

Submission to DSS Discussion Paper

Future Directions for Family and Children Services

Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed reforms to family and children services funding.

This feedback is provided on behalf of Julyardi Aboriginal Corporation, Hedland Aboriginal Strong Leaders, Hedland Emerging Aboriginal Leaders and 6718 Yandi for Change Elders.

Our organisation broadly supports the vision outlined in the discussion paper and believes the proposed changes will strengthen outcomes for children, families, and communities, particularly in regional and remote areas. We believe the new vision reflects what we all want for children and families - healthy, resilient children supported by empowered caregivers.

General Position

- We broadly support the proposal and agree that consolidating services into one national program will make the system easier to navigate.
- We support the two core outcomes. They capture both the immediate role of parents and caregivers and the long-term trajectory of children into adulthood.
- A single program will reduce duplication, streamline processes, and provide clarity for service providers.
- This approach will allow organisations to focus on what they do best, delivering support to families, rather than managing multiple overlapping funding reports.

Flexibility and Place-Based Control

- We believe the proposed flexibility will enable better place-based control, ensuring services are tailored to local needs and contexts.
- Local decision-making is critical to achieving improved outcomes, particularly in communities with unique cultural and social structures.

Funding Distribution

- The three proposed funding streams appear to cover the core needs of children and families across the country
- It is essential that funding be distributed relative to need rather than population size.

Intensive and Long-Term Support

- Families who need the most support in remote and regional areas often require assistance over long periods.
- Short-term intensive support is not sufficient to achieve lasting change.
- Intensive support should be needs-based, particularly for families experiencing multiple and complex challenges.

Definition of Family

- Family funding should adopt an expanded definition of family, recognising multi-generational support, caregiving, and shared responsibilities for child-rearing.
- This is especially important in Aboriginal communities, where extended family and kinship structures play a central role in raising children.

Outcomes-Based Assessment

- We agree that combined outcomes-based assessments are the right way forward.
- This approach will ensure efficiency for reporting organisations while providing a holistic picture of the support delivered and the impact achieved.

Relational Contracting

- We support the move towards relational contracting.
- The best way for the department to identify suitable organisations is by understanding who is trusted in the community and connected to those who need the most support.
- Relational contracts should prioritise organisations with deep community ties and proven capacity to deliver culturally guided, place-based services.

Conclusion

We commend DSS for engaging in consultation and for proposing reforms that simplify service funding, strengthen outcomes, and empower communities. To maximise impact, the program must:

- Ensure funding is distributed according to need.
- Provide flexibility for place-based solutions.
- Recognise the importance of long-term, intensive support.
- Adopt an inclusive definition of family that reflects cultural and community realities.
- Embed relational contracting to strengthen trust and community-led delivery.

We look forward to further collaboration to ensure these reforms deliver meaningful, lasting change for children and families.