



Next Steps for Our Kids

2022-2030



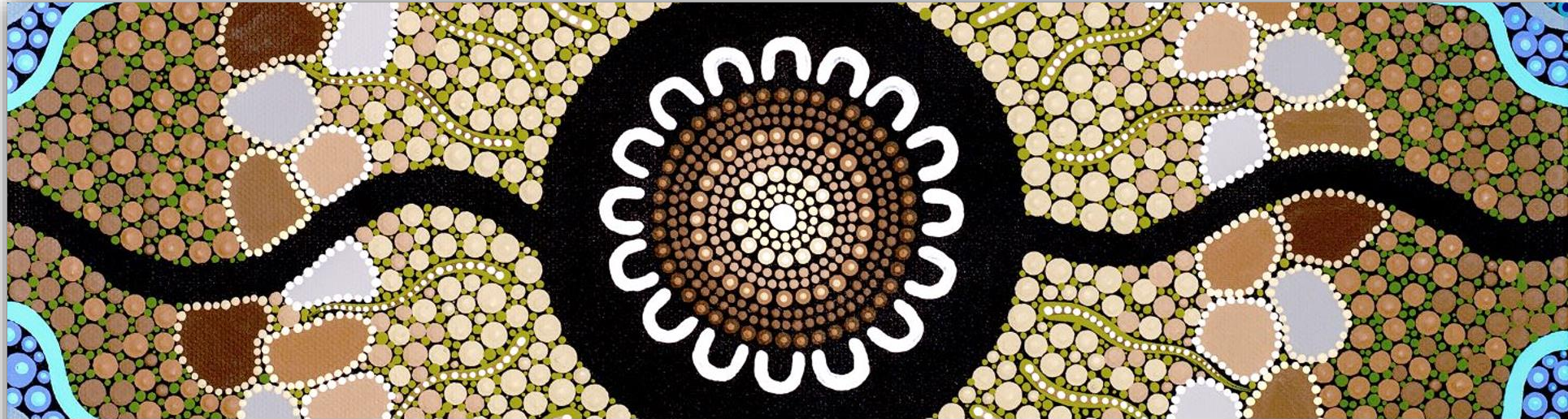
Briefing for Community Sector
Partners

29 September 2022

Summary



ACT strategy for strengthening families and keeping children and young people safe



In the spirit of reconciliation, I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, waters and community.

I pay my respects to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.



Detail of: *Meeting Place* by Leah Brideson

A representation of Canberra as a meeting place. The palette is inspired by colours of our natural environment and the textures of the land, mountains and rivers that surround this beautiful city.

