your study?

Where you have completed more than one course or degree program, please specify the institution for each program in the 'Comment' section provided.

| | Institution |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Certificate | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> |
| Advanced Diploma and Diploma | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> |
| Graduate Certificate and Diploma | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> |
| Bachelors degree | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> |
| Post-graduate degree | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> |

Other (please specify):

Page 2

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

9. How important were the following social/personal factors in influencing your decision to live in your current location?

| | Very important | Important | Neither important nor Unimportant | Of little importance | Not important | N/A |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Access to family and existing social networks | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Attraction of the Murchison lifestyle | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Cost of living in the Region | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Desire to leave my previous place of residence | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| A good place to raise children | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| A good place to retire | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Opportunities for new experiences | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Familiarity with the Region or similar environment | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Partner's work or career opportunities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Increased chance to engage with Indigenous people | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Opportunity to experience the 'outback' | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Climate/Weather | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Access to affordable housing | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Page 3

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

6. Recruitment to the Department of Child Protection (DCP)

The following asks you about when you joined the DCP and your experience of the recruitment process.

10. How long have you been employed by the Department?

Less than one year
 1 to 2 years
 3-5 years
 6-9 years
 10 years and over

11. How were you recruited to the DCP?

Advertisement in newspaper
 Advertisement in online employment search engine (e.g. SEEK)
 Response to radio or television advertisement
 Graduate recruitment
 External Recruitment Agency
 Word of mouth (e.g. through local professional networks, contact in local DCP office)
 I don't recall
 Other
 Other (please specify):

12. Were you recruited overseas for your current role?

Yes
 No

Page 4

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

7. Overseas Recruits

13. Please indicate the region/country where you were living when recruited:

New Zealand

Pacific Islands

South Africa

Asia

U.K.

Europe

North America

Other (please specify)

14. Have you been sponsored on an employee nominated visa (such as the 457 visa) to work for the DCP?

Yes

No

I don't know

Page 11

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

8. Recruitment Incentives & Allowances

The following asks about the importance of incentives and allowances in your decision to join the DCP and your receipt of such allowances on joining the Department.

15. When you made the decision to join the DCP, how important were each of the following in your decision?

| | Very important | Important | Neither important nor Unimportant | Not too important | Not Important | Not applicable (N/A) |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Salary | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Attraction and Retention Benefit (ARB) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Housing allowance / Subsidised housing | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Job Security | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Public respect for the work I'd be doing | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Opportunity to help children and families | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Opportunity to do challenging work | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Opportunity to serve the community in which I live | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Opportunity to move to the location | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Salary packaging | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

16. Please indicate which (if any) of the following incentives and/or allowances were available to you on joining the DCP:

Removal/relocation expenses

Access to government housing or subsidised accommodation

Attraction & Retention Benefit

District allowance

Study Leave

Other

Other (please specify)

Page 12

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

17. Did you receive any incentives and/or allowances as part of your recruitment to the DCP?

Yes

No

Page 13

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

9. Your Recruitment: Incentives and Allowances

18. Please indicate which of the following incentives and/or allowances you received on joining the DCP:

Removal/relocation expenses

Access to government housing or subsidised accommodation

Attraction & Retention Benefit

Location allowance

Study Leave

Other

Other (please specify)

Page 14

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

10. Your Role and Employment with the DCP

The following section asks about your employment with the DCP. You are asked about your current role, and experience of working for the DCP.

19. Please indicate which of the following roles/positions you are currently employed with the DCP?

| | Substantive Role | Acting Role |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Field Worker | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Senior Field Worker | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Team Leader | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Clinical and Counselling Psychologist | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Residential Care Officer | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Family Resource Officer | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Education Officer | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Specialist Child Interviewing Unit | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Case Support Officer | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Administrative Assistant | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Senior Practice Development Officer | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Youth and Family Support Worker | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Other | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Other (please specify):

20. In which office are you located?

Geraldton - District Office

Carnarvon

Meekatharra

Geraldton - Westview Hostel

Other

Other (please specify):

Page 13

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

21. For what length of time have you occupied this role?

Less than six months

Between six months and a year

1 - 2 years

3 - 5 years

6 - 9 years

10 - 14 years

15 years and over

22. Were you employed by the Department prior to your current role?

Yes

No

If 'Yes' please specify:

Page 13

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

11. Previous Roles in the DCP

23. Please indicate which of the following roles you have been employed with the DCP prior to your current role.

This includes roles you may occupied on a formal basis, including in an 'Acting' capacity. You may select more than one option where you have occupied more than one role during your employment with the Department.

Field Worker

Senior Field Worker

Team Leader

Clinical and Counselling Psychologist

Residential Care Officer

Family Resource Officer

Education officer

Specialist Child Interviewing Unit

Case Support Officer

Youth and Family Support Worker

Administrative Assistant

Other

Other (please specify):

Page 17

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

12. Your Experience of Working for the DCP

The following section asks you a series of questions related to your professional experience with the DCP. Questions include: your satisfaction with aspects of your work and the organizational environment, and the conditions of employment.

24. Characteristics of the Job

Please indicate the extent to which you either Agree or Disagree with each of the following statements.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| The size of my caseload/workload is manageable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| There is a good match between the duties of this job and my skills and interests | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| When I took this job, the expectations I had about my professional responsibilities match my actual responsibilities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| It is easy to burnout in the job I do | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The travel requirements for my job are manageable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| There exists good career development opportunities for me in the DCP | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I feel adequately supported in regard to my personal safety at work | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

25. Salary and Benefits

Please indicate the extent to which you either Agree or Disagree with each of the following statements.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I am paid fairly considering the responsibilities I have | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| My overall remuneration is sufficient to support a good standard of living | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Receipt of the Attraction and Retention Benefit is an important consideration in my employment with the DCP | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Page 13

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

26. Workplace and Organizational Culture
Please indicate the extent to which you either Agree or Disagree with each of the following statements.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| The organization helps me know and understand how well I am performing | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I receive timely recognition or acknowledgement for my work | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have the support I need to balance work and personal life | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The feedback I receive from my line manager helps me improve my performance | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

27. To what extent do you have:

| | Always | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never | Don't Know |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Access to the information needed to do your job | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Access to the technological equipment needed to do your job | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Access to training and/or professional development needed to do the job well | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

28. To what extent does the DCP have:

| | Always | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never | Don't Know |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Access to the information needed to do its job | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The technological equipment needed to do its job well | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Page 10

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

29. How much training have you had for your role/job?

Great deal
 Fair amount
 Not too much
 None at all

Comment:

30. How much has your field of study prepared you for working in child protection?

Great deal
 Fair amount
 Not too much
 None at all
 Not applicable - I am not in a child protection role
 Not applicable - I have not completed any formal education and am not in a child protection role

