



Communication Link

FINAL

Children and Family Services Reform Forum

Real change is a collective effort | Advancing the wellbeing of children and families in the ACT

Forum outcomes report

FINAL

23 April 2021

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1. Acronym glossary

Acronym	Definition
ACCOS	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CCR	Child Care Rebate
CMTEDD	Chief Minister, Treasury, and Economic Development Directorate
COVID	Covid-19, Corona virus
CYF	Children, Youth and Families
CYP	Children and Young People
CYPS	Child and Youth Protection Services
CSD	Community Services Directorate
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
FFT	Functional Family Therapy
FGC	Family Group Conferencing
GP	General Practitioner
ICT	Information Communication Technology
JACS	Justice and Community Safety Directorate
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Queer, Intersex
MACH	Maternal and Child Health
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NFP	Not for Profit
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSW	New South Wales
OAM	Medal of the Order of Australia
OOHC	Out of Home Care
OBOW	Our Booris, Our Way
PCYC	Police & Community Youth Clubs
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan
UC	University of Canberra



2. Introduction

The Child and Family Services Reform Forum was held by the Community Services Directorate (CSD) of the ACT Government from 9.30am to 3:00pm on Monday 29 March 2021. The purpose of the forum was to:

- Provide an understanding of the Government's vision and commitment to outcomes.
- Gather feedback from participants on the reform implementation principles.
- Gather feedback on how to translate principles into practice change.

The Forum was facilitated by Communication Link, with supporting facilitation provided by members of the Forum Advisory Panel. It provided the opportunity for:

- CSD to provide stakeholders with background and context
- Relationship building and networking within the industry
- Stakeholders and collaborators to share their ideas, preferences, challenges, and wicked problems
- Collaboratively setting a strategic direction, enabling key organisations to move forward with a shared vision

This document provides a summary of matters raised during the Forum, and the ideas put forward. This document is not a verbatim record and provides a synthesised version of the key points raised.



3. Forum overview

The Forum was facilitated by Ellen Samuels from Communication Link with technical support and assistance provided by Jessica Smith-Roberts from Communication Link. The Forum agenda was as follows:

- An introduction and welcome
- Welcome to Country delivered by Ms Caroline Hughes
- Minister's address, Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA, Minister for Families and Community Services
- A panel discussion facilitated by Ellen Samuels. Panel members included:
 - Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
 - Professor Michael Brydon
 - Dr Justin Barker
 - Ms Barbara Causon
 - Ms Jodie Griffiths-Cook
- Workshop activity - Review of the principles to inform reform implementation
- Breakout sessions hosted by:
 - Dr Justin Barker
 - Ms Alison Brook
 - Ms Barbara Causon (with Jessica Smith-Roberts, Communication Link co-facilitator)
 - Ms Jodie Griffiths-Cook

The breakout sessions explored four questions:

1. How can government and the community sector work together differently to achieve the reforms? What from your perspective is the area we should focus on first?
2. What can your organisation do differently to achieve the reforms and improve outcomes for children and families? Where in the sector do we need a more joined up approach?
3. How can we bring in the voices and expertise of children, young people and their families into implementation of the reforms?
4. What governance or implementation oversight mechanisms could be established to help drive joint implementation of the reform agenda? Where and how can your organisation be involved?

The forum ran for approximately five and a half hours.



4. Context setting

4.1 Welcome to Country

Caroline Hughes provided a Welcome to Country for the Forum and reflected on the historical impact of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people having parents and children separated from each other, and the opportunity for change that the day presented.

Key points raised included:

- The Indigenous community is still suffering from the effects of the Stolen Generations, and the impact on family life and Ngura (a place of belonging)
- There continues to be high levels of Indigenous children in the out-of-home care (OOHC) system in the ACT
- Aboriginal children are 26 times more likely to be in OOHC
- There are 307 children in child protection system
- Trust and appropriate support is required. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with lived experience are important to build this trust and connection
- Draw on the experience of the sector, people attending the forum know what the community needs, and we, the Aboriginal community want to implement change quickly
- Every area of government has an impact in this space
- Community came forward in large numbers to share deeply personal experiences that informed the [Our Booris, Our Way Report](#). This experience was traumatic for both the interviewer and interviewee. The recommendations need to be implemented to draw on the power of those impacted
- “Trauma permanently changes” us. If you have experienced trauma you are forever different and there is no going back
- For change to happen it must be seen by all involved as a two-way process
- Following through with the outcomes of the event today is critical. It has been 22 years since the *Bringing Them Home Report* was completed. The recommendations made in that Report have not been implemented, and if they had, we wouldn’t be in this situation today.
- Restore beautiful and vibrant family life. In Aboriginal culture, children are gifts from the spirit world, and they belong to their community.



Figure 1 Ms Caroline Hughes delivers Ngunnawal Welcome to Country and provides Indigenous context for the Forum



4.2 Minister's address

Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA, Minister for Families and Community Services, provided an overview of Reform measures, objectives and priorities. The Minister outlined her vision for the reform outcomes and the role of this Forum in achieving them.

Minister Stephen-Smith noted:

- She is seeking input on how best to align the work and to co-design reforms and co-produce services together with the children, young people and families we are all here ultimately to support.
- Some things are starting to work. There has been a 28% decrease of children entering care since 2016/17, but there is always room for further improvement
- The need to break down barriers that prevent us working collaboratively
- Be evolutionary, not revolutionary, draw on what works
- The need to seek opportunities to privilege the voices of children, young people, and their families
- Lack of trust is a barrier to overcome
- The reforms address the need for fundamental changes across our system, rather than relying on a new program here and a new program there to drive change. They will require government and non-government partners who provide funded services to work differently, together.



FIGURE 2 MINISTER STEPHEN-SMITH PROVIDING A CONTEXT SETTING PRESENTATION TO THE FORUM



The Minister also provided an overview of the Forum, the opportunities it presents and the goals sought to be achieved. She spoke briefly about the current reform work underway, including:

- Our Booris, Our Way review
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle
- Shifting the system for wellbeing and early support
- Changing the way we design and deliver services
- Best Start: the first 1,000 Days Strategy
- A Step up for Our Kids reform program
- Contemporary child protection
- The development of a Charter of Rights for Parents and Families
- The commencement of an external merits review
- Development of an ACT Child Safe Standards Scheme
- Government commitment to raising the age of criminal responsibility
- She noted that these reforms:
 - are built on evidence about how children and young people are doing in the ACT
 - are informed and shaped by extensive consultation with families, the community sector and government stakeholders
 - reflect what we have heard through reviews and inquiries and the many recommendations they have made
 - provide a collective, shared agenda to support children, young people and their families to thrive
 - will be delivered through a restorative approach, with practice, system and service changes – not just new programs.

4.3 Panel discussion

A panel discussion provided further insight into issues and opportunities faced by the sector.

Presenters for the Panel were:

- Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
- Professor Michael Brydon
- Dr Justin Barker
- Ms Barbara Causon
- Ms Jodie Griffiths-Cook

Biographies for presenters are provided in **Appendix C**.

4.3.1 Questions answered by panel members

Questions included:

- What do you see as being the biggest challenges in delivering such a comprehensive reform agenda?
- We've had the *Our Booris, Our Way* review and now implementation oversight being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led. Where else can the government promote self-determination and put decisions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the hands of the community?



- How does focusing on the early years, or first 1000 days, set up children for success in life? What are the key things we could be doing?
- As the ACT shifts towards a commissioning approach, what are the key shifts in the relationship between Government and the community that need to occur for this to be successful?

These questions were followed by questions from the audience where discussion focused on:

- Shared passion and interest in utilising implementation science and harnessing data insights more effectively – identifying ways to change focus or identify interrelated responsibilities and efficiencies.
- Trauma informed response not only for children but for all parties
- First 1000 days – how can we increase co-design within the delivery of health and community service during this time?
- Implementation of reform – how can we work towards a more even spread of resources to shift the focus from crisis intervention to early support?



FIGURE 3 PANEL SESSION



5. Review of the principles to inform reform implementation

The first feedback activity of the workshop was to review and assess proposed principles to underpin reform implementation.

Within table groups, participants were given a worksheet that contained the proposed principles gathered from previous consultations and asked to consider:

- If anything was missing from this list?
- What are the barriers to, and factors that support, the implementation of these principles?

5.1 Principle feedback summary

Section 5.1.1 through to Section 5.1.9 identifies the principles proposed and the barriers and enablers identified for each.

