Project Outline – Review of Data and Outcomes for the Permanency Support Program (PSP)

Prepared by the Australian Centre for Child Protection

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ACWA PROPOSED PSP PROJECT DRAFT RFP

Below is a brief description of a proposed PSP project that seeks to respond to concerns that exist across both the NGO and government sectors relating to:

- the need to drive ongoing improvements in practice and outcomes through efficiently capturing and using critical data relating to the impact of the PSP;
- the need to ensure efficiency and quality in the system/s and processes for capturing and using this critical data;
- ascertaining how the Department and sector can work together to support the capture and reporting of data; and
- determining how the data should be best used to drive ongoing improvement in practice and outcomes.

1. PSP Reform – data required to drive improved outcomes

Background

Access to reliable data is essential to being able to successfully drive ongoing operational improvements, at both the individual agency and broader systems levels, in order to maximise positive PSP outcomes.

Although significant work is underway to improve data and systems, there are still gaps in data.

There is also a challenge relating to data accuracy – for example, not all agencies have a baseline of relevant data. Although certain agencies have undertaken lengthy reconciliation processes. This process is still underway, and there remain issues with the quality of data on DCJ's systems.

Issues that have been raised by NGOs include:

- Lack of integration between data systems that is leading to a huge administrative burden
- Duplication of effort, largely due to the current lack of ChildStory Business to Business functionality, means that NGO data systems can no longer export data into the new DCJ data system – instead, NGO staff have to fill out components of ChildStory data requirements, in addition to entering data on their own systems.
- The administrative burden associated with the PSP data reconciliation payment process.
- The inadequacy of the original training for the current IT and broader reporting requirements

This issue was also examined by the NSW Auditor-General in her 2019 report on Contracting Non-Government Organisations which led to the following recommendation:

Recommendation 5

Improve the accuracy and completeness of client and NGO performance data and use it to:

- monitor the performance and quality of NGO services
- provide performance feedback to NGOs on their services
- publicly report the performance of NGO services.

Deliverable

An analysis of PSP data, considering:

- Data that was originally envisaged to be collected under the PSP Program Level Agreement.

- What data is needed to support the delivery of PSP, oversight the placement of children in OOHC, and validly and reliably determine whether PSP is having a positive impact?
- What is currently collected and where are the current PSP data gaps and limitations (including barriers to the collection of valid and reliable data)?
- What valid and reliable data can feasibly be collected now to drive improved outcomes?

2. Data Strategy Roadmap

There is significant work already underway to address some of these issues, including:

- The joint DCJ-sector Administrative Burden Working Group
- OOHC remediation processes
- Current and planned system improvements
- Planned data sharing with NGOs including the OOHC Performance Dashboard

Deliverable

A roadmap that takes stock of the work already underway, and considers what additional work or requirements may be needed for DCJ and the NGO sector to collect and effectively use the data required to understand the impact of PSP and drive improved outcomes.

3. Other project requirements

The project requires the contractor to work with both the NGO sector and DCJ on designing and implementing the operational framework to deliver on the dual objectives of capturing the best data that we can reasonably be expected to capture, and identifying a streamlined process for doing so.

In addition, it will be critical for DCJ to provide the contractor with access to its ChildStory and other relevant IT systems experts. On a related note, both DCJ and the NGO sector will warrant that the contractor will be provided with access to individuals from within the department, and NGO agencies, with the requisite skills and experience to provide the necessary advice.

In addition, the proposed contractor will need to demonstrate that they have the requisite skills and experience to meet the deliverables within the specified timeframe. (In this regard, it is imperative that the contract be finalised within 3 months).

PROPOSED APPROACH

ACCP will undertake a multi-staged approach to documenting existing data collection and identifying the data and measures necessary for monitoring the delivery and effect of the PSP. The approach will be highly consultative, recognising that the required knowledge exists across the agencies responsible for the delivery of the program.

Stage 1: Program Familiarisation, Existing Logic Model Review and Development of Operationalised Logic Model

The ACCP will undertake a process of rapid familiarisation with the PSP, informed by a purpose developed background briefing document provided by the funding organisations. The background briefing document to include: overview of the PSP, target population(s), objective(s), PSP reach (size, scale, location), PSP background/problem the PSP was intending to solve, activities delivered under the PSP, how they are delivered, referral pathways into and out of the PSP, existing logic model, existing data and monitoring plan (including sources of information), and any gaps in the data and monitoring plan identified to date. Rapid familiarisation post background briefing review will also be aided by a briefing from the PSP Evaluation Team from CEI (with DCJ). It is envisaged that the focus of this first briefing will be the PSP Theory of Change.