31. To what extent are the people you work with in your office (i.e. Meekatharra):

| | Great Extent | Somewhat | Not too much | Not at all | Don't know |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Open to new ideas | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Willing to help other employees learn new skills | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Concerned about achieving the organization's mission | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

32. To what extent are the people you work with in the District (i.e. Murchison):

| | Great Extent | Somewhat | Not too much | Not at all | Don't know |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Open to new ideas | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Willing to help other employees learn new skills | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Concerned about achieving the organization's mission | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Page 11

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

33. To what extent are the people you work with in head office (i.e. Perth):

| | Great Extent | Somewhat | Not too much | Not at all | Don't know |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Open to new ideas | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Willing to help other employees learn new skills | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Concerned about achieving the organization's mission | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

34. How much mentoring or guidance do you receive from a senior person where you work?

A great deal
 A fair amount
 Not too much
 None at all
 Don't know

35. Do you personally mentor a colleague in your office and/or another office in the district?

Yes
 No

36. Do you access external mentoring? (i.e. outside the Department)

Yes
 No

Page 12

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

37. Practice Supervision
NB: The question relates to practice supervision not line management.

Please indicate the extent to which you either Agree or Disagree with each of the following statements.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| My supervisor provides the expert help I need to do my job | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| My supervisor encourages co-workers in my team to help each other with work related problems | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| My supervisor cares about me as a person | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I receive adequate levels of practice supervision to do my job | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I do not receive practice supervision | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

38. Organisation Conditions
Please indicate the extent to which you either Agree or Disagree with each of the following statements.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I would recommend the DCP to others seeking employment in child protection | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The DCP is often 'under fire' by the community | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Overall, I receive sufficient recognition for my work | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| My work reflects the DCP's purpose | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have sufficient input into decision-making processes that govern my work | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have opportunities to improve my knowledge and skills in this organisation | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I receive adequate support from the organisation to improve my knowledge and skills | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Page 13

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

39. When you tell your friends and neighbours where you work, do you feel:

Proud of the organisation you work for

Somewhat proud

Not too proud

Not proud at all

Don't know

Comment

40. Local Professional Networks/Service Community

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I have a positive working relationship with the agencies with whom I work | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The DCP has a positive working relationship with the agencies with whom it works | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| There are sufficient services within the community to support my work with children and families | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

41. How would you rate the overall morale of the people you work with (i.e. in the office which you are located)?

Very High

Somewhat high

Somewhat low

Very low

Don't know

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

42. Overall Satisfaction with the Job and Work

How satisfied are you with the following:

| | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Your job security | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Your opportunity for advancement | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Your opportunity to develop new skills in your job | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The respect of the agencies with whom you work | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The public respect for the type of work you're doing | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The level of acceptance and/or understanding from clients for the job that you do | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Your salary | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Your benefits, such as district allowances | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The opportunity to accomplish something worthwhile | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Your job overall | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

43. Do you believe there has been a high turnover of staff in your office and/or district?

NB: The type of turnover to which this section refers is 'voluntary turnover', that is where staff have voluntarily left the organization.

Yes

No

I don't know

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

13. Impact of Staff Turnover

This section asks you to indicate the impact of staff turnover within the DCP (i.e. DCP staff). The type of turnover to which this section refers is 'voluntary turnover', that is where staff have voluntarily left the organization.

You are asked about the localised impact such as that in the office in which you are located, and the clients and agencies with whom you work. You are also asked about the wider impact of staff turnover on the district and organization.

44. How would you describe the impact of staff turnover on your office?

Positive

Negative

Both Positive and Negative

Neither Positive or Negative

No impact

45. How would you describe the impact of staff turnover in general across the district?

Positive

Negative

Both Positive and Negative

Neither Positive or Negative

No impact

I don't know

Please explain in what way

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

46. How would you describe the impact of staff turnover in general across the organization?

Positive

Negative

Both Positive and Negative

Neither Positive or Negative

No impact

I don't know

Please explain in what way

47. How would you describe the impact of staff turnover on DCP clients (i.e. children and families)?

Positive

Negative

Both Positive and Negative

Neither Positive or Negative

No impact

I don't know

Please explain in what way

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

48. How would you describe the impact of DCP staff turnover on agencies/services with you work?

Positive
 Negative
 Both Positive and Negative
 Neither Positive or Negative
 No impact
 I don't know

Please explain in what way

Page 12

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

14. Reasons for Staying in the Murchison

This section asks you to reflect on those factors you perceive as likely to influence your decision to stay in the Murchison to work and your plans to remain employed with the DCP.

The section includes separate questions on Work- and Social- factors which may influence your decision.

49. How much longer do you intend to stay living in the Murchison?

Between 1 and 2 years
 Between 2 and 3 years
 Between 3 and 5 years
 I plan to continue living in the Murchison for the foreseeable future
 I don't know
 Other

Other (please specify)

Page 13

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

50. How important are the following work factors in influencing your decision to continue to work for the DCP?

| | Very important | Important | Neither important nor Unimportant | Of little importance | Not important | N/A |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Expectation of work experience not matching the reality | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Desire for change in type of work | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Limited access to education and professional development opportunities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Work/life balance | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Limited opportunity for career progression | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| High administrative load | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Desire for change in work environment | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Heavy caseload/workload | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Stressful work environment | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Quality of work environment | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Availability of good job opportunities elsewhere | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Plans to undertake further study | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Lack of support from management | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Difficulties in working in regional and remote communities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Limited access to professional support | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Page 14

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

51. How important are the following social factors in influencing your decision to continue living in the Murchison?

| | Very important | Important | Neither important nor Unimportant | Of little importance | Not important | N/A |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Cost of living in the Region | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Housing affordability | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The 'distance from everywhere' factor | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Desire for change in lifestyle | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Local lifestyle | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Housing availability | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Climate | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Limited social opportunities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Retirement plans | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Partner/house's relocation | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Greater work/life balance | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Unforeseen family issues | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Educational facilities for children/family | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Limited recreation and leisure opportunities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

52. How long to you intend to stay working for the Department?

Less than one year
 Between 1 and 2 years
 For the next five years
 For the foreseeable future
 I don't know
 Other

Other (please specify)

Page 15

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

53. Reasons for Leaving
Please indicate the extent to which you either Agree or Disagree with each of the following statements.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I am actively seeking other employment | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have considered leaving the DCP for work related reasons in the last year | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have considered leaving the DCP for personal reasons in the past year | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have discussed leaving the DCP with a colleague in the past year | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

15. About You

The following section asks some questions about you. This includes a series of questions relating to key life areas, including your level of satisfaction with aspects of your life, and your social networks.

