

Aboriginal Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) Transition Factsheet for PSP Providers

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) values the strong commitment and acknowledges the great work undertaken by the Non-Government sector over the past decade in supporting Aboriginal children in Out-of-Home-Care (OOHC). Non-Aboriginal PSP providers have worked alongside Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to deliver these services and many have supported ACCOs to set up their PSP services. This support is appreciated and we look forward to working as allies on the next phase of the Aboriginal OOHC Transition.

Background to the Transition

In 2012 the NSW Government committed to ensuring all Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC are cared for by Aboriginal carers, supported by caseworkers, employed by local Aboriginal managed agencies¹. This means that Aboriginal children and young people who cannot live at home with their families will have their case management transferred to an Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation (ACCO) as part of the Aboriginal OOHC Transition.

The Aboriginal OOHC transition is a very important project for the DCJ, along with our partners AbSec - NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation and Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA). The project aims to provide better outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC, through culturally safe care, carer support and case management. This is in line with DCJ's commitment to upholding the Aboriginal Child Placement Principles.

The transition follows successive reports and reviews, including the 2008 Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW (known as the 'Wood Inquiry'). The Wood Inquiry listened to concerns about the child protection system (including concerns raised by carers) and made recommendations about the best way forward. One of the main recommendations of the Wood Inquiry was that non-government agencies should deliver quality OOHC services, instead of the DCJ.

The NSW Government is committed to improving outcomes for Aboriginal people as set out in the 2019 Family is Culture Review, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the targets set out in

¹
http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/320039/tpo_policy_paper_3_caring_for_children_and_young_people_in-nsw_final_october-2012.pdf

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the [Premier's Priorities](#), and to reducing over-representation of Aboriginal people in Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) service systems.

Why is the transition important?

Self-determination and culture are at the heart of the rights and best interests of Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC. Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC must be able to form strong connections to their kin, culture and country. This contributes to their identity and sense of belonging which are important foundations for wellbeing and resilience.

ACCOs are best placed to support cultural connections and provide case management services for Aboriginal children, young people and their families.

This Aboriginal OOHC transition will ensure that all Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC are supported by an ACCO best placed to uphold and promote self-determination and cultural connection. ACCOs will assist carers on the journey to ensure increased cultural connections and family time for the Aboriginal children and young people in their care.

What is the timeline for the transition?

The initial timeline for the transition was 10 years (2012 – 2022). As with any complex project involving children, carers and families the project is going to take time to deliver successfully, and there is still work to do to build the community controlled sector. DCJ, in partnership with AbSec, are working to establish ACCOs as PSP Providers in areas where there aren't any established.

Transfers will occur overtime, and timelines will vary across the state. Individual District timelines will be agreed to and overseen by both the Aboriginal Leadership Group and the Expert Advisory Group, once all Aboriginal Transition plans have been submitted to DCJ.

The transition is a priority and initially focus will be on transferring carers in areas where existing ACCOs are established. The transfer rate will be dependent on the number of ACCOs in an area and the volume of transfers sustainable for these organisations.

Who will be transferred?

The current focus is on transferring carers of Aboriginal children and young people in foster care arrangements to ACCOs. This includes statutory foster care and relative/kinship care.

Aboriginal children currently residing in Intensive Therapeutic Care (ITC), Supported Independent Living (SIL) and Interim Care (ICM) are out of scope for the Aboriginal OOHC Transition at this

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time. As children or young people step down to a foster or relative/kinship care placement, active steps are taken to transition case management to a PSP Provider who is an ACCO.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal units operating within Non-Government Organisations have been a valuable approach in supporting Aboriginal children, young people and their carers to date. Moving forward, the expectation is that the Non-Government Organisations with Aboriginal units will move away from this approach. Instead we ask that these organisations support the growth of the Aboriginal Community-Controlled sector, consistent with the principle of self-determination, which underpins the NSW Government's commitment to Closing the Gap and Empowered Communities.

Priority cohorts for transition

All carers of Aboriginal children and young people will be transferred to the community controlled sector over time, beginning with those carers who are willing to transfer.

Carers will be transferred from non-Aboriginal PSP Providers to ACCOs in the following priority order:

- Priority Cohort 1: Non-Aboriginal carers of Aboriginal children and young people
- Priority Cohort 2: Aboriginal carers of Aboriginal children
- Priority Cohort 3: Aboriginal children and young people in other placement types

The speed by which the transition will occur will vary from district to district. Some districts will progress to Priority Cohort 2 and 3 sooner than others. Aboriginal Transition Plans should focus on activities to support the transfer of carers from non-Aboriginal PSP Providers.

As DCJ is the preferred provider of relative or kinship care, the majority of Aboriginal children managed by DCJ are being cared for by family in line with the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles. DCJ is focussed on transitioning unrelated carers of Aboriginal children to the community controlled sector as a priority.

From time to time, where in the best interests of children, carers of Aboriginal children will transition from DCJ to an ACCO on a case by case basis.

What if a carer doesn't want to transfer to an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation?

The transfer of Aboriginal children and young people to an Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation is in the best interests of the child and upholds their right to cultural connection. All carers of Aboriginal children and young people will be transferred over time.

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Transition Plans

Transition plan templates

The aim of the Transition Plan is to guide strategic planning using various sections in the template, with the final plan due by 30 June 2023.

DCJ acknowledges that circumstances change, therefore the Transition Plan is a living document. The Transition Plan is to be reviewed regularly by the PSP provider and the contract manager, at a minimum, annually. The actions in the plan may also change overtime based on actual numbers of children in OOHC and circumstances of children and carers.