Drawing on the ACCP's award winning Target Group to Outcomes (TGO™) methodology, this initial stage will establish the intended client group(s)/target population(s) and existing logic model for the program. Workshop(s) with the Project Advisory Group will be utilised to review the logic model with a view to (a) identifying any contingent assumptions and outcomes that were not originally included in logic models, but will need to be monitored to identify any implementation facilitators or barriers; as well as (b) any potential and foreseeable unintended consequences and contingent outcomes that should be included in the logic model. **This outcome of stage 1 will be an operationalised logic model**, including optimal constructs and outcomes and their directionality for data monitoring. It is envisaged that the operationalised logic model will be developed collaboratively with the Project Advisory group (PAG) over 2 workshops. PAG members are likely to be provided some brief pre-reading for workshops in order to get the most out of the time meeting together and to maintain the project timeframes.

Stage 2: Mapping Indicators to the Operationalised Logic Model

In research and data measurement, "constructs" are social science concepts that are assumed to exist, but which are challenging to observe and are therefore measured by some indirect means (e.g., children's sense of safety in care). Researchers use scales and indicators as means of measuring these constructs. In the child and family welfare sector key outcomes are also often difficult to measure or obtain data for (e.g. abuse in care). The way constructs and outcomes are measured are subject to considerations about validity and reliability. Briefly, validity refers to whether something measures what it is intended to measure, and reliability refers to the consistency of the measure. In this context, identifying the best indicators and proxy indicators for the constructs and outcomes identified in the operationalised logic model is critical to the ability to interpret and make sound judgements about the impacts of reforms.

In this stage each of the constructs and outcomes identified in the operational logic model will be examined in terms of the existing indicators and data being collected to evaluate and monitor the PSP. This may include specific instruments (e.g. Child Behaviour Checklist) or points of data that are assumed to be indicative of a construct (e.g. renotification post restoration as a proxy indicator of safety). This stage will involve mapping the existing PSP data collection to the constructs and outcomes identified in the operational program logic, as well as identifying other potential indicators and proxy indicators.

In order to undertake this work within project timeframes, the ACCP will draw upon a second consultation with the CEI PSP Evaluation Team with a focus on available data and indicators, as well as specific information

requests and consultation with DCJ personnel regarding data availability for particular indicators, constructs and outcomes. ACCP will also consult with the ACWA working group on data and monitoring. A focus of the indictor mapping will be to gain a sense of both the potential indicators and proxy indicators as well as the relative resource intensity of collecting and extracting each indicator for routine performance monitoring. A final consultation will be undertaken with the CEI PSP Evaluation Team focussed on PSP data collection and extraction barriers and pain points for the sector

The indicator mapping and the connection between the data and the constructs and outcomes in the operationalised logic model will be cross-checked through a workshop with the PAG, as will the initial sense of the relative resource intensiveness of collection and extraction for the different indicators. **The outcome of Stage 2 will be the Indicator Mapping** comprising the constructs and outcomes from the operationalised logic model mapped to the potential indicators and proxy indictors identified along with the identification of any gaps.

Stage 3: Online Sector Consultation

The findings from Stage 2 will be utilised to develop an online Sector Consultation Survey to gain input from PSP service provider agencies on the optimal indicators for monitoring of the PSP, priorities and relative resource intensiveness. It is envisaged that invitations to participate in the online sector consultation will be administered through existing mailing lists held by ACWA, AbSec and DCJ..

Through the support of the Project Advisory Group, ACCP will conduct an online consultation with the sector to determine the priorities for monitoring and the relative resource intensity associated with the collection and extraction of each indicator. The consultation will ask agency representatives about the relative priority and intensity of existing indicators and the priorities among any data gaps identified in the previous stage.

The aim of the consultation is to inform conclusions about which indicators are most feasible and fit for purpose for monitoring of the PSP in the short-term, as well as helping to identify priority indicators for any future data development activity that may occur. This consultation will potentially identify high intensity – low value existing points of data that may present opportunities for increased efficiency in data collection across the agencies involved in the PSP. The consultations may also identify where differences in the perceived value and intensity, either across agencies, or between agencies and the DCJ have created issues in data collection. Improving understanding of relative priorities and intensity across agencies can help identify strategies to improve the efficiency of data collection requirements.

