

Are you an individual or making a submission on behalf of an organisation?

Organisation

Organisation name

Northern Rivers Children's Services - Ready Set Go - Child Development and Parent Support Program

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?

- New South Wales

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

Regional area

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

The new vision in theory sounds promising, however it lacks the detail needed to fully evaluate what this means in practice. We believe that any changes need to build on and expand existing programs. It is important this process of change does not undermine or erase the established services that communities rely on, especially services with proven track records on delivering meaningful outcomes. Further, there is a limited pool of funding, and it is not yet clear how a single national program will fit within the broader social services system and how it may impact service delivery. It is also not clear how this proposed national program will align with and complement other programs and policy initiatives such as Thriving Kids. Nor is it clear if this will match current and emerging needs and we believe comprehensive service needs analysis and mapping needs to be undertaken. Without a thorough analysis it is difficult to assess if this vision and the proposed outcomes are appropriate.

2. Are the two main outcomes what we should be working towards for children and families? Why/Why not? - Outcome 1: Parents and caregivers are empowered to raise healthy, resilient children - Outcome 2: Children are supported to grow into healthy, resilient adults.

We suggest if these are the 2 outcomes that are settled on in principle, there needs to be a change in word emphasis shown in bold to:

Outcome 1. Parents and caregivers are supported to raise healthy, thriving children.

Outcome 2. Children are supported to develop and thrive to their full potential. Research shows early childhood intervention helps shape future success, but we cannot target adult resilience as an outcome because it demands long-term data and lies beyond the program's focus on ages 0–5.

The term resilient can feel heavy and evoke complex feelings for families and communities who have experienced trauma and/or large-scale tragedy or natural disasters. For some, it may inadvertently minimise the ongoing impact of these events or create pressure to 'bounce back' within a certain timeframe. It may unintentionally dismiss the reality that healing is not linear and that many people continue to be affected long after the event.

The term Empowered can be a loaded word that suggests parents are disempowered and can be disenfranchising. It can also suggest that once they are Empowered they no longer need support. In reality, parenting thrives on interdependence-the ability to seek and accept support when needed. Expecting parents to manage everything alone is unrealistic and often leads to stress and poorer outcomes for families.

The outcomes also need to mention the importance of strengthening community capacity to support families. It takes a community to raise a child, and families need connection and support of the community to raise healthy thriving children.

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

Without clarity on the details of the proposed national program, it is difficult to determine whether it will offer greater flexibility. As a small, community-based provider, we already demonstrate flexibility and responsiveness to local needs. Our continued involvement would bring valuable insights and adaptability, supporting DSS in achieving improved outcomes for children and families.

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?

Our organisation currently spans both Stream 2 and Stream 3, delivering prevention and early intervention services as well as intensive family supports. With over 20 years of experience in these areas, we are well positioned to continue providing responsive and flexible approaches that meet the evolving needs of our community.

The streams broadly align with the current and anticipated needs of children and families in our community. However, further detail on program implementation would enable us to provide a more informed assessment. In relation to what our community needs now we know:

- Small, locally embedded organizations provide continuity of relationships: families know the workers, not just the organization.
- Our flexible outreach model allows the team to support families across long day care, preschools, playgroups, community hubs, and other familiar spaces where families naturally gather.
- The multidisciplinary structure of our program brings together child development expertise (speech pathology, OT, family support, community development) to respond holistically to the full range of family indicators.
- Our coaching approach is strengths-based, starting from where each family is at and building on their existing skills, priorities, and cultural context.
- Universal or “one-size-fits-all” parenting programs often fail to recognize the unique strengths and challenges of each family. In contrast, our model adapts to individual needs so parents feel supported, respected, and empowered.

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

We are concerned about the potential impact of removing our current program on our highly vulnerable community and the children and families we support. When programs are discontinued or significantly altered and new providers enter, communities can experience harmful outcomes such as loss of trust, the need to retell their stories, and challenges in rebuilding relationships. To prevent this, program funding and structure should be long-term and sustainable, ensuring continuity and stability for families.

