

**Submission
No 3**

**EXAMINATION OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL'S PERFORMANCE AUDIT
REPORTS JUNE - DECEMBER 2020**

Organisation: Department of Communities and Justice NSW

Date Received: 2 September 2021

Greg Piper MP
Chair
Public Accounts Committee
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Ref: EAP21/11124

Dear Mr Piper

Auditor-General's performance audit report – *Their Futures Matter*

Thank you for your correspondence of 23 July 2021 regarding the Department of Communities and Justice's (DCJ) response to the Auditor-General's performance audit report - *Their Futures Matter*, tabled on 24 July 2020.

I appreciate the opportunity to make a submission outlining DCJ's progress towards implementing the Auditor-General's recommendations. Please see the enclosed table with our response.

DCJ remains committed to continued collaboration with government and non-government partners to implement a data-informed, whole-of-government investment approach to the design, commissioning, delivery and evaluation of human services in NSW.

As highlighted in our response, the next phase of this work is focused on identifying groups of people in the population who are more likely to have poorer life outcomes and trialling place-based, evidence-driven and coordinated service interventions at selected demonstration sites, with the aim of achieving measurable and meaningful improvements to their lives.

If the Committee requires any further information in relation to this matter, please contact [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
Michael Coutts-Trotter
Secretary

2 September 2021

Encl.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Department of Communities and Justice

Their Futures Matter

RECOMMENDATION	ACCEPTED OR REJECTED	ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN	DUE DATE	STATUS (completed, on track, delayed) and COMMENT	RESPONSIBILITY (Section of agency responsible for implementation)
<p>1 Continue work to deliver the intent of reform, including by:</p> <p>a) developing a strategy and key performance indicators for the next stage of work to build on the progress that the reform made, and regularly reporting to the government on progress towards outcomes and key risks</p> <p>b) using the Their Futures Matter Human Services Dataset to identify the needs of vulnerable children and families, and undertake independent service mapping to assess the extent to which existing services respond to these needs</p> <p>c) working with agencies to track and report achievements against the whole of government shared outcomes framework for children aged zero to five years</p>	Accepted	<p>1(a) – (j):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish post-TFM governance arrangements for the continued implementation of an investment approach for human services in NSW (the Investment Approach) • Develop for public release an Investment Plan for Human Services in NSW (the Investment Plan) • Establish a post-TFM authorising environment for investment decisions in relation to the cross-agency Stronger Communities Investment Pool (SCI Pool) • Develop mechanisms for regular reports/briefings to government on the progress, key risks, mitigation strategies and outcomes in relation to implementation deliverables • Deliver a phased, three-year trial of the Investment Approach in selected demonstration sites • Undertake a review of completed evaluations for programs/services within the SCI Pool • Conduct an evidence review and high level service mapping/gap analysis in relation to two 	June 2021	<p>ON TRACK AND ONGOING</p> <p>On track overall, noting that the establishment of a non-government advisory committee and publication of an Investment Plan for Human Services in NSW have been delayed to allow for adequate stakeholder consultation and input.</p> <p>GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INVESTMENT APPROACH [responds to 1(a),(b),(e),(f) & (g)]</p> <p>In February 2021, the Attorney General and Ministers responsible for portfolios across families and communities, health, mental health, education and early childhood endorsed new and strengthened governance arrangements for the continued delivery of the policy objectives of TFM. This includes the post-TFM authorising environment with respect to decisions about allocation of available funds in the Stronger Communities Investment Pool (SCI Pool).</p> <p>In brief, the governance entities with mandate to drive implementation of the Investment Approach are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Ministers’ Group – oversees the implementation of the Investment Plan, decides the scope of programs within the SCI Pool, approves investment objectives and targets and sets the direction for funding re-prioritisation. ▪ The Secretaries’ Group – approves proposals for allocation of SCI Pool funding and oversees policy development and effective service responses to identified priority groups of vulnerable children/families. ▪ Social Policy Senior Officers’ Group (SP SOG) – cross-agency Deputy Secretary group that provides strategic oversight of the Investment Approach, ensures alignment with other whole-of-government initiatives/priorities and escalates issues at impasse to Ministers/Secretaries 	Strategy, Policy and Commissioning Directorate (Child and Family/FACSIAR) in partnership with Western Sydney Nepean Blue Mountains District (WSNBMD) and South West Sydney District (SWS District)