5.1.1 Including diverse voices with lived experience

The following barriers were identified:

- Under resourced and time poor, impacting delivery to the community. Leading to physical and emotional burnout within the sector.
- A lack of efficiencies and planning across government and community organisations leading to consultation fatigue. Engagement is often an afterthought, rather than a business as usual, collaborative activity with shared learnings.
- Lack of trust and safe spaces for people who need support.
- Stigma, bias and lack of cultural sensitivity.
- Not community driven.

The following enablers were identified:

- Genuine partnerships and appropriate funding to support trusting, working relationships and provision of early support and education for parents.
- Meaningful and authentic co-design, to inform evidence-based approach includes engagement with diverse voices, supported by a building a diverse and trauma informed workforce, and translators.
- Language is important, both of those we are engaging with, and the value of positive framing in the language we use (mandatory responder, not mandatory reporter).
- Create safe spaces to build trust.
- Culturally sensitive services and consultation.

5.1.2 Enabling self-determination

The following barriers were identified:

- Historic inequality, challenges with legislation and bureaucracy, and lack of cultural competency created fear, distrust, and bias within the community.
- Power imbalances, and lack of listening, engagement, and provision of choice.



- Capacity challenges due to increasing pressure and expectations to respond to government, while frustrated with repetition of feedback.
- Reluctance to hand over decision-making.

The following enablers were identified:

- Existing ACOOs and their connection with community organisations.
- Long term planning, taking a holistic view to support building the sector. Recommendations included greater employment and representation, expanding RAPs and ACCOs, building flexibility into service delivery, and flexible funding contracts.
- Engagement protocols of trust, respect, listening, support, and power sharing, with increased documentation and use of this for self-education.
- Holistic approaches with families.

5.1.3 Building restorative systems and practice

The following barriers were identified:

- Lack of investment, review, time spent building connections, expertise, and understanding of restorative principles.
- Need for leadership by organisations including planning and flexibility.
- Challenges with the transactional approach, power, and inequality of service provision.

The following enablers were identified:

- Trusting family and strength focused approach with ongoing engagement to understand the assistance they want.
- Trauma informed systems and practices such as diversionary practice.
- Mechanisms for collaboration and connection, including suggestions for legislative reform, a clear integrated model, shared KPI's, and greater risk tolerance across the sector.
- Fundamental change.

5.1.4 Supporting strong families

The following barriers were identified:

- Support delivery is siloed and complex, with an imbalance of power, and inhibited by financial arrangements, fear, and vexatious reporting.
- Engagement is challenged by not capturing the voices of people with lived experience, with trauma responses preventing engagement.
- Suggestions were made for wholistic and support including a multi-agency approach, better support for families, and long-term assistance.
- Families to access support that is earlier, timelier, trauma informed, and long term when required.

The following enablers were identified:

- Holistic, collaborative, and flexible delivery to support families to be a unit. Suggestions were made to find different ways to assess risk, document, and explain decision making.
- ACT Government to reflect the changes and principles, and support through legislative reform.



5.1.5 Focusing on system change

The following barriers were identified:

- Disconnection inside government and with community sector. Challenged by complexity, siloed work, blurred roles, different KPI's, risk aversion, funding, and lack of a bipartisan supported forward plan and vision.
- Staff challenged by training availability as well as time constraints leading to lack of opportunity to reflect, ask questions, and create shared understandings.
- Short term focus – effecting real change takes time.

The following enablers were identified:

- Collaborative, evidence based, nimble, responsive and joined-up approach across the sector and government (co-design), focused on long term change, and supported by increased funding.
- Suggestions for reorientation to earlier opportunities, justice reinvestment, legislative requirement to exhaust all options for support before legal/court processes occur, and standardised tools across service system.

5.1.6 Working across boundaries by improving communication

The following barriers were identified:

- Siloed activities with absence of communication mechanisms/ committees to support information sharing and collaboration in the sector, challenged by time restrictions, the Privacy Act and principles.
- Community information barriers include information being heavily technology based, inaccessible, and not written in easy English. Could be supported by embracing cultural diversity.
- Competitive relationships across the sector with lack of trust, genuine collaboration, and flexibility.

The following enablers were identified:

- Measurement that keeps all accountable across shared outcomes.
- Integrity in engagement activities supported by external communication, easy English, translation services, and closing the loop on communication at completion.
- Flexible contracts, working arrangements, and agreements.

5.1.7 Identifying engagement opportunities within existing reform priorities

The following barriers were identified:

- Organisations already stretched and under-resourced.
- Duplication of activities without streamlining.
- No viewing of historical documents (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs).

The following enablers were identified:

- Opportunities for creativity, efficiencies and shared use of insights for productivity.
- Open conversations between government and services, viewing information through multiple lenses.



5.1.8 Using an evidence base drawing on data

The following barriers were identified:

- Lack of sector-wide and aligned data gathering, data systems or sharing framework to enable data collection, sharing, analysis and evaluation.
- Inability to share information due to cultural/legislative impediments.
- Limitations with data use and availability, and varying ability to interpret data, and outputs vs outcomes data.

The following enablers were identified:

- Wealth of existing data but lack of systems to utilise well. Participants indicated requirement for investment in systems, standardised tools and data literacy. Wellbeing framework data and Medicare data presents opportunities.
- Data management supported by consent framework and implementation science, measuring true outcomes. Recommendation for data access to be provided to researchers who can undertake mapping and data analysis, informing better response.
- Data from lived experience.

5.1.9 Building trust and whole of community responsibility

The following barriers were identified:

- Concerns noted in relation to power imbalance, the need for greater transparency around decision making, sufficiency of funding, the need for safe environments and consultation fatigue for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The following enablers were identified:

- Listening, engaging, and trusting the community to build relationships.
- Strengths-based approach, celebrating what we are doing well.
- Child safe standards.

5.2 Additional principles for consideration

The following principles, along with barriers and enablers were identified by participants as missing from the identified principles put forward.

	Barrier	Enabler
Top led	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs to be priority for CMTEDD • Needs to be demonstrated as priority 	
Including diverse voices of children and young people with lived experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to ensure safe and respectful engagement • Gap in skills and expertise • Time to build trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe and respectful engagement • Design delivery implementation and evaluation
Building trust whole of community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Churn in government and sector • Knowledge gets lost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed trusted relationships in the business as usual and in the culture of the



<p>responsibility for safety</p>		<p>organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster broader trust in organisation • Action on advice and accountability
<p>Boldness to do it differently this time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency in reviews and reporting on progress – authorise people to do things differently • “Elephant is so big” • Risk appetite • Gains won’t be seen for several years – incongruent with four-year budget and political cycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permission to have variation
<p>Supporting families to be their best</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce – recruitment, retention and exhaustion • Invest in next generation • Silos and culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of intersectionality
<p>Working across boundaries by improving partnerships and communication</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reimagining procurement processes
<p>Gaining additional resources – NIH/housing/Paeds</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate voices and what’s been shared • Language and culture at table
<p>Vision/mission underlying principle</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Every child and young person to have every opportunity to live their best life” 	



FIGURE 4 PARTICIPANTS WORKING THROUGH PRINCIPLES WORKSHEET



6. Breakout session feedback

Four breakout sessions took place to consider the following four questions:

1. How can government and community sector **work together differently** to achieve the reforms? What from your perspective is the area we should focus on first?
2. What can **your organisation do differently** to achieve the reforms and improve outcomes for children and families? Where in the sector do we need a more joined up approach?
3. How can we bring in the **voices and expertise of children, young people** and their families into implementation of the reforms?
4. What governance or implementation **oversight mechanisms** could be established to help drive joint implementation of the reform agenda? Where and how can your organisation be involved?

Although questions were offered as guidance, feedback received was not always aligned to the prompting questions.

Feedback from the breakout sessions is summarised below.

