



Australian Government  
Department of Social Services

# Frequently asked questions

**A new approach to programs for families and children**

Last updated 5 December 2025





## Purpose

This document sets out key questions that the sector have asked on the proposed reforms in the Discussion Paper: *A new approach to children and family programs*.

This document will be updated throughout the consultation process, which commenced 3 November 2025 and concludes 5 December 2025.

Questions and answers have been grouped thematically:

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# How to have your say

## How can I have my say?

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There are a few ways you can provide feedback:

- You can make a written submission to the Discussion Paper.
- You can answer a quick survey.
- You can also attend an interactive townhall.

Visit DSS Engage to have your say and to have a look at the documents which explain the changes in more detail.

These documents include a Discussion Paper (also available in Easy Read), Evidence Summary, Consultation Summary and factsheet for families, parents and caregivers.

## How do I make a submission to the Discussion Paper?

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Submissions can be provided online via DSS Engage, either via the built-in survey function or by uploading a separate attachment. You will be asked to specify whether you would like your submission to be made publicly available on the department's website ([www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au)). Submissions will not be published without your agreement.

You can also send a copy of your submission to [families@dss.gov.au](mailto:families@dss.gov.au), or via post to:

Policy Reform Section  
GPO Box 9820  
Department of Social Services  
Canberra ACT 2601

## How do I complete the survey?

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You can complete your survey online via the built-in survey function on DSS Engage. You can also email [families@dss.gov.au](mailto:families@dss.gov.au) for a Microsoft Word document of the survey which you can email once completed.

## Will my submission be responded to?

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The department will not be responding to individual submissions or survey responses. However, the department will release a summary of the key themes heard through consultation on DSS Engage.

## Will my submission or survey response be published?

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The department will publish submissions if you provide consent for us to do so. Submissions will not be published without your agreement. Survey responses will not be published.



## Outside of the consultation process, what other opportunities will there be for the views of families and caregivers to inform program design?

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All families, parents and caregivers are welcome to be a part of the consultation process if they have stories, insights or perspectives to share. With more submissions, we can ensure that we're reflecting what families truly need.

You can visit DSS Engage to have your say and to have a look at the documents which explain the changes in more detail.

We have also developed a [factsheet](#) specifically for families, parents and caregivers, which outlines the changes and how they impact families and children.

## Can I have an extension to make a submission/complete the survey beyond 5 December?

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Consultation has been extended to 11.59pm Monday 8 December 2025.

# The new program

## What's an example of a "support or service" under this program?

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Currently under these programs, a very broad range of activities are funded. Examples include activities like playgroups and parenting programs, websites that provide information on parenting and child development, or counselling services to assist families with challenges.

In the new program, we are proposing that supports or services that could be funded would be aligned to the two key outcomes proposed in the Discussion Paper.

## Are there other changes in scope for the reform?

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The changes being considered are presented in the Discussion Paper. You can provide any feedback, including about other relevant issues and changes, in the consultation process.

## How does Communities for Children – Facilitating Partners fit into the proposed changes?

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Communities for Children Facilitating Partner (CfC FP) is one of the 5 programs in the proposed reform model. The CFC FP initiative operates in a place-based way, with Facilitating Partners managing and facilitating the Communities for Children in their local area.

The proposed changes will not prevent local and shared decision making. We want to hear from individuals through the consultation process about how organisations should be assessed on their level of community connectedness and how they can demonstrate that their activity is responding to a community need.



## Service Areas and Community Need

### How can we ensure the program will harness local social capital?

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The proposed changes include directing investment to community service organisations that are able to demonstrate they are connected to the communities they serve, and delivering services that are responsive to, local community need.

We are interested in hearing from you through the consultation process about how providers should demonstrate this, and how the department should assess whether an organisation reflects the needs of their community.

### Will the program fund the work required to facilitate and enable connected, co-located and/or integrated services?

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The reform seeks to invest better — not just in services, but in the people, systems, and infrastructure that underpin them.