Our program straddles stream 2 & 3 and the program design needs the flexibility to provide levels of service across streams 2 & 3. It is important that families can access changing levels of support as their circumstances change. Families do not change in a linear manner, rather, they are dynamic and are adjusting to constant

changes in stresses and pressures and changes in circumstances. This means a family that engages in prevention and early intervention may require intensive family supports at a later stage, shift back to lower level of support and then need intensive support again.

An example to illustrate this is a child may be referred due to concerns about development. Initially the family may present well, and no complex needs are identified. As the service engages with the family and trust is built, it emerges that there is significant family violence and intensive family supports are needed. In time, the parent may leave the violent partner and shift to only requiring early intervention supports. Then at a later stage, due to cumulative stressors such as insecure housing, poverty and declining mental health the parent may need intensive family support. This example highlights the importance of families being able to access the level of support they need seamlessly and to have the level of support adjusted as their circumstances change.

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

If these priorities cannot be changed/added to, we would prioritise the 4 listed priorities in the following order and with the changes made below:

1. Invest early and comprehensively to improve family wellbeing, break cycles of disadvantage, and reduce the need for later interventions – like child protection
2. Ensure services are informed by and respond to community needs.
3. Prioritise connected or co-located collaborative partnerships and integrated services that work together to meet family needs.
4. Improve outcomes for First Nations children and families by increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community – controlled organisation (also called ACCOS) delivering or partnering to deliver supports in locations with high First Nations population.

It is very important that First Nations families have choice to engage with an ACCO or a non – ACCO service provider. This is especially true in regional communities where many families express privacy concerns and difficulty accessing support due to personal conflictual relationships with community members that may be employed by the ACCO. There is also a workforce shortage issue with difficulty recruiting and retaining the people for ACCO services – especially in regional areas.

In relation to Prioritising Investment the department needs to understand:

- Investing in small, embedded community partners preserves long-standing trust,

deep relational engagement, and genuine accessibility.

- Our service is already fully established in the community, with existing shopfronts, real estate, and known service sites — eliminating the need for lengthy establishment periods.
- Because teams, infrastructure, and community visibility are already in place, there is no long lead-in time required to recruit staff, find premises, or build awareness.
- Maintaining multiple local providers distributes responsibility, reduces risk, and prevents any single organisation from holding all gatekeeping power.
- This model remains cost-effective, adaptable to policy change, and responsive to demographic and community needs.
- Retaining a diverse network of providers strengthens choice, equity, and access for families who may not engage with a single centralised provider.

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

It is important to prioritise longer term support being provided for families with significant and multiple complex needs. Many families have a number of intersectional complexities, meaning these factors do not exist in isolation, but interact to produce specific challenges and barriers that cannot be fully understood by looking at a single identity alone. Understanding intersectional complexities is crucial for developing more effective and equitable policies and intervention. This includes understanding that intervention needs significant investment and wrap around support over longer periods of time. Short term outcome focused models do not work for families with multiple complex needs. It is important to ensure the priorities include families with diverse family structures such as:

- kinship care
- grandparent-led households
- non-traditional families
- LGBTQIA
- non-nuclear
- single-parent families
- people with a disability.

It is also important to explicitly ensure that priority is given to families:

- experiencing family and / or community violence
- with mental health issues
- with substance issues
- with insecure housing or homelessness

- experiencing poverty
- who are isolated with no family or social supports

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, we believe the proposed focus areas align with the needs and priorities of our service. However, we recommend it is essential to expand these areas to include diverse family structures such as kinship care, grandparent-led households, non-traditional families, LGBTQIA, non-nuclear, single-parent families and people with a disability to ensure comprehensive support. A strong focus on young parents under 25 is problematic as it makes assumptions that the parents age alone is a risk factor. Many parents 25 and under are competent in their parenting, while some need support. This is true across the age span of parenting.

We also believe the key areas of interest need to cover a range of factors. Families experiencing family and / or community violence, mental health, substance issues and poverty along with families that are isolated or removed from extended family supports need to be explicit areas of investment and focus.

