Organisation name

Ngala Community Services

Is your organisation....?

- A provider currently funded under one or more of the 5 programs in scope for this consultation

What type of service or support do you mostly provide?

- Prevention or early intervention services
- Intensive family supports

What state or territory does your organisation deliver services and supports in?

- Western Australia

Where does your organisation deliver most of their services and supports?

Major city

1. Does the new vision reflect what we all want for children and families?

Yes, the new vision reflects what we all want for children and families: communities where every child can thrive and families feel supported and connected.

It captures the importance of strong relationships and environments that enable wellbeing across generations. The focus on empowering parents and building resilience in children is a positive foundation and aligns with Ngala's commitment to early support and prevention.

To strengthen this vision, we believe it should clearly define what "healthy" means—embracing physical, mental, and social wellbeing—and ensure that children's developmental needs are front and centre. Opportunities for play, learning, and social connection are not optional extras; they are essential for growth and lifelong resilience.

Equally important is recognising that children's wellbeing is inseparable from the communities they grow up in. Embedding community connection, cultural safety, and local leadership within the vision ensures that families are supported in ways

that respect diversity and strengthen protective factors.

With these refinements, the vision can hopefully drive meaningful outcomes for families and communities.

The two proposed outcomes—empowering parents and caregivers to raise healthy, resilient children, and supporting children to grow into healthy, resilient adults—are broadly appropriate and reflect the principles of prevention and early intervention that underpin effective family and child wellbeing strategies.

These outcomes align with evidence-based frameworks that emphasise mental health, wellbeing, family functioning, and age-appropriate development as key protective factors.

However, refinement is essential to ensure these outcomes deliver meaningful impact. The concept of "healthy" should be clearly defined to encompass physical, mental, and social wellbeing, recognising that resilience is shaped by holistic development, including opportunities for play, education, and social connection.

The framing of family must reflect contemporary realities and diverse structures, including extended kinship networks, communalist values, and relationships beyond the nuclear family model. Without this inclusivity, significant cohorts who rely on family and community supports risk being overlooked.

Children's wellbeing cannot be separated from the social, cultural, and relational conditions of the communities they grow up in. Embedding community connection, cultural safety, and local leadership as core components of these outcomes is critical. Additionally, the outcomes must acknowledge the complex vulnerabilities families face—such as poverty, housing stress, mental health challenges, and disability—because resilience cannot be built in isolation from these systemic factors.

In summary, Ngala supports the intent of these outcomes as a strong foundation for reform. To achieve their full potential, they must be broadened to reflect holistic health, diverse family structures, and the central role of community, while

addressing the realities of complex need. This approach will ensure that families and children are not only supported but truly empowered to thrive.

3. Will a single national program provide more flexibility for your organisation?

A single national program has the potential to create greater flexibility for Ngala, but only if it is designed to enable responsiveness rather than impose uniformity.

For us, flexibility means more than streamlined contracts—it means the ability to adapt services to the realities of families' lives, respond quickly to emerging needs, and innovate without being constrained by rigid program boundaries.

If the new approach allows for shifting resources where they are most needed, reducing duplication, and focusing on outcomes rather than compliance, it could strengthen our capacity to deliver integrated, person-centred support.

However, flexibility must go hand in hand with local decision-making and cultural safety. Families do not live in standardised systems — they live in communities with unique strengths and challenges.

A single program that overlooks this risks disconnecting services from the people they are meant to support.

Done well, this reform could free providers like Ngala to invest time in relationships, collaboration, and innovation—the elements that truly change lives.

Done poorly, it could undermine trust and responsiveness. The detail will matter.

4. Does the service or activity you deliver fit within one of the three funding streams? Do these streams reflect what children and families in your community need now – and what they might need in the future?

Yes, the services Ngala delivers align with the intent of the three proposed funding streams, as they aim to provide proportionate, responsive support to families and children.

Our work spans universal access through to targeted, intensive support for families experiencing complex challenges, which reflects the continuum these streams are designed to cover.

Do these streams reflect what children and families need now and into the future?

Broadly, yes—but only if they are implemented with flexibility and a clear understanding of real-world service delivery.

Families rarely fit neatly into defined categories. Needs shift over time, and many experience multiple vulnerabilities that require adaptable, integrated responses. The streams must allow for movement between levels of support and avoid rigid boundaries that could fragment care.

To strengthen the model, it must anticipate emerging needs such as mental health support for younger children, digital inclusion, and culturally safe services for diverse communities.
It should also recognise the importance of community connection and local leadership as protective factors that underpin resilience.

