

# ACWA NGO Sector Permanency Support Program (PSP) Needs Analysis

## Report 8: Western, Far Western and Murrumbidgee, 21 September 2017

This report identifies the critical needs and solutions NGOs conveyed to ACWA relating to the PSP Reform at a videoconference. Participants were asked to rank the priority of need relating to each to the PSP. This information was gathered on Thursday 21 September from 3 different agencies. The focus group participants comprised OOHC managers and casework specialists from services operating across the Western, Far Western and Murrumbidgee regions. No Aboriginal controlled agencies were interviewed. The feedback gathered from participants will inform a statewide survey aimed at refining information already gathered on the needs of the NGO sector relating to the PSP reform.

<p><b>1. The critical needs in caseworker practice, skills and capabilities</b></p>	<p><b>Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frontline caseworker skills in assessment and evidence informed decision making for safe restoration</li> <li>• Understanding the appropriate evidence base for family preservation and family restoration work</li> <li>• Engaging with families and parents (and extended families) – carers need training to engage and workers need to model this from the moment children enter care.</li> <li>• Work around supporting guardianship with non-indigenous family members (where this is an appropriate outcome)</li> <li>• Grasping expectations of permanency particularly when the available permanency outcomes don't seem to fit (this work would need to be informed and guided by the views of Aboriginal leaders in the sector)</li> <li>• Assessing (and re-assessing) carer motivation</li> </ul> <p><b>Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate post-order support for guardians (advocacy and support services at times of elevated need)</li> <li>• Adoption – what are the likely trigger points for difficulties for children with a background of complex trauma? What are the opportunities to touch base and receive additional services?</li> <li>• Support around contact (which is more generally an increased area of expectation for carers and guardians)</li> </ul>
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	<p>particularly when birth parents may be remote or have an adversarial relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need comprehensive information sharing – this is currently not occurring</li> <li>• Training/support of long-term carers to reorient them towards openness and changing language (some may already have begun working with an agency for 10-15 years in earlier models with different expectations)</li> <li>• Developing a pool of prospective adoptive parents</li> <li>• Clarity on roles when gathering evidence for Court-directed case plans (when NGOs are best placed to know what is happening and inform the Magistrate)</li> <li>• Clarity needed on how children and young people's needs be assessed, monitored and reviewed post-restoration</li> </ul> <p><b>Additional needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns about potential impact of new financial arrangements (abatements) on good placement matching</li> <li>• Helping carers manage multiple contact arrangements</li> <li>• Recruitment of appropriately qualified staff in rural areas</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. How you rank them in priority to be addressed</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assessment</li> <li>2. Carer recruitment to the new model</li> <li>3. Working effectively with birth families (when there may be a paucity of information)</li> </ol>
<p><b>3. What you think the possible support solutions are</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using coaching, mentoring, training courses and joint FACS/NGO training to support practice change (working effectively with birth families). Building on existing work in Family Finding.</li> <li>• More ready availability of FGC facilitators and services in regional areas.</li> <li>• Funding for specialist birth parent support worker positions.</li> <li>• More informal events/opportunities to enable networking (which can be difficult in rural/regional areas)</li> <li>• Reciprocal invitations to team meetings to FACS staff to facilitate information exchange and discussing “out-of-the-box” solutions</li> <li>• Podcasts (an accessible format when long drives between</li> </ul>

	<p>locations are part of the job)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mechanisms to encourage recruitment and retention of carer assessors (once trained) in regional areas</li></ul>
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