Important considerations to improve Family Wellbeing that need to be addressed are:

- Families with complex or intergenerational needs benefit most from stable, trusting, long-term relationships with practitioners who can adapt to changing circumstances.
- Parents feel empowered when they understand child development, strengthen their connection with their children, and receive practical, tailored coaching.
- Small teams build community social capital: parents learn together, develop peer networks, and strengthen shared capacity — improving wellbeing beyond the immediate program.
- Practical navigation support (NDIS, paediatric pathways, obtaining IDs/birth certificates, school transitions) reduces stress and builds parent confidence in advocating for their children.

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

As mentioned previously, there is a need to broaden the focus to include diverse family structures such as kinship care, grandparent-led households, and single-parent families and support for co-parenting. Expanding the program to reflect

these realities will ensure more comprehensive and equitable support for family wellbeing.

Child protection in Australia provided through the states and territories is woefully under-resourced leaving children at significant risk of harm. We hold grave concerns for the safety of many children in our community that need more intensive support than early intervention services can provide and that do not get allocated child protection intervention due to lack of resources. Stronger and significant investment and partnering between state funded child protection services and the Commonwealth early intervention sector is needed.

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

The focus needs to be on integration, collaboration and partnerships more than co-location. The local community and leadership need to have input and engagement in the design and response to ensure the program is suited to and responsive to local emergent needs.

Effective, coordinated and integrated services are dependent on trusting relationships to build collaboration, partnerships and warm referrals, not shared locations. Co-location is extremely challenging with a lack of suitable premises and would need capital expenditure to effectively achieve. Flood affected towns such as Lismore NSW have lost many suitable premises and many community services have been displaced. Additionally, co-location could pose challenges for access, especially in rural and remote areas. Co-location could also lead to some community members not accessing appropriate services in smaller communities due to confidentiality, especially in regard to domestic violence.

In order to effectively connect and coordinate services the following factors need to be understood and reflected in the funding model:

- A diverse network of partners prevents siloing and brings complementary expertise, improving overall system responsiveness.
- Maintaining multiple community partners ensures families can transition between supports without losing connection or momentum.
- Collaboration strengthens shared planning, joint problem-solving, and flexible division of responsibilities based on each agency's strengths.
- Over-consolidation under a single provider risks reducing choice, excluding families who have had ruptured experiences with that service, and diminishing engagement.

When our team uses the term “warm referral,” we are referring to a supported, relational referral process that goes beyond giving contact details. A warm referral

includes:

- o Facilitated or supported introduction to the new service.
 - o Checking in with the family to ensure they understand the purpose and feel comfortable engaging.
 - o Following up with the receiving service, where appropriate, to confirm the connection is made.
 - o Ensuring continuity so families are not left navigating complex systems alone.
- Defining warm referral clearly supports consistent understanding for readers and reinforces the relational nature of our work.

Relationship building takes much time and energy to establish and is indispensable to achieve integrated and connected service delivery. Relationship building ensure understanding of local needs, strengthens cultural responsiveness, improves referral pathways and reduces duplication. This new approach must prioritise services embedded in their community that have demonstrated relational work and partnerships to ensure continuity of service provision for the benefit of community. Services such as ours have a 20 + year history with incredibly strong collaborative relationships and partnerships built over this time.

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?

Other effective means to achieve connected and coordinated services that we would highlight and believe that applicants need to be assessed on, include a demonstrated record of:

- Interagency forum participation.
- Genuine collaborative projects delivered in partnership with other providers, including with ACCO's.
- Participation in child protection interagency meetings.
- Place -based, flexible delivery of intervention in community settings such as in Early Childhood Centres.
- Provision of warm referrals, and collaborative individualised planning for children and families.
- Strong relational and flexible practice with proven effective outcomes.
- Regular community consultation to design and review community priorities.
- Working with an Advisory committee made up of community professionals and leaders.

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

Given the varied and complex differences between communities, it is critical that program development targets the unique needs of each region. In our local area, we have and are responding to challenges such as the impact of natural disasters like the 2022 Lismore NSW flood events. These events have created ongoing trauma impacts for families, children and community.

The department needs to understand and consider that regional and remote areas face transport barriers which have a huge impact on family functioning and capacity to access services and supports. Program design may need some capacity embedded to provide or subsidise transport for families so they can engage in services.

These factors should be considered alongside locational disadvantage to ensure funding truly reflects community needs. It is vitally important that services that are embedded in their communities, who know the history and story of their communities are prioritised to deliver responsive services tailored to their community's needs.

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

What is important for the department to understand in relation to Responding to Community Need is:

- Local community partners hold deep knowledge of community histories, social dynamics, demographic shifts, and emerging needs — insight that larger, centralised NGOs cannot replicate.
- Outreach ensures support is offered in places where families already feel safe and welcome, reducing stigma and increasing engagement.
- Small services such as ours adapt quickly to policy changes. For example, when free preschool hours were introduced and employment supports shifted, we moved from focusing primarily in long day care settings to working more intensively in preschools where children were more likely to need support.
- Families with intergenerational trauma, mental health challenges, housing instability, disability, or limited service literacy benefit from the consistent, relational, adaptable support that small flexible teams are uniquely able to provide.

We strongly believe applications need to be sought from only community-based, not-for-profit organisations. Not for profit services purpose is to reinvest all funding back into the community, driven by service rather than profit.

Organisations need to demonstrate that they genuinely meet community needs and this evidence could include:

- Collecting testimonials from families and children.
- Gaining feedback from other service providers in the region whom they engage with.
- Highlighting a proven track record of delivering high-quality programs that are adaptable and responsive to emergent community needs.
- Providing evidence-based outcomes through pre and post assessments, using data such as SCORE results.

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

We support in principle increasing the number of ACCO'S delivering supports in locations with high populations if that is the preferred approach by those communities and service mapping and data supports the areas where this is needed. It is important for the department to understand that there are workforce shortages to staff an increase in ACCO's. In our region, suitably qualified and experienced First Nations employees are highly sought after and there are not enough staff to fill all available positions. The grant process needs to be designed to support and/or increase the number of ACCOs and Non- ACCOs partnering to delivering services to children and families by:

- A focus on funding services that are partnering with or commit to developing partnerships with existing ACCO's to deliver services.
- Services that will, where appropriate, partner with ACCOs to mentor First Nations trainees to increase workforce capacity.

Non- ACCO services demonstrating cultural awareness, safety and responsiveness in their program design can provide services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. This can be achieved through active and ongoing consultation, and training and guidance provided by ACCOs to enable provision of culturally relevant safe and responsive practices and programs. Over a 20 + year history, approximately 50% of the children and families our service (a non – ACCO) have supported have identified as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both with excellent engagement and effective outcomes.

The grant process needs to recognise the importance of First Nations families having choice to engage with ACCOs or non-ACCO services. Some families explicitly do not want to engage with ACCOs due to privacy concerns, which can be especially true in regional and remote communities.

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

Program design needs a focus on collaboration and partnerships between ACCO and Non- ACCO services to work together for improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Community capacity building needs to be an essential and integral part of the program design. Programs that provide opportunities for families to connect in community and strengthen knowledge, skills and relationships will support parenting capacity to provide safe and nurturing environments for their children to thrive. Parents learning and growing together has a positive ripple effect within community. This is true for both ATSI and non ATSI families as many families are struggling with a loss of community connection and are parenting in isolation.

Program design to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children needs to understand:

- Local, trusted relationships are critical for engagement with First Nations families, especially where there has been mistrust or harm in larger service systems.
- Maintaining multiple community partners supports cultural and psychological safety by offering choice and reducing the risk of families feeling “stuck” with one service provider.
- Outreach in early learning and community settings allows First Nations families to participate in familiar, culturally safe environments rather than centralised hubs that may carry stigma.
- Our strengths-based, relational coaching approach aligns with community-led principles by supporting parents and caregivers to exercise agency, autonomy, and cultural authority in raising their children.

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

Qualitative data and data collection that measures engagement levels would be helpful to assist our organisation to understand our impact and improve our services. Data that enables us to capture more story and convey family complexity through reporting would be highly beneficial.