<p>d) applying a consistent evaluation framework to all government funded services and programs for vulnerable children and families identified in the TFM investment pool, to assess and compare effectiveness, costs and benefits, and inform service planning and funding redirection</p> <p>e) identifying gaps, duplication and ineffective programs identified in the TFM investment pool serving vulnerable children and families to inform service planning and funding redirection</p> <p>f) assisting agencies with repurposing any programs identified in the TFM investment pool that are comparatively less effective, and redirecting this funding to more effective evidence-based approaches</p> <p>g) identifying means to scale up proven TFM pilot programs or promote their elements of success for wider adoption</p> <p>h) ensuring Aboriginal representation in relevant governance</p>		<p>identified priority vulnerable populations (children < 5 years and young people with mental illness)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stronger Communities Data Partnership – cross-agency Deputy Secretary and Data Custodian group that drives greater use of human services data assets and actuarial analysis by NSW Government agencies, service providers and researchers to enhance service delivery and customer experience, guide investment and drive policy reform across human services. ▪ Cross-agency Executive Director Working Group – drives implementation of the Investment Approach/Plan and co-commissioning of evidence-based integrated service responses to priority vulnerable groups. ▪ The Social Investment Projects (SIP) Advisory Group – intended to comprise non-government representatives and community leaders with specialist expertise and experience to provide strategic advice and guidance on implementation. Establishment of this group is underway, with membership expected to be confirmed in time for an inaugural meeting in October 2019. <p>Each of the cross-agency entities comprises representation from government agencies including DCJ, Department of Education, Department of Health, NSW Treasury, Department of Premier and Cabinet and Department of Customer Service.</p> <p>Ministers/Secretaries meet on a bi-monthly basis in relation to the Investment Approach, as does the Stronger Communities Data Partnership. The SP SOG meet monthly and the Investment Approach and Plan are standing agenda items at meetings of the SP SOG and Stronger Communities Data Partnership. Given the aligned target cohorts of the Department of Education led Brighter Beginnings initiative and the KEYS Network (0-5 years with family experiencing disadvantage/vulnerability), from June 2021, officer-level working groups jointly brief the SP SOG on a monthly basis to report on progress/risks and identify opportunities for collaborative and coordinated work.</p> <p>The Cross-agency Executive Director Working Group had its inaugural meeting in June 2021, and will continue to meet bi-monthly.</p> <p>In relation to the non-government and philanthropic sector, it is intended that the SIP Advisory Group will convene on a quarterly basis, however, members will provide out-of-session advice and participate in local level design workshops as needed. A number of Aboriginal leaders</p>	
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	<p>arrangements and all key decision points developing and implementing a plan in partnership with Aboriginal services, families and children to address the areas for improvement identified by the Tune and other relevant reviews</p> <p>i) continuing to prepare joint submissions to seek additional funding where the evidence supports this</p> <p>j)</p>			<p>in the health, research and early education field have been nominated by partner agencies for invitation to participate.</p> <p>INVESTMENT PLAN FOR HUMAN SERVICES IN NSW [responds to 1(a),(c),(d), (e),(f), (g) & (i)]</p> <p>In December 2020, DCJ completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a desktop review of completed evaluations for all agency programs/services within the SCI Pool, and • an evidence review of risks and protective factors and high level service mapping/gap analysis in relation to two identified priority vulnerable populations (children < 5 years and young people with mental illness). <p>This work together with stakeholder consultation and feedback is informing the development of an Investment Plan for Human Services in NSW (the Investment Plan).</p> <p>In June 2021, DCJ completed a consultation draft Investment Plan for Human Services in NSW (the Investment Plan).</p> <p>The overarching purpose of the plan is to enable better and earlier targeting of programs and services to the 7% of people in NSW who make up 50% of future service costs, to improve their outcomes and reduce liability over time. The initial focus of the investment approach is on the early years, where data and evidence shows that it will make the most difference.</p> <p>The Investment Plan is intended to be a whole-of-government strategy for the operationalisation of an investment approach to the joint design, commissioning, delivery and evaluation of health and human services in NSW.</p> <p>It sets out, at a high level, the principles and methodology for how government and non-government partners will collectively: identify vulnerable cohorts of children, young people and families using data driven insights; design and implement evidence-based interventions; and measure outcomes and net benefits/avoided costs.</p> <p>The Investment Plan will also set a clear strategy for continued cross-agency work to build on TFM foundations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ use of the Human Services Dataset and rigorous evaluation and liability modelling to identify cohorts of children and families experiencing disadvantage and inform investment priorities, service planning, design and delivery 	
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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a framework for evaluation of government funded services and programs identified in the Stronger Communities Investment Pool (SCI Pool) against Human Services Outcome domains and whole-of-government outcome indicators for children under five years ▪ mechanisms to identify opportunities to reinvest savings gained through better targeted service delivery to scale up proven pilot programs/services, and to make evidence-based decisions about the potential repurposing or redirection of program funding, and ▪ a framework to guide local, place-based approaches to resource allocation and commissioning and to support local collaboration to better coordinate effective universal and targeted services towards those most in need. <p>In June and July 2021, a consultation draft Investment Plan was disseminated to agency partners and other key stakeholder for review and feedback. It was also presented to, and supported by, the various cross-agency governance entities underpinning the Investment Approach including the Ministers’ group, Secretaries’ Board, Social Policy Senior Officers’ Group, Stronger Communities Data Partnership and Executive Director Working Group.</p> <p>Detailed written feedback from partner agencies and other key stakeholders was received in mid-August and is currently being consolidated and incorporated into the final version of the draft plan. It is anticipated that this will be completed in time to progress for Ministerial endorsement at the September 2021 meeting of Ministers and Secretaries on the investment approach.</p> <p>TESTING THE INVESTMENT APPROACH IN SELECTED DEMONSTRATION SITES</p> <p>[responds to 1(b),(c),(d),(h), (i) & (j)]</p> <p>As part of moving towards an investment approach to the prioritisation and funding of human services in NSW, DCJ and agency partners have committed to trialing a place-based, three-year phased implementation of the investment approach in a selection of demonstration sites. The intent is to test and refine arrangements in the demonstration sites to inform how a state-wide rollout could progressively occur.</p> <p>Western Sydney has been selected as the first demonstration site, given its strong pre-existing interagency governance mechanisms and</p>	
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				<p>successful delivery of a range of interagency programs. A second demonstration site in South West Sydney is currently in the exploratory phase.</p> <p>Work to test the investment approach at the local level is underway and involves four main steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ drawing on the Human Services Dataset and local level service mapping/gap analysis to identify community needs and priority cohorts for intervention ▪ collaborative work by local stakeholders across government and the non-government sector to define the problem to be solved and identify opportunities for new or tailored service models ▪ collaborative work by local stakeholders, service providers and receivers to design and implement evidence-based interventions to address identified local need, and ▪ determining the methodology, data sources and indicators to measure outcomes and quantify benefits. <p><i>Western Sydney Demonstration site – Kids Early Years (KEYS) Network</i></p> <p>Building on the TFM reform, Brighter Beginnings and other whole-of-government initiatives to help vulnerable families earlier, NSW has initiated a transformation of the way the service system responds to vulnerable children and families, through a local level response to help communities.</p> <p>The Western Sydney Service Delivery Reform was established in 2014 and uses a regional multi-agency approach to leverage existing resources to ensure vulnerable children are identified, and families are linked to community-based services and empowered to support their children’s healthy development.</p> <p>In October 2020, the Ministers’ group agreed to test local community investment and decision-making in in Western Sydney with the three-year rollout of a new interagency initiative – the Kids Early Years (KEYS) Network - offering interagency case coordination and advocacy, improved referral pathways and access to services, and continuity of care to vulnerable children and young people, their parents and families.</p> <p>KEYS provides support for families with children aged 0-5 years old living in Western Sydney, who are not engaged with appropriate</p>	
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				<p>where a family can share their narrative, and be utilised for shared case planning with service providers and the family.</p> <p>At the time of writing, the KEYS Project Team is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ preparing a Lean Business Case for a beta submission to the Digital Restart Fund in order to build and trial the tool with a small cohort, with a view to scalability, and ▪ negotiating the settlement of data sharing deeds of agreement and consent forms with the Privacy Commissioner and respective partner agency legal units in order to facilitate linkage of client data for joint case planning and integrated service delivery. <p>A robust evaluation of KEYS and the KEYS data sharing platform will be conducted, as part of the broader Investment Approach for NSW, guided by the Investment Plan for Human Services in NSW.</p> <p><i>South Western Sydney Demonstration Site</i></p> <p>A demonstration site in the South Western Sydney District is currently in the scoping/exploratory phase.</p> <p>An initial workshop with key government and non-government peaks and service providers was held on 10 May 2021 to consider local needs, define the problem to be solved and settle an approach to service design.</p> <p>The district subsequently commenced a process to determine an Investment approach in partnership with other key government agencies. This process aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ define the target population and/or cohort who will be the focus of the investment approach ▪ identify the major goals to improve wellbeing outcomes while reducing long-term costs to government, and ▪ determine whether the investment approach will address an unidentified need, improve cross-agency service delivery or bolster an existing program or service within the district. <p>FACSIAR, the district and community leaders have drawn from analysis of the Human Services Dataset and local knowledge to identify that women who are pregnant, new parents and children aged 0-12 are key groups where targeted social investments are likely to improve outcomes and reduce costs to government. The Local Government Area of Campbelltown has been identified as a potential priority area of need.</p>	
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				<p>programs and services to determine realised benefits and avoided costs, and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> for the DCJ Child and Family Directorate to establish and maintain governance structures to drive an investment approach, and provide policy support towards the design and delivery initiatives to test the investment approach in demonstration sites. <p>In collaboration with partner agencies, DCJ is preparing a budget proposal for Ministers and Secretaries to agree the allocation of 2021-22 available SCI pool monies in September 2021.</p> <p>REGULAR REPORTING TO NSW GOVERNMENT ON IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS, PROJECT CONTROLS AND RISKS [responds to 1(a),(h) & (i)] Project management mechanisms and functions have been established which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion of implementation milestones and deliverables in the Strategy, Policy and Commissioning divisional business plan Monthly dashboard reports to brief initiative owners and other executive stakeholders on implementation progress, risks and mitigation strategies Regular updates to the DCJ Audit and Risk Committee, chaired by the DCJ Secretary Standing agenda item on meetings of the SP SOG and Stronger Communities Data Partnership Fortnightly briefing notes and meetings with the lead Minister's office to track implementation progress, raise risks and determine mitigation strategies as required. 	
2	<p>Revise the governance arrangements for Their Futures Matter to:</p> <p>a) ensure the participation of all relevant Ministers in decisions on the reform's performance, risks and value to each portfolio</p> <p>b) develop and implement a mechanism to resolve cross-agency issues that have reached an impasse, such as</p>	Accepted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish new governance arrangements with sufficient authority to make investment decisions Ensure that governance entities are apprised of quality independent expertise and advise to guide and steer implementation of the Investment Approach/Plan 	<p>June 2021</p> <p>ON TRACK AND ONGOING Since February 2021, the Attorney General and Ministers responsible for Families and Communities, Health, Mental Health and Education portfolios meet every second month to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> discuss progress and resolve blockers to implementation of the Investment Approach and Plan make evidence-informed decisions about priority groups and/or locations for targeted service interventions in line with the Investment Approach and Plan, and make decisions about the allocation of available funds from the cross agency SCI Pool. 	<p>Strategy, Policy and Commissioning Directorate (Child and Family)</p>