54. Life-balance
How satisfied are you with the following:

| | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| The amount of free time I have available | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| How I spend the free time that I have available | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| My access to activities of interest in which to spend my free time | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

55. Education Opportunities
Please indicate your Agreement or Disagreement with the following statements relating to your interest in and access to Educational Opportunities.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | I don't know |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| If I wanted to access educational opportunities at TAFE or Uni they are available in the area in which I live | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am interested in pursuing further education related to my area of work | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am interested in pursuing further education not related to my area of work | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| My employer supports me in further education related to my area of work | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

56. Please indicate the occurrence and frequency of each of the following activities:

| | Daily | A few times a week | Once a week | Fortnightly | Monthly | Once a quarter | Not at all |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Go to a club/gym/society | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Go to a hotel/bar/pub | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Attend a sporting event | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Go to a place of worship | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Chat with neighbours | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Eat out | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Go to a movie | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Visit family or friend | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Play sport or go to a gym | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Socialize with work colleagues | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Socialize with colleagues from the wider services community | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

57. Please indicate how often (i.e. frequency) you keep in contact with close friends and family via the following:

| | Do not discuss | Daily | Every Other Day | Weekly | Fortnightly | Other |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Meeting in person/face-to-face | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Telephone (including Skype) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Email communication | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Online social networking sites (e.g. Facebook) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Where "Other" please specify (e.g. monthly)

58. Please indicate whether you regularly travel outside of your place of residence (e.g. Geraldton) for each of the following personal reasons and the frequency of your travel:

| | No | Once a week | Fortnightly | Once a month | Every other month | Other |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Study | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Visiting spouse/partner | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Visiting children | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Visiting family | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Visiting friends | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Leisure and recreation activities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Caring responsibilities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

59. Personal relationships
Please indicate your satisfaction with the following relationships:

| | Very satisfied | Satisfied | Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Your personal relationships | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Support from people in your community/place in which you live | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Support from colleagues within the Department | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

16. About You (II): Demographic and Household Information

The following section asks you to provide some demographic and household information.

60. Housing Tenure
Which of the following best describes your housing status in the home in which you live:

- Own outright
- Own with loan
- Renting - private landlord
- Living in GROH accommodation
- Boarding, staying with friends/family

61. Living Arrangements
Please indicate which of the following best describes your current living arrangements?

- Living with spouse/partner
- Living with spouse/partner and children
- Living alone
- Living with children, no spouse/partner
- Living with other non-related adults in shared accommodation
- Living apart from spouse/partner (still married/together)

Other (please specify)

62. Are you a carer for a family or non-family member (e.g. child, parent)?

- Yes
- No

Please specify (e.g. elderly parent, grandchild)

Page 13

Survey of DCP Murchison Workforce

63. Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

- No
- Yes - Aboriginal
- Yes - Torres Strait Islander
- Yes - Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

64. Please indicate your Age by the relevant (age) group:

- under 25 years of age
- 25 - 34 years
- 35 - 44 years
- 45 - 54 years
- 55 - 59 years
- 60 years or over

65. Please indicate your Sex:

- Female
- Male

Page 14

Appendix 4 Human Research Ethics Approval



Curtin HREC Form B PROGRESS REPORT or APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL

The Form B is to be completed and returned to the Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee, c/- Office of Research & Development.

If any of the points below apply prior to the expiry date, this form should be submitted to the Committee at that time. An application for renewal may be made with a Form B three years running, after which a 'new' application form, providing comprehensive details, must be submitted.

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| Approval Number: HRRD-33-09 | | Expiry Date 10-08-2010 | |
| PROJECT TITLE: Pathways to Better Practice | | | |
| 1A | Has this project been completed? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 1B | OR Do you wish to apply for a renewal of the project? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| If YES please state the expected completion date. | | | |
| If NO please state why, eg abandoned/withdrawn/no funding etc. Please see below - approval is sought for amendment of current proposal. | | | |
| 2 | Has this project been modified or changed in any manner that varies from the approved proposal? | YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| If yes, please provide details _____ (Attach additional comments on a separate sheet of paper if necessary) Further to initial approval (RD-33-09), this application seeks amendment to the existing approval to incorporate the proposed survey instrument in order that the second stage of primary data collection for this research can be undertaken. A copy of the draft survey instrument is included with this document as Attachment 1. | | | |
| 3 | Have any ethically related issues emerged in regard to this project since you received Ethics' Committee approval? (e.g. breach of confidentiality, harm caused, inadequate consent or disputes on these). | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| If yes, please provide details _____ (Attach additional comments on a separate sheet of paper if necessary) | | | |
| 4 | Have any ethically related issues in regard to this project been brought to your attention by others? (i.e. study respondents, organisations that have given consent, colleagues, the general community etc). | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| If yes, please provide details _____ (Attach additional comments on a separate sheet of paper if necessary) | | | |
| Investigator: | Maree Collins | Signature: | |
| Co-Investigator: | | Signature: | |
| School/Department: | Research Centre for Stronger Communities | | |
| Head of Enrolling Area: | Professor Daniela Stehlik | Signature: | |
| Date: | 25 MAY 2010 | | |

Office Use Only
APPROVED:

Executive Officer

DATE:

~~27/10~~
2/6/10

memorandum

| | |
|----------------|--|
| To | Maree Collins Research Centre for Stronger Communities |
| From | Miss Linda Teasdale Manager, Research Ethics Office of Research and Development |
| Subject | Protocol Extension Approval RD-33-09 |
| Date | 4 June 2010 |
| Copy | Professor Daniela Stehlik, ADSI |

Office of Research and Development

**Human Research Ethics
Committee**

TELEPHONE 9266 2784

FACSIMILE 9266 3793


EMAIL hrec@curtin.edu.au

Thank you for keeping us informed of the progress of your research. The Human Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your Form B report, indicating modifications / changes, for the project "*Pathways to better practice*". Your application has been **approved**.

Approval for this project remains until **10-8-10**.

Your approval number remains **RD-33-09**, please quote this number in any further correspondence regarding this project.

Thank you.



Miss Linda Teasdale
Manager, Research Ethics
Office of Research and Development

Appendix 5 *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (Part 2, Division 2)

Western Australia

Children and Community Services Act 2004

CONTENTS

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| Part 1 — Preliminary | | |
| 1. | Short title | 2 |
| 2. | Commencement | 2 |
| 3. | Terms used | 2 |
| 4. | Presumptions of parentage | 7 |
| 5. | Status of notes | 7 |
| Part 2 — Objects and principles | | |
| Division 1 — Objects | | |
| 6. | Objects | 8 |
| Division 2 — General principles relating to children | | |
| 7. | Best interests of child are paramount consideration | 8 |
| 8. | Determining the best interests of a child | 8 |
| 9. | Principles to be observed | 10 |
| 10. | Principle of child participation | 11 |
| Division 3 — Principles relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children | | |
| 11. | Relationship with principles in Division 2 | 13 |
| 12. | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle | 13 |
| 13. | Principle of self-determination | 14 |
| 14. | Principle of community participation | 14 |

Part 2 — Objects and principles

Division 1 — Objects

6. Objects

The objects of this Act are —

- (a) to promote the wellbeing of children, other individuals, families and communities; and
- (b) to acknowledge the primary role of parents, families and communities in safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of children; and
- (c) to encourage and support parents, families and communities in carrying out that role; and
- (d) to provide for the protection and care of children in circumstances where their parents have not given, or are unlikely or unable to give, that protection and care; and
- (e) to protect children from exploitation in employment.

