



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2022-2023

Mr James Milligan MLA (Chair), Mr Andrew Braddock MLA (Deputy Chair),
Dr Marisa Paterson MLA

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Elizabeth Kikkert MLA: To ask the Minister for Families and Community Services

Ref: Budget Statement G, pp.2,22 (Community Services Directorate)

In relation to: Universal Access to Family Group Conferences

Date (Question Lodged by Member): 29/08/2022

Date (Question Sent to DLO): 31/08/2022

1. On which date did it become government policy that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families involved with CYPS would be offered a family group conference (FGC) to enable them to participate in family-led decision-making?
2. From the beginning of that policy until now, what is the total number of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families involved with CYPS who should have been offered a FGC? Of that number, how many were actually referred to a FGC?
3. It was said in hearings that there has recently been a change in referral numbers. In order to highlight that trend (and any others), can the minister please provide the same data as in question 2 but broken down by year, half-year, or quarter (based on the government's tracking method) since this policy was adopted until now?
4. The 'appropriateness' of a FGC referral was made in hearings. How does this concept apply to a policy that is intended to be universal, who determines if a referral is appropriate or not, and what criteria are used? Can this determination be appealed in any way, and if so, how?
5. It was stated in hearings that ACT Together can refer a family to a FGC or that this referral pathway is under discussion. Can the minister please explain how this does or will work, including when a referral might be made, any triggers for this, and so forth? Would this option be used when a referral has not earlier been made by CYPS? In any other circumstances?
6. It was stated in hearings that FGC might be used in future to facilitate restoration. Can the minister please explain how this is expected to work?
7. Has the FGC referral form been simplified, and if so, can the minister please attach both the old and the updated versions?
8. It was stated in hearings that the government is looking at using FGC facilitators that are not located within CYPS. Would these facilitators be based elsewhere in government, or would they be outside contractors?
9. Who made the decision that FGC facilitators should be located within CYPS and for what reasons?
10. What has been the cost (by year) of paying Curijo to train FGC facilitators?
11. What is the current cost of having FGC facilitators based within CYPS, and what is the projected cost of having them a) based elsewhere and b) contracted outside government?

12. Who provides training for the universal FGC policy and is attendance at and participation in training low?
13. Has consideration ever been given to ACT Together providing the FGC facilitators? If so, what has been the nature of that discussion?
14. What do the following initialisms mean in the 'Family Group Conferencing (FGC) Strategic Plan 2021': CST team, EA, and CCR?



29 August 2022

Minister Stephen-Smith: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. Family Group Conferencing (FGC) began as a pilot in November 2017 to help divert Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people from the entering care and enable family-led decision making.
2. CYPS do not collect data on the number of families who should have been referred to FGC. CYPS have committed to undertake an FGC process evaluation that will be able to provide insights into families participation.
3. CYPS do not collect data on the number of families who should have been referred to FGC. However, CYPS can provide referral numbers by year:
 - 2017-2018: 17 referrals
 - 2018-2019: 37 referrals
 - 2019-2020: 27 referrals
 - 2020-2021: 32 referrals
 - 2021-2022: 35 referrals
 - 2022-2023: 8 referrals (as of 1 September 2022)

4. An FGC referral is appropriate for any family who request an FGC or are agreeable to participating in an FGC.

There are circumstances where families do not want to undertake an FGC. This may be due to significant family conflict, the family determining that an FGC is not the best approach to family led decision making for them, or they have limited engagement with CYPS. As the program is voluntary, it would not be appropriate to refer the family to an FGC in these circumstances.

5. ACT Together can refer Aboriginal and Torres Strait families directly to the CYPS FGC team. A referral can be made by ACT Together at any stage of their involvement with a family. A referral can be made by ACT Together regardless of whether CYPS has made a referral or not.
6. FGC has been used to facilitate restoration. In several instances, families have utilised FGC for the purposes of planning restoration goal setting, contact arrangements and safety planning.
7. The FGC referral form was developed when the pilot commenced and there have been a number of versions since then. An early version and the current version are **attached**. The current version provides additional detail to assist in FGC planning.
8. CYPS has the current capacity to outsource as required to Curijo – an Aboriginal organisation.
9. CYPS determined FGC should be located within the CYPS due to their ability to identify early and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait families, as well as their understanding of child protection processes.
10. In 2020-2021, the total cost of FGC Facilitator training was \$1,500, representing one training session. This training is provided on a fee-for-service basis when a new FGC Facilitator is employed.

11. In 2018-19, the ACT Government announced an investment of \$1.433 million in Family Group Conferencing to continue to deliver the program. This investment allowed two full time FGC Facilitators. In the 2020-21 supply bill, funding of \$150,000 was received for an additional FGC Facilitator for a period of 12 months with further ongoing funding obtained in the 2020-21 Budget process totaling \$519,000.

In circumstances where a FGC has been outsourced, it has taken place on a fee for service basis at approximately \$3,000 for a complex FGC, noting this varies based on the length of preparation time, planning, travel requirements and the unique needs and circumstances of each family.

No further modelling has been undertaken.

12. FGC Training for all staff (separate to the FGC facilitator training referenced in the answer to question 10) is delivered by Curijo four times per year. This is one of the core modules of the Foundational Learning Program and is mandatory for all CYPS staff. For operational staff the current completion rate is 82%.

13. To date, there has not been consideration to ACT Together providing FGC facilitators.

14.

- CST – Cultural Services Team
- EA – Emergency Action
- CCR – Child Concern Report

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2022-2023

Signature:



Date: 14/9/22

By Minister Stephen-Smith [Minister for Families and Community Services]

INSTRUCTIONS FOR LODGING QUESTIONS ON NOTICES (QON):

1. Each QON should be emailed to the Committee Support office in **Word format** and **signed PDF (scanned)** to LACommitteeEstimates@parliament.act.gov.au
2. This should occur within **5 working days of the hearing**. Day 1 of the 5 working days is the next working day after the hearing day. **Example:** *If a hearing was held on Monday, the QON should be submitted by close of business on the following Monday.*
3. * Number assigned by Committee Support office