



ST JOHN OF GOD

Raphael Services

Driving Change: pregnancy, parenting, alcohol and other drugs conference

Welcome



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Raphael Services

Mothers' Voices: Parenting support needs of mothers challenged by alcohol and other substance abuse

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Voices of Mothers with Empty Arms

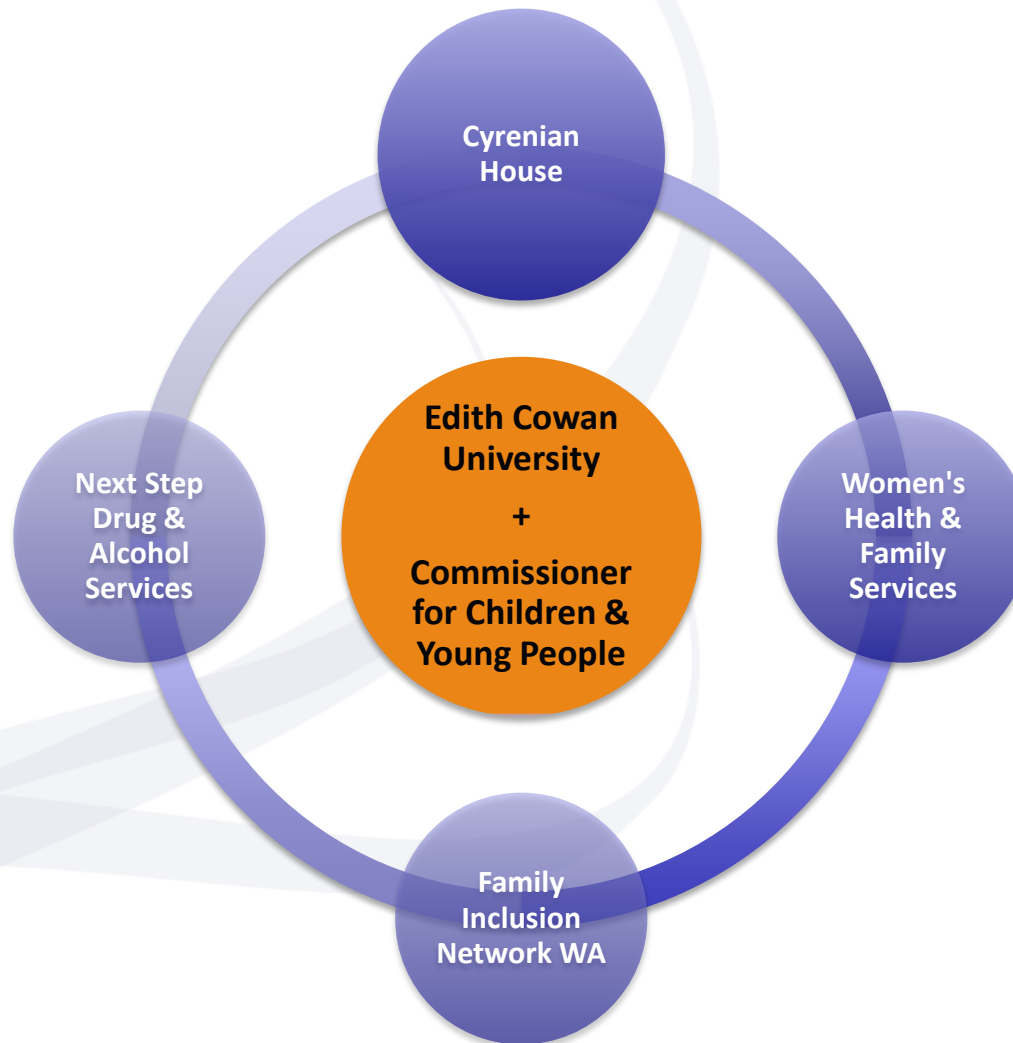


‘... there’s just nothing like it – having your child taken off you...there’s just no, no feeling like it.’

Separation and reunification issues experienced by mothers with alcohol and other substance use issues.

Professor Ruth Marquis
Dr David Coall
Dr Julie Dare
Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia
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Funders and Collaborators



About the Mothers..



16 participants



22-45 years, 50% Aboriginal



45 children, 0-27 years with 41 under 18 years of age



Mother's adverse life experiences

Point of Apprehension

- Risk of downward spiral into drug and alcohol use

"I couldn't handle the situation that my boys were gone. I hit the amphetamines twice as hard, just to numb my pain."

"When we lost our daughter we did start using. For two weeks we were heavily using. We cried every night for three months."



Challenges

Maintaining
bonds with
children

Sourcing
information

Shifting
goal posts

Trust and
collaboration

Challenges

Living in fear

Finances and
employment

Community
supports

Random
visits and
tests

Mothers' advice to Mothers



- **“Don’t give up!”**
- **“Find an advocate”**
- **“Get counselling”**
- **“Be honest but careful”**
- **“Keep records”**

What helped?

- **Empathetic case worker**
- **Early intervention**
- **Collaborative goal setting**
- **Information on child's progress in care**
- **Natural environments for supervised visits**
- **Help to develop healthy support networks**

"My caseworker was onside of me. She said to the in-laws, 'we're not taking the child away'. She's doing a perfectly good job as a parent."

"At the very start you just need compassion. Someone to make you feel you're not alone and you can do this ... to be heard."

"I had the blessing of knowing where my kids were and I had a phone number for them."

A Mother's Message to Other Mothers

“There is always hope, no matter how dark or feeling like you’re not going to get anywhere or it’s not possible...just think about the children. They deserve us and this is a horrible drug and addiction is horrific, but you can fight through it. And our kids deserve us to be happy and to be there for them too.”



A Mother's Appeal to the 'community'

To be invited back into society, to be given jobs and trusted and having a purpose."



Reflection



*“Never see a need without
doing something about it.”*

- St. Mary MacKillop RSJ
1842-1909

Current ECU Intergenerational Research

- Exploring the different and shared experiences in informal and formal grandparent carers in Western Australia (Grandparents raising Grandchildren).
- Children's Voices, Leadership and Respite Camps.
- Exploring the different and shared experiences of informal and formal grandcarers in Western Australia (Multigenerational Family Matrix for Grandcarers).
- Health and Well-being of Grandchildren Raised by their Grandparents.

Dr David Coall
Professor Ruth Marquis
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Voices of Mothers with Empty Arms

Thank you

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