

Proposed changes to programs for families and children

**PeakCare's Submission to the Department
of Social Services**

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Introduction

PeakCare welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Department of Social Services (DSS) on the proposed changes to programs for families and children. PeakCare supports the response made by Families Australia on these changes as the national body representing the views of member organisations working with children, young people and families. We support the intent of the proposed reforms to prioritise investment in prevention, early intervention and targeted supports that are informed by and responsive to community needs. Where the sector is adequately supported to transition, PeakCare supports an approach that strengthens long term funding security, simplifies grant processes and enhances services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. PeakCare also supports Families Australia in calling for further detail on the proposed reforms design and implementation as well as strong and carefully considered transition arrangements.

Given the significant, system-wide impacts of the proposed changes, PeakCare also supports Families Australia's offer to play a coordinating role alongside government throughout implementation. As the trusted national peak body, this coordinated leadership approach would help create the conditions for a smoother transition, strengthen sector capability across jurisdictions, and assist in early realisation of the reform's intended benefits. PeakCare encourages DSS to give strong consideration to this proposal to minimise disruption for organisations and, most importantly, for the children, young people, families, and communities they support.

About PeakCare

PeakCare is a not-for-profit peak body for child and family services in Queensland, providing an independent voice representing and promoting matters of interest to the non-government sector. Across Queensland, PeakCare represents small, medium, and large local, state-wide and national non-government organisations which provide prevention and early intervention, generic, targeted, and intensive family support to children, young people, families, and communities. Member organisations also provide child protection services, foster care, kinship care and residential care for children and young people who are at risk of entry to, or who are in the statutory child protection system and youth justice systems.

A large network of associate members and supporters also subscribe to PeakCare. This includes individuals with an interest in child protection, youth justice and related services, and who are supportive of PeakCare's policy platform around the rights and entitlements of children, young people and their families to safety, wellbeing, and equitable access to life opportunities.

PeakCare's Submission

PeakCare supports the intent of new funding approaches which aim to provide children with the supports they need, when and where they need them. The Australian Childhood Maltreatment Study (ACMS) found that, 62.2 per cent of the Australian population has experienced at least one type of childhood maltreatment.¹ This highlights the widespread nature of childhood maltreatment and

¹ Haslam D, Mathews B, Pacella R, Scott JG, Finkelhor D, Higgins DJ, Meinck F, Erskine HE, Thomas HJ, Lawrence D, Malacova E. (2023). [*The prevalence and impact of child maltreatment in Australia: Findings from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study: Brief Report*](#). Australian Child Maltreatment Study, Queensland University of Technology.

reinforces the importance of a public health approach to supporting children and families. With increasing numbers of young people entering out-of-home care in Queensland, ongoing workforce shortages and decreasing availability of foster carers, increased funding in prevention and early intervention supports is essential to the long-term sustainability of our child protection system.

The need for reorienting our community services investment is emphasised by economic outcomes highlighted in recent analysis: Australia currently spends more than **\$22 billion** annually on late interventions for children and young people alone. This includes interventions in child protection, youth justice and acute health care, an increase of over 40 per cent since 2019 which exceeds both inflation and population growth.² While PeakCare supports greater investment in these areas and acknowledges the long-term benefits this can provide, it is important to recognise that prevention and early intervention funding will ultimately significantly reduce the needs for expensive crisis response services. The return on investment from these early interventions will take time to materialise, and until such time, sustained investment in intensive support and crisis services will need to remain in place.

PeakCare also supports changes to funding arrangements that improve stability through longer term agreements. We strongly support efforts to simplify grant application and reporting processes, noting the significant administrative burden these processes currently place on organisations. Noting this however, it is essential organisations are adequately supported to transition to any new model and that new contracting agreements are outcomes focused and support genuine partnership and collaboration. Importantly, service continuity for children, young people and families requiring services must not be compromised during this period of change.

Finally, PeakCare supports reforms aimed at improving outcomes for First Nations children and families through efforts to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) delivering supports to their communities. We encourage DSS to work closely with national and local partners such as SNAICC and the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP) to ensure funding approaches enable genuine community-centred approaches.

Conclusion

PeakCare welcomes the intent of the proposed reforms and supports Families Australia's position regarding the need for careful, well-supported transition arrangements. We encourage DSS to work closely with state and national peak bodies and community organisations to set the conditions for a smooth transition and ensure funding and implementation approaches deliver meaningful, sustainable improvements for children, young people and families across Australia.



² O'Connell, M. (2025). [The cost of late intervention 2024](#). The Front Project.