FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ACWA RESPONDS TO MAJOR RESET OF NSW OUT OF HOME CARE SYSTEM

Monday 2nd March 2026

The Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) recently attended the NSW Government's Out of Home Care Ministerial Forum, where Minister for Families and Communities the Hon. Kate Washington MP and the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) outlined a major reform agenda for the state's Out of Home Care (OOHC) system.

ACWA acknowledges the Government's commitment to reforming a system facing significant pressure and supports the shared goal of improving safety, stability and long term outcomes for children and young people in care.

The reforms respond to findings from multiple independent reviews highlighting challenges relating to accountability, oversight, rising costs and declining outcomes. The Government has signalled a reset focused on stronger stewardship, clearer roles across the system, and improved public accountability.

A renewed focus on outcomes for children

The reform vision outlines an OOHC system centred on child wellbeing, restoration to family where safe, cultural connection and placement stability.

Key directions include stronger government stewardship, the phased conclusion of the Permanency Support Program, expanded roles for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, enhanced financial transparency, improved system integration, and greater recognition of carers as essential partners.

Implementation will occur in stages through to 2030, with transitional contract extensions intended to maintain stability for children and carers during the reform period.

Partnership critical to successful reform

ACWA Chief Executive Officer, Simone Czech said reform of this scale must be delivered in collaboration with the organisations and workforce supporting children and families every day.

"Non government organisations care for the majority of children and young people in out of home care across NSW. Sector expertise and community connections will be critical to ensuring reform delivers meaningful improvements for children," Ms Czech said.

"Implementation must prioritise children's best interests, stability for children, support for carers while preserving the relationships that underpin positive outcomes."

ACWA welcomed the strengthened focus on restoration, cultural connection and carer support, noting these areas are central to improving long term outcomes.

Supporting a stable transition

ACWA emphasised the importance of careful implementation to avoid disruption for children, carers and services.

"The sector shares government's commitment to accountability and better outcomes," Ms Czech said. "Reform must now be delivered in a way that support what is in the best interests of children and supports a capable and sustainable workforce."

ACWA will work constructively with government, Aboriginal partners and sector organisations to support implementation and contribute practical expertise as further detail emerges.

ACWA will also engage closely with members to understand the implications of the announcement and provide informed feedback to government as the reform progresses.

Click here to visit: **acwa.asn.au**

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For more information please contact:
Nat Peacock
Media and Communications Lead
Phone: 0475 915089
Email: nat@acwa.asn.au

Notes to Editors:

- The Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) is the peak body representing non-government organisations providing services for vulnerable children, young people, and families in NSW.
- ACWA's training arm, the **Centre for Community Welfare Training (CCWT)**, delivers professional development and capacity-building programs across the sector.
- As of March 31, 2024, there were **12,352 children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC)** in NSW.*
- Between 2018 and 2023, the number of authorised carers in NSW fell by 14.9%, with annual new carer applicants declining by 9.7%. This downward trend has persisted into 2024 and 2025.*
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to be significantly overrepresented in the OOHC system in NSW. As of June 30, 2024, there were **6,312** Indigenous children in OOHC placements in NSW, accounting for **45%** of all children in care in the state. **

Visit **acwa.asn.au** for more information.

* Office of the Children's Guardian
** National Indigenous Times