



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2023-2024

Mr Mark Parton MLA (Chair), Ms Jo Clay MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

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

Ref: Budget Outlook, p. 129

Hearing Date: 28 July 2023

In relation to: Establishing a First Nations Family Support Team within CYPS

(1) This budget provides \$2 million of supplementary funding over two years for the First Nations Family Support team. How many FTEs is this funding intended to provide?

(2) Can the minister please clarify what role the support team will play in ensuring that Our Booris, Our Way recommendations are fully implemented?

(3) In the hearing, mention was made of a group that reviews all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters that might lead to emergency action. How many are in this group? Who is in this group? What is the title of this group, who leads it, what roles are members of the group, and how exactly does this review function occur?

(4) What is the First Nations Family Support Team's current and planned involvement in improving referrals to Family Group Conferences and as well as uptake of those referrals?

(5) What is the First Nations Family Support Team's current and planned involvement in improving early identification of Indigenous families that come into contact with the child protection system?

MINISTER STEPHEN-SMITH: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1) The new funding provides an additional three FTE:

- 1 CYPP4, 1 CYPP3 for case workers; and
- 1 ASO6 to operate as secretariat for the Case Directions and Discussion Group.

2) The First Nations Family Support team provides culturally safe and informed responses in the Child Protection setting via two pathways:

- Family Support – in response to the reports identified as lower risk, or at risk of cumulative harm, and in need of brief support intervention; and
- Appraisals – in response to reports identified as higher risk and in need of more intensive support via statutory intervention.

The Team is also supporting systemic change and uplift in cultural competency in a range of ways, the Operations Manager and Principal Practitioner have been in their positions for five months, and significant efforts have occurred with respect to:

- Meeting face to face with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations for introductions and consultations with respect to hearing community voices for what needs to change in the Child Protection setting.
- Meeting face to face with other relevant support services such as Legal Aid NSW and the Aboriginal Legal Service to determine culturally safe support and advocacy services in the community.
- Fostering community collaboration to ensure culturally safe referral pathways exist, which will work toward diverting Aboriginal children, young people and families away from the Child Protection setting.
- Fostering internal CYPS collaboration by meeting face to face with the wider workforce to introduce the team, and to provide an overview of what the team's support comprises with the aim of setting a standard of care for Aboriginal children, young people and their families in the Child Protection setting.
- Working in collaboration with the CYPS policy and systems teams to re-write existing policy to allow the provision of the Family Support pathway, and changes in the information management system, CYRIS, to support this.

3) In further efforts to achieve self-determination for Aboriginal children, young people, and their families, CYPS has implemented the following pathways to review the provision of culturally safe practice. These arrangements ensure decision-making for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families is led by senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners:

- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Care Pathway - Aim of the Care Pathway panel is to review all proposed applications for court orders or the commencement of legal proceedings, and to review the practice and legal issues that form the basis of a proposed application for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families. The Care Pathway panel members vote on a majority basis with respect to endorsing case management decisions and refer to the non-voting member, Senior Director of Legal Services, for confirmation of adherence with current legal parameters in this space.
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Case Discussion and Direction Group - Aim of the Case Discussion and Direction Group is to provide cultural expertise and advice to the referring Child Protection Case Management teams. It is envisioned the advice provided by the panel will assist in assuring case planning is culturally informed, realistic, safe and in the best interest of Aboriginal children and families.
- Interim Emergency Action process - The aim of the current interim process is that the Child Protection Case Management Team contact the First Nations Family Support Team Principal Practitioner prior to taking emergency action, or as soon as practical after it has occurred. The Principal Practitioner will then convene a panel of at least three senior, experienced Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff to meet and discuss the proposed emergency action. This process is considered best practice with respect to reviewing all active efforts that occurred to keep children and young people with their parents, and when not possible, in culturally safe arrangements in line with the Placement Principle while long-term permanency is assessed with restoration being the first priority.

The various panels operate on a revolving co-chair arrangement in consideration of their capacity to attend. The members who currently take part in the above are:

- First Nations Family Support Team, Operations Manager
- First Nations Family Support Team, Team Leader
- First Nations Family Support Team, Principal Practitioner
- First Nations Family Support Team, Senior Case Manager
- Family Group Conference Team Leader / Aboriginal Practice Lead
- Senior Director of Cultural Services

4) The First Nations Family Support Team has a close working relationship with the Family Group Conferencing team. During all family support and appraisal responses, an overview of the Family Group Conference process is provided and the importance of family-led decision making in this setting is discussed and encouraged to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are active in this process.

5) The First Nations Family Support Team have been working in collaboration with the CYPS policy and systems teams to re-write existing policy to support the provision of the Family Support pathway. This ensures families who are assessed as lower risk at the time of the report are not closed without support being offered. Rather they are being contacted at the early stages and offered preservation support and culturally safe referral pathways to allow support provision in the community outside of the statutory system.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2023-2024

Signature:



Date:

16/8/23

By the Minister for Families and Community Services, Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA