

A new approach to programs for families and children



3/12/2025

To whom it may concern,

Parent-Child Mother Goose Australia (Inc.) (P-CMG) is the Australian Charity and Not-for-Profit registered organisation which trains facilitators in the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program. We are aware that as the Department of Social Services grants such as the Children and Parenting Support, Communities for Children Facilitating Partners support this program to run in community-based organisations throughout Australia.

Parent-Child Mother Goose Australia (Inc.) supports the DSS grants to focus and develop further data about prevention and early intervention with families. Parent-Child Mother Goose Australia (Inc.) also supports further development of programs that are focused on community led and culturally safe practices, incorporating language, culture, practice, and opportunities to enrich attachment bonding between a parent or carer with an infant and /or young child.

Responses to Discussion Questions:

Vision and outcomes

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

The new vision has a focus on skills and confidence, rather than attachment and bonding.

The Parent-Child Mother Goose program aims to build a stronger attachment and bond between parents/caregiver and their child/infant. Attachment Theory is a foundational theory when working with families. Working to develop a stronger attachment between a caregiver and their child/infant is a prevention to counter mental illness, child maltreatment, and neglect.

Parenting programs which focus on skills development can be useful when a parent has experienced trauma, mental illness, and/or has a cognitive difference through intellectual disability or neurodivergence. However, nurturing and bonding are still stronger determinants of lifelong health than a focus on parenting skills.

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.

These outcomes are positive, however, they are linear. Some of the anecdotal outcomes of attending Parent-Child Mother Goose programs are that people build connections in their local community and are supported by new friendships. Community connections and development of community resourcefulness is also a positive outcome of the parent-child and family work that is carried out under the Children and Parenting Programs, and the Communities for Children Facilitating Partners. A broadening of these outcomes would strengthen the community and intergenerational outcomes overall.

Program structure

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

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?

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

Parent-Child Mother Goose Australia (Inc.) does not directly receive grants to run programs. The three funding streams may have a direct impact on Parent-Child Mother Goose programs across Australia, if services are not funded to continue running the groups.

Prioritising investment

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

Are there any other priorities or issues you think the department should be focussing on?

Parent-Child Mother Goose Australia (Inc.) agrees that early intervention, integrated and local services, responding to community need are great priorities. Parent-Child Mother Goose Australia (Inc.) also encourages further investment into supporting children and families from our First Nations populations. However, location-based services can provide services in regional areas, when families are not always located near an ACCO service.

Improving family wellbeing

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?

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

Parent-Child Mother Goose Australia (Inc.) supports the focus on prevention and early intervention. However, a focus on practical activities that give parents and caregivers tools and knowledge may not include the Parent-Child Mother Goose program, which focuses on attachment, bonding, social connection and emotional wellbeing.

Connected, co-located, and integrated services

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

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?

Responding to community need

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

Community need may be based on population growth in outer metropolitan/semi-regional areas; diversity of families and spoken languages; having connections to community throughout multiple services; lack of suitable services, for example allied health and speech pathology, mental health services.

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

Improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

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

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

Measuring outcomes

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

DSS are gathering large amounts of information about the Parent-Child Mother Goose programs across Australia. Parent-Child Mother Goose Australia (Inc.) encourages the Department to summarise and publish the attendance and outcomes data from regions/states. Parent-Child Mother Goose Australia (Inc.) also encourages a survey or evaluation across the types of measurement which are being used to capture positive outcomes. This will contribute to a discussion about evidence and which quantitative methods are better to evaluate the Parent-Child Mother Goose program.

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?

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

P-CMG programs funded through DSS grants domains most used are:

- Client circumstances SCORE:
 - Mental Health, wellbeing and self-care
 - Personal and Family Safety
 - Community Participation and networks

- Family Functioning
- Client Goal SCORE:
 - Changed knowledge and access to information
 - Changed behaviours
 - Changed engagement to relevant support services

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

Parent-Child Mother Goose Australia (Inc.) encourages the development of case studies from the previous rounds of the Families and Children grant schemes which showcase the positive outcomes of the programs utilised across Australia. This will contribute to further knowledge in this sector and promote the positive impacts that this grant scheme has for families.

Working together

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

Formal relational contracting means less involvement of Government departments for reporting. Strong program planning must have built-in evaluation, or a third-party evaluator who oversees the measurement of the outcomes. If there is less Government information gathering, then a more professional evaluation should be undertaken that can contribute to the evidence base across the Families and Children's services sector.

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

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

Parent-Child Mother Goose Australia (Inc.) is a small charity which could not manage a formal relational contract. Parent-Child Mother Goose programs are delivered by professionals with diverse educational backgrounds, including, Early Childhood Education, Social Work, Psychology, Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology, Nursing, Librarians and other Allied Health. Evaluations need to be robust, but not reducing the ability for this program to be delivered by a diverse range of professionals.

Other

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