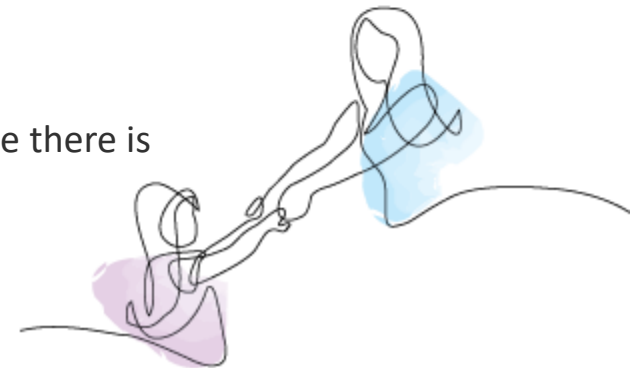
Participants

- Minister for Families and Community Services, Rachel Stephen-Smith, MLA
- Chris Redmond, Official Visitor, Children and Young People (General) - MC
- Jo Wood, Acting Director-General CSD
- Anne Maree Sabellico, Acting Deputy DG CSD
- Emeritus Prof. Morag McArthur, Australian Catholic University
- Jodie Griffiths-Cook, Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner
- Selina Walker, Ngunnawal Woman and member, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Network
- Will Mollison, Families ACT
- Yvonne Gritschneider, Families ACT
- Stephanie Hodson, Relationships Australia
- Karen Pollard, Community Services 1
- Papunya Connors, Everyman
- Jenni Shoring, A Gender Agenda
- Jenny Kitchin, Woden Community Services
- Lauren O'Brien, ADACAS
- Gemma Killen, ACTCOSS
- Brendan Richards ACTCOSS
- Stephen Imrie, PCYC
- Kim Hefren-Webb, Sanctuary AUS
- Lucy Hohnen, St Vincent de Paul
- Karen Parter, The Smith Family
- Penny Burns, Menslink
- Michael Nurmi, UnitingCare Kippax
- Deborah Evans, Tjillari Justice Aboriginal Corporation
- Anne Kirwan, Marymead Catholic Care
- Rebecca Taylor, Marymead Catholic Care
- Rosa Ciravolo, Barnardos
- Michael Dunne, Barnardos
- Alex-Lee Hargy, Women's Legal Centre
- Cara Jacobs, YWCA Canberra
- Anna Whitty, Northside Community Service
- Jonathon Goodwin, Ministerial Advisor
- Jacinta Evans, CSD
- Kate West, CSD
- Ryan McLauchlan, CSD
- Melanie Saballa, CSD
- Lisa Brown, CSD
- Kate Ehlers, CSD



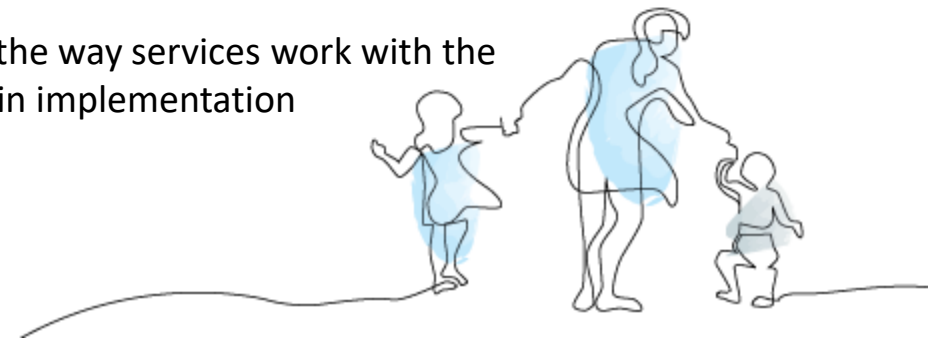
Opening comments – Minster Rachel Stephen-Smith

- The community sector has shown significant commitment, innovation and resourcefulness in their work to support children, young people and their families in the ACT community.
- There is a shared goal of moving to a service system that truly supports wellbeing for all children, young people and their families. This goal is reflected in *Next Steps for Our Kids*.
- The Next Steps strategy sits alongside others that will have an impact on the child and family sector including *Maternity in Focus*, *Set Up for Success* and *Best Start* (to be released soon).
- Implementation of this work is underpinned by a commitment to partnering with the non-government sector through Commissioning for Outcomes, delivering on the recommendations of the *Our Booris, Our Way* review and working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to strengthen the community-controlled sector and close the gap.
- *Next Steps* has an ambitious eight year reform agenda that sets out the principles, reform domains and priority initiatives to drive our reform efforts going forward.
- *Next Steps* holds the central focus of improving outcomes for children, young people and families where there is vulnerability and risk, and intersection with statutory systems.



Opening Comments cont.

- While *Next Steps* has maintained a strong focus on child protection, out of home care and youth justice, the success of *Next Steps* recognises the influential role of the broader service system to support children, young people and families – and these services and supports sit both within government and services delivered by community sector partners.
- We are now in the important phase of focussing on implementation and the sequencing of reform effort, and how we do this together.
- *Next Steps* extends the commitment to co-designing new programs between government, non-government and community stakeholders and ensuring the voice of lived experience is heard and considered in decision making at all levels.
- We need earlier and proactive supports as often these can be the difference between a child or young person placed in care and a child or young person or a carer who needs some help and support to improve their wellbeing.
- The future for children, young people and families can be different in the ACT.
- Through commissioning, government and the community sector can re-examine our community need, look at what is working here and in other jurisdictions, align the program to our contemporary intentions and redesign the service delivery model to better meet these needs into the future.
- I am interested to hear your views on the opportunities *Next Steps* can generate for the way services work with the community, what you see as implementation priorities and how you can participate in implementation planning and roll out.