6.1 How can government and community sector work together differently to achieve the reforms?

- Increased opportunities sought to share information, collaborate, build networks, and come together regularly, recognising the power in the collective. This will facilitate a better understanding of what everyone is working on, support barrier removal, and progression of a unified approach.
- Issues exist with time capacity, power imbalance, lack of trust, fear, and protection of “territory” which may create challenges in breaking down silos. There is a need for open dialogue without organisations feeling like they will be penalised for it. Relationships need to be re-built, particularly with Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Need an intentional focus on building trusted relationships.
- Build shared understanding of what it means to work in partnership and create an authorising environment so that staff are confident undertaking their work through a partnership model.
- Desire for increased foundational work and connection to result in best outcomes for families. Adopt a more holistic approach to taking care of children by considering the needs of their family.
- Desire for long term planning such as an industry-wide strategy, supported by committees and working groups, with greater risk tolerance and flexible funding. Commissioning approach based on shared outcomes.
- Increase openness and transparency, or clearly communicate why we are not able to be open and transparent (barriers). Ensure feedback loops are closed appropriately.
- Draw on the experience of others. Be creative, innovative, and bold.
- Review branding and recognition of CYF.



6.2 What can your organisation do differently to achieve the reforms and improve outcomes for children and families?

- Responses to this question largely supported how government and community sector can work together differently.
- Share information, identify gaps, and align work to battle silos.
- Increase in accountability, information/ learning sharing, and ‘closing the loop’ was identified.
- Review approaches to funding (Government), and resourcing so it is directed appropriately and is outcome driven.
- Need to shift and change with needs of the sector.

6.3 How can we bring in the voices and expertise of children, young people and their families into implementation of the reforms?

- Empower families with peer support, forums, and language to self-advocate.
- Time and trusting relationships are required for effective engagement. Recognise the importance of branding and language in this.
- Normalise engagement, don’t make it an afterthought. Be creative, and ensure lived experience is understood/ captured. Understand the difference between hearing their voice and involving in co-design. Increase availability of appropriate facilities and include interpretive services. Engage families, children and young people.
- Increase the accessibility of engagement opportunities, engage where they are, at a time that suits them. Tap into existing groups, and preferred methods. Ask if and/or how they want to be involved. Develop and provide multiple, alternative ways of sharing experiences and seek out diverse perspectives. Leverage trusted relationships.
- Transparency with the child or young person about process and possible outcomes.
- Importance of closing the loop - “If we are eliciting the views of those impacted, they need to see the effect or the impact of them being involved”.
- Be trauma sensitive so as not to exacerbate their problems, create safe spaces, develop principles to guide youth communication.
- Access to facilities where safe spaces can be created for engaging children and young people.

6.4 What governance or implementation oversight mechanisms could be established to help drive joint implementation of the reform agenda?

- Joint, co-designed governance, supporting breakdown of silos with shared reporting systems which transverses sectors, and could be delivered through a portal/ one-stop-shop. Include children and young people. Engagement should occur at the outset and expertise should be remunerated.



- Any governance groups should be tactical, outcomes focused and have a clear focus on joint delivery, not just reporting on progress and oversight.
- Oversight mechanisms should support and enable flexible service delivery, easy referral, map family journeys (improving understanding of touch points), while considering early intervention, brighter futures, and crisis protection.
- Working groups can be established to progress key pieces of work.
- Efficient use of information and effective sharing information across government and sector, increasing clarity of pathways and choices for those in the sector, and for families.
- Resourcing to identify and address gaps.
- Focus on meaningful outcomes.

A full record of the feedback provided in each room is provided in **Appendix B**.



Appendix A – Principle worksheet detailed Feedback

The feedback provided by workshop participants on table worksheets is captured in Table 1.

Table 1. Principle barriers and enablers

Principle	Barrier	Enabler
Including diverse voices with lived experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work hours – convenient for us, not for lived experience • Families with disabilities – federal response (NDIS) • Consulting with white eyes – methodology limited • Systemic issues in the method of engagement • Limited trust in system • Unconscious bias • An after-thought • Trust and confidence and lack thereof • Needs to be intrinsic • Sick of being labelled • Using available models • Consultation fatigue • Systems not community driven • Lack of community awareness regarding how that CALD community interacts with services and systems • Do we have the systems/trust for people to lived experience to have a voice – safe space? • Lack of communication • Assumptions on ‘who they are’ • Tokenism • Time for genuine engagement/co-design • Stigma – external and internal shame • Time and flexibility • Distrust in existing structures • Financial circumstances • Unrealistic expectations • Repeating same stories – over and over • Narrative focussed on negatives • Co-creation/design – participation early, moving from consultation to co-design/creation • Time consuming • Understanding/acknowledging of intersectionality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected Body • Consultation with community (representative) • Community agencies doing consultation • Avenues for young people and family members to have a voice – ongoing discussion • Existing models • Expectation exists but capability may be necessary • Evidence based approaches • Valuing experiences we all have • Validation of what we have already been told • Building a diverse workforce (CALD, Disability, LGBTQI) • Trauma informed workforce • ACT Government to have direct conversations with the multicultural communities/organisations • Change/educate how we speak about disability/diversity - including these voices • Allowing clinicians to be part of building programs • Translators • Early support to respond to, end, or to overcome trauma in families • Fund individual advocacy for all families • Parent peer support advocates • Education and understanding role modelling • Mentoring • Appreciation of cultural diversity • Cultural and supportive services • Mandatory responder (not mandatory reporters) • (Validate) meaningful and authentic consultation



Principle	Barrier	Enabler
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to decision makers• Negative history and need to build trust• Burnout• Western lens on ‘good parenting’• Talking about this for 30 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reframe and focus on what’s working well and outcomes – system level scale up• Existing relationships and services (NGO’s) with people with lived experience• Trusting, working relationships• Genuine partnerships with government and community sector• Cash fund brokerage – expertise, transport• Recognise additional costs• Markets of positive parenting – strength-based• Culturally appropriate risk assessment tools
Enabling self-determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distrust• Racism• Unconscious bias• White privilege• Closing the gap• Fear of seeking help• Lack of treaty• Lack of action• Inclusion from the start• Power holding• Listening• Gaps in skills and expertise in engagement• Divesting power• Scaling current landscape• Lack of trust, representation, appropriate services• The Act itself i.e. the legislation• Our bureaucratic structure inhibits engagement• Tokenism• Time for genuine engagement/co-design• Lack of choice• Power imbalance• Relationships and trusts – history (journey)• Small community with increasing pressure to respond to government• Lack of cultural competency• Size and number of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trust• Governance mechanism• Respectful support• Kinship care• Culturally appropriate organisations leading/delivering services• Closing the gap• Power sharing• Funding of accommodations• ACCOs focussed not just in the same delivery methods, but in building the sector• Listening• Good support from rest of sector and government• Long-term plan• Contract levers• Greater employment/representation• Changing the Act itself• Flexibility in service delivery and funding contracts• Strong community organisations• Early family support services• Procuring more Aboriginal organisations and training• Expanding existing services including actions in Reconciliation Action Plans (as justice aspect of a broader response)



Principle	Barrier	Enabler
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Burnout, fatigue/break from local community• Asking the same questions when advice has already been provided• Expectations and capacity• Relying on Western research• Reluctance to hand over decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FFT and FGC – examples of progress and collaboration in disparity voices• Increase ACCO's• Existing ACCOs• Strong examples of existing partnerships between ACCO and mainstream organisation• A protocol on how engage community – documenting• Take responsibility to become familiar with areas, reports, advice• Holistic impact on whole family not about just one issue
Building restorative systems and practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Level of ACT Government investment• Lack of external and internal review processes• Lack of access to extended expertise• Need for flexibility within requirements• Transactional approach• Time-building connection• Power imbalance• Lack of understanding and capability• 'What is restorative practice'• Ad hoc initiatives• Canberra as a restorative city still not across all out work• Lack of connection across service sector• Different departments/services not taking the lead – expert to fix mentality• Competition• Unequal hierarchy (families without advocacy and legal support to engage with process as well as early support)• Language – it needs to focus on families• Lack of knowledge of restorative principles – families• Lack of family support and services• Training and skills development• Staff retention• Siloed work cluster agencies• Lack of collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restorative practice network• Trauma informed• Restorative justice• Diversionary practice• Legislative reform in relevant areas• Demonstrating where restorative practice exists and is embedded Clear model and integration of elements• Better connections across service sector• Government leading restorative practice• Shared common outcomes across all government and sector. Shared KPI's• The Minister and portfolios held• Collaboration• Strong definitions of restorative practice• Ask – how can I/we help?• Strength based family practice – families as 'experts'• FFT• FGC• Greater tolerance of risk• Clarity – what can be shared• Two-stage engagement – initial and step down• High levels trust with families and ongoing engagement• Fundamental change• Victoria – large number of children on supervision orders but not PR, sharing PR