We need to stress that a focus on short term outcomes is often detrimental. As such, data that can show change over a period of time at incremental reflection points would be beneficial. It is important to stress that progress and change occur

in a non – linear manner.

The new approach needs to recognise that families with multiple complexities such as intergenerational trauma, poverty, mental health, family violence and substance issues will need intensive wrap around supports and often for extended periods of time. Families may need different levels of support over time as their needs and circumstances change. A focus on short term outcomes with such families is not only unrealistic, it also creates further stress and poor outcomes. When families are prematurely exited from programs it negatively impacts trust and safety and a family's capacity to engage and make positive changes. Further, rigid streams could create artificial barriers and families need to be provided with support that is responsive to and matches their needs in a timely manner. Our program straddles 2 of the proposed streams and we need to be able to provide services for both streams flexibly to meet changing family needs. Data capture would need to be able to accommodate this program structure.

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?

Data needs to be able to reflect changes in outcomes over time and sometimes over extended periods of time. Data needs to capture the qualitative outcomes and reflect the complexity, nuanced challenges and the positive outcomes for children, families and community.

Measuring Outcomes effectively needs a combined quantitative–qualitative evidence framework and is essential for early intervention work where relational engagement is a core mechanism for change. Specifically this evidence needs to include:

- Quantitative measures include: attendance, referrals, developmental data, engagement progression, and service navigation outcomes.
- Qualitative measures capture: lived experience, parent voice, child voice, relational trust, practitioner reflections, pre and post assessment results, and the growth of peer and community networks (social capital).

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

The most relevant SCORE Circumstances domains for the services we deliver and currently report on are:

- Family Functioning
- Age-Appropriate Development.

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

Templates that have an open and flexible way to respond to provide a case study through narrative would be helpful. It may include some leading open-ended questions to guide the responses.

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

In practice, a relational contracting approach means building long-term, trust-based partnerships that prioritise collaboration and shared outcomes over rigid compliance. This strongly aligns with our current way of working. We actively partner with key service providers and stakeholders in our region to deliver integrated, responsive supports for children and families. For us, this approach involves:

- Open communication and transparency with funding bodies and partners.
- Co-designing solutions with stakeholders to address emerging community needs.
- Flexibility in service delivery, adapting programs as circumstances change.
- Shared accountability for outcomes rather than transactional reporting. We believe this model fosters stronger trust, better collaboration, and ultimately improved outcomes for children and families.

We would like to see criteria that reflect the values and strengths of community-based organisations, including:

- Community Connection: Demonstrated local knowledge and strong relationships within the community.
- Not-for-Profit Commitment: A clear purpose to reinvest funding into community outcomes rather than profit.
- Collaboration and Partnership: Evidence of working effectively with other service providers and stakeholders.
- Flexibility and Responsiveness: Ability to adapt services to emerging needs and co-design solutions with families and partners.
- Proven Track Record: Experience delivering high-quality, evidence-based programs with measurable outcomes.
- Cultural Competence and Inclusivity: Capacity to support diverse family structures and respond to cultural needs.

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

The best way for the department to decide which organisations should be offered a relational contract is to assess criteria that reflect both capability and alignment with relational principles, such as:

- Community Connection: Demonstrated local knowledge and strong relationships within the community.
- Collaboration and Partnership: Evidence of working effectively with other service providers and stakeholders.
- Track Record: Proven history of delivering high-quality, evidence-based programs and achieving positive outcomes.
- Flexibility and Responsiveness: Ability to adapt services to emerging needs and co-design solutions.
- Values Alignment: Commitment to trust, transparency, and shared goals rather than purely transactional approaches.
- Not-for-Profit Purpose: Reinvestment of funding into community outcomes rather than profit-making. These criteria ensure that organisations selected for relational contracts are genuinely positioned to deliver sustainable, community-driven outcomes.

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

Yes, we are very interested in a relational contracting approach because it strongly aligns with how we have planned, developed, and implemented successful programs for over 20 years. Our organisation thrives on collaboration, trust, and flexibility, principles at the heart of relational contracting. This approach would allow us to continue delivering responsive, community-driven services while working in genuine partnership with DSS to achieve shared outcomes for children and families.