The purpose of the Transition Plan is for:

- DCJ to provide PSP Providers with Statewide data on the number of Aboriginal children, by LGA, who could possibly be transferred. This can be found in the Statewide data tab.
- DCJ to provide PSP Providers with localised data on the number of Aboriginal children with non-Aboriginal providers who could possibly be transferred. This can be found in the location data tab.
- Non-Aboriginal PSP providers to identify carers readiness for transfer. This will be completed within the location data tab by non-Aboriginal PSP Providers.
- All PSP providers to identify strategies to prepare for any changes to their contracted volume such as staffing, carers, vehicles, office space, change to geographic locations or services offered. Planning for this can be done on the Service Planning tab before the Transition meeting with DCJ. The actions which are agreed to by the service provider and the DCJ lead contract manager will be included on the Transition plan tab.
- All PSP providers to identify how they will collaborate with other providers in their area to ensure successful case management transfers. This will be completed on the Collaboration tab.
- All PSP providers to identify strategic risks associated with the case management transfer process, and mitigation strategies
- All PSP providers to negotiate with DCJ an indicative number of children which could be transferred in the first 3 years. These numbers will be included on the Transition plan tab.

Non-Aboriginal PSP providers develop relationships with ACCOs in the areas where they have case management of Aboriginal children. It is acknowledged that DCJ Districts and individual providers are at different stages in this process. Some providers are already collaborating, meeting regularly to discuss possible case management transfers and transfers already occurring. It is important

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that all providers are engaged in this process to confirm planning and timelines. ACWA, AbSec and Contract managers in your District will support this process where support is required.

Children or young people in Intensive Therapeutic Care

Aboriginal Transition Plans are not yet required to be submitted by PSP Providers who solely deliver ITC services

DCJ is currently progressing a tender to expand ITC service delivery across the below locations and an objective of this tender is to grow ACCO service delivery in ITC.

Where ACCO service delivery is able to be expanded into ITC, existing providers will then be required to submit an Aboriginal Transition Plan (or updated plan) by December 2023.

LGA / Location	Service type
Lismore & Tweed Heads	ITC
Newcastle	ITC
Orange	ITC AND ITC Significant Disability
Queanbeyan	ITC AND ITC Significant Disability
Wagga Wagga	ITC AND ITC Significant Disability
Metro Sydney	ITC AND ITC Significant Disability
Mid North Coast (Taree, Foster, Gloucester, Port Macquarie/Kempsey, and Coffs Harbour)	ITC

What you need to know about the process

Planning will occur between providers and Districts. This may take several meetings to confirm. Where providers work across multiple Districts, broader planning and support will be provided, if needed.

Once agreement has been reached the actions will be compiled in the final table of the Transition plan. This table will need to be formally endorsed by the Board or Management Committee of the PSP Service Provider and returned to DCJ by 30 June 2023.

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Step by step process for PSP providers completing transition plans

Actions	Who	When
Start collaborating with other providers about the case management transfers including joint meetings, trainings and events for carers	All PSP Service Providers	March 2023 onwards
Attend District PSP Implementation Group or Forum meetings to discuss the local transfer process	All PSP Service Providers	March 2023 onwards
Transition data, factsheets and sample transition plan templates will be sent out to all PSP service providers	Statewide Services	April 2023
Review and check data for your agency. The data has been pulled from Childstory and there may be some discrepancies. Speak to your contract manager about this.	All PSP Service Providers	April 2023
Individualised transition plans for each of the PSP providers will be sent out for completion	Lead Contract managers	April 2023
Identify Aboriginal children, young people and their carers who are suitable and ready for transfer as well as those not yet ready for transfer.	Non-Aboriginal PSP providers	April 2023 onwards
Complete the various tabs in the Transition plans to identify indicative transfer numbers, collaboration activities and risks, before meeting with Contract Managers	All PSP Service Providers	April –May 2023
Negotiate actions for your agency to undertake as part of the transition with your contract manager	All PSP Service Providers	April - June 2023
Seek Board/Management Committee approval for your transition plan and return to your contract manager by 30/6/23	All PSP Service Providers	May –June 2023
Implement the actions in the transition plan	All PSP Service Providers	July 2023 onwards
Organise transfer meetings with Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations who operate in	Non-Aboriginal PSP providers	April 2023 onwards

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<p>the areas where you have identified Aboriginal children and their carers for transfer.</p> <p>Seek additional support from your Contract manager and/or ACWA if required.</p>		
<p>Meet with your contract manager to follow up on actions in the transition plan until the plan is fully implemented.</p>	<p>All PSP Service Providers</p>	<p>July 2023 onwards</p>

What support is available to PSP Providers?

For questions or assistance with any aspect of developing and managing Transition plans:

- First, discuss it with your Contract Manager or Manager Commissioning and Planning
- If necessary, the Contract Manager can escalate the issue to Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes Team.

ACWA and AbSec are working with their member agencies to identify and share useful resources about the transition and develop new resources where needed, covering issues that agencies flag would be helpful. Please reach out to these agencies if you need support or have questions.

Project governance and reporting

Governance structure established

In partnership with AbSec and ACWA, the DCJ has established a Project Control Group to oversee the strategic direction for the project. Representatives from the Office of the Children’s Guardian and various Divisions within the DCJ are also represented on this group.

An Aboriginal leadership group and a separate expert advisory group has been established. This is made up of 60% ACCOs and 40% non-Aboriginal PSP Providers.

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Reporting and monitoring

Reporting on transfers will be the responsibility of the Aboriginal OOHC Project Control Group to assure adequate support and momentum for the project.

A dashboard with numbers of Aboriginal children transferring across to Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations by location and provider is currently being developed. It will be ready by December 2023 and published monthly.

For more information

If you have questions or would like to know more about the Aboriginal OOHC Transition project please speak to your Contract Manager.