[Section 6 amended by No. 19 of 2007 s. 64.]

Division 2 — General principles relating to children

7. Best interests of child are paramount consideration

In performing a function or exercising a power under this Act in relation to a child, a person, the Court or the State Administrative Tribunal must regard the best interests of the child as the paramount consideration.

[Section 7 amended by No. 49 of 2010 s. 38.]

8. Determining the best interests of a child

- (1) In determining for the purposes of this Act what is in a child's best interests the following matters must be taken into account —

- (a) the need to protect the child from harm;

- (b) the capacity of the child's parents to protect the child from harm;

- (c) the capacity of the child's parents, or of any other person, to provide for the child's needs;

- (d) the nature of the child's relationship with the child's parents, siblings and other relatives and with any other people who are significant in the child's life;

- (e) the attitude to the child, and to parental responsibility, demonstrated by the child's parents;

- (f) any wishes or views expressed by the child, having regard to the child's age and level of understanding in determining the weight to be given to those wishes or views;

- (g) the importance of continuity and stability in the child's living arrangements and the likely effect on the child of disruption of those living arrangements, including separation from —

- (i) the child's parents; or

- (ii) a sibling or other relative of the child; or

- (iii) a carer or any other person (including a child) with whom the child is, or has recently been, living; or

- (iv) any other person who is significant in the child's life;

- (h) the need for the child to maintain contact with the child's parents, siblings and other relatives and with any other people who are significant in the child's life;

- (i) the child's age, maturity, sex, sexuality, background and language;

- (j) the child's cultural, ethnic or religious identity (including any need to maintain a connection with the lifestyle, culture and traditions of Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders).

- (k) the child's physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, developmental and educational needs;
 - (l) any other relevant characteristics of the child;
 - (m) the likely effect on the child of any change in the child's circumstances.
- (2) Subsection (1) does not limit the matters that may be taken into account in determining what is in the best interests of a child.
- 9. Principles to be observed**
- In the administration of this Act the following principles must be observed —
- (a) the principle that the parents, family and community of a child have the primary role in safeguarding and promoting the child's wellbeing;
 - (b) the principle that the preferred way of safeguarding and promoting a child's wellbeing is to support the child's parents, family and community in the care of the child;
 - (c) the principle that every child should be cared for and protected from harm;
 - (d) the principle that every child should live in an environment free from violence;
 - (e) the principle that every child should have stable, secure and safe relationships and living arrangements;
 - (f) the principle that intervention action (as defined in section 32(2)) should be taken only in circumstances where there is no other reasonable way to safeguard and promote the child's wellbeing;
 - (g) the principle that if a child is removed from the child's family then, so far as is consistent with the child's best interests, the child should be given encouragement and support in maintaining contact with the child's parents, siblings and other relatives and with any other people who are significant in the child's life;

- (ha) the principle that if a child is removed from the child's family then, so far as is consistent with the child's best interests, planning for the child's care should occur as soon as possible in order to ensure long-term stability for the child;
 - (hb) the principle that decisions about a child should be made promptly having regard to the age, characteristics, circumstances and needs of the child;
 - (i) the principle that decisions about a child should be consistent with cultural, ethnic and religious values and traditions relevant to the child;
 - (j) the principle that a child's parents and any other people who are significant in the child's life should be given an opportunity and assistance to participate in decision-making processes under this Act that are likely to have a significant impact on the child's life;
 - (k) the principle that a child's parents and any other people who are significant in the child's life should be given adequate information, in a manner and language that they can understand, about —
 - (i) decision-making processes under this Act that are likely to have a significant impact on the child's life; and
 - (ii) the outcome of any decision about the child, including an explanation of the reasons for the decision; and
 - (iii) any relevant complaint or review procedures;
 - (l) the principle set out in section 10(1).
- [Section 9 amended by No. 49 of 2010 s. 39.]*
- 10. Principle of child participation**
- (1) If a decision under this Act is likely to have a significant impact on a child's life then, for the purpose of ensuring that the child

- is able to participate in the decision-making process, the child should be given —
- (a) adequate information, in a manner and language that the child can understand, about —
 - (i) the decision to be made; and
 - (ii) the reasons for the Department's involvement; and
 - (iii) the ways in which the child can participate in the decision-making process; and
 - (iv) any relevant complaint or review procedures; and
 - (b) the opportunity to express the child's wishes and views freely, according to the child's abilities; and
 - (c) any assistance that is necessary for the child to express those wishes and views; and
 - (d) adequate information as to how the child's wishes and views will be recorded and taken into account; and
 - (e) adequate information about the decision made and a full explanation of the reasons for the decision; and
 - (f) an opportunity to respond to the decision made.
- (2) In the application of the principle set out in subsection (1), due regard must be had to the age and level of understanding of the child concerned.
- (3) Decisions under this Act that are likely to have a significant impact on a child's life include but are not limited to —
- (a) decisions about placement arrangements or secure care arrangements in respect of the child; and
 - (b) decisions in the course of preparing, modifying or reviewing care plans or provisional care plans for the child; and
 - (c) decisions about the provision of social services to the child; and

- (d) decisions about contact with the child's parents, siblings and other relatives and with any other people who are significant in the child's life.
- (4) In subsection (3)(b) —
- care plan* has the meaning given to that term in section 89(1);
- provisional care plan* has the meaning given to that term in section 39(1).
- [Section 10 amended by No. 49 of 2010 s. 3.]

Division 3 — Principles relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

11. Relationship with principles in Division 2

The principles set out in this Division are in addition to, and do not derogate from, the principles set out in Division 2.

12. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle

- (1) The objective of the principle in subsection (2) is to maintain a connection with family and culture for Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children who are the subject of placement arrangements.
- (2) In making a decision under this Act about the placement under a placement arrangement of an Aboriginal child or a Torres Strait Islander child, a principle to be observed is that any placement of the child must so far as is consistent with the child's best interests and is otherwise practicable, be in accordance with the following order of priority —
 - (a) placement with a member of the child's family;
 - (b) placement with a person who is an Aboriginal person or a Torres Strait Islander in the child's community in accordance with local customary practice;

Children and Community Services Act 2004
Part 2
Objects and principles
Division 3
Principles relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

s. 13

- (c) placement with a person who is an Aboriginal person or a Torres Strait Islander;
- (d) placement with a person who is not an Aboriginal person or a Torres Strait Islander but who, in the opinion of the CEO, is sensitive to the needs of the child and capable of promoting the child's ongoing affiliation with the child's culture, and where possible, the child's family.