We need to see more detail is needed to know how the department sees relational contracting working in practice. There is an inherent power imbalance between funder and service provider which needs to be carefully managed to ensure it is truly relational.

We strongly believe that longer, 5-year grant agreements are more productive due to the ability to plan over the longer term. It is very important that there is flexibility in the use of funding across the contract life span to enable more adaptive and flexible service delivery. The current financial year basis of funding and acquittal of unspent funds each year is limiting and reduces scope for program innovation and

best use of funds. Further longer the grant agreements need indexation built in to ensure that increased costs over time do not mean reduced service delivery.

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

We hold concerns about a focus on national data sets determining priorities for funding that risk missing local nuance and hidden disadvantage. For example, our community in Lismore NSW is significantly impacted by the ongoing effects of trauma caused by the recent climate change disasters of the 2022 flood events. The impacts on parenting capacity and child development is profound and needs intensive support.

The department needs to understand the importance of continuity of service provision in communities. Services with a 20 + year history, embedded in communities with trust and strong reputations need to be prioritised. The collective capital of established relationships, knowledge and expertise must be recognised, valued and cannot be underestimated. The community needs services to be predictable and consistent to know where to go for support when it is needed so they can easily navigate the services network. Proven track records of meeting departmental outcomes and providing meaningful support and change for children and parents must be a high determining factor in awarding contracts. Long – term contracts with periodic outcomes check points will ensure outcomes are being met. It will also support services to attract and retain quality employees and provide continuous quality improvement through a relationships-based approach. The negative impact of the tender process and uncertainty on employee well-being through change fatigue and difficulty retaining staff is crucial to consider. Constant change and uncertainty negatively impact on services capacity to provide the community with the optimal supports and services they need. Competitive tendering threatens service continuity and erodes collaboration as services lose transparency and openness to protect their intellectual property. It is counter to the collaborative/partnership model that is most productive for communities of practice and the community the organisations serve. The short time frame for this process is diminishing trust and adding further stress to service providers. Competitive tendering also promotes ‘cost’ over participant value and disadvantages small community-based organisations who don’t have the same scale of resources to develop complex tender submissions. Smaller organisations are at a distinct disadvantage in open competitive tendering. As such, the process must be fair and very transparent and would include features such as:

- Providing the weighting assigned to each question
- Ensuring appropriate weighting and valuing of good proven performance and

demonstrated outcomes.

- Ensuring appropriate weighting and assessing demonstrated local connections and knowledge with historical connections and service delivery.
- Clear and full disclosure of how AI is planned to be used in determining and assessing grant applications.

Other important factors to consider in the tender process and assessing “value for money” in place-based service delivery are:

- The cost of service delivery is higher in rural regional and remote communities and needs to be catered for in funding grants.
- Subcontracting and partnership arrangements have a cost factor
- There is a significant financial cost in lost relationships, time and productivity when existing service providers are replaced by new providers.

We are concerned that if services such as ours were not funded in this tender round, and the funding went to a competitor the impacts on the children, families and communities would be profound, especially in the first 1 – 2 years of a transition phase. We hold great concerns about the impacts on community that the loss of our service would have and the vacuum this would leave. We believe that local embedded providers are best equipped providers are best equipped to respond to and serve their communities, as they have a deep understanding of the area’s history and specific and emergent needs. Diversity of organisations is critical for a robust service system as it increases the service sectors capacity to reflect on and respond to their diverse communities needs.

We hold great concerns that there is a possibility that our community may not be prioritised for continued grant funding due to emergent high need populations. If the department is really serious about the stated vision then it is imperative that communities that have historically been supported continue to be supported and that the program is expanded to further address emergent new high community needs areas. If the Lismore NSW region lost funding entirely for the scope of services currently provided it would have devastating impacts on the community. We believe it is vital that the department releases its high needs, high demands locations first to enable time for the service sector to respond to the proposed regions to be funded and help inform the department of nuanced needs that national data sets may not capture.