Principle	Barrier	Enabler
Supporting strong families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fear from statutory agencies• Shift of risk with families• Difficult to get information from CYPS• Lack of trust and understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Current system can't deal with complexity• Lack of support for continued contact• Trauma not addressed for adults• Not seeing family wholistically• Limited long-term supports for family unit –silos• Families able to access earlier, more timely support• Sector competition• Professional mindsets• Financial arrangements that create barriers• Not using voices with lived experience in design• The ACT – does it reflect what a family is in the modern world?• Holistic approach required – not just the child in isolation. Multi-agency responses required• Power imbalance with some services/organisations• Growing inequity in society• Existing trauma responses preventing engagement• Siloing of service delivery including age, restrictions, geography of client• Early support and proactive KPI vs outcome• Trigger is crisis• Cultural connections• Community in a broader sense• Current legislation to work with family as well• Focus on child• Vexatious reporting increases CCR• Fear of what happens if things go wrong• Assessment is worthwhile/relevant/effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CYP ACT and resourcing in funding system <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gendered lens• Holistic support• Sector collaboration• Alternatives in commissioning• Coaches as opposed to de facto experts• Flexibility for families to move on the service continuum• Using whole of family approach• ACT reflects the changes and principles we are looking to implement• Working with the family as a unit• If child wants to return home, put in place support to enable that• Invest in families, not OOHC• Best start – universal family support• Child, family centres• Legislation reform• Documenting process – explain decision making• Different ways of assessing risk – better outcomes for kids and context for Aboriginal families• Holistic care and kinship• Broaden family gap conferencing



Principle	Barrier	Enabler
Focusing on system change	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Best they can be “supporting wellbeing of families”• Housing and health• Disconnect government and community sector• Blurring roles• Shared understandings• Short term focus• Complexity• Whole of government cooperation• Length of political cycle• Funding contracts – required KPI’s• Not being focused on commissioning different outcomes. Procurement second.• Sector to step away from holding funding when not in the best interest of the community. Very short timeline• No time to look up/reflect and ask questions• Being able to stop programs and issues• Being dragged into reactive workspace• Every directorate has own KPI’s• Working in silos• Training for all workers is not consistently available• No investment in change management• Lack of sustained commitment beyond election cycles• Political will and short political cycles• Fear of change across all levels of services system• Risk aversion• Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognising the need for change• Reorientation to earlier opportunities• Justice reinvestment• Working across sector and government collaboration• Co-design with lived experience• Commissioning at a whole of government level• What can we learn from NSW?• Permission to have variation• Stopping things• Authority to focus on ‘things on plate’• Legislative requirement to exhaust all options for support before legal/court processes occur• Increase funding implementation and program for change• Focus on long term• Being nimble, responsive• Evidence based practice• Standardised tools across service system



Principle	Barrier	Enabler
Working across boundaries by improving communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Easy English access to information• Heavily technology based• Lack of trust and genuine collaboration• Absence of mechanisms to have the right people talk to each other – inside government sector and outside government sector• Privacy Act/principles?• Competitive relationships across the sector• Community organisations are “siloed”• Requires a lot of work - interdepartmental committees• Flexibility (lacked)• Embracing cultural diversity• Fear of seeking help• Time• Silos• Intergovernmental collaboration (non-existent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Measurement that keeps all accountable• Better more visible external communication – government and sector• Closing the loop on communication• Acting with integrity in engagement activities• Flexible contracts• Shared outcomes• Flexible working arrangements/agreement• Easy English/plain English and interpreters, or translated resources• Restorative approaches• Memorandum of Understanding
Identifying engagement opportunities within existing reform priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organisations already stretched and under resourced• CSD/Health doing same process at the same time• Frustration• Time and space to express and imagine• No viewing of historical documents (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Affairs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mechanisms to use our information and advice for multiple purposes• Build ways to use intelligence more productively (unpacking required)• Open conversations between government and services• Time and space• Multiple lens• Creativity
Using an evidence base drawing on data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outputs vs outcomes• Data systems used need to be sector wide• Lack of alignment• We believe we can't share information• Cultural/legislative impediments or understanding thereof• Collection and sharing of data• Absence of evaluation culture• Communication challenge – convincing the right people• Lack of data use• Inability to access/interpret data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to researchers who can undertake mapping and data analysis• Lived experience: rich source• Measurement• Wellbeing framework• Wealth of existing data but lack of systems to utilise well• Measuring right things• Joining information• Voices of people with lived experience• Inform better response• Proper funding to update ICT to collect data• Access to Medicare data



Principle	Barrier	Enabler
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of sharing across services• Ability of services to collect data (valuable data)• Limited data 0-3 space• Data linkage• Information sharing framework• Limited meaningful population data• Sharing and availability of data for example re disability as a factor for parents in contact with CYPs/ACT Together and enabling system change across CYPs/community responses, non-governmental organisation• Different levels of data literacy and ability to interpret/infer• Limitations of data• Information sharing issues• Lack of consistency in data being gathered• Existing knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consent framework• More cost effective to intervene earlier and intensively provide support as needed then• Implementation science• We need standardised tools across system• True outcomes measurements• One monitoring and evaluation plant system, coordinated across system
Building trust and whole of community responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater transparency around decision making• Power imbalance• Need safe environments• Program funding valuing the time it takes to truly develop relationships of trust between government: NFP/Community sector: families• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community tired• Implement and keep	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengths-based approach• Child safe standards• Earning/building trust• Listening to community• Celebrate what we are doing well• Invest in engagement with community• Invest in engaging Aboriginal staff/prioritise



Appendix B – Breakout group feedback

6.5 Breakout group 1

Group facilitator: Jodie Griffiths Cook

How do we find the bits of the puzzle and put them together?

- A Network that comes together regularly - can be hybrid - both in person and through virtual attendance.
- It has been hard with COVID - we haven't come together in a long while and it shows. We don't know what everyone else is doing.
- We absolutely need to know what threads are on the go to be able to bring them together.
- Joint Pathways - has been able to identify gaps and provide training to the sector where needed
- Shared training - would be a great way to achieve the outcomes we are trying to reach

"Unhelpful competition" - how do we overcome that feeling?

- If commissioning is done in such a way to result in collaboration rather than competition - that is what we need
- Needs to allow flexibility, foster creativity, builds strong relationships across the community sector and between Government and community sector.
- Creativity will come if we don't think of it as each sector or service area but think more broadly - we are all responding to the same issues and need to work as one.
- The problem is with the Directorates - not the services - Directorates are causing the silos with the way things are funded. For example PCYC crosses four portfolios - we take a service need to a Directorate and they tell us it sits better over there, and we go over there, and they tell us it doesn't neatly sit with them and so we bump around without anyone really taking ownership of it.
- We need a dedicated cross Directorate team that is the go-to point that the community sector can work with - that is one to battle the silos.

What does a more effective response look like?

- Work with a child and their family collaboratively in an overarching way, we need to take a holistic approach to taking care of that child (and family, including the siblings) - instead we currently work with just the child and then hand over that child to another service (if they are lucky).
- One approach is to work in a way that is a domino effect - work and lessen the issue then pass them on to the next pressing issue, all the while reducing what is challenging them.
- We need to do more foundational work, early on in life - relies on relational work in the sector. Without that foundation we can't get an effective result.
- Parameters get set because we have set funds for set services - must have more flexibility with how we provide services and to who.
- How do you get to know what everyone is doing so you have the relational basis to make sure you are referring the family to where they need to be?
- We are not funded to do the work of those referrals - it takes time and resources to do that work. We do it because we know it makes a difference - but that is what is missing for children and families - someone that knows what is available and works with the family to make sure they get what they need when and where they need it.



- If you have a live journey map that could change with time, be updated as things change - would that provide an overview of what is available. Maybe that can go on the ICT portal?

What can your organisation do differently to provide the services to children and young people?

- Get the feedback loop right - understand where there is an issue or where people fall through the cracks. If we don't know that we can't address the gap.
- We don't invest enough in Networking - particularly because we are time poor and too busy doing the work that is pressing. That Networking will help us all though.
- As someone that has only been in the ACT for five years - it is harder to make Networks h.
- Information sharing is key - NSW has a form that identifies what organisations have been working with which families. You can send that form off and understand who is working with that family so you know how to keep your workers safe and so they know what they are walking into (talk to PCYC rep).
- Interagency work has been successful for some specific clients (we sit down with the services we know are supporting that client and we come up with how we can work together for the best outcomes) - could we extrapolate and work with more families that way? (Jana - ACT Together consortium).
- The work that was done around when the NDIS was coming out - it really helped. Sitting down together, with Government and understanding what it meant and how we needed to work with it. (Rep from United?)
- (Cathy - Companion House) - there have always been capacity issues around achieving reforms. The reforms are good on paper but don't amount to much change.