[Section 12 amended by No. 49 of 2010 s. 40.]

13.

Principle of self-determination

In the administration of this Act a principle to be observed is that Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders should be allowed to participate in the protection and care of their children with as much self-determination as possible.

14.

Principle of community participation

In the administration of this Act a principle to be observed is that a kinship group, community or representative organisation of Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders should be given, where appropriate, an opportunity and assistance to participate in decision-making processes under this Act that are likely to have a significant impact on the life of a child who is a member of, or represented by, the group, community or organisation.

page 14

Version 03-f0-01 As at 07 Dec 2012
Extract from www.slp.wa.gov.au, see that website for further information

Appendix 6 Murchison District Offices

Geraldton (Source: Collins MT March 2012)



Carnarvon (Source: Google Street View (Image 2, March 2008). Accessed online: <http://maps.google.com.au/>. April 2012)



Meekatharra (Source: Collins MT March 2012)



Wiluna (Source: Collins MT March 2012)



Appendix 7 AEDI data

Comparative AEDI Results for Children Developmentally Vulnerable on two or more Domains for Selected Communities in the Murchison: 2009 and 2012

| Community | Percentage Vulnerable | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|------|-------------|------|
| | One or More | | Two or More | |
| | 2009 | 2012 | 2009 | 2012 |
| Geraldton | 41.5 | 36.2 | 17 | 23.1 |
| Carnarvon | 23.5 | 40.7 | 17.6 | 24.6 |
| Meekatharra/Wiluna | 68.4 | 65.2 | 25.6 | 40.7 |

Source: Data derived from AEDI. Available online: <http://maps.aedi.org.au/5/535>

Summary of AEDI 2012 results for Selected Murchison Communities, Percentage of Children Developmentally Vulnerable

| Area/Domain | Geraldton | Carnarvon | Meekatharra/ Wiluna | Greenough | Exmouth | Morowa/ Perenjori | Three Springs/ Mingenew | Irwin |
|---|-----------|-----------|------------------------|-----------|---------|----------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Physical health and wellbeing | 15.3 | 19.8 | 33.3 | 7.9 | 13.9 | 4.8 | 8.3 | 2 |
| Social competence | 16.2 | 10.5 | 19.2 | 9.5 | 22.2 | 4.8 | 4.2 | 4.1 |
| Emotional Maturity | 12.2 | 18.6 | 34.8 | 8.9 | 13.9 | 9.5 | 4.2 | 0 |
| Language and Cognitive skills (school-based) | 21 | 18.6 | 30.8 | 8.9 | 16.7 | 4.8 | 4.2 | 2 |
| Communication skills and general knowledge | 15.3 | 20.9 | 18.5 | 9.9 | 22.2 | 0 | 4.2 | 8.2 |

Source: Data derived from AEDI. Available online: <http://maps.aedi.org.au/5/535>

Appendix 8 'Local' perspectives on the Murchison

For other, and vastly different, perspectives on the Murchison told by the people who live and work there, the reader is directed to the following links for online media.

Wiluna

Wiluna Remote Community School

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRvmEcF8pz4>

Appeal against Uranium Mining

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irUAizV1f7w&feature=related>

Television media coverage of Police photos posted on Facebook

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPFk0F_7Rs4&feature=related

Burringurrah Aboriginal Community

A local history of the community

<http://vimeo.com/42600855>

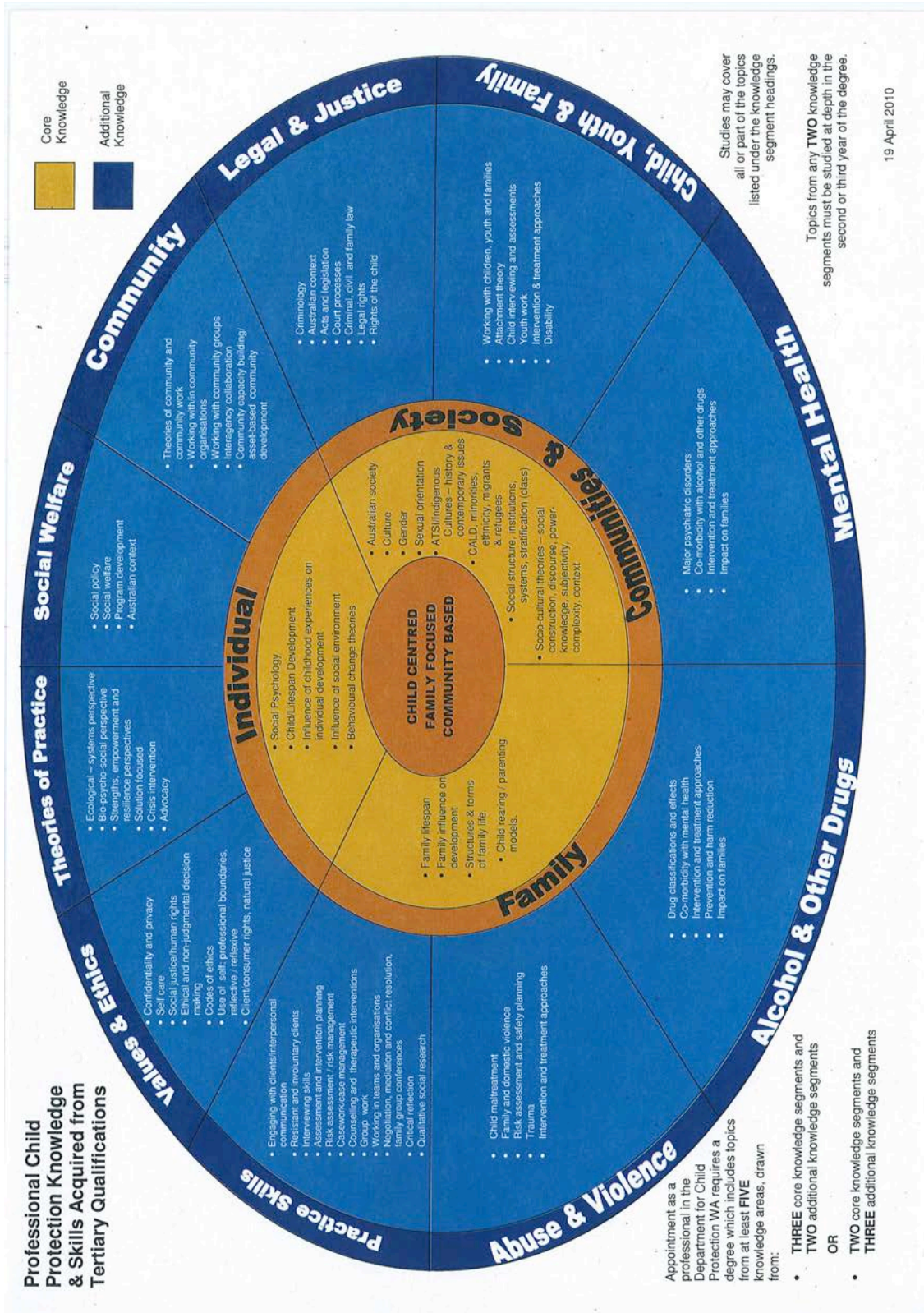
No School, no pool (Burringurrah Community)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqZtQEe9maY&feature=related>