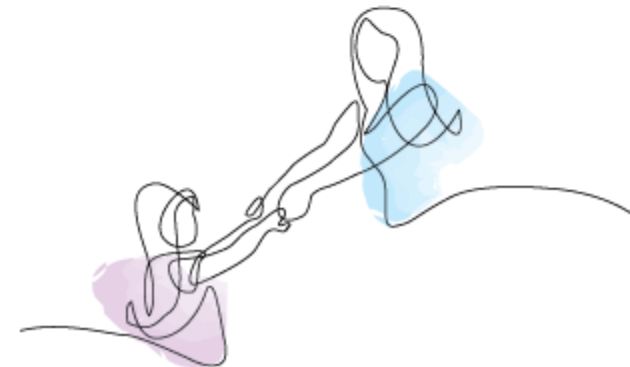
Panel Discussion – Jodie Griffiths-Cook

- Children and young people are impressive innovators and capable contributors, we need to include them in the conversation.
- The issues from the last 6 years are reflected in the *Next Steps* strategy.
- The reforms have to work together with a key focus on getting the integration right.
- Families need intervention at the time a need is identified.
- How do we learn from our mistakes?
 - Be open to hearing when we don't do things well
 - Be willing to speak up if we see things are not working well
 - Share lessons learnt when things do go well
 - Partnership is so important
- Important to ask “what hasn't worked” as an evaluation question (so we don't keep doing it).



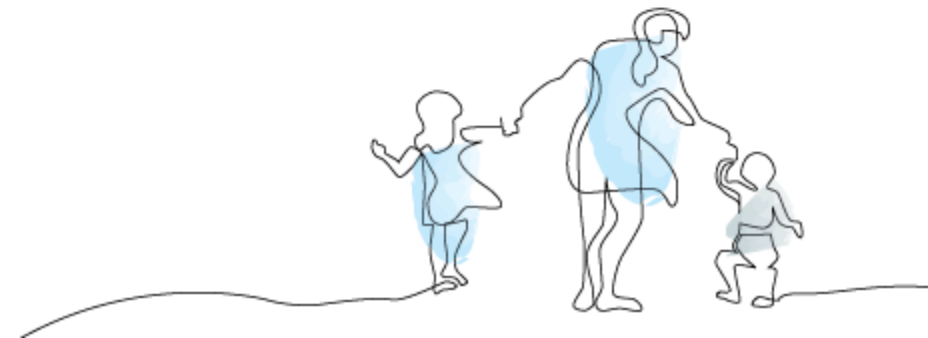
Panel Discussion – Selina Walker

- 2 ways to do the same thing – to get to the same outcome.
- No right/wrong way, just different. Need to support people to learn from mistakes.
- Parents and families are the first educators of children, and community elders are the knowledge holders. To exclude them is to do a disservice to the children and young people.
- For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, disconnection from culture is like having an amputated limb – they still feel it.
- We need to nurture culture and identity.
- “Stop trying to save us.”
- Aboriginal families need support to navigate the white man’s world.



Panel Discussion - Selina cont.

- Reconciliation is an action, not just a word.
- We are just 55 years into the Reconciliation journey.
- Reconciliation – everyone has the responsibility to change, not just the Government.
- We need to find a way forward that works for everyone.



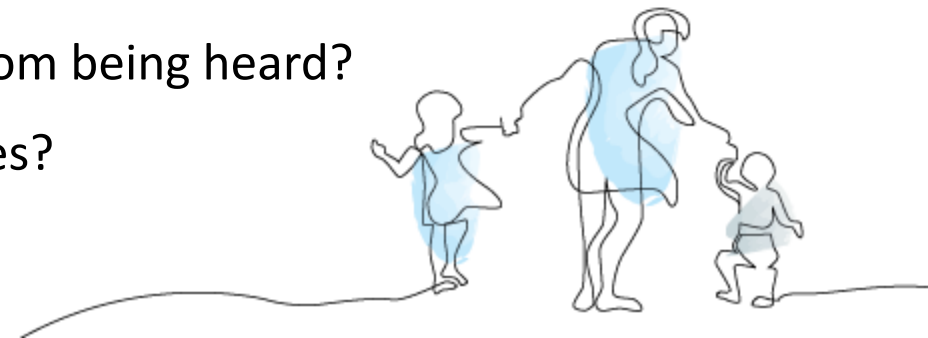
Panel Discussion – Morag McArthur

- The *Next Steps* strategy has a **bold** vision.
- Semantics are important.
- Consider root causes of why families may not be doing well, and the intersection of these:
 - Poverty
 - Colonialism
 - Employment
- Reporting to CYPS is not always the answer. It's a limited repertoire response.
- For Child Protection – need the capacity to differentiate response based on need.
- Partnership is very important.
- Connection to culture and connection to informal supports.
- A challenge for the government is to keep the funding at the “pointy” end of the system while also investing funding in early intervention in order to support positive long-term outcomes.
- How do we build TRUST
 - Respectful persistence
 - Trust that other parts of the system will share the risk.



