

Reflections from Fran Crowe, for the David Hunter Memorial Lecture 2018

Read by Vivien Palmer at the lecture when Fran was unable to attend

Hi lovelies

My name is Frances Crowe

I am Wirradjurri woman from Peak Hill NSW

I am the youngest of 9 children I was raised by my 5 older brothers after my parents passed away - my mum when I was 6 my dad when I was 10

My brothers had to fight to raise me and my 2 older sisters so that is why it's so important to me to see children in the system be raised and carried for by family:::

I have 6 grandchildren with the 3 eldest in my care

Well this is my situation - after the break down of my son's relationship, the mother didn't want to be a mum anymore. My son was in no way ready to care for 3 young children 6 months- 15 months and 3 years old

The mum had signed the children over to me (witnessed by family services) - after 18 months the mother wanted them back

She was still taking drugs and I took her on through the family court - it took 4 years, by this time the children were settled into school and preschool, playing sports and establishing healthy friendships in the community and school, bonding with family members (uncles aunts cousins) and going back to country on the school holidays - if these children got taken by care and protection they would not have this strong sense of belonging

I see so many of our young children so detached and unengaged after being removed and not placed with family or even Aboriginal families it is heart breaking

I have seen it first hand how these little people are trying to make sense of this world they have been placed in. I hear loving stories how families go above and beyond to care for these little people then I hear the horror stories that these children are a good source of income to some families.

So how do we change this system that is now so broken that we have another stolen generation it's been happening for years but only being addressed now

Like I was telling you I along with 4 other Aboriginal people won our positions with care and protection in 2014-15 to make up a culture advisory team to support the non-indigenous case workers in culturally appropriate approach to dealing with our Aboriginal families that came to their attention -we were never called upon in any cases for almost a year -we all resigned from the positions.

The job was to go with the case workers to investigate the issues and lend support to the case worker as well as the families, but we were never called upon not once.

We may have been able to make a difference if they allowed us to do our jobs with the knowledge all members have and not being able to use it to help our people was very disappointing to say the least ::

I'm looking forward to having my say

The other thing I would like to say is as grandparents we are just bystanders in our adult children's lives we hope that we have given our children the morals and values to make good choices but when they don't we are there to pick up the pieces and step in to guide and support our grandchildren but the system as failed a lot of grandparents and they become helpless in these situations

Thank you for inviting me



Vivien presents Fran a thank you gift