	<p>through escalation to the Secretaries Board and/or relevant minister's offices</p> <p>c) enhance the capability of the Their Futures Matter Implementation Board - or alternative governance entities established in its place - to include external expertise from Aboriginal leaders, finance professionals, the funded NGO sector, the evaluation and data field, and experienced commissioners.</p>				<p>At the time of writing, work is underway to formalise an advisory committee that will provide strategic advice to NSW government on the direction, focus and practical considerations as implementation of the Investment Approach and Plan is progressed and trialled at demonstration sites. As detailed above, regular engagement with the non-government sector and Aboriginal leaders has been key to scoping and design work to date, particularly at the demonstration sites.</p> <p>Please refer to responses to 1(a-j) above for more detail on governance arrangements and involvement of the non-government and Aboriginal community in the development, design and delivery of Investment Approach initiatives in Western Sydney and South Western Sydney.</p>	
3	<p>Work with partner Ministers and agencies to develop and implement:</p> <p>a) a mutually agreed standard of evidence required to make informed funding decisions, and a process to guide how decisions about future redirection of funding will be made where the evidence on effectiveness is mixed, unclear, or difficult to compare</p> <p>b) a process for reprioritising identified funding, building on the evidence and key enablers now in place, including outcomes evaluations from key pilots, the Human Services Dataset and the</p>	Accepted		June 2021	<p>DELAYED</p> <p>As noted in responses to 1(a-j) above, the first step in meeting this recommendation will be the finalisation of the Investment Plan for Human Services in NSW.</p> <p>Following this, work to develop business rules/guidelines/detailed processes to support implementation of the plan will be undertaken by DCJ in collaboration with partners. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ mutually agreed standards of evidence to inform future funding decisions, and ▪ detailed criteria and processes for decision-making in relation to funding proposals, including allocation and re-prioritisation of pool monies. 	Strategy, Policy and Commissioning Directorate (Child and Family and FACSIAR)