Through the consultation process, we are interested in hearing feedback about how a provider's connectedness to community should be applied and assessed through a new grant opportunity.

### Will service areas be decided by the Department of Social Services (DSS) based on criteria outlined in the Discussion Paper, or will organisations nominate service areas in their application?

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Under a new grant opportunity, applications will be assessed based on community need. Organisations may apply to deliver a service in any location. Providers will be asked to demonstrate how their proposed activities are responsive to local community need.

Through consultation, we want to understand what providers would want to highlight in a grant application to demonstrate a service is connected to the community it services, and what applicants should be assessed on.

### Will every community (LGA/SA2) receive funding for programs covering each of the three streams?

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The final shape of the new program will be informed by feedback gathered through the consultation process.

No decisions have been made yet on how funding would be apportioned under a new program.

### Will Indigenous Areas be considered?

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You can read the [Discussion Paper](#) and [Evidence Summary](#) on DSS Engage to learn about the different datasets we have suggested be used to help identify community needs.

We are interested in hearing about what other datasets and statistics you think should inform our assessment of need and allocation of funding.



## Has DSS mapped existing service provision in communities to identify if there is a saturation of services or a lack of services?

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The department is committed to ensuring that service delivery supports the achievement of two key outcomes:

1. Parents and caregivers are empowered to raise healthy, resilient children.
2. Children are supported to grow into healthy, resilient adults.

Grant applications will be assessed based on community need. To understand need, the department will use key data sources, including:

- Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) – to identify areas facing disadvantage.
- Australia Early Development Census (AEDC) – to understand how children are developing in different communities.
- Census data - including how many children and families live in an area, and how many young people are not in education, employment, or training (NEET).
- Child protection engagement rates – to highlight where prevention and family support services may be most needed.

Through the consultation process, we are interested in receiving feedback about whether there are other factors that should be considered to make sure funding reflects the needs of communities. This may include the level of existing services already delivered in a community.

## Tenders requiring single responses make it difficult for those working in multiple areas to demonstrate knowledge of local needs. Will this be taken into account in tender design?

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The proposed reforms seek to reduce administrative burden for providers, including by making grant and reporting processes simpler.

We are interested in hearing feedback about how we could design the grant opportunity, as well as feedback on any other changes we should make to the program or application process to help your organisation overcome current challenges.

## Future Grant Round

### What is happening to the current grants under the 5 programs while consultation is underway?

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The department will extend all current grants under the 5 programs for 7 months to 31 January 2027. As a guiding principle, extensions will reflect a pro-rata of current base funding values.

This will provide continuity and stability for the sector while we undertake consultation on the changes. It will also maintain support for families and children and enable time for transitions to future program and funding arrangements.

For more questions about your specific funding arrangement, please speak to your Funding Agreement Manager.



## When will we hear about the agreed changes and when will applications for the new program open?

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Feedback received during the consultation process will inform the shape of the new grant guidelines, to be released in 2026.

You may wish to subscribe to [GrantConnect](#) to be notified when it opens.

We anticipate the competitive grant round will open early 2026.

## Will the Department be favouring National Providers in all of the funding streams?

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No. The proposed changes seek to deliver better outcomes for all providers delivering services and supports to families and children.

Under any subsequent grant opportunity, providers will be asked to demonstrate how their activities align with the four investment priorities, including that their service offer is informed by, and responds to, community needs. Providers of any size will be encouraged to apply and will be considered equally through the assessment process.

## Will the Department provide clear guidelines on how much funding will be allocated in each of the three streams?

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The final shape of the new program will be informed by feedback gathered through the consultation process.

## Will the number of providers reduce?

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The final shape of the new program will be informed by feedback gathered through the consultation process. The number of providers awarded grants under the new program will be decided through a competitive grant opportunity process.

More information regarding the next round of funding will become available in early-2026.

## Will service providers be able to charge fees as part of this reform?

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No decisions have been made on service charges. Further detail will be available in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.