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Advocacy model and social action

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# Executive summary

The report recommends the most effective types of advocacy and social action to advance the cause of the issue of providing support to homeless children. Facts stated that in 2018 around 105,000 people were homeless in Australia. While latest figure reveals that every year 44,000 children are homeless. The larger percentage is of indigenous children who aged between 6-12 years. 1 in every 4 Aboriginal children is homeless in Australia. These children include unaccompanied runaways, thrown-away children and those who are forced to leave homes. Homeless children are commonly reported to come from single-parent homes. These are street kids having ages of less than 18 years and lacking a permanent home. Several interventions are adopted by the government agencies for interrupting with different groups and ending homelessness. The policy focuses on provision of permanent shelters to the children with care and supervision. Department of Social Services in collaboration with other government policies like National Housing and Homeless Agreement (NHHA) is working to offer appropriate living facility with medical care, educational opportunities and development prospects.

NHHA has been involved in taking efforts to identify and respond to the homeless children with focus on trauma management, poverty elevation and determination of the need of socials services and support for mitigating adverse impacts. The most effective types of advocacy and social action models are recommended that would lead to maximization of welfare. The aim of the report is to identify the best advocacy and social action models that will resolve the issue.

# Background and overview of issue

Child homelessness is one of the critical issues faced by the poor children who are thrown-away of run from homes. These children are lacking access to appropriate living facilities, necessities and education. Child homelessness has increased in different cities of Australia. “A homeless person is reasonably defined as anyone who does not have stable housing and who, therefore, is living on the streets, in a shelter, in a mission or a single-room occupancy unit, or in an abandoned building or vehicle” (Dwomoh & Dinolfo, 2018). Australian census disclosed that there are 50 homeless person for every 10,000 people. Aboriginal and Tore Island children are 15 times more likely to remain without permanent housing compared to non-indigenous population. Social work is defined as, “social work is committed to rights and justice; and that it exists to assist, support and enable those who suffer from the negative effects of social inequalities. Social work has a function of social integration; it is also widely seen as having the function of dealing with failures in other policy areas such as crime, health or education” (Jones & Truell, 2012). Half of the homeless population is above age of 6 years. Runaway children have either left home due to their own violation or they are forced by parents to leave homes (Ife, 2007). Irreconcilable conflict or loss of contact is also prominent reasons behind homelessness. Many children who leave homes are victims of abuse or they have spent some time in foster care. Children belonging to aboriginal and Torre Islanders are also rescued by the child protection agencies due to the domestic violence and inappropriate support from families

Homelessness is a common issue faced by every state of Australia. There are also indigenous families who experienced long periods of homelessness and have hidden in shelters, abandoned buildings, living with relatives or their friends and even in cars and trucks. Economic hardship has been the central cause of homelessness because families are unable to find permanent homes. Children belonging to these families are victims of violence, child abuse, mental health issues and addiction disorders (Turner, 2010). The most common reasons behind homelessness are lack of affordable housing, poverty, unemployment and financial constraints of a single parent. Most of the homeless children belong to indigenous populations. It is also revealed that many homeless children continue to live in poverty that deteriorates their future. They also exhibit high likelihood of joining criminal groups and live troubled lives in future. There is need for addressing the issue of homelessness for providing better growth and survival opportunities to the aboriginal and Torre Island children (Raver, 2012). Advocacy models and social actions can play effective role in mitigating the risks faced by the indigenous children. These models will save the life of young homeless children who could later become victims of crime and other social evils.

# Comparative analysis and evaluation of two potential models of advocacy

The first most effective model for addressing the issue of homelessness is Independent/ Professional Advocacy. This model focuses of offering social services to the victims which in the present case are children belonging to the indigenous families (Neiditch, 2017). Long-term advocacy is offered to the children that will allow them to overcome complexities. The central feature of this model is independent governance. Independent findings are also arranged through direct and indirect means. The focus in on individual advocacy rather then group (Stewart & MacIntyre, 2013). This is because the model believes that paying individual attention could generate positive outcomes. This model emphasizes on provision of specialized services that include treatment against trauma, mental issue and other health related problems. This model is also used because it focus on making individuals self-sufficient. The advocate will help homeless children to develop sense of identity by engaging them in discussion. The certain strategy of this model is to build a positive relationship with the children by providing them a friendly and inclusive environment. Independent advocacy is effective for bridging the gap between parties and offering the best environment that will leads to the overall development of the children (Soska, Gutierrez, & Santiago, 2016).