	whole of government shared outcomes framework for children aged zero to five years.					
4	<p>Ensure that for the Human Services Dataset:</p> <p>a) there continues to be data governance arrangements in place to preserve the independence of the Data Set, and protect the privacy of the data it contains</p> <p>b) there is a strong mandate and clear cross agency accountability governing data sharing and use, and rigorous controls are in place to ensure the quality, reliability, accuracy and completeness of the data, and compliance with relevant legislation and directions</p> <p>c) it captures relevant outcomes and administrative data, and is regularly updated and analysed</p> <p>d) Insights from its analysis continue to be shared within government and with external stakeholders including funded service providers and academics</p> <p>e) It is used effectively to enhance service delivery, guide investment and drive</p>	Accepted	<p>4(a) – (d)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement recommendations from the 2020 Public Interest Direction (PID) audit • Continue engagement with the Human Services Dataset Governance Advisory Committee (HSDGAC) and agency partners • Maintain existing MOUs • Finalise MOU between DCJ and CHeReL • Deliver an updated Insights Report based on investment modelling using data up to 30 June 2019 • Continue sharing analytic insights from ongoing uses of the Human Services Dataset • Deliver a linked NSW-Multi-Agency Data Integration Project (MADIP) dataset • Continue sharing analytic insights from ongoing uses of the Human Services Dataset • Continue to maintain the analytics request log 	June 2021	<p>ON TRACK AND ONGOING</p> <p>On track overall except for the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DCJ and the Centre for Health Record Linkage (CHeReL) which has been delayed.</p> <p>DATA GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recommendations from the 2020 Public Interest Direction (PID) audit have been implemented. ▪ The PIDs were amended to account for a minor non-compliance issue identified in the 2020 audit as well as operational changes. ▪ The NSW Privacy Commissioner extended the PIDs until 13 July 2023 to enable the development of a permanent Privacy Code of Practice. ▪ Agency partners through the Human Services Dataset Governance Advisory Committee are engaged in the process of endorsing analysts and projects to use the Human Services Dataset for final approval by the Data Custodian of the Human Services Dataset. ▪ There is an MOU in place with the NSW Data Analytics Centre (DAC) which hosts the NSW Human Services Dataset. ▪ There is an MOU in place with the Australian Bureau of Statistics which hosts the version of the Human Services Dataset linked to MADIP. This was extended to June 2022. ▪ An MOU between DCJ and CHeReL is still under development. ▪ The Human Services Dataset is currently updated annually. DCJ in collaboration with Data Partnership agencies are currently undertaking a detailed systematic review of the datasets and variables within the Human Services Dataset, with the aim of ensuring the Dataset is more useable for multiple on-going analytical purposes and to facilitate more frequent updates. ▪ Policies related to the use and governance of the Human Services Dataset have been reviewed and updated to reflect operational changes. These are available on the website that has been built to help ensure awareness of governance arrangements, and highlight key contact points for inquiries, requests or complaints. 	FACSIAR