Contemporary Missionary activity

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CctMhg0af8Q>

Appendix 9 Child Protection Qualifications Framework



CHILD PROTECTION QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
Knowledge and Skills Descriptors

CORE KNOWLEDGE

| INDIVIDUAL | COMMUNITIES & SOCIETY | FAMILY |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social psychology – Effects of social group membership on the development of beliefs and attitudes. • Child/Lifespan development – Interplay of genetic and environmental factors on biological and psychological changes throughout life. • Influence of childhood experiences on individual development – Impacts of early experiences on physical and psychological development and adult wellbeing. • Influence of the social environment – Effects of complex interactions between developing person and family, friends, community, culture, social status and access to services (eg. health, accommodation and education). • Behavioural change theories – Major theories : 1. Self Efficacy; 2. Learning Theory; 3. Social Learning Theory; 4. Theories of Reasoned Action; 5. Planned Behaviour; 6. Stages of Change. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian society – Development of historical and contemporary socio-cultural, economic, legal and political frameworks and institutions. • Culture – The shared customs, traditions, values, beliefs, language, social networks and power relations of a group of people. • Gender – Social identity and performance of culturally prescribed behaviours associated with maleness or femaleness. • Sexual orientation – Personal and social identity based on emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions. • ATSI/Indigenous Cultures – History and contemporary issues including colonisation, social policies, diversity, disadvantage, white privilege. • CALD (Cultural and Linguistic Diversity); migrants, refugees, ethnicity, minorities, racism and discrimination. • Social structure, institutions, systems, stratification/class –social institutions (family, religion, law, economy and class), systems (economic, legal, political and cultural systems) and stratification (class, resources, wealth, goods, knowledge, cultural capital). • Socio-cultural (post-structural) theories – key ideas: social construction, discourse, power-knowledge, subjectivity, complexity, context. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family lifespan –relationships and arrangements at different stages of the family influenced by the life stages of individual family members. • Family influence on development – Family functions and connections, and their emotional and psychological impact on a developing child. • Family structures & forms– diversity of family structures, kinship and friendship networks, family interactions and gender roles. • Child rearing/Parenting models – values, beliefs and actions in relation to children’s physical, emotional, social and intellectual growth. |

ADDITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

| 2. VALUES & ETHICS | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. PRACTICE SKILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging with clients/interpersonal communication – building a positive relationship through respect, empathy & non-judgemental attitude. Resistant & involuntary clients – overcoming clients’ fear of change, balancing legal and helping roles. Interviewing – purposeful guided conversation with intended objectives designed to obtain required information. Assessment skills & intervention planning – forming professional judgements often through the use of tools and designing interventions. Risk assessment/risk management – assessing degree of risk for potential maltreatment, developing actions to prevent harm. Casework/case management – direct work with individuals or families, identifying needs and coordinating services provided by a range of providers designed to bring about a change in the client’s situation. Counseling & therapeutic interventions – including motivational interviewing, cognitive behavioural therapy, solution-based strengths focused therapy and narrative therapy. Group work – stages of group development, group dynamics and facilitation styles of group leaders. Working in teams and organisations – team dynamics and collaboration, accountability, record keeping, awareness of policy and procedures. Negotiation, mediation & conflict resolution, family group conferences – clarifying issues in dispute, reconciling differences and reaching agreements with stakeholders with an interest in the issue. Critical reflection - analysing, reconsidering and questioning assumptions, experiences and presuppositions (particularly about oneself) drawing on a wide range of possible contributing factors or influences. Qualitative social research – gathering and analysis of data that provide an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern such behaviour. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confidentiality & privacy – informed consent, principles of right to privacy, limited confidentiality, breaching confidentiality to prevent harm. Self care – Avoidance of countertransference with clients, managing workplace stress, prevention of vicarious trauma and burnout. Social Justice/human rights – elimination of unequal access to resources and power, empowering people to participate. Ethical and non-judgemental decision making – Non-biased decision making based on transparency, natural justice and evidence. Ethics – principles and practices that inform professionals’ treatment of their clients, each other and their relations with society at large. Use of Self: professional boundaries, reflective/reflexive – observing boundaries with clients, critical reflection about the issues and about ones beliefs, emotions and actions in the situation. Client/consumer rights, natural justice – self determination, quality of service and procedural fairness. |
| 4. SOCIAL WELFARE | |
| <p>3. THEORIES OF PRACTICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecological-systems perspective – the adaptive fit of people to their environment to achieve equilibrium and optimum functioning. Bio-psycho-social perspective – essential to consider all three factors in human functioning, especially in the context of disease or illness. Strengths, empowerment & resilience – focusing on a client’s capacities, including for change, their resilience in the face of adversity and supporting clients to bring about change themselves. Solution focused – supporting clients to explore their preferred futures and identifying how some aspects are already occurring. Crisis intervention – identifying a crisis, reducing negative feelings and activating social resources to address the crisis. Advocacy – Action on behalf of and/or with an individual or group to ensure their rights or entitlements are maintained or advanced. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Policy – government programs addressing social needs, improving wellbeing and regulating behaviour Social Welfare – provision of social benefits, particularly income support and housing, by the State. Program Development – development of programs for the delivery of services promoting social welfare and justice Australian Context – history and contemporary welfare policies and political debates at local, state, national and international levels. |

ADDITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>5. COMMUNITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theories of community and community work – Ideas about types and functioning of communities, ways of working with communities to enhance the conditions in which they live Working with/in community organisations – working in, or in partnership with, organisations that represent community interests or deliver services. Working with community groups – using skills to support or assist a community group to reach their goals Interagency collaboration – working with representatives of other organisations to achieve improved outcomes. Community capacity building/asset-based community development - capitalising on and developing the skills, assets, capacities and resources within a community. | <p>6. LEGAL & JUSTICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criminology – history of classification of various behaviours as criminal, causes and consequences of behaviour that violates criminal law. Australian context – history of development of legal framework, federal and state laws Acts & legislation – knowledge of acts and legislation relevant to working with clients and colleagues. Court processes – The processes and operations of different court systems in Australia (eg. District, Family, Supreme). Criminal, civil & family law – laws covering criminal offences, family issues and private rights of individuals. Legal rights – proscribes the arbitrary exercise of power by the state and require responsible behaviour by professionals. Rights of the child – United Nations convention includes protection from exploitation, provision for growth and development and participation in decisions made on their behalf. Preparation of court documents – Succinct and accountable reports taking into account purpose, client issues and consistency. | <p>7. CHILD, YOUTH & FAMILY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with children, youth and families – ways working in partnership with families and engaging individual members to address problems experienced by one or more members. Attachment theory – the need for intimacy and belonging; quality of nurturing relationship between young children and their caregivers; attachment types and implications for forming adult relationships. Child interviewing and assessments – techniques of engaging in purposeful conversation and assessment tools taking account of the stage of emotional, cognitive and language developmental of the child. Youth work – the unique developmental stage; social construction of youth; family issues; gender; sexuality; violence; offending. Intervention & treatment approaches – solution focused brief therapy, narrative, family systems and cognitive behavioural. Disability – issues for family and individuals when a parent or child has an intellectual, physical or emotional disability and/or mental illness. |
| <p>8. MENTAL HEALTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major psychiatric disorders – behavioural and/or psychological patterns that cause distress or disability not part of normal development. Co-morbidity with alcohol & other drugs – abuse of alcohol or other drugs by people with a mental illness; may be a form of self-medication. Intervention & treatment approaches – psychotherapy; medication; social interventions including support groups; involuntary detention. Impact on families – influenced by attitudes of family and community; access to supports and treatment | <p>9. ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUGS (AOD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drug classification & effects – drug classifications according to their actions on the mind and body and common effects. Co-morbidity with mental health – effects of substance abuse leads to mental health problems. Intervention & treatment approaches – medication for withdrawal, motivational interviewing, stages of change and therapy. Prevention & harm reduction – Primary and secondary interventions including community education, social supports and access to services. Impact on families – financial issues, neglect of children, family conflict, relationship breakdown and employment problems. | <p>10. ABUSE AND VIOLENCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child Maltreatment – physical, psychological, emotional, sexual abuse and/or neglect; understanding causes and interventions. Family & domestic violence – Pattern of abusive and/or violent behaviours in an intimate relationship resulting in fear and/or harm. Risk assessment & safety planning – undertake effective risk assessments and develop a personalised safety plan; victim protection. Trauma – intense fear, terror or helplessness resulting from psychologically distressing events; develops into post-traumatic stress disorder. Intervention & treatment approaches – emotional, economic, legal and social support for victims; civil and legal responses and behaviour change programs for perpetrators. |

Appendix 10 Murchison District Promotional Material



Government of Western Australia
Department for Child Protection

Living and working in Geraldton, Western Australia

visit www.jobs.wa.gov.au or contact (08) 9222 2525

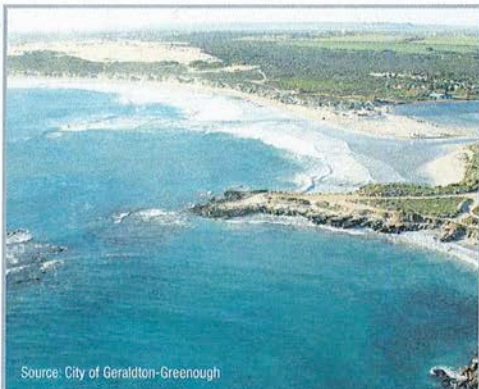
About the Community?

Aborigines have occupied the Geraldton area for more than 40,000 years and on 3 June 1851, the townsite of Geraldton was declared. The port facilities that were constructed at Champion Bay became a vital part of Geraldton's economy and became one of the State's major seaports.

The city of Geraldton as it is known today was officially declared a city in 1988 and has a current population of approximately 37,500 people. It remains a hub for fishing, manufacturing, construction, agriculture and tourism industries.

The rich history is abundant in Geraldton. The character stone buildings are remnants of a once thriving community of pioneers who developed the area at the turn of the 19th century and the Western Australian Museum-Geraldton, houses relics of ships wrecked off the rugged coastline, and the magnificent Memorial to the 645 crew members who were lost when HMAS Sydney II went down on 19 November 1941.

The nearby Abrolhos Islands which are situated just off of the coastline are a great day trip from Geraldton. Visitors can also head inland to the gorgeous hinterland, or take a scenic flight over the area. The renowned wildflower season is in full bloom from July to November.



Source: City of Geraldton-Greenough

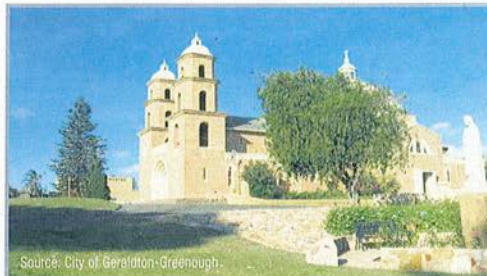
What is it like to work for the Department for Child Protection in Geraldton?

The Department for Child Protection Office is located at the corner of Chapman Road and Cathedral Avenue in Geraldton CBD, only a short stroll from the beach. The team at the Geraldton Office provide each other with support and are always willing to lend a hand to help out a team mate. The team works collaboratively with each other and the wider community.

New team members are welcomed with open arms and made to feel a part of the "family".

Relocation and housing

Subsidised housing through the Government Regional Officers' Housing (GROH) may be provided to employees and their families.



Source: City of Geraldton-Greenough

The Department for Child Protection is committed to employing Aboriginal people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, to be more reflective of our client base so we can deliver quality service to the community.

For further information on employment opportunities with the Department for Child Protection, please visit www.jobs.wa.gov.au or contact (08) 9222 2525.

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Where is Geraldton?

Geraldton is a bustling coastal town situated on Champion Bay on the Balavia Coast in the Murchison region of Western Australia. The city is approximately 424 km north of Perth and is only a leisurely five hour drive via the Great Northern and Brand Highways. There are also regular bus and flight services to Geraldton from Perth.



Source: City of Geraldton-Greenough

There are plenty of sports and recreation activities available in Geraldton. People from all corners of the world travel to the city for the perfect windsurfing conditions. The fishing is excellent too – after all Geraldton is known as the lobster capital of the world!! Geraldton offers first class sporting and recreational facilities that will keep all members of the family busy. From netball courts and green golf courses, to dance classes and heritage societies, there is something for everyone! There are also neighbourhood and community parks that provide playgrounds, skating ramps and are the perfect spot for a family picnic.

"Living in Geraldton is like country living in the city; Beachside alongside rural life; Thermometer friendly environment - between the hot North and cold South; A town where you can have your boat and horse as well; Murchison is the crayfish on the menu, banana of the fruit bowl and gold in the coin and has something for everyone; climate, beach, islands, bush, city shopping & services, scenery, recreation & sport and as much noise or peace and quiet you desire."
– Geraldton staff

What is it like to live in Geraldton?

With spectacular ocean views to wake up to every morning it is little wonder why so many families and individuals choose to relocate to the coastal mecca that is Geraldton. With marina living right on the waterfront, semi-rural acreages for hobby-farmers or new housing estates there is an abundance of lifestyle options for everyone.

