

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

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**QUESTION 1:**

In 1997 and 1998, following the *Bringing them Home* report, a number of NSW Government agencies acknowledged and apologised to those affected by the policies of separation. What action since that time has the Department of Family and Community Services taken in terms of providing acknowledgement and apology to members of the Stolen Generations?

**ANSWER:**

In line with the *Bringing them Home* recommendations, Sections 11-14 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Principles has been included the *Children and Young Persons (Care & Protection) Act 1998*.

The Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) commemorates National Sorry Day in its central office and across Districts to acknowledge and apologise for the historical actions and consequences of past governments in the forcible removal and displacement of Aboriginal children and young people from their families and communities.

The FACS Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal People was signed by the Secretary in 2014 and recognises the Stolen Generation. It commits FACS to building inclusive communities where Aboriginal people can experience better outcomes in life.

In 2012, FACS contributed approximately \$20,000 to fund the Centenary celebration of the Cootamundra Girls Home, which the former Minister for Family and Community Services, the Hon Pru Goward, attended. FACS also formally returned an Albert Namatjira painting to the 'Coota Girls', the rightful owners.

FACS developed an Aboriginal Consultation Guide 2011, to outline mandatory practice requirements for consulting with Aboriginal people on all Aboriginal child protection cases.

**QUESTION 2:**

What was the outcome of the \$200 million Aboriginal Communities Development Program initiated in 1998?

**ANSWER:**

The Aboriginal Communities Development Program is an Aboriginal Affairs initiative.

**QUESTION 3:**

Does the NSW Government's *Families First* program still exist? Are other initiatives identified in the NSW Government's response still in operation, for example, Aboriginal Family Support Services, the Casino Intensive Family Based Service and the Schools as Community Centres Project?

**ANSWER:**

The *Families First* program is now referred to as Families NSW. Families NSW is the joint responsibility of three government agencies, working together to make a positive difference for children and families. These agencies are the NSW Ministry of Health, Department of Education and FACS.

The Intensive Family Based Service (IFBS) in Casino, Malanee Bugilmah, has been operational since 1994. Since this time, six more services have been established in

Redfern, Dapto, Mt Druitt, Campbelltown, Bourke and Newcastle. All services, with the exception of the Bourke service, are still in operation.

Since 2011/12, an additional four services have been piloted in Aboriginal non government organisations (NGOs) under the Keep them Safe reforms. The pilot is funded until 30 June 2016. Services are located in Kempsey, Wyong/Lakes/Gosford, Clarence Valley and Wagga Wagga.

The Schools as Community Centres (SaCC) program is a prevention and early intervention cross agency initiative supporting families with young children from birth to 8 years of age. Further information on this program is available at [www.families.nsw.gov.au](http://www.families.nsw.gov.au).

#### **QUESTION 4:**

What programs are in place to support Aboriginal families and communities, given the effect of separations?

#### **ANSWER:**

FACS either leads or is involved in a number of programs to support Aboriginal children, young people and families. Programs include:

- Aboriginal Child and Family Centres
- Aboriginal Intensive Family Based Services
- Brighter Futures
- Integrated Domestic Family Violence Services
- Intensive Family Preservation
- Intensive Family Support
- NSW Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy
- Protecting Aboriginal Children Together Services
- Staying Home Leaving Violence.

Information on these programs can be found at [www.facs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.facs.nsw.gov.au).

#### **QUESTION 5:**

What support has the Department of Family and Community Services provided to healing programs for Aboriginal people?

#### **ANSWER:**

Under OCHRE, (Opportunity, Choice, Healing and empowerment) FACS has responsibility for strengthening the capacity of Aboriginal non-government organisations (NGOs) to take up leadership roles across a wide range of relevant sectors and to progressively take charge of more decisions, programs and activities.

The NSW Aboriginal Child, Youth & Family Strategy (ACYFS) has a focus on healing disadvantage on most indicators of health and wellbeing from pregnancy, early childhood and into adulthood. The ACYFS was established to address entrenched disadvantage by making supports available to all Aboriginal families with a child in the target age-range – 0 to 5 years – or expecting a child.

While FACS has not developed or managed its own specific healing programs, a number of funded programs, including the Aboriginal Intensive Family Based Services (IFBS) programs aim to provide intensive support to vulnerable Aboriginal families. This includes addressing the impact of past wrongs.

Programs, like IFBS, develop case plans to help families address issues that are impacting on the safety of their children and young people. There are occasions when services will refer family members to a range of supports that promote or encourage healing including Aboriginal healing camps, men's and women's groups, grief and loss counselling.

**QUESTION 6:**

What is the Department of Family and Community Services doing to address the high rate of contact Aboriginal people have with their agency?