We are concerned that the current definitions risk excluding families who do not have children living with them—such as parents separated from their children, expectant fathers/parents, or kinship carers—yet these families often need support to strengthen relationships and prepare family for future parenting responsibilities.

It may be implied in the broad definition that these families/groups/individuals will still be included - but it should be explicit. The risk is not just about new people accessing, but does it mean current access will now be ceased if the descriptors changed?

Without these considerations, the model risks leaving gaps for families who fall outside narrow definitions. Done well, the streams can provide a strong framework for proportionate universalism, but success will depend on how they enable local responsiveness, collaboration, and innovation.

5. Are there other changes we could make to the program to help your organisation or community overcome current challenges?

Yes, there are important changes that would help Ngala and our communities overcome current challenges and deliver better outcomes for families and children.

While we support the intent of the reform, success will depend on how well it reflects the realities of families' lives and the complexity of service delivery.

1. Embed flexibility and local decision-making

Flexibility must go beyond streamlined contracts. It should enable providers to adapt services to local needs, adjust intensity when challenges are complex, and respond quickly to emerging issues.

Families rarely fit neatly into categories, and rigid definitions risk fragmenting care.

A program that empowers local decision-making will ensure services remain relevant and effective.

2. Broaden definitions of family and eligibility

Current framing risks excluding families who do not have children living with them—such as expectant parents, separated parents, and kinship carers—yet these families often need support to strengthen relationships and prepare for future parenting responsibilities. Definitions should reflect diverse family structures, cultural norms, and contemporary realities.

3. Fund integration as a practice, not a floorplan

Integration is not achieved through co-location alone. Relationship-building, warm handovers, and joint planning require time and resources. Funding should explicitly support these activities to create connected service ecosystems rather than fragmented programs.

4. Address emerging and unmet needs

The program should anticipate gaps such as mental health support for children under 12, digital inclusion, culturally safe services for CALD and First Nations families, and support for families awaiting diagnosis for developmental conditions. These areas are critical for prevention and early intervention.

5. Simplify reporting and strengthen outcome measurement

Current linear reporting does not capture the complexity of family support work. A mix of quantitative and qualitative measures—including narrative reporting and storytelling frameworks—should be adopted to reflect real impact.

6. Ensure sustainable funding and workforce stability

Longer-term grants with adequate indexation and flexibility to use funds across the life of the agreement will enable planning, innovation, and workforce retention. This stability is essential for building trust with communities and delivering consistent, high-quality support.

7. Prioritise cultural safety and community voice

Mandatory cultural safety standards, capacity-building for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, and genuine community governance must be embedded in program design. Children's wellbeing is inseparable from the social and cultural conditions of the communities they grow up in.

In summary:

Ngala supports the vision for reform but calls for a model that is flexible, inclusive, and grounded in community realities. Done well, these changes will create a system that empowers families, strengthens resilience, and delivers lasting impact.

6. Do you agree that the four priorities listed on Page 4 are right areas for investment to improve outcomes for children and families?

Yes, the four priorities identified are the right areas for investment to improve outcomes for children and families.

Early intervention and integrated services are particularly critical because they prevent issues from escalating and ensure families receive coordinated, holistic support. These priorities align with Ngala's commitment to strengthening protective factors and reducing vulnerability.

To make these priorities truly effective, they need to reflect the realities of families' lives and the complexity of service delivery.

We recommend broadening the scope to include support for families awaiting formal diagnosis for children, mental health services for children under 12—the "missing middle"— and culturally responsive services for CALD families.
Digital inclusion must also be prioritised to ensure equitable access, particularly for families in regional and remote areas.
Housing stress and cost-of-living pressures are major drivers of vulnerability and should be explicitly recognised within the investment framework.

Additionally, priorities should embed cultural safety and community voice as non-negotiable principles.

Children's wellbeing is inseparable from the social and cultural conditions of the communities they grow up in.

Investment should also fund integration as a practice—not just co-location—by resourcing relationship-building, warm handovers, and joint planning. Without these elements, the system risks fragmentation and missed opportunities for prevention.

Finally, the priorities should anticipate future needs and systemic gaps.
This includes addressing family violence, supporting kinship and grandparent carers, and ensuring services remain flexible enough to respond to emerging challenges.

Done well, these priorities can create a system that is inclusive, adaptive, and grounded in community realities—delivering lasting impact for families and children.

7. Are there any other priorities or issues you think the department should be focusing on?

Yes, there are additional priorities and issues the Department should focus on to ensure the reform delivers meaningful outcomes for all children and all families.