Is it better to get mainstreams to do better or have specific services to services cohorts?

- Both - a concrete thing is to have interpreters across all sectors. That needs to be built into the cost of doing business - needs to be considered and built into every response. We work like that, but many services don't. And that means a section of community are missing out.
- For example: Access to community nutritionists - currently the wait is about 12 months (waiting times in the public system) - flexible or additional discretionary funding - I know of cases where that funding has been used to get the services privately rather than waiting for the public and the results for that family have saved government money because the outcomes are so much better. Ad hoc money is needed - it doesn't need to be a lot of money - organisations just need to be able to use it.

How easy is it to operate in the flexible way now?

- We have been able to combine some Commonwealth money with a UC grant/research - students are working with parents sharing the skills and strategies to work at home which is great because we are seeing the immediate changes but it also giving the families the empowerment and language to self-advocate. That is powerful.
- Key is bringing services to families not expecting families to go to services. Also giving families the language to help themselves
- Funding needs to be longer - current windows are too short. We can't undo 14 years of trauma in a 20-week program and yet sometimes it feels like that is the expectation.
- Short term risk averse thinking can be so detrimental - we need to have robust honest discussions so not output driven - need to build on expertise of all parts of the sector



- There are such limited supports and resources in the pre-natal space - you can see what is going to happen for these children and families, but we are not able to help them change it.
- Childcare makes such a real difference - NSW paid the consolidated debts and that makes such a difference to the experience of families
- Difficult as an organisation to plan long term when our funding is so short term and not guaranteed

So, I am hearing we need a 'Whatever it takes' model

- Understand where the family is at and what will help at that time - understand what it takes then to make a difference for the outcomes

Commissioning Model

- Needs to transverse the sectors
- Needs analysis
- There is not one single problem that can be sorted out by a single sector alone
- There is a need to tackle this at the absolute core as it never sits with sector
- All departments need to have accountability
- The Chief Minister and CMTEDD need to be at these things - where are they? You never see them.
- How do you mitigate crisis? By dealing with things early

How do we draw in the expertise of child and young people and their families? What is needed that is not there currently?

- Lack of community space - facilities
- We have really struggled to set up groups because there are no physical spaces
- Facilities needs assessment - see where the gaps are so we know where there needs to be facilities - older, migrants, LGBTQI, accessible, disability
- To be able to bring the voices we need to have the spaces to be able to have the conversations so people can come together to thrash out the issues -places they feel comfortable and safe
- Even peer support - that is an untapped resource, but we need the community spaces for that support to happen
- Advocacy services
- If we are eliciting the views of those impacted, they need to see the effect or the impact of them being involved. We don't do that well currently
- It is partly provision of the space but also the management of the spaces
- Lived experience bureau

- Access to EAP support, funding for training - is there training that person needs to be able to fully participate and share their expertise? accessibility access that could be funded
- Taking a place-based approach / collective impact approach - this needs additional funding
- I don't think the Reform agenda has consulted any multi-cultural leaders - that is something is looks to be lacking
- (Ginninderry development) Perhaps that is what needs to be written into legislation to include community space when developing areas. Maybe also include community officer that is paid for by Government
- People and space go hand in hand - need both
- Your Say is the only space that invites people in to have their say about things - we need
- One of the biggest challenges is that people don't engage with services, many know where the services are, but people don't feel valued or respected or safe there



- Also, people do speak up, but they are not getting the help they need
- How is it that my services can receive a referral for a kid that hasn't been at school for over a year - how does that happen?
- We need to create a space where people feel safe to let services know about their needs?
- Mandatory responders not mandatory reporters
- Don't make a report without responding and providing services

What governance or implementation oversight mechanisms could be established to help drive joint implementation of the reform agenda?

- Governance doesn't necessarily provide outcomes - we are the most oversighted system I have seen
- How does power operate in our system and how do we change how power operates in our system?
- We don't have to work against families - we can work with them. We need to change the dynamic.
- There is a lack of understanding (by the workers) about the amount of power workers have and wield so they don't understand the impacts (on children and families) of the way they work
- In NSW split into three sections: NGOs, early intervention, and then Brighter Futures (for those families just under the thresholds) then crisis child protection - breaks down the barriers to families getting the support.
- Until some if this is addressed you will never have shared accountability
- Need to tackle from governance to infrastructure - e.g. Child and Family Centres aren't linked to school or preschools. They sit there unconnected - they need to be connected to schools, so the services are linked for families.
- Pathways aren't at all clear for families - the families must find their own way through the system. It isn't clear to them, or even workers sometimes where they go to next to get the help they need.
- How do you get continuum of care right across? It is good having 3-year-old preschool now but there is still a gap from when services stop with MACH nurses until they get picked up at 3-year-old preschool, that gap is important and needs to be filled.

Would a Ministerial Council be useful?

- No - it would be more useful to have an on the ground Network so we can stay connected about what we are all working on and what the emerging need is.
- In services land like today but in a different format will be useful to feedback to each other and understand what we are all doing
- Ideally, families being part of the services landscape in their own journey - that is what is required.
- ICT portal - have a one stop shop for services that are offered/available.
- Build collaboration into the reform(s)
- Understanding the touch points - for families
- GP that bulk bills and playgroup - great touch points for those that fear govt/system
- Magistrates need to be involved - currently person dependant, and also DPP could get involved
- If all of government and non-government organisations keep in their head, they are working towards key child rights would be helpful - the Charter could guide all the work we do
- We have the rights but not being used or embedded in accountability frameworks. It is everyone's KPI to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care. Everybody contributes to that - we need to have that as everyone's KPI.



- Wellbeing framework can help support this but needs to be linked - need more detail that links directly with children and young people.

6.6 Breakout group 2

Group facilitator: Alison Brook

Improving the relationship between government and community:

- Recognition that better communication and more transparency are needed.
- Reality that the community sector does not feel that working together and sharing of information happens enough with government services. Belief that sometimes more is expected of the community sector by way of information sharing and Government does not share information in return.
- There is the need to understand if this is because communication lines aren't strong enough or because Government can't share due to transparency limitations.
- There is a general understanding that it is the role of Government to work in partnership but there are processes Government needs to respond to and honour and sometimes it is not possible to share information.
- Suggestion that perhaps more clarity on Government processes and what Government is not able to share would be beneficial for the community sector so they don't have unrealistic expectations.
- Sense that Government somehow sees members of the community sector as 'less capable'.
- From a community sector point of view there is the fear that if they engage in honest dialogue, they may be penalised for this due to power imbalances. Also, people don't always feel comfortable talking about all that is occurring for them.
- For most, building positive relationships comes down to time- there are time constraints and large volumes of work on both sides. Time and effort need to be put into prioritising trust and relationship building- this recognises that it is important. Perhaps these can be built into workload and KPI's.
- There were some positive learnings from the Covid experience. Organisations learnt a lot about positive ways for working together.
- There is value in pulse surveys for a lot of people and groups, but don't underestimate the value of taking someone out for a coffee and getting to the bottom of what is really going on. This is part of building relationships.

Transparency:

- It may be an option to have working groups with the community sector and Government working together to achieve common goals and develop a better understanding of what the other can and can't do. There needs to be knowledge and understanding of both limitations and possibilities. For example, forums could be held to explain when and why communication can't happen.
- Misunderstanding about processes? Need alternative solutions to scenarios.
- Common understanding of the other and their situation is needed.
- Need to recognise that we all have the same aim and want the same outcomes for our clients.
- With openness comes helpfulness- this is where a service may not have the answers/ it may not be the service's role to assist and individual but the service will know where to refer them to so they can be helped and not feel lost in the system.
- Part of transparency is ensuring feedback loops.
- Openness is different to transparency. There is a need to be open to talking about things on a conversational level with colleagues from other services.
- Transparency can lead to trust across the board. Some services have concerns around mandatory reporting. For example, domestic crisis services want to ensure



the best outcomes for their clients and don't always trust they will be dealt with appropriately by CYPS and JACS.

