

**Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024****Answer to question on notice**

Asked by: Mr Thomas Emerson MLA

Addressed to: Suzanne Orr MLA

Reference: Indigenous Social Workers/Community Services Directorate

Hearing: 25 February 2025

In relation to: Indigenous Social Workers

Question received: 26 February 2025

Answer Due: 5 March 2025

1. What actions have been taken to support the recruitment and training of Indigenous social workers and carers across the community sector?

Suzanne Orr MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. Community Services Directorate (CSD) is unable to comment on behalf of other agencies however can advise on the actions CSD has taken to support the recruitment and training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers and workers in the community services sector.

Recruitment and training support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in the community services sector

CSD funds the ACT Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS) \$315,967.29 (GST exclusive) per annum to deliver the Gulanga Program. The Gulanga Program is funded \$144,713.61 (GST exclusive) per annum through Social Housing and Homelessness Services (SHHS) and \$171,253.68 (GST exclusive) per annum through the Child, Youth and Family Services Program (CYFSP).

The Gulanga Program supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in the nonprofit community services sector in the ACT and region through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Sector Network and the Reconciliation Peer Network. This support is not exclusive to social workers, but to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers employed in the sector.

The Gulanga Program also supports the accessibility of mainstream community services - with a focus on housing support, homelessness and children, young people, and families - for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through:

- a) the development of tools and resources including:

- i. Self-Assessment Tool for Recruiting & Retaining Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander Workers
 - ii. Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness Self-Assessment Toolkit
 - iii. Gulanga Good Practice Guides
 - iv. Literature Review: Recruitment and Retention of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Staff
- b) The development and delivery of training in cultural awareness for community sector workers.

Training support for of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers

- The Australian National University has partnered with CSD to trial Connect Training specifically for Kinship Carers. Connect is a 9-week small group program specifically tailored to the unique needs of Kinship Carers and is being run in Terms 1 and 3, 2025. The trial also includes adapting the program specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
- A First Nations Kinship Support Practitioner is imbedded in the Kinship Assessment and Support Team within Child, Youth and Family Services (CYF) in CSD. This role provides support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Kinship Carers including ensuring cultural safety through the assessment process and when working with CYF; support to eliminate fear as a barrier for Aboriginal kin putting themselves forward as carers; frontloading carer support for new placements; ensuring kinship carers are linked with appropriate training and support; emotional and practical support; and advocacy.
- Recently, a small cohort of Aboriginal foster carers were recruited and trained by Barnardos Australia – Canberra as part of their foster carers training program funded by CSD.
- The ACTCOSS Gulanga Program also facilitates the ACT Nannies Group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grandmothers in the ACT and region.
- CSD works closely with Carers ACT to enhance existing supports available to carers, this includes funding the development of the soon to be launched online carer portal to promote training and educational accessibility for carers of the ACT. Carers ACT also offer advocacy and support exclusively for Kinship and Foster Carers, and also advertise a wide range of programs for all carers, for example, mindfulness and art workshops.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature:

Date:

05/03/25

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Suzanne Orr MLA