**ANSWER:**

FACS works closely with Aboriginal organisations and communities ensuring delivery of tailored and locally relevant services. We have implemented strategies focused on reducing the over representation of Aboriginal children and young people in out of home care (OOHC) and child protection, and improving decision making:

- *Intensive Family Based Services Program (IFBS)* works with Aboriginal families with children at risk of significant harm to address risk and increase child safety by improving life skills, parenting capacities, coping ability and problem solving.
- *Aboriginal Family Group Conferencing (AFGC)* commenced in 2012 and is operational in the Central Coast, Illawarra Shoalhaven and Northern districts. A pilot program, delivered by AbSec, provides family, community and significant other people, with the opportunity to participate in decision making and developing solutions to ensure the safety of Aboriginal children and young people involved in child protection and OOHC.
- *Protecting Aboriginal Children Together (PACT)* operates from two sites, Moree and Shellharbour. PACT is an independent cultural advisory and support service, assisting Aboriginal clients in decision making about cultural needs and best interests of Aboriginal children and young people involved in the child protection system.
- *Gunnedah Grandmothers Against Removal (GMAR)* was formed in Gunnedah in 2014 to advocate against the removal of Aboriginal children from their immediate and extended families. FACS has been working with GMAR representatives including the Office of the Senior Practitioner (OSP) leading a practice support and development workshop and reviewing five cases that were identified in discussions with GMAR.
- *FACS Aboriginal Cultural Inclusion Project (ACIF)* builds organisational cultural proficiency and incorporates all aspects of culturally inclusive practice, helping FACS to deliver services to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal people and their families.

District led initiatives include:

- *Establishing Aboriginal Community Protocols* – developing and implementing community specific protocols about how FACS will work with endorsed Aboriginal community governance structures and other Aboriginal representatives to better support Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC.
- *Mobile Child Protection Unit* – a specialist team of experienced case workers based in Dubbo that provide outreach child protection services to the communities of Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar, Walgett and Coonamble. This unit was established in February 2015 to address the need for a more consistent and timely child protection response.
- *Cultural Connections Project* – dedicated focus on strengthening cultural connections for Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC.

**QUESTION 7:**

Do Family and Community Services still provide a Leaving Care and After Care Service program for young people? If not, when did it end? What other services are in place to provide this support?

**ANSWER:**

FACS has a Leaving and Aftercare program that provides assistance to care leavers aged 15 to 25, and in some circumstances for those aged 25 and over.

Information on these programs and support services is available at [www.facs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.facs.nsw.gov.au).

**QUESTION 8:**

How many Aboriginal foster carers are there? Please provide statistics from 1998.

**ANSWER:**

It is not possible to know how many foster carers there are as FACS does not keep records of foster carers available through non-government organisations or foster carers who do not have a child or young person placed with them. FACS records the number of households in NSW with at least one Aboriginal foster carer within the household. Details are available in the FACS Annual Statistical reports.

**QUESTION 9:**

How many Aboriginal District Officer positions are employed in Family and Community Services?

**ANSWER:**

There are no longer District Officer positions in FACS. The position title is: Caseworker. The table below provides the actual FTE for Aboriginal Caseworker positions from 2012/13 to 2014/15:

		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Aboriginal Tagged Type	Fund	FTE	FTE	FTE
Aboriginal	Integrated Domestic & Family Violence	0.08	0.42	0.11
	Intensive Family Based	25.30	22.04	23.74
	Joint Investigation	1.69	0.98	0.94
	KTS IFBS	0.99		
	Out of Home Care	29.80	30.25	26.82
	Stat Child Protection	39.86	44.26	46.65
	Strength Families	2.07	2.33	
<b>Aboriginal Total</b>		<b>99.79</b>	<b>100.29</b>	<b>98.26</b>
Current Occupant Aboriginal	Out of Home Care	3.65	1.00	
	Stat Child Protection	2.57	1.00	
Current Occupant Aboriginal Total		6.22	2.00	
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>106.01</b>	<b>102.29</b>	<b>98.26</b>

**QUESTION 10:**

How is FACS ensuring Aboriginal cultural awareness training is provided to all employees? In particular, what are you doing to ensure your staff are educated about the history and effects of forcible removal?

**ANSWER:**

All new CS Caseworkers and CS Casework Support Workers must undertake two mandatory training modules. The first is a workshop on Culturally Responsive Practice. The second module is a continuation of the workshop with an on-the-job focus:

Joint Investigation and Response Team (JIRT) members are able to attend a workshop on Interviewing Children and Young People from Aboriginal Communities. This touches on historical aspects of the Stolen Generation and how this impacts on children and young people's willingness to engage with FACS and Police workers (in a JIRT context).

The following programs are available to all FACS employees:

- Building Cross Cultural Competence for Managers  
This face to face program assists managers in understanding the cultural needs of Aboriginal staff. It is co-facilitated by Aboriginal FACS staff and Callaghan Cultural Consulting.
- Aboriginal Cultural Awareness  
A six-week eLearning program for frontline staff, delivered by the Centre for Cultural Competence Australia to develop an understanding and awareness of issues that face Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In 2009, Community Services produced the *Working with Aboriginal People and Communities – A Practice Resource*. The Guide includes a range of information to increase staff cultural awareness. The Guide was distributed to all staff, funded NGOs and on request, it is also available online.