- Unfortunately, no matter how well-intentioned senior managers are in saying their organisations are transparent and have good policies and procedures, decisions often come down to individual case workers with varying skills who may come from a punitive stance.
- There can be a difficulty in moving families forward when they lose trust in community workers due to the practice of government workers and this is frustrating.

Co-design and co-production

- This should be happening.
- Need for flexibility in application.
- People must be paid for their expertise.
- Involve people at the very beginning.
- Find someone you can bring in from an organisation that specialises in a specific area- for example CREATE has access to a lot of young people with lived experience.
- Be creative in how you can assist people to participate. For example, ensure accessibility. This may entail asking users if there is anything that might make them feel more comfortable.
- Provide follow up, close the loop for those whose expertise you sought.

Commissioning process:

- Need to have conversations about service design.
- When looking at service design there is a need to ensure everyone has a say in what is needed and how to fund it.
- Consider what organisations could do differently.
- For those organisations there is a great concern about wait lists and the everyday battles of how to meet demand without changing quality of service.
- Consider how to quarantine space to ensure services can be responsive and flexible.
- Many organisations need more staff who are on the ground, doing the actual work.
- Acknowledgement that silos exist within organisations- need to look at service delivery for the whole family and wrap around models that can be delivered.
- Need better collaboration both internally and externally.
- Need to consider how to address gaps and use resources differently.
- Need to value the length of time organisations have been in existence and somehow attribute value to the relationship families have with organisations and the trust they have in the 'brand'.
- Be open to creative conversations.
- Acknowledge there is fear and risk when funding is discussed. Normalise that organisations feel they need to 'guard their turf' and that this impacts on collaboration.
- Part of the fear is that that work could be swallowed up into other organisations- many feel protective of their services as they know how good their service is.
- Need to consider how to get the service to shift while protecting the good parts of it?
- We don't want to reinvent everything and throw the baby out with the bath water. Acknowledge really good work and recreate it.
- Network with the organisations that have knowledge and time. It is possible to share information/piggyback on other organisations programs and work as not everyone has the same expertise.
- Covid has taught organisations that it is okay to 'Invest in ourselves and our governance'. Such as investing in digital systems. 'We can look after selves as well'.



Restorative Practice

- Recognising where things have not always been done well and working out how to move on from this in a new and better way of working.
- There is a need to make sure organisations that are not government funded also have a voice.
- There is a need for organisations to be able to have honest dialogue and not be penalised for it

Early support:

- Look at what could help people early on.
- A lot of assistance lands at the child protection space where there is less capacity to deal with issues holistically.
- Early support must be more transparently available. There is a need for mapping of early support services and a gaps analysis. We then need to address the gaps.
- There is the need to ensure there is a variety of services, so people have choice.
- Support must be independent. For example, there should be easy access for a person with an intellectual disability to get parenting skills prior to pregnancy. This will make it less likely that CYPS will become involved.

Voices and expertise of children, young people, and their families

- Need to make sure to always ask them what they think. Need to not consult them as a last option. Involve them in all aspects of work and design of services and have this be the norm. Note that this takes time.
- Work out how to capture the individual voices that might differ from more dominant views.
- Need the ability to be flexible around what is going to work for people- some would prefer to talk in a group while others would prefer one-on-one discussions.
- Recognise there is an emotional and psychological cost to participation for many with lived experience.
- Recognise the independent entity of a child from their family.
- Listen to what they say-looking past own agendas.
- Acknowledge the time necessary to develop trust first- it's difficult to feel safe to speak up if your past experiences have not been great.
- Really consider who you should be asking and how many to ask.
- Be very clear what you are asking for.
- In terms of reform, you also want to talk to people not in the system.
- Also work with the voices that can't come forward and participate because there is too much trauma . Part of the work might be in unpacking for individuals what the risks are for them, being mindful of the fears and understanding their reticence and that there are risks to them.
- Need to think through how to consider the 'voice' of infants.
- The when, the what and the where, matter but also being conscious that these may impact on the answers you will get.

Governance and oversight mechanisms

- These should be multi-level in organisations.
- We need less Committees that talk and where nothing ever happens.
- People around the table need to have 'skin in the game', as equals.
- Layers idea- how the feedback loop is closed in CYPS- risk in giving an honest response in specific circumstances.
- Need for young people on Leadership teams.
- Need for joint governance.
- Mechanism- not just government.



- Joint ownership and membership.
- Succession planning for young people- capacity building.
- Better skilled about why not adopting the view of a person on the board- if a recommendation is made and why not accepted.
- Design of an outcomes framework and what you are going to measure should be determined early on.
- Clear complaints pathway

6.7 Breakout group 3

Group facilitator: Dr Justin Barker

How can we work together differently?

- Draw from NSW's experiences of commissioning – permanency support program in NSW
 - This worked because it was underpinned by shared outcomes – government decided outcomes
 - Peaks hosted consultations
 - Need to learn from what not done well – didn't engage strongly enough with Health, Education, Housing and Homelessness
 - Ongoing co-production is required
 - Commissioning needs to look different
 - Relationships between NGO also worked really well
- Both sides need to give over to commissioning principles – this includes government giving over its funding as well as NGOs needing to recognise risk of losing funding in best interests of the community
- Commissioning funds for outcomes per child
- We need to flip current delivery on its head to ensure the system follows the person, not where the person has to follow the services
- Government must realise where the gaps are – or act on the information that it has about gaps in services
- We need to clean the slate between government and community sector – to enable rebuilding relationships and moving. We need to do a Lessons Learnt process and plan to set up new ways of working together better
- This reform work provides an opportunity to clarify roles and responsibilities across the NGO and Government sector
- Government needs to commit to the Industry Strategy – we want to have a robust, quality driven person-centred community sector – funded well enough to deliver community outcomes
- We need to understand the barriers for achieving the early support reform because the policy work is good, the evidence base is undeniable, the commitment is there, but why hasn't it been delivered or achieved?

Sequencing

- Start with outcomes – if they are shared everyone's on the same page and around the table for the right reasons – what are we all here for?
- We need transition periods – at least 12 months to set up or transition out of service delivery

How can we bring in diverse voices?

- Tap into existing groups
- Ask them how they want to be involved?



- Go out to where people are
- We need a centralised place for guidance and support to engage with children and young people?

Joint Implementation

- Universal access to 3-year-old preschool has worked well
 - community of practice, outcomes, joint meeting, equal voices with NGO sector
 - we can learn from this
- ECEC – Children’s first alliance has allowed for joint NGO decision making – this takes time and effort
- Adopt Implementation Science in co-production approach with NGO sector and governance frameworks – how do we use our peaks, and how do peaks work with members?
- Working groups can be established to progress key pieces of work
- Resources can be put into the community to progress key pieces of work
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination – OBOW has become the default for children and families
- Need to be a process to co-design governance roles and responsibilities
- Is the mechanism established to reach into all the different sub sectors rather than to become another governance group?
- Any governance mechanism must be co-designed and allow for flexibility and innovation
- It also needs a paid Secretariat and dedicated resources

6.8 Breakout group 4

Group facilitator: Ms Barbara Causon (with Jessica Smith-Roberts, Communication Link co-facilitator)

How can government and community sector work together differently to achieve the reforms? What from your perspective is the area we should focus on first?

- We need to build shared understanding of what it means to work in partnership beyond lip service. Everyone needs to be clear on what the expectations are in a partnership, what we expect from different stakeholders and individuals. We also need to create an authorising environment so that staff are confident undertaking their work through a partnership model. We need to clarify what roles are in a partnership. What are you there to do?
- An intentional focus on building trusted relationships – and valuing the process to build these trusted relationships (don’t wait for trust to develop before starting – recognise that trust can be built through undertaking the process).
- Recognise that it is not about individual power in a collective - the collective is the power.
- For Aboriginal people it is important that partners understand community members role and the community - there is no “I” in representation, it is “we”
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body is an advocacy body and is trying to make sure community-controlled organisations get a good seat at the table. Elected Body members are focused on asking what *changed* because of projects.
- Government needs to recognise the need to reset the relationship with Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. This means investing in the work to rebuild the relationships, including understanding how to reset the relationships and how to rebuild it. There might be good relationships between staff members but across the board they are not good. This also means unpacking who is responsible for finding out what the issues



underpinning the poor relationship are and rebuilding the relationships. What is the role of “relationship management” in driving and maintaining this rest?

What can your organisation do differently to achieve the reforms and improve outcomes for children and families? Where in the sector do we need a more joined up approach?