<p>social policy reforms in NSW</p>	<p>CONTINUED SHARING OF INSIGHTS FROM HSDS ANALYSIS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The NSW Human Services Dataset has been linked with the Commonwealth’s MADIP data. This linked dataset is currently being used to undertake investment modelling using data up to 30 June 2019. The related Insights Report will be delivered in early 2022. ▪ Delays in completion of the linked NSW-MADIP dataset have delayed the publication of the next Insights Report. ▪ There has been an increase in inquiries and data requests. The Human Services Dataset was showcased at the July 2021 launch of the DCJ research Strategy to encourage use by researchers, academics, government agencies, NGOs and the public. ▪ Resources are made available on the DCJ website, including the 2018 Insights Report. The Community Attitudes Survey on Privacy and Data Sharing will be made available along with the updated Insights Report when available. <p>HSDS USED EFFECTIVELY TO ENHANCE SERVICE DELIVERY, GUIDE INVESTMENT AND DRIVE SOCIAL POLICY REFORMS IN NSW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Human Services Dataset is currently being used to undertake investment modelling using data up to 30 June 2019. The related Insights Report will be delivered in early 2022. ▪ Use of the Human Services Dataset is increasing as it is leveraged from beyond being the dataset behind the TFM investment model to a cross-government data asset. ▪ The Human Services Dataset is being used in the Department of Customer Service Better Outcomes Lab pilot aimed at improving the access to, and application of, high-valued human services datasets. ▪ Access to the Human Services Dataset is also available to approved analysts across government, academia and the non-government sector. 	
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