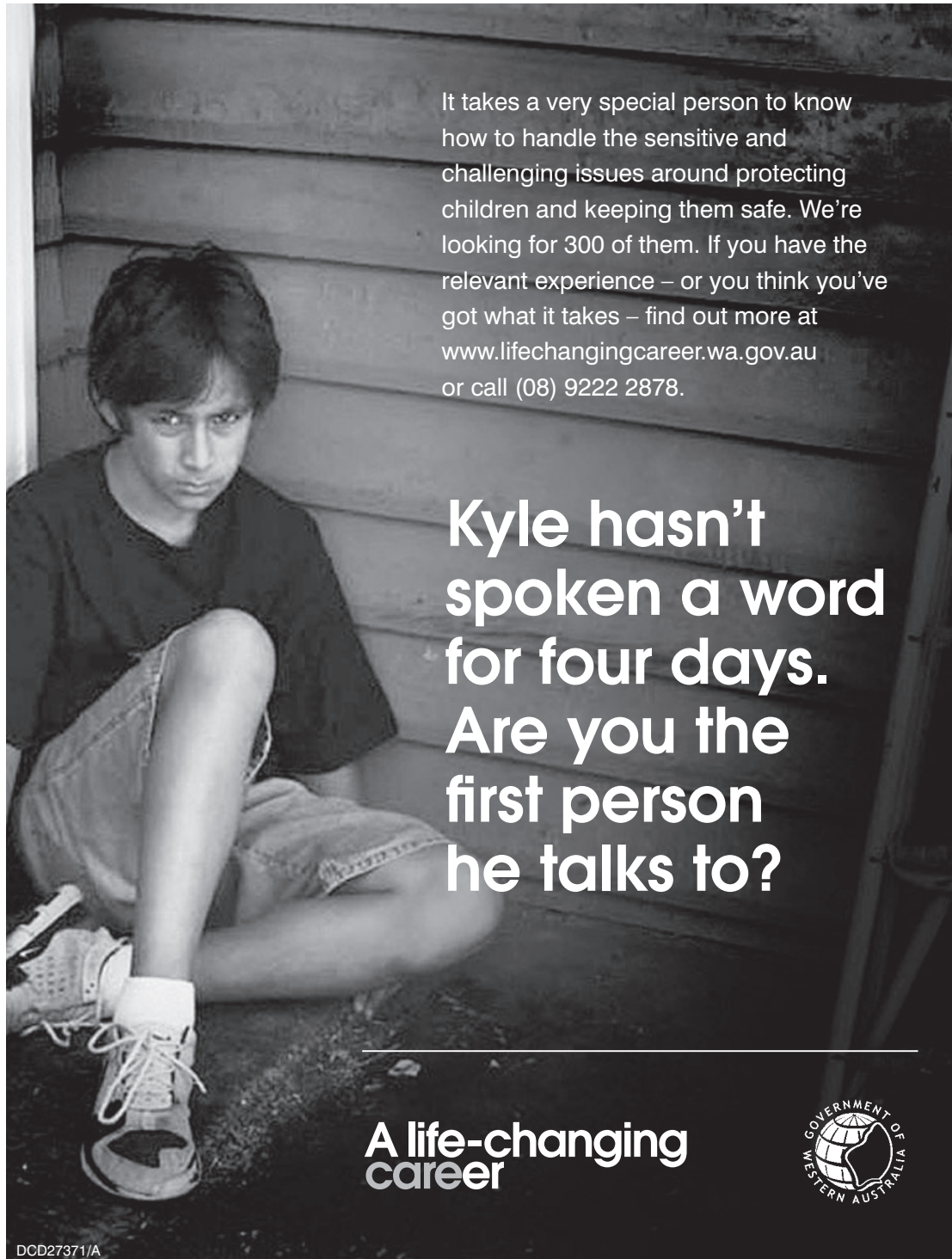
Geraldton's Mediterranean climate is perfect for those who prefer to be outdoors. The sun always shines (almost!). Winter temperatures are typically two degrees warmer than Perth, while summer averages are capped in the low 30's. Autumn and spring are simply too good to miss with perfect weather to enjoy balmy afternoons in the Chapman Valley, drinking local wine and eating local produce or simply dining in one of the many fabulous alfresco cafes.

For further information on the Geraldton lifestyle, visit:

Geraldton on Western Australia's Coral Coast www.geraldtonau.com
Experience Extraordinary Western Australia
www.westernaustralia.com
Live and Work in Geraldton www.geraldtonopportunities.com.au
Australian Explorer www.australianexplorer.com

For further information on employment opportunities with the Department for Child Protection, please visit www.jobs.wa.gov.au or contact (08) 9222 2525.


Appendix 11 Media images from 'Life changing career campaign'



It takes a very special person to know how to handle the sensitive and challenging issues around protecting children and keeping them safe. We're looking for 300 of them. If you have the relevant experience – or you think you've got what it takes – find out more at www.lifechangingcareer.wa.gov.au or call (08) 9222 2878.

Kyle hasn't spoken a word for four days. Are you the first person he talks to?

A life-changing career



DCD27371/A



It takes a very special person to know how to handle the sensitive and challenging issues around protecting children and keeping them safe. We're looking for 300 of them. If you have the relevant experience – or you think you've got what it takes – find out more at www.lifechangingcareer.wa.gov.au or call (08) 9222 2878.

18 hours without a meal. 2 years without love.

The only person she can trust is you.

A life-changing career



DCD27371/B



It takes a very special person to know how to handle the sensitive and challenging issues around protecting children and keeping them safe. We're looking for 300 of them. If you have the relevant experience – or you think you've got what it takes – find out more at www.lifechangingcareer.wa.gov.au or call (08) 9222 2878.

**Olivia's father
left months ago.
Her mother can't
cope anymore.**

Over to you.

**A life-changing
career**



DCD27371/F

Appendix 12 Handwritten transcription: example

→ import. to have work around - travel (5)
long distances, prep (eg recent tag)
"just another trip out" ∴ need to feed
back to staff - incl usuals

• "Vital" local knowledge.

- local knowledge TBC - pm Fri
- local local - having (+ sub-sharing) knowl.
about loc
 - vital that people ask before they go
somewhere - they may be going into country
at times - wraps (by someone) or
conflict (fighting)
 - other agencies as well
 - comm. knowl. important, to have local links
into a community; having key people to speak
to (noted gatekeeper issue)
 - our workers need to link with them + learn
with them - can be provided with knowledge
 - not just stomping out there -
 - always check before go out into a community
ask whether it's okay to come out
only polite to ask

? Dept's reputation

- part. remote comm + Ab communities - part intro.
is to acknowledge past but advise that Dept.
is ok - people can see gov. being Dept +
community in a different light
- Mullewa event - services provided w/ shop.
food provided (incl. self-harm) - it's the
way you do the Dept's business

Appendix 13 Intake flow chart