- We need to align similar work more effectively and do one thing well for multiple purposes, rather than separate but similar pieces of work
- Build a shared understanding of how all work fits into the bigger picture. Achieving this will help ensure all work is fit for purpose and everyone understands how their “piece of the puzzle” fits into the big picture.
- Recognises we may not break down silos overnight and that a first step can be better alignment across silos.
- Mutual knowledge sharing with NGOs.
- Constantly look at where we are putting our resources to ensure we are directing our resources to the right place. For example – as a result of the impacts of *Step Up*, we may need to adapt where resources are directed – is the balance right between face-to-face time working with families and administration/ office base work? How could we embed a continual time in motion assessment to monitor and adapt? The extent of focus on compliance and recording may have cut into time with families. We need to focus on freeing up time to build relationships with families.
- Ongoing historical processes continue to drive many policies and procedures, rather than the best way to get outcomes driving policy and procedures. This should change.
- CSD needs to challenge ourselves – especially about the statutory system. Where do we need to shift and change as a Directorate that is currently part of a service system that doesn’t work for families – CSD needs to not just think of itself as statutory response.
- Be bold about looking for solutions.
- Name recognition of CYF for families/agencies who do not know other options. Many in community think CYP is where you go or report when a family needs help, but currently if a family does not meet the threshold there is no help. CYF needs to be more assertive on providing pathways into non statutory service.
- Part of the issue is that in the current system, child removal is seen as the outcome. There needs to be a “branding shift” in how child protection/wellbeing is thought of to it being there to help and support, rather than current view – as focused on removing child. This needs to be demonstrated through CYF actions.
- There are also strong negative connotation with CYF – it is not seen as getting help, it is seen as something fundamentally wrong with the family. CYF needs to be seen as something anyone may experience.
- There is a difference between mandatory respondent vs mandatory reporter. However, there needs to be actual responses that mandatory responders/reporters can provide. Mandatory reporting culture may have had the inadvertent impact of a loss of responding culture. Often services see a report as the only option left.
- Current policies in other departments often rely on referrals to CYF but often no context/ or going back to child to understand the context. Eg. Education often has a better relationship with the child and much better placed to understand what is happening and may not require concern report.
- CSD needs to consider its stewardship functions, especially in data and storytelling across gap analysis and journeys. This is critical to help to help clarify who and what response is required.

Voices and expertise of children, young people and families

- Recognise the challenge around getting a broader, diverse perspective of stories and experiences.



- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body can help facilitate public consultation processes to engage with children and family (noting work that has already been done by *Our Booris, Our Way* in consulting the community). The Elected Body can help connect to broader existing groups broader than Elected Body
- Target people who work in the sector and don't let them off the hook about their contribution – it is critical this expertise is included.
- When community groups are underrepresented, follow up with organisations out of session to make sure their view is heard. This is especially important in engaging with Community-Controlled organisations.
- Develop and provide multiple, alternative ways of sharing experiences
- Ensure ethical processes about what information is used for and how it is used.
- If we are going to have children in the room, we need to be mindful about how this is done, so that we are not exacerbating harm that has already occurred through contact with the system. We need to intentionally focus on creating safe spaces to hear children's voices – e.g bringing in counsellors, psychologists. How do we talk about issues and hear the child's voice without burdening the child?
- Develop principles-based options to guide processes for engaging with children and young people. This should cover every level, including the individual level, case level, case load level, program level, policy level.
- Recognise that to do it differently takes time and effort and we need to scaffold participation for increasing maturity in co-production. Need to make sure it is done organically and consistently, and not as an afterthought or add on.
- Voice and participation are not the same thing. Voice is a point in time, whereas participation/co-production should be fundamental to how we work and embedded at every stage.
- We need to be accountable to the kids and families we are working with – two way and shared accountability – not just internal linear/top-down accountability down. This should help to shape the practice around service delivery, contract mgt, procurement.
- Involving children's voices doesn't mean they have to participate – ask them if they want to have an ongoing say, even if they choose they don't want to or aren't in a space to contribute – it is still important to ask if/ how they want to be involved.
- Consider how to leverage off trusted relationships. If an organisation/ worker has a trusted relationship with a family, ensure that worker/ organisation involved will help the family, especially where the family is distrustful of the system. We don't currently value trusted relationships – many families will already have a trusted person somewhere. The current system can discourage advocacy and maintaining trusted relationships. Need to consider practice-change opportunities to build on this – for example, trusted people “vouching” for other trusted contacts, accompanying family at early visits until further trust is established.
- Trusting relationships mean telling the truth about possible outcomes of the process. Families can't then be blindsided by outcomes. EG CYF creating expectations based just on housing. Also need transparency about possible negative consequences.
- Distrust can be created when children and young people are told someone is there to support them without explaining what they may need to do (e.g., worker needs to say it is concerning and if they must act). As a child it is hard not being able to voice opinions, which makes it hard to trust the system. There needs to be space for children to explain how they feel, and for practitioners to explain how and why decisions are made, rather than workers saying, “this is how it will be”. It is critical that workers acknowledge how children and young people are feeling because of what has happened and what actions are being taken. Providing context is critical – for example, if a child had disclosed domestic violence and was removed, the child can blame themselves and internalise it, but need support to recognise it is not their fault.



- We don't want a system where kids are too scared to talk about what is going on because of fear of consequences for family. There needs to be balance between possible consequences and the need for support. Once the child has disclosed something that may trigger further response, need to explain to them about what needs to be done.
- Both government and funded agencies need to recognise the impact of the turnover of staff on families and the potential to impact trusted relationships. For example, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members do not know who their housing manager is and use the Senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy officer as a liaison. Community members will wait until that staff member is back from leave or available before approach HACT for assistance. This can mean there is a delay in service/outcome.
- We need to be conscious of language and how we use it. Can develop empathy purely based on the language. Currently language is structured by the system – e.g., 'cases', rather than what we want to achieve. We can build greater empathy into practice and systems by shifting to 'family'. There also needs to be a focus on shifting to a safety or wellbeing lens, and not focusing on meeting thresholds to get into the required service response.
- For every family involved, there are three who are too afraid to approach for help. Families are sick and tired of CYP coming to their homes
- How do we cater for families who are wanting to knock on the door to get help to keep their kids and stay out of system?
- Importance of engaging with families who may need help to get perspective on preferred pathways.

Oversight mechanisms

- *Our Booris, Our Way* is a different way of working. Implementation oversight means there is something to drive implementation and the review doesn't just sit on a shelf. It also ensures staying true to what has been recommended. There is scope for external oversight of reforms, especially at statutory end. Having reform objectives without wider involvement in implementation oversight, especially from the people involved, is needed for the changes to be effective.
- Mechanisms should focus on meaningful outcomes driven work that covers off multiple recs by theme and keep coming back to intent. For example, there are five to six key themes in the current suite of recommendations that can be commonly delivered.
- There are no/limited mechanisms for CYF/ community agencies/community members to work with the statutory system about what is happening at both the individual family level and wider systems level. To drive a focus on child wellbeing as an overall responsibility of community that is not just the remit of the child protection system means processes to hang in there in the long term. How do you hang in there with families to enter into the child protection system.
- There is a strong understanding of the 'gap' between statutory intervention and universal/early support. There is an ongoing need for more early support to prevent families entering tertiary services. The challenge is for the whole child and family system to respond to 'gap'. To achieve this, CYF also needs a preventative focus
- 'No wrong door' is a good principle but difficult to embed – if it is the wrong door, how do you get the right key to the family?

6.9 Consolidated written feedback on the 4 questions

The below is consolidated feedback from all groups, which was written on butchers paper or whiteboards during discussion.



Q1. How can government and community sector work together differently to achieve the reforms? What from your perspective is the area we should focus on first?

- Voices
 - Using existing groups and services with trusted relationships with individuals
 - Using trusted relationships as a mechanism
 - Individual contributions
 - Providing alternative avenues to provide input
 - Shared accountability
 - Considering the context of conversations
 - Ethical concerns in conduction the conversations
 - Safety of the participants
 - Principle led engagement – at every level, practitioner, participants
 - Investment of time in taking a different approach with young people
 - Difference by the way ‘talking’ and having a conversation about participation (providing opportunity for engaging)
- Clarity on what the service system should look like to ensure engagement/voices are involved at every stage
- Trusted relationship
 - value the relationship and the contribution the relationship can make to improved outcomes
 - how to identify and acknowledge the trusted relationships
- Ways to collect information about the relationship
- Maintaining trusted relationships despite organisation role (action from where you are)
- Language
 - Ways to improve how we describe families and children
- Listening to the voices
 - in the context of decision making describe and explaining decisions to children and young people
- Acknowledgement of voices [lessons from the Listening Report]
- Narrative about safety – message about safety (rather than protection of children)
- Real – truth telling for families
- Making sure information is complete when provided to families – the whole story/the truth
- Full disclosure – in dealing with children and families (appropriate information for children) example of mandatory responder
- Explaining why
- What are the reasons for decisions – what does it mean?