The second model used for addressing the current issue is ‘Non-Instructed Advocacy’. This model is practical method for choosing the best practices that could lead to the overall welfare of the homeless children. Language or communication issues can undermine children from expressing their feelings. It is this important for the advocates to understand the concerns and worries of the children. Some issues that can undermine child’s ability to communicate could be trauma, negative impacts of the experiences or mental issues. Therefore, this model focuses on adopting fair and equal treatment towards all children irrespective of their health or mental problems (Fothergill & Peek, 2015). This model gives the right to advocates to take certain decisions without instructions that are in the best interest of the homeless children. Such as aboriginal homeless children may not accept the offer of living in foster or childcare institute. But the advocate can reach a better decision by examining his state (Soska, Gutierrez, & Santiago, 2016). If there are any signs of abuse or violence then he can choose to move the child to a foster care. The advocate has a responsibility of choosing the best methods that makes it easy for him to communicate with the child. The model stresses on identifying the core quality domains of life that provides best development environment to the children.

Two other models that can be effective in this scenario include Volunteer Citizen Advocacy and Peer Advocacy. Volunteer Citizen Advocacy is a model that encourage citizens to take active role in supporting the homeless children belonging to aboriginal and Torre Island backgrounds (Siegel, 2000). This model can be useful if effective relationship is developed between the advocate and the children. By involving citizens it is possible to find more homeless children and taking immediate actions for responding to the situation. This will be a useful way of saving more children and offering them education that will lead to their development (Soska, Gutierrez, & Santiago, 2016). Peer model can also be effective in addressing the issue of homeless children. This model will focus on hiring advocates who have undergone similar issues such as aboriginal social workers will be able to offer better services (Mago, et al., 2013). This model will thus provide better opportunities of recovery to the children and they will develop close association with the advocates. Relationship of trust will also improve the possibilities of child recovery and development.

# Comparative analysis and evaluation of the two potential models of social action

Each social action model focuses on different assumptions, goals and outcomes. The first social action model selected for dealing with the homeless indigenous children is ‘Institutional State Model of Social Action’. This model follows a common framework chosen by the state for addressing a national and macro-level issue. As the issue of homelessness aboriginal and Torre Island children has been increasing in Australia this model is the best fit. This model emphasize on formation of laws and procedures that will target the victims at large scale (Soska, Gutierrez, & Santiago, 2016). This model is focused on convincing social agencies to follow rules such as providing financial and healthcare assistance to such children. The model implement some laws that will prevent intuitions from exploiting the rights of thee children (Votruba-Drzal, Coley, Maldonado-Carreño, Li-Grining, & Chase-Lansdale, 2010).

There are some strengths of the model that makes it a better choice. The model eliminates the risks of instructions engagement in exploitative practices. They will have to provide audits and performance reports that confirms that the state regulations are followed in social activities (Stewart & MacIntyre, 2013). This model has some weaknesses including; the inability of state to supervise organizations at large scale. Due to lack of resources the private child care organizations have to arrange funds on their own (Ioakimidis, 2016). This limits their capacity of reaching wider children. These state laws are ineffective at foster care homes because children have reported their experiences of violence and malpractices.

The second model used for addressing the needs of homeless children is ‘Institutional Social Model’. This model relies on non-governmental institutes for offering support and help to the homeless children. In this model every non-state institute has a right to save homeless children who lack inappropriate homes or permanent homes. This allows organizations to reach wider children who are seeking help from the agencies. The aim of this model is to provide services to the needy who need immediate support. Many NGO’s and non-profit organizations are using funds and charities for helping homeless indigenous children (Dwomoh & Dinolfo, 2018). The focus of the social action is to offer adequate learning opportunities to the children by providing them education and schooling. They are also offered other services including counseling, trauma therapy and medical care.

There are significant benefits of the model such as arrangement of funds. NGO’s and non-profit organizations manage funding through collaboration with different childcare organizations and charity organizations. This improves their capacity of reaching larger population of children who are homeless. Another strength is the capacity of these institutes to pay individual attention to the children (West, 2018). There are some organizations that focus on providing independent counseling and other healthcare services to the children, based on their needs.

However there are also some weaknesses of this model. These institutes rely on internal audits. This minimize state’s potential for evaluating their actual performance. Non-government agencies have opportunities of engaging in exploitative practices because the government does not supervise them. In time of funds requirement it is difficult to get money from government.

# Conclusion and recommendations

Due to increased rates of homeless children belonging to aboriginal and Tore Island the state must engage in actions that will offer immediate support to the children. The reasons that encourage children to runway from homes are violence, child abuse, lack of financial support and poverty. Living in streets is dangerous and it also ruins the future of the children. Two advocacy models that can be used for mitigating these issues include Independent/ Professional Advocacy and Non-instructed Advocacy. The best social action models are Institutional State Model of Social Action and instructional Social Model. Based on the evaluation of models some recommendations are made;

* Choosing multiple models for reaching the larger homeless aboriginal and Tore Island population rather than relying on one.
* Adopting strict regulatory framework and compliance structure for removing threats of negative activities such as exploitation of children rights.
* Institutional State Model of Social Action and Institutional Social Model can work for offering extended support in all dimensions including education, mental health and care.

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