While the current priorities are a strong foundation, they do not fully capture the complexity of family life or the systemic factors that drive vulnerability. We do though appreciate the full understanding will come with greater detail.

Ngala recommends the following areas for consideration:

1. Mental health and wellbeing for children under 12
There is a critical gap—the "missing middle"—in mental health support for younger children. Early intervention in this space is essential to prevent escalation and lifelong impacts.

2. Support for families awaiting diagnosis
Families navigating developmental or health concerns often experience prolonged stress while waiting for formal diagnosis. Targeted support during this period can reduce anxiety and improve outcomes.

3. Digital inclusion and access equity
One in five Australians is digitally excluded, limiting access to online services. Investment in digital inclusion is vital to ensure families can engage with supports regardless of location or income.

4. Cultural safety and responsiveness
Mandatory cultural safety standards and capacity-building for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations must be embedded. Services must also reflect the needs of CALD families and diverse cultural norms. We cannot make the decision that an Aboriginal Person must go to an ACCO - or even assume that they will. Everyone needs to have choice and control - with many customers claiming they do not want to utilise an CCO due to their family connections and risk of confidentiality breaches etc.

5. Housing stress and cost-of-living pressures
These are major drivers of family vulnerability. Without addressing these systemic issues, service demand will continue to rise, and outcomes will be compromised.

6. Broader definition of family and eligibility
Current framing risks excluding families without children in their care—such as expectant parents, separated parents, and kinship carers—who often need support to strengthen relationships and prepare for future parenting responsibilities.

7. Integration as a funded practice
Integration is not achieved through co-location alone. Relationship-building, warm handovers, and joint planning require time and resources. Funding must explicitly support these activities to create connected service ecosystems.

8. Trauma-informed practice and family violence response
Investment should prioritise trauma-informed approaches and ensure services can respond effectively to family violence, which remains a significant risk factor for children.

9. Longer-term, flexible funding
Five-year grants with adequate indexation and flexibility to use funds across the life of the agreement will enable planning, innovation, and workforce stability—critical for building trust and delivering consistent support.

10. Fair and transparent commissioning
Tender processes must value proven performance, local knowledge, and community connections, and avoid creating unnecessary disruption or competition that undermines collaboration.

Ngala's recommendations are grounded in over a century of experience supporting families and children. We know that prevention and early intervention are not only life-changing — they are cost-effective and reduce demand on statutory systems.

To deliver on this promise, the Department should also prioritise workforce development, ensuring staff have the skills for trauma-informed practice, cultural competency, and digital engagement.

Investment in robust data systems is critical to capture both quantitative and qualitative outcomes, enabling continuous improvement and accountability.

Finally, the program must be future-focused—anticipating demographic shifts, emerging technologies, and evolving family structures—so it remains relevant and responsive for decades to come.

In summary: Ngala calls for a model that is flexible, inclusive, and grounded in community realities. These additional priorities will ensure the system addresses both immediate needs and emerging challenges, creating lasting impact for families and children.

8. Do the proposed focus areas – like supporting families at risk of child protection involvement and young parents match the needs or priorities of your service?

Yes, the proposed focus areas—families at risk of child protection involvement and young parents—are relevant and align with Ngala's commitment to prevention and early intervention. These groups often face significant challenges that, if addressed early, can prevent escalation and improve outcomes for children and families.

However, these focus areas do not fully reflect the breadth of need we see in our communities. We recommend expanding the scope to include:

Grandparent and kinship carers, who play a critical role in caring for children but often lack adequate support.

Families experiencing separation, grief, or trauma, as these transitions can

significantly impact wellbeing.

Middle years children (ages 5–12) and key transition points such as moving from primary to high school, which are periods of heightened vulnerability.

Families awaiting diagnosis for developmental or health conditions, who often experience prolonged stress and need tailored support.

In addition, the framing of these focus areas should recognise that families rarely fit neatly into categories.
Many experience multiple vulnerabilities and require flexible, integrated responses. Limiting eligibility to narrow definitions risks excluding families who need support—such as expectant parents, separated parents, or carers without children currently in their care.

To strengthen outcomes, the Department could also embed community voice and cultural safety as core principles.

Children's wellbeing is inseparable from the social and cultural conditions of the communities they grow up in.

Investment should prioritise integration as a funded practice, not just co-location, by resourcing relationship-building, warm handovers, and joint planning.

Without these elements, the system risks fragmentation and missed opportunities for prevention.

Finally, the focus areas should anticipate emerging needs such as mental health support for younger children, digital inclusion, and culturally responsive services for CALD and First Nations families.

