

**TASA 50TH ANNIVERSARY LECTURE**

**Indigenous Child Sexual Abuse: Who is Responsible for Effecting Change**

**The Australian Sociological Association and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies invites you to attend a public lecture**

**Speaker**

Dr Kylie Cripps

University of NSW

**Time**

Thursday 25 July 2013

5.30 pm – 7.30 pm

**Venue**

Mabo Room, AIATSIS

**RSVP**

d.habibis@utas.edu.au

deirdre.howard-wagner@sydney.edu.au

theresa.petray@jcu.edu.au

by 16 July

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse represents a historic moment in the Australian nation’s self-understanding and its willingness to uncover how its institutions have responded to the needs of its most vulnerable citizens. This moment has special relevance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples where rates of state intervention in child protection cases are far higher than for the rest of the Australian population and where public scrutiny occurs in the tangled context of neo-colonial relations and the legacy of historic injustice.

Sexual assault in Australian Indigenous communities is not a new phenomenon. It has been the subject of reports for more than a decade.  These reports have called on the support of government to assist Indigenous community members to stop the violence.  The intensity of these demands increases periodically as shocking examples of child sexual abuse perpetrated against Indigenous children are exposed to the public through these reports and the media.  Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders have declared the problem of sexual abuse an ‘issue of urgent national significance’ demanding appropriate action and intervention.  The responses, including the Northern Territory Emergency Intervention in 2007, have largely focused on law and order measures to respond to the violence at the time of the crisis.  These measures focus on securing the safety of the victim and holding perpetrators responsible for their actions.  But this process is never clear-cut as this paper will demonstrate via an intersectional analysis of available literature and sexual assault sentencing transcripts.

Dr Cripps will provide evidence of how race, gender, class and age impact on the emotions, reactions and behaviours of key players in responding to child sexual abuse. She will consider how power and privilege influence decisions in ways that have a detrimental impact on Indigenous children, their mothers and broader kin networks.  The Royal Commission into Institutional responses to Child Sexual Abuse marks an opportunity for us to reflect on available evidence, theoretical understandings and interpretations of that evidence, and to imagine, as the Commission will be doing, how we may effect institutional change. This paper will contribute to that initiative.

Kylie Cripps is a Pallawah woman and senior lecturer in the Indigenous Law Centre at the University of New South Wales. She has written extensively on issues relating to Indigenous family violence and child abuse for audiences including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.