

26 February 2018

Our reference: ADM/2017/711

Ms Emma Wood  
Committee Manager  
Legislative Assembly  
Parliament House

By email: [childrenyoungpeople@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:childrenyoungpeople@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Ms Wood

### **Inquiry into Prevention of Youth Suicide in New South Wales**

Thank you for your letter dated 20 February 2018, which included advice regarding questions taken on notice.

During the hearing on 12 February 2018, I took one question on notice. Please find attached my answer, as requested.

If you have any questions in relation to this matter, please do not hesitate to make contact with Monica Wolf, whose details are provided above, in the first instance.

Yours sincerely

  
Michael Barnes  
Convenor, NSW Child Death Review Team

## QUESTION ON NOTICE

**Ms Jodie Harrison:** I have a question regarding people who are at increased risk because they are children who have been reported to Family and Community Services (FACS). I note in your submission you have made recommendations to FACS about changes that should be made. I am wondering what those recommendations were that the Ombudsman made to FACS and what the response has been?

1. In our submission we noted 'our reviews have consistently identified that young people in out-of-home care are particularly vulnerable and frequently present with high and complex needs'.
2. Against this background, we advised that our *2017 Report of Reviewable Deaths in 2014 and 2015* included a focused review of the circumstances of a group of 15 young people (aged 13-17 years) who were in out-of-home care and died by suicide (9), or in a risk-taking context (6), between 2004 and 2015.
3. All these young people had high and complex support needs. The young people who died by suicide had child protection histories which documented significant trauma and experiences of abuse before they came into care.
4. Our review highlighted the critical importance of intensive case management, a consistently supportive and therapeutic care environment, and close monitoring and support of placements.
5. In this context, we recommended that FACS should consider the issues raised, and provide details of current or proposed strategies to address these issues. We said that FACS should have particular regard to:
  - a. Responses to risk of significant harm reports, particularly those that raise concerns about self-harm and risk-taking behaviours (including suicide attempts or threats of suicide, and substance abuse)
  - b. Identification of, and response to, escalating self-harm/risk-taking behaviours, and
  - c. Lack of placement stability and homelessness.
6. We asked that FACS provide details of current or proposed strategies to address these issues.
7. In a written response (June 2017), FACS Secretary Mr Michael Coutts-Trotter, stated that FACS accepted the recommendation 'in full'. FACS provided information in relation to:
  - Its work in developing an Intensive Therapeutic Care (ITC) service system to replace the residential care system. FACS advised it had engaged a third party expert to review the current system and design a therapeutic care model specifically aimed to support children and young people, aged above 12 years, with identified high and complex needs who are unable to be supported immediately in a family-based or

foster care placement. The new model will be progressively implemented in 2018 following a competitive tender.

- Additional funding (\$8.5 million) committed to by the NSW Government under the *Their Futures Matter* reforms to out-of-home care for a Trauma Treatment Service for children in out-of-home care.
  - Various strategies either underway or being scoped which aim to directly or indirectly address lack of placement stability and homelessness for young people in, or leaving, out-of-home care.
  - The introduction of a new Permanency Support Program in NSW designed to address individual needs and help families change, and which includes provision for additional specialist funding to address specific areas of need, such as 'leaving care' or 'complex needs'.
8. In line with our reporting obligations, we will be seeking information from FACS in the months to come about its progress towards implementing the recommendation. Full details about progress made will be reported in our next biennial report (likely to be tabled in early 2019).