

**FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES (FACS) QUESTIONS ON NOTICE (QONS)  
FROM THE NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S INQUIRY INTO REPARATIONS FOR THE  
STOLEN GENERATIONS IN NSW**

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**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**QUESTION (The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL):**

1. How long has the cultural care plan process been in place, and can FACS provide a copy of the cultural care plan template?

**ANSWER:**

- Cultural care planning has been part of good child protection practice for many years.
- In 2013, an Aboriginal Working Party involving Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec), Aboriginal Legal Services, Children's Court and FACS was established to redevelop the template cultural care plan.
- In August 2014, this project was incorporated into a Safe Home for Life initiative focusing on redesigning both the Care Plan and Cultural Plan.
- The Cultural Plan is being redesigned to enhance consistent, effective and meaningful cultural casework and will capture important information regarding Aboriginal children's culture, heritage, family and communities of belonging. The redesigned plan will deliver a state-wide approach to cultural planning to ensure consistency across FACS and the entire child protection system.
- FACS has continued to work closely with key stakeholders to finalise the content of the Care Plan and Cultural Plan and it is expected to be launched across NSW in 2016.
- It is intended that the Cultural Plan will help facilitate appropriate placements for Aboriginal children in line with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Young Person Placement Principles. It will enhance the capacity to understand identity, heritage and inform strategies to maintain connections to culture.
- Culturally competent practice is more than just the tools available for caseworkers. While the implementation of a new Cultural Plan is significant, there is more that the department is doing to enhance practice. Working with AbSec, the peak NSW Aboriginal organisation, we are developing an Aboriginal Case Management Policy to meet the needs of Aboriginal children and young people, their families and communities. This will include identifying what improvements are required to enhance caseworker skills and experiences in culturally appropriate practice.

**QUESTION (CHAIR):**

2. Why does NSW not provide the same transparency than that of other State governments in relation to adherence with the Aboriginal placement principles? Will this be revised? What are the exact numbers being dealt with under the Act? What are the comparisons with other States?

**ANSWER:**

- Data on the number and percentage of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care by Aboriginality of caregiver and placement type, in NSW, at 30 June, from years 2010 to 2015 is attached (**Attachment 2**).
- In September 2015, FACS launched the FACS Statistics webpage on its website. This page includes data on placement type and Aboriginality of care givers for Aboriginal children in out of home care. A number of other indicators are also disaggregated by Aboriginality.

- The data for the current dashboard covers June 2012 – June 2014. FACS Statistics will have new content included over time and all data will be updated annually with some updated quarterly.
- The data provided shows the current placement outcomes for Aboriginal children. Cases where Aboriginal children are placed with non Aboriginal family members or non Aboriginal carers can be placements that comply with the Placement Principles where they are in the best interests of the child.
- FACS acknowledges that other States are doing better in measuring compliance with the principles via their client management systems, which enable them to produce data and statistics on their compliance. While some FACS casework staff do record this information, the current client management system requires manual entry of data which makes reporting difficult.
- FACS has made significant investments into redesigning a new IT client management system, Child Story, which will provide an opportunity to build in a measurement tool for the Aboriginal placement principles. Planning for this will occur in the coming months.

**QUESTION (The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS):**

3. What is the NSW Department of Family and Community Services specifically doing to improve parenting skills and family well-being for Aboriginal children and families; and were five Aboriginal District Officer positions established to assist Aboriginal foster carers?

**ANSWER:**

- FACS provides support to Aboriginal foster and kinship carers across many programs. This work has progressed well beyond the original recommendations.
- A range of FACS funded programs including Aboriginal Intensive Family Based Services (IFBS), Intensive Family Preservation/Intensive Family Support, Intensive Support Services and Brighter Futures, all aim to work with vulnerable families to increase parenting capacity and family well-being.
- In 2013/14, FACS trained approximately 48 Aboriginal staff in an Indigenous version of an evidence based parenting skills program known as Triple P. The cost of this training was approximately \$65,000.
- Aboriginal IFBS caseworkers have received a range of intensive training and support in using a range of cognitive and behavioural techniques with families to increase parenting capacity and improve family well-being. Non government organisation (NGO) IFBS workers also use the North Carolina Family Assessment Scale (NCFAS) with families, which measures family functioning from the perspective of the worker most involved with the family. The tool includes 5 domains that look at the family as a whole in terms of environment, parental capabilities, family interactions, family safety, and child well-being.
- Approximately 70 per cent of Aboriginal family referrals to IFBS are for assistance with parenting capacity (based on NGO data only). This evidence allows relevant training in this area to be targeted to FACS staff, and funded program staff.
- FACS funds a network of targeted early intervention services across NSW. This includes funding to family support services that would assist a large number of Aboriginal clients.

**QUESTION (CHAIR):**

4. Is Aboriginal family group conferencing happening in those four locations? Are you able to identify those locations and identify for how long you will be trialling them, or, if you have some early responses, if the indications are good does that mean you will be expanding on those programs?

**ANSWER:**

- The Aboriginal Family Group Conferencing (AFGC) project is currently being piloted by AbSec in three Districts - Central Coast (Wyong/Lakes), Illawarra Shoalhaven (Shellharbour) and Northern (Clarence Valley).
- Since 2012, FACS has provided a total of \$955,000 to AbSec to develop and pilot the AFGC model. The funding was due to end in October 2015, however approval has been given to rollover funds until February 2016 to allow AbSec to conclude the pilot.
- AbSec has indicated that progress has been slowed due to difficulties in recruiting AFGC facilitators, and then developing their capacity through training. There were also delays due to the need to re-recruit new staff. To date 16 Family Group conferences have been held resulting in 16 Family Plans developed involving a total of 96 children.
- FACS will consider future opportunities to incorporate AbSec's AFGC model into the broader scope of work being undertaken in family group conferencing.

**QUESTION (CHAIR):**

You have all referred to early intervention. Are you able to identify why we are not seeing an increase in early intervention? We are seeing a huge increase in the funding for out-of-home carers that escalates but not the overarching support for early intervention when all the evidence says that is what works. Why is that not marrying up? You have all referred to it, saying that is the way to go.

**ANSWER:**

- FACS will invest \$337 million in 2015/16 for community, early intervention and intensive services to support all vulnerable children, young people, families and communities. This includes \$57.3 million for services provided by the Office of Communities, which transferred to FACS from 1 July 2015.
- Targeted Earlier Intervention Program (TEIP) reforms will focus on delivering a cohesive and effective service system that is flexible, localised and firmly child-focused. It will support families to reduce their risk of entering the statutory child protection system.
- Client and sector consultation is a key pillar of the TEIP Reform. FACS has released a Sector Consultation Paper seeking the views of service providers, as well as other government and related organisations, on what is working well and where we could improve. Feedback received from the consultation is being collated and will inform the draft reform directions which will be released in the new year.
- Prioritising Aboriginal clients will be a major direction of the reform. An Aboriginal strategy will be developed as part of the reform project, with Aboriginal community consultations almost complete.
- Targeted Earlier Intervention Reforms includes the following programs:
  - Aboriginal Child Youth and Family Strategy (\$4 million)
  - Families NSW (\$27 million)
  - Getting it Together (\$2 million)
  - Community Builders (\$45 million)
  - Community Builders Fixed Term (\$3 million)
  - Child Youth and Family Support (\$56 million)
  - Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) (\$0.5 million)
  - Staying Home Leaving Violence (\$6 million)
  - Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Support Program (\$3 million)
  - Youth Hope (\$10 million).