Done well, these changes will create a system that is inclusive, adaptive, and grounded in community realities—delivering lasting impact for families and children.

9. Are there other groups in your community, or different approaches, that you think the department should consider to better support family wellbeing?

Yes, there are other groups and approaches the Department could consider to better support family wellbeing. While the proposed focus areas are important, they do not fully capture the diversity of families or the complexity of challenges we

see in our communities. Ngala recommends the following:

1. Broaden the scope of families supported
Include grandparent and other carers, who often step in during crises but lack adequate resources. Recognise families experiencing separation, grief, or trauma, as these transitions can significantly impact wellbeing. Support for middle years children (ages 5–12) and key transition points such as moving from primary to high school is critical, as these periods are often overlooked yet carry heightened vulnerability. Families awaiting diagnosis for developmental or health conditions also need tailored support to reduce stress and improve outcomes.

2. Embrace diverse family structures and definitions
Current framing risks excluding families without children currently in their care—such as expectant parents, separated parents, and carers preparing for reunification. These families often need support to strengthen relationships and prevent future risks.

3. Embed cultural safety and community voice
Children's wellbeing is inseparable from the social and cultural conditions of the communities they grow up in. Programs must prioritise cultural safety standards, capacity-building for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, and genuine community governance to ensure services are trusted and effective.

4. Fund integration as a practice, not just co-location
Effective support requires relationship-building, warm handovers, and joint planning. These activities take time and resources and should be explicitly funded to create connected service ecosystems rather than fragmented programs.

5. Address emerging and systemic needs
Investment should anticipate gaps such as mental health support for children under 12, digital inclusion for families who are digitally excluded, and culturally responsive services for CALD communities. Housing stress and cost-of-living pressures are major drivers of vulnerability and must be considered in program design.

6. Strengthen workforce and data systems
Workforce development is essential to equip staff with skills in trauma-informed practice, cultural competency, and digital engagement. Improved data systems should capture both quantitative and qualitative outcomes, enabling continuous improvement and accountability.

7. Future-proof the system

The program should anticipate demographic changes, evolving family structures, and emerging technologies to remain relevant and responsive over time.

10. What are other effective ways, beyond co-location, that you've seen work well to connect and coordinate services for families?

Beyond co-location, Ngala has seen several effective strategies that strengthen coordination and connection between services for families:

1. Shared referral pathways and warm handovers

These approaches ensure families experience seamless transitions between services, reducing the risk of disengagement and duplication.

2. Joint case conferencing and integrated planning

Collaborative case discussions allow services to share insights, align goals, and coordinate support for families with complex needs.

3. Integrated data systems

Shared platforms for secure information exchange improve continuity of care and reduce administrative burden, while respecting privacy and cultural safety.

4. Community engagement activities

Events, forums, and workshops bring services together with families, fostering trust and awareness of available supports.

5. Cross-sector partnerships and governance

Formal agreements and community-led governance structures ensure services work collectively toward shared outcomes, rather than in isolation.

These strategies recognise that integration is a practice, not a floorplan. They require investment in time, skills, and relationship-building—elements that are often invisible but essential for creating a connected ecosystem of support for families.

11. What would you highlight in a grant application to demonstrate a service is connected to the community it serves? What should applicants be assessed on?

In a grant application, services, like Ngala, would highlight evidence that demonstrates deep connection to the community, including:

1. Local partnerships and collaboration
Showcase formal and informal partnerships with schools, health services, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, and other local providers. Evidence of joint planning and shared referral pathways demonstrates integration and trust.

2. Community governance and voice
Describe how community members influence service design and decision-making through advisory groups, consultations, and feedback loops. This ensures services reflect local priorities and cultural norms.

3. Responsiveness to local needs
Provide examples of adapting programs based on local data, emerging issues, and community feedback—such as tailoring services for CALD families, addressing transport barriers, or responding to housing stress.

4. Cultural safety and inclusion
Highlight strategies for embedding cultural safety standards, employing local staff, and delivering services that respect diverse family structures and cultural practices.

5. Evidence of engagement
Include participation rates, co-designed initiatives, and community events that build trust and awareness of services.

12. Beyond locational disadvantage, what other factors should the department consider to make sure funding reflects the needs of communities?

Beyond geographic disadvantage, the Department must consider a broader set of factors to ensure funding truly reflects community needs:

1. Cultural diversity and language access
Communities with significant CALD populations often encounter systemic barriers to engagement. Funding should prioritise culturally competent service models and multilingual support to guarantee equitable access.