Q2. What can your organisation do differently to achieve the reforms and improve outcomes for children and families? Where in the sector do, we need a more joined up approach?

- Partnership
 - Expectation setting



- Authorising environment
- Trust – building through doing
- Clarity on role
 - What are you there to do?
 - Partnership
 - Collaboration
- Collective
 - Representative
 - Achieving change for community
 - Achieving outcomes for children, young people and families
- Reset relationships
- How to re-building process
 - Relationship management in CSD with the community sector
- Ways to understand what the issues are.
- Who is responsible for resetting relationships?
- Use data and information more effectively and use same information for multiple purposes
- Communicating our intelligence, research data to a wide range of services and organisations across the sector and across government
- Analysis of standard process and their contribution to outcomes for children and families

Q3. How can we bring in the voices and expertise of children, young people and their families into implementation of the reforms?

- People in lived experience embedded in those mechanisms
 - Existing groups e.g. autism carers
 - Using data bases as pools
 - Not in crisis
- Single place to go for consulting with community, young people and families
 - Methods
 - Ethics and safety
 - Capacity
 - Solutions
- Gaps
 - Transitioning
 - Intergenerational – CYPS involvement
 - Health, education, police – early identification
- Early intervention and prevention
 - Poverty
 - Children
- Industry strategy
 - Confidence, security (?)
 - Needs to happen at the same time
- Universal access from 3-year-old
 - Community input



- Coming together
- ‘Sector’ as collective view
 - Children first alliance – takes resources
- Partnership – inclusive
 - Planning, roles, reporting, authority to act, governance
- Use peaks
 - Joint collaboration mechanism – terms of reference
 - Reference group
 - Advisory group/action groups/working group
 - Accountability
 - Commitment of organisations
 - AISL – self determination
- Why do families follow organisations – why not flip in on its head?
 - Services fit the family – “family centred” and outcomes focused
 - Intergenerational – clarify roles and responsibility of organisation, government

Q4. What governance or implementation oversight mechanisms could be established to help drive joint implementation of the reform agenda? Where and how can your organisation be involved?

- Need active implementation oversight and plan and not just report and recommendations
- Staying true to the intent of recommendations – strategic intent
- Look for common delivery
 - biggest bang for buck, outcome driven action
- Committees need to have
 - Diversity
 - Lived experience
 - Independent external oversight
- How do our multiple oversight committees work together?
- Must be external mechanisms of review – of new initiatives, of current delivery
- The voice of partners who are not funded are not heard, at the table
- Looking at reform needs to include people outside of the voices already being included
- Need to look more broadly than the statutory system
- Oversight is currently messy
- Reform should consider all children, young people, and families in the ACT
 - The minority of our families are in the statutory system
 - Need to focus on the early support
 - How to respond to the ‘help us’ request
- Preventative arm to statutory system
 - For young people
 - For children and young people with disability
- Linked up systems
 - In the community
 - In the ACT Government service system



- Acknowledge gaps
 - Where
 - who should respond
 - how do linkages work
 - map the services so can see pathways
- Consider how we support and provide services outside of child protection
- Where are the thresholds, boxes, the gaps and overlaps (8-12, family vs child, diagnosed disability, unknown referral pathways, secret referrals)
- No wrong door (hard to achieve) – given right door (where and key)
- What part is statutory, what isn't, who supports what pieces
- Understand all the cogs and in the service system
 - CSD
 - Other government directorates
 - Services
 - Community
- Being bold to look at new ideas
 - Families who haven't accessed services
 - Harassment due to nefarious reporting
 - Burden on other people in community to explain how the government processes work, for example, Elected Body members
- Early support to stop families entering child protection system
- Most reporting is about service need
- Need reporters to help link services – police, principals, MACH nurse
- Child protection is seen as the place to go to ask for help
 - Seen as the front door
 - Seen as the place who could refer
- Would like to see CYPs partner in services to go out to families
- Are child reports seen as so negative? We need a different mechanism to request support
- Externally child protection is seen as the place which can help families, children, and young people
 - Child protection reports are a statutory response with a threshold
- Currently have a diluted 'responder' behaviour
 - Report
 - But also work to help respond and assist
 - Help understand how to refer
- Stigma (negative) for kids getting a CYPs
 - Isn't seen as good for kids by kids
 - Seen as serious, something fundamentally wrong
 - Could be referred as somewhere to get help
- Reform – so much bigger than CYPs
 - Universal services
 - Conception to adulthood
 - Need to tell stories, journeys, gap analysis and where health/education
- Our policies and practice needs to focus on



- Referrals
- Conversations and deeply understanding the issues from C and YP view
- Family and supports
- Not jump to crisis end and statutory space
- Check our policy and documentation support the behaviours we want
 - What is the culture we have – we want
- Learn from other jurisdictions
 - More from crisis to secondary – early support



Appendix C – Presenter Biographies

Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith - Minister for Families and Community Services

Minister Stephen-Smith was first elected to the ACT Legislative Assembly as a Member for Kurrajong in 2016, after a 20-year career in public policy across Federal and ACT Governments and non-government organisations. Rachel was appointed a Minister in the Barr Government following her election, and currently holds the portfolios of Health, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Families and Community Services.

Rachel has a Bachelor of Economics (Hons) from the Australian National University and a Master of Real Estate Development from the University of Maryland in the United States. Rachel knows that good government is driven by clear values, sound evidence and strong community engagement.

Professor Michael Brydon

Professor Michael Brydon is an experienced Paediatrician with over 30 years clinical practice. He served as Chief Executive of Australia's largest children's health service and is currently the A/Dean of the Rural Clinical School at the University of Notre Dame. Professor Brydon is respected for his collaborative style and is connected to a wide network of child health practitioners, nationally and internationally. He is currently on the Boards of Children's Healthcare Australasia and the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association. He currently co-chairs the ACT's interagency "First 1000 Days" through which he advocates for early intervention and prevention strategies.

Professor Brydon has received multiple awards for his services to the community including an OAM for his contributions to child health in Australia. His additional interests and expertise are in the social determinants of health and indigenous health issues.

Dr Justin Barker

Justin is an anthropologist and youth studies academic with an extensive background in conducting research with marginalised population groups and community service providers in the areas of youth work, domestic & family violence, youth & family homelessness, child protection, alcohol and other drugs and service use by vulnerable population groups.

Justin has extensive experience in program evaluation and working with community services to build their capacity for ongoing service improvement. Prior to his career as a researcher Justin was a youth worker in working with homeless young people. This experience led onto his PhD that examined the lives of homeless young people in Canberra, providing ethnographic insights into the conditions of youth homelessness.

Ms Barbara Causon

Barb chaired the *Our Booris Our Way* Steering Committee which led a comprehensive two-year review into the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system in the ACT.

Conducted over two years from November 2017 to December 2019 the review consulted broadly across the community and reviewed the case files of 307 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were in contact with the child protection system as at 31 December 2017.

In December 2019 the *Our Booris Our Way* Steering Committee presented its final report to government with 29 recommendations and sub-recommendations aimed at reducing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the ACT child protection system, improving the experiences of children in care, and improving pathways to exit care through restoration.



Barb currently Chairs the *Our Booris, Our Way* Implementation Committee. The Implementation Oversight Committee was established to provide a cultural lens to monitoring implementation of the recommendations from the *Our Booris Our Way* final report.

Ms Jodie Griffiths-Cook

Jodie is the ACT Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner. Part of her job is talking with children and young people about the things that are important to them as well as getting other people to listen to and understand what children and young people say about important issues, especially when they are making decisions that impact children and young people.

Jodie uses what she hears to let government, service providers, parents/carers and other people in the community know what they can do differently to better support children and young people in the ACT. With over 25 years' experience in human services, Jodie is committed to doing everything she can to promote a child-safe, child-friendly Canberra.