Stage 4: Preparation of PSP Data Road Map Final Report

Drawing on the information produced from the previous stages and recognising existing efforts to reform data within the program, the final stage of the review will involve the creation of a draft data and monitoring road map. The roadmap will provide a summary of conclusions from this project regarding

  (a) The optimal indicators in terms of fitness for purpose and feasibility for PSP data monitoring in the short-term, including high priority indicators; and

  (b) Considerations for future data development and priority gaps.

The road map will reference the operationalised logic for the PSP and the indicators needed to measure the key outcomes and constructs of the program, along with consideration of indicators to measure contingent or unintended outcomes of the program.

The Draft Final PSP Data Road Map will be a project deliverable.

Stage 5 Final PSP Data Road Map and Implementation

The project finder will have an agreed period of time (propose 2 or 4 weeks) to review the Draft Final Report and provide any feedback. Subject to feedback being provided within agreed time frames, the ACCP will provide the Final PSP Dara Road Map within 2 weeks of receipt of feedback.

Following the delivery of the Final PSP Data Road Map Report the ACCP will meet once per month for two months following delivery to provide an opportunity for the project funders to discuss and workshop any implementation issues arising from the Data Road Map.

Project Advisory Group

A Project Advisory Group will need to be assembled rapidly to support the completion of the project. The Project Advisory group will meet 4-6 times over the 3mths via zoom and work collaboratively with the ACCP Project team. It is anticipated that this group will involve senior representatives of DCJ involved in the PSP Monitoring and Commissioning, representatives from ACWA, AbsSec and some of their member agencies. A maximum of 8 members is recommended for zoom facilitated workshops.

THE AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR CHILD PROTECTION

The Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia (ACCP) was established in 2005 as a joint initiative between government and academia to reduce the gaps between research, policy and practice in child protection and ultimately to transform the lives of vulnerable children. The ACCP offers research and evaluation, policy and practice solution and has a particular specialism in the support of Royal Commissions and Inquiries. Our researchers have evaluated more than 150 innovations in child and family services, including social policies, practices, programs and service reform and the Centre is highly regarded for its ability to work with partners across government and non-government sectors. Collectively, our leadership team has more than 80-years' experience in the field of child abuse and neglect.

The award-winning team, led by Professor Fiona Arney and Professor Leah Bromfield, have pioneered methods for research and evaluation with some of the most vulnerable children, families and communities in Australia. This includes world first research and evaluation focusing on: institutional child sexual abuse, predicting and preventing high levels of child protection involvement and cumulative harm, working with refugee families to support parenting in a new culture, the experiences of children in out of home care and juvenile justice, highlighting the needs of homeless children, understanding the impacts of child removal, fathering, and family violence. Aligned with leading peak bodies, community-controlled organisations, communities and other researchers, the ACCP has a specific focus on supporting child, family and community strengths for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The ACCP has designed and delivered formative, summative, process, fidelity, impact, outcome and hybrid evaluations and utilised implementation frameworks to determine the impacts of interventions and reform in child protection. Our experience in designing and conducting evaluations includes programs, policies and reforms with a range of goals at program, organisational, jurisdictional and national levels across a range of government departments, statutory authorities and non-government organisations (e.g., Desktop Evaluations of South Australian Government investment in child abuse prevention, Multi-Agency Investigation and Response Team, Implementation of Signs of Safety, Aboriginal Family Home Visiting program, Berry Street Organisational Evaluation Framework). Our evaluation methodologies have incorporated multiple informants and data sources including children, parents, victim/survivors, practitioners, policy makers and systems data.