2. Transport and regional realities
In rural and remote areas, limited transport options and vast distances create serious access challenges. These practical constraints must be embedded in funding frameworks to ensure services are viable and inclusive.

3. Emerging social pressures

Mental health concerns, family violence, housing insecurity, and rising living costs are critical drivers of vulnerability. Investment must anticipate these pressures and enable services to respond proactively and holistically.

4. Digital equity

With one in five Australians digitally excluded, reliance on online platforms risks deepening disadvantage. Targeted investment in digital inclusion is essential to bridge this gap and ensure universal access.

5. Community-led governance

Funding should favour organisations that demonstrate authentic community connection through co-design, local governance, and continuous feedback loops. This ensures programs reflect lived experience and local priorities.

6. Complexity of family circumstances

Families rarely fit into neat categories. Funding models must accommodate those facing intersecting vulnerabilities—such as separation, bereavement, trauma, or prolonged waits for developmental diagnoses.

7. Cultural safety for First Nations families

Mandatory cultural safety standards and sustained capacity-building for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations must be embedded as core requirements, not optional extras.

By integrating these considerations alongside locational disadvantage, the Department can direct investment where it will have the greatest impact—building a system that is inclusive, adaptive, and deeply connected to the communities it serves.

13. What's the best way for organisations to show in grant applications, that their service is genuinely meeting the needs of the community?

The best way for organisations to demonstrate in a grant application that their service genuinely meets community needs is to provide evidence of authentic connection and responsiveness, not just service delivery.

Key elements include:

1. Local Data and Evidence

Show how programs are informed by community-specific data, consultations, and feedback loops. This demonstrates that services are designed around real needs rather than assumptions.

2. Co-Design and Governance

Highlight mechanisms for community involvement in decision-making—such as advisory groups, local governance structures, and co-designed initiatives. This proves services are shaped by lived experience.

3. Partnerships and Collaboration

Provide examples of strong local partnerships across sectors—schools, health, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, and other community services. Evidence of joint planning and shared referral pathways signals integration and trust.

4. Cultural Safety and Inclusion

Show how cultural safety standards are embedded, including employment of local staff, capacity-building for ACCOs, and strategies for CALD engagement. This reflects respect for diversity and cultural integrity.

5. Adaptability and Responsiveness

Demonstrate how services have evolved to meet emerging needs—such as mental health challenges, housing stress, or digital exclusion. Flexibility is a marker of genuine community alignment.

6. Outcomes Beyond Numbers

Include qualitative evidence—case studies, impact stories, and narrative reporting—alongside quantitative data. This captures the complexity of family support work and the real difference made in people's lives.

What applicants should be assessed on

Depth of community engagement and governance.
Evidence of local partnerships and integration.
Commitment to cultural safety and inclusion.
Ability to adapt to emerging needs.
Proven impact through both data and lived experience.

These criteria ensure funding goes to organisations that are embedded in their

communities and capable of delivering responsive, culturally safe, and effective support.

14. How could the grant process be designed to support and increase the number of ACCOs delivering services to children and families?

The grant process can play a pivotal role in increasing the number of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) delivering services to children and families by removing barriers and actively enabling participation. Key strategies include:

1. Simplify application and reporting requirements
Current processes are often complex and resource-intensive, disadvantaging smaller ACCOs. Streamlined applications, reduced compliance burden, and flexible reporting formats will make participation more achievable.

2. Provide capacity-building support
Offer targeted assistance such as grant-writing workshops, mentoring, and administrative support to strengthen ACCOs' ability to compete in open tenders and manage contracts effectively.

3. Embed cultural safety as a core criterion
Make cultural safety standards mandatory and assess applicants on their ability to deliver culturally responsive services. This positions ACCOs as leaders in meeting these requirements.

4. Prioritise Aboriginal-led governance
Design funding models that value community-led decision-making and governance structures. Weight assessment criteria to recognise local cultural authority and connection.

5. Enable flexibility in service design and delivery
Allow ACCOs to adapt programs to reflect cultural practices, extended family involvement, and mobility across regions. Rigid program structures risk excluding culturally appropriate approaches.

6. Longer-term, secure funding
Offer multi-year grants with adequate indexation to support sustainability and workforce development. Short-term contracts undermine trust and continuity of care.

7. Relational contracting and trust-based partnerships
Move beyond transactional processes to relational approaches that prioritise collaboration, shared outcomes, and flexibility.

Empower Funding Arrangement Managers to support adaptive, culturally safe service delivery.

By embedding these principles, the grant process can shift from being a barrier to becoming an enabler—creating a system where ACCOs are not only included but positioned to lead in delivering culturally safe, community-driven services for children and families

15. What else should be built into the program design to help improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families?

To improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, program design must go beyond inclusion and actively embed cultural integrity, community leadership, and flexibility. Key elements include:

1. Mandatory Cultural Safety Standards
Cultural safety should be a non-negotiable requirement across all funded services, supported by clear guidelines and accountability measures.

2. Prioritise Aboriginal-Led Governance
Programs must recognise the authority of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and prioritise their leadership in service design and delivery. Funding models should weight governance structures that reflect cultural knowledge and community decision-making.

3. Capacity-Building for ACCOs
Provide targeted support such as grant-writing assistance, workforce development, and administrative resources to enable ACCOs to compete effectively and sustain service delivery.

4. Flexible Service Design
Allow services to adapt to cultural practices, extended kinship networks, and mobility across regions. Rigid program structures risk excluding culturally appropriate approaches.

5. Relational Contracting and Trust-Based Partnerships
Move beyond transactional compliance to relational approaches that foster

collaboration, shared outcomes, and adaptability. Empower Funding Arrangement Managers to support culturally responsive delivery.

6. Embed Community Voice and Co-Design
Ensure Aboriginal families and communities have a genuine role in shaping programs through consultation, advisory groups, and governance mechanisms. This strengthens trust and relevance.

7. Longer-Term, Secure Funding
Multi-year grants with adequate indexation are essential for stability, workforce retention, and building trust with communities.

8. Integration as a Practice
Fund the time and skills needed for relationship-building, warm handovers, and joint planning between ACCOs and mainstream services. Integration must be resourced, not assumed.

9. Data and Reporting Flexibility
Reporting frameworks should accommodate narrative and qualitative evidence to reflect cultural context and extended family involvement, not just quantitative metrics.

By embedding these principles, the program can move from inclusion to empowerment—creating a system where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families receive culturally safe, community-driven support that strengthens wellbeing and prevents pathways into statutory systems.

16. What types of data would help your organisation better understand its impact and continuously improve its services?

To understand impact and drive continuous improvement, Ngala recommends collecting a mix of quantitative, qualitative, and contextual data that reflects the complexity of family support work.

Key data types include:
1. Outcomes Data

Child development indicators (age-appropriate milestones, school readiness, social-emotional wellbeing).
Family functioning measures (resilience, parenting confidence, relationship quality).

Mental health and wellbeing assessments for parents and children.

2. Service Utilisation Data

Access and reach (number of families served, demographics such as age, cultural background, and location).
Frequency and duration of engagement.
Drop-off points and reasons for disengagement.

3. Equity and Inclusion Data

Cultural safety metrics, including feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
Representation and access for CALD families and children with disability compared to population data.

4. Qualitative Evidence

Case studies, impact statements, and "most significant change" stories to capture complexity.
Community voice through consultations, advisory groups, and co-design processes.
Staff reflections on what works and areas for improvement.

5. Integration and Collaboration Data

Evidence of warm handovers, joint planning, and shared referral pathways.
Partnership effectiveness, measured through surveys or interviews with collaborating organisations.

6. Longitudinal Data

Follow-up data 6–12 months post-program to assess sustained impact.
Indicators of prevention, such as reduced child protection involvement or crisis interventions.

7. Operational and Workforce Data

Staff capability and retention, including training in cultural safety and trauma-informed practice.

Resource allocation for relationship-building and integration activities.

8. Financial and Efficiency Data

Cost per outcome to link investment with measurable improvements.
Flexibility in funding use to respond to emerging needs.

A robust framework should combine quantitative measures (e.g., SCORE domains for mental health, wellbeing, age-appropriate development, and family functioning) with qualitative reporting templates to ensure narrative-based evidence is captured alongside data.

This approach supports transparency, continuous learning, and culturally responsive service delivery.

17. What kinds of data or information would be most valuable for you to share, to show how your service is positively impacting children and families?

To demonstrate positive impact, Ngala would prioritise information that reflects both measurable outcomes and lived experience. This includes:

1. Child and Family Outcomes

Developmental progress for children (social-emotional skills, learning readiness).
Improvements in family wellbeing, resilience, and parenting confidence.

2. Engagement and Reach

Who we are supporting (age, cultural background, location) and how often families participate.
Patterns of service use that show accessibility and responsiveness.

3. Cultural Safety and Inclusion

Feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families on cultural integrity.
Representation of CALD families and children with disability compared to community demographics.

4. Stories and Voices

Case examples and family testimonials that illustrate real-life change.

Community input gathered through advisory groups and co-design processes.