PERSONNEL

Dr James Herbert (PSP Project Role: Project Manager)

Dr Herbert is a social researcher specialising in research and evaluation in the child and family welfare sector. His PhD research focused on the evaluation impact of key reforms in NSW including the Brighter Futures evaluations. He is a specialist in the ACCP TGO™ methodology, with a particular focus on multi-agency and multi-disciplinary program and policy responses. He is an internationally recognised leader in the field of cross-agency collaboration in responses to child sexual abuse and has a strong history in working in partnership with non-government and government organisations engaging with all levels of organisations from the Executive to frontline practitioners. He is currently undertaking research on addressing the barriers to therapy engagement for children that have disclosed sexual abuse. Working across child protection topics, Dr Herbert also has a key interest in the translation of research evidence into policy and practice change and building the capacity of the sector to apply evaluative thinking to complex social policy issues

Dr Olivia Octoman (PSP Project Role: Administrative Data and Client Management Systems Indicator Specialist)

Dr Octoman is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Australian Centre for Child Protection at the University of South Australia. Her areas of research include repeat involvement with child protection and support needs of foster carers and she has broad experience in the analysis of administrative data and child protection systems and information. Olivia's research into child protection intake, assessment and response systems has underpinned findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. She has led a team examining risk factors and child outcomes in child protection case file reviews as part of the South Australian Early Intervention Research Directorate and been a member of project teams examining the incidence and prevalence of child sexual abuse for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Professor Leah Bromfield (PSP Project Role: Partnership and Strategy Lead)

Professor Bromfield is one of Australia's foremost child protection researchers and is Co-Director at the Australian Centre for Child Protection. She is a highly-regarded research expert in issues affecting child protection systems, chronic maltreatment and cumulative harm, and has worked closely with state, national and international governments on establishing and implementing child welfare reforms, including the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children. Professor Bromfield was the Professorial Fellow to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, established by the Australian government and lead its extensive research program. She has also won numerous awards for her leading work, including the 2017 National Telstra Business Women's Award for Public Sector and Academia.

Professor Fiona Arney (PSP Project Role: ACCP Internal Project Advisor)

Professor Arney, an internationally renowned and award winning child protection researcher has over 20 years research experience in conducting program evaluation. Prof Arney has worked on a range of significant projects involving national incidence and prevalence studies, randomised and non-randomised control trials and other evaluative comparison methods, measure development, administrative data analysis, grounded theory and content and thematic analysis. Her research has a focus on building the evidence base for child protection reform and she has provided support to numerous child protection Inquiries, led significant committees and has guided system reform efforts. This has included roles as Professorial Fellow and Research Support to the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory, as well as the former Chair of the South Australian Council for the Care of Children.

Associate Professor Melissa O'Donnell (PSP Project Role: ACCP Internal Project Advisor)

Associate Professor Melissa O'Donnell is a nationally and internationally recognised researcher in child abuse and neglect, with particular expertise in administrative and linked cross jurisdictional data. Her leading work in investigating and monitoring outcomes and risks and protective factors for children and families who experience child abuse and neglect has informed both national and state policy, including the National Child Protection Framework and the development of the first Youth Health Policy for Western Australia. Prof O'Donnell's work and impact has earned the prestigious WA Premier's Award Woodside Early Career Scientist of the Year in 2018. Her global profile and recognition includes providing expertise to the United Nations and serving as Co-Chair on the International Working Group on Child Maltreatment Data Collections through the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.

Project Risks and Mitigations Table

Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation Strategy
Small budget and short turn-around time (3 month project)	Medium	Medium	Ensuring tight scope with funder and ACCP.
Lack of background knowledge of ACCP	Medium	Medium	CEI Briefing on PSP, data systems and implementation issues emerging
Potential to be overwhelmed with background document volume and content	High	High	Agreed documentation set with funder and ACCP.
Large sector with multiple stakeholders (government and NGOs) to be managed	High	High	Project Advisory Group & survey
Burden on participants and reform fatigue	Medium	Medium	ACCP are highly experienced at working in service contexts in which there are multiple, and at times, competing service imperatives.
Project slippage	High	Medium	ACCP will appoint a dedicated project manager within the University of South Australia who will implement ACCP project management guidelines, tools and resources We will regularly liaise with the funder regarding potential and real external issues threatening delays. Contingency plans for each component will be developed to deal with external delays.
Impacts of staff turnover in the project team	High	Medium	ACCP have a proven track record of conducting complex and sensitive child protection projects as part of a collaborative team. We have structured the project team so that multiple staff on our team can cover the roles of other staff members in the event of staff turnover. We will hold regular meetings to ensure there is common understanding of the roles and functions of all team members and a collective organisational memory.
Impacts of COVID 19	High	High	The ACCP have conducted an extensive "pivot" to COVID process for all funded projects within the Centre. This pivot has included extensive use of virtual technologies to continue to provide services to funders. The University of South Australia has rigorous practices in place to maintain business continuity and safety in this environment.

ACCP