5. Collaboration and Connection

Evidence of integrated practice, such as warm handovers and joint planning with partner services.
Indicators of strengthened local networks and trust-based partnerships.

6. Longer-Term Impact

Follow-up data showing sustained benefits for families and reduced risk factors (e.g., child protection involvement).

Combining quantitative measures with qualitative narratives provides a complete picture of how services improve wellbeing and strengthen families.

This approach ensures accountability while capturing the depth and diversity of outcomes that matter most to communities.

18. If your organisation currently reports in the Data Exchange (DEX), what SCORE Circumstances domain is most relevant to the service you deliver?

For Ngala's community-based support services, the most relevant SCORE Circumstances domains are:

Family Functioning – demonstrating improvements in relationships, resilience, and parenting confidence, which are foundational for strong, connected communities.

Mental Health and Wellbeing – capturing changes in emotional health for parents and children, reducing stress and building protective factors that strengthen family stability.

Age-Appropriate Development – tracking children's progress across social, emotional, and cognitive domains, ensuring they thrive in safe, supportive environments.

These domains are particularly significant for community-based services because they show how local, place-based programs contribute to preventing pathways into statutory systems, fostering social connectedness, and supporting whole-of-family wellbeing.

When combined with qualitative evidence—such as family stories, community feedback, and co-design insights—these measures provide a complete picture of impact and accountability.

19. What kinds of templates or guidance would help you prepare strong case studies that show the impact of your service?

Templates and guidance should make it easy to capture both measurable outcomes and the lived experience of families. Useful features include:

Structured Prompts for Storytelling-
Clear sections for context, challenges faced, actions taken, and outcomes achieved, so stories show the journey and impact.

Space for Family Voice-
Guidance on including direct quotes or reflections from parents, carers, and children to highlight authentic experiences.

Link to Outcomes Frameworks-
Prompts that connect stories to DSS Outcomes Framework and relevant SCORE domains (e.g., family functioning, wellbeing, age-appropriate development).

Cultural Safety Lens-
Sections that encourage reflection on cultural responsiveness and community-led approaches, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Visual and Narrative Options-
Flexibility to include photos (with consent), diagrams, or timelines alongside narrative text for richer storytelling.

Impact Indicators-
Simple fields for quantitative data (e.g., number of sessions, pre/post measures) to complement qualitative insights.

Guidance Notes and Examples-
Practical tips and sample case studies to show what good reporting looks like, ensuring consistency and clarity.

These tools would help providers demonstrate real change in families' lives while aligning with evidence-based practice and DSS reporting requirements.

20. What does a relational contracting approach mean to you in practice? What criteria would you like to see included in a relational contract?

A relational contracting approach for Ngala (and others) means moving beyond a transactional, compliance-driven model to one that is built on trust, collaboration, and shared accountability. In practice, this looks like:

Open Communication and Flexibility:
Regular dialogue between funding arrangement managers and providers to adapt services as community needs evolve.

Shared Outcomes:
A focus on achieving agreed outcomes for children and families rather than rigid adherence to outputs or prescriptive activities.

Empowered Funding Arrangement Managers (FAMs):
Delegated authority for FAMs to make timely decisions that support local responsiveness and innovation.

Recognition of Community Context:
Contracts that value place-based knowledge and cultural safety, allowing services to tailor delivery to local needs.

Reduced Administrative Burden:
Streamlined reporting requirements that prioritise meaningful data and narrative evidence over excessive compliance

Criteria for a strong relational contract should include:

Demonstrated Collaboration History:
Evidence of partnerships and co-design with local communities and other services.

Community Engagement and Voice:
Mechanisms for incorporating feedback from families and communities into service planning.

Cultural Safety Commitments:
Clear expectations for embedding cultural integrity and working with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

Flexibility Provisions:
Ability to adjust service models and funding allocations within agreed parameters to respond to emerging needs.

Longer-Term Funding:
Multi-year agreements with adequate indexation to support stability, workforce retention, and trust-building.

Capacity-Building Support:
Recognition of the time and resources needed for integration, relationship-building, and continuous improvement.

21. What's the best way for the department to decide which organisations should be offered a relational contract?

The department should prioritise organisations that demonstrate trust-based, community-embedded practice and a proven ability to deliver outcomes in partnership with others.

Key considerations include:

Collaboration History
Evidence of strong partnerships, co-design with local communities, and integrated service delivery.

Community Engagement and Voice
Demonstrated responsiveness to local needs through consultation, feedback loops, and governance structures that include community representation.

Cultural Safety and Inclusion
Commitment to cultural integrity, including partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and culturally responsive practice.

Adaptability and Innovation
A track record of adjusting service models to meet emerging needs while maintaining quality and outcomes.

Performance and Impact
Proven ability to achieve outcomes for children and families, supported by both quantitative data and qualitative evidence (e.g., case studies, stories of change).

Place-Based Knowledge
Deep understanding of local context, including barriers to access and strategies for inclusion.

Capacity for Relational Practice
Systems and workforce capability to engage in ongoing dialogue, joint planning, and flexible delivery.

These criteria ensure relational contracts are awarded to organisations that can work collaboratively, respond to complexity, and build trust with communities, rather than those focused solely on compliance.

22. Is your organisation interested in a relational contracting approach? Why/why not?

Yes, Ngala strongly supports a relational contracting approach because it reflects how we work—with communities, families, and partners—to deliver flexible, culturally safe, and locally responsive services.

This approach aligns with Ngala's commitment to prevention, early intervention, and community-led decision-making.

A relational model moves beyond transactional compliance and enables Ngala to:

Build Trust-Based Partnerships
Deepen relationships between the department, Ngala, and local communities to achieve shared outcomes that matter for children and families.

Respond to Local Needs with Flexibility
Adapt service models as circumstances change, ensuring programs remain relevant and effective for diverse communities.

Reduce Administrative Burden
Streamline reporting to focus on meaningful outcomes and qualitative evidence, freeing time for direct service delivery and integration work.

Empower Funding Arrangement Managers (FAMs)
Equip FAMs with delegated authority to support innovation and responsiveness at the local level, fostering collaboration rather than compliance.

Drive Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Create space for adaptive practice, co-design with families, and solutions tailored to community priorities.

Relational contracting is particularly critical for community-based services, where success depends on trust, cultural integrity, and strong local partnerships.

For Ngala, this approach would enable us to deliver place-based solutions that strengthen families, build resilience, and prevent pathways into statutory systems.

23. Is there anything else you think the department should understand or consider about this proposed approach?

From Ngala's perspective, the success of this reform depends on more than structural changes—it requires a shift in mindset, investment in relationships, and a commitment to equity and cultural integrity.

Key considerations include:

1. Relational Contracting Is a Cultural Shift

Moving from compliance-driven models to relational contracting is not just a legal change—it requires trust, flexibility, and capability-building on both sides. Funding Arrangement Managers (FAMs) must be empowered and trained to make decisions that support local responsiveness, otherwise the approach risks becoming another layer of bureaucracy rather than an enabler of innovation.

2. Integration and Collaboration Must Be Resourced

Integration is a practice, not a floorplan. Co-location alone does not create collaboration.
The department should fund the "glue"—time, skills, and relationship-building—needed for warm handovers, joint planning, and culturally responsive partnerships.

3. Community Voice and Cultural Safety Are Non-Negotiable

Programs must embed community governance and co-design as core principles. Cultural safety standards should be mandatory, with clear accountability measures, and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) prioritised in governance and delivery - through supportive partnerships as not all ACCOs are 'there' yet..

4. Longer-Term, Flexible Funding Is Essential

Multi-year agreements with adequate indexation will enable stability, workforce retention, and trust-building.
Flexibility to adjust service models and funding allocations within agreed parameters is critical for responding to emerging needs.

5. Reporting Must Reflect Complexity

Current linear reporting does not capture the reality of family support work.
Templates should allow for qualitative evidence (stories of change, cultural context) alongside quantitative data, linked to DSS Outcomes Framework and SCORE domains.

6. Equity in Tendering

Competitive processes risk disadvantaging smaller, community-based organisations.
Criteria should value proven performance, local connections, and cultural responsiveness, not just scale or tender-writing capacity.

7. Implementation Needs a Staged Rollout

Poorly implemented relational contracting could increase compliance burden and undermine existing collaborative models.
A clear roadmap, with consultation and feedback loops, is essential to avoid unintended consequences.

8. Recognise Realities of Service Delivery

Families often present with multiple, complex challenges that do not fit neatly into program streams.
Funding models must allow for person-centred flexibility, including increased service intensity when needed.

Ngala's Position

Relational contracting and new funding approaches offer significant potential to strengthen outcomes if they are implemented with trust, flexibility, and community

leadership at their core.

For Ngala, success means a system that values place-based knowledge, cultural integrity, and genuine collaboration, enabling services to adapt and innovate in partnership with families and communities.

Biggest point is there may be much implied in these decisions and we won't know more until the tender documents are revealed. People need time to process and provide feedback - the devil will be in the detail, as we are all saying right now.