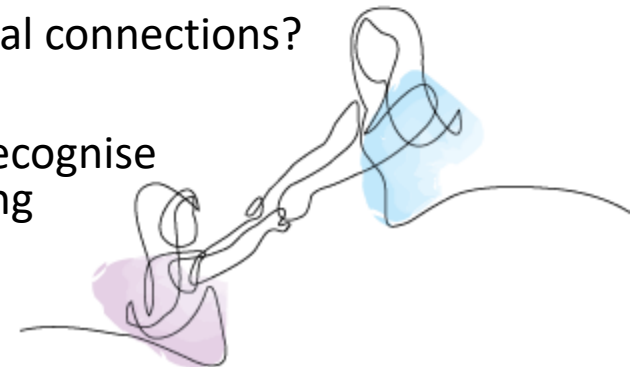
Group Discussion points

- How do we identify resources to support the primary prevention intervention of connection and belonging to family and community?
- Importance of families/parents/young people being able to link in with workers who can support them to navigate the system and connect with appropriate supports.
- Thinking **CREATIVELY** about how we work with children and young people – this requires a tolerance of risk.
- Opportunities to build on strengths to support participation in decision making
 - Awareness of the gaps, what is missing that:
 - Prevents the voice of children and young people from being heard?
 - What supports are available for parents and families?



Group Discussion points

- We need specific mental health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families.
- COVID has impacted everyone's wellbeing
 - Has exacerbated inequality (example of increased access to food hub)
 - Disrupted children's education and socialisation
 - Need to rebuild connection and trust as well as rebuilding the system
 - Raise the rate of income support.
- Trauma is real, how we respond to it is key
 - Post Traumatic Growth – comes from building connection, wellbeing and belonging
 - How do we bring buckets of funding together?
- How can we refine reporting mechanisms (for child protection reports) from Police, Education and Health, to reduce pressure on the Child Protection system?
- How can we reach people who don't use services?
 - Example of social workers in GP clinics
 - Build into systems that can help to navigate.
- How can we work differently to get great outcomes?
- How do we build informal connections?
- "Challenge yourself to recognise each time you are judging someone today."



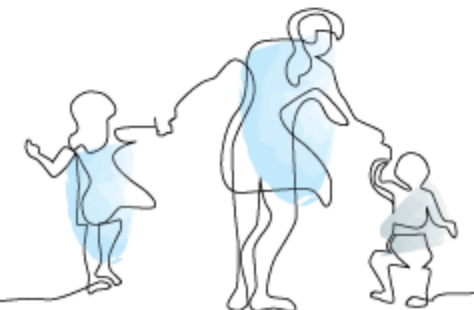
Quotes from the online chat

Unfortunately when Aboriginal families reach out for help they are reported to CYPS and the cultural team is very limited to be able to help out

The disconnect of services is a huge issue

We need better mental health systems that specialise in Aboriginal trauma

Being Aboriginal and having 3 or more children, you are automatically put on the high risk list with CYPS



CYFSP commissioning & *Next Steps*

Considerations and opportunities

- What opportunities do you see for us (community sector and government) to work together better?
 - to intervene earlier
 - to achieve better outcomes for children, young people and families?
- Where could we take early action?
- How does the work under *Next Steps* align with commissioning processes already underway?



Where to from here?

- CSD are committed to continuing to listen well. The *Next Steps* team welcome further conversations.
- Please provide your comments and feedback on the intersection of the CYFSP commissioning project with *Next Steps* implementation planning. What are the opportunities and central considerations?
- Today's meeting will inform thinking on how to progress the reform effort.
- A summary of meeting will be circulated.
- Planning is underway to bring together participants from the Child and Family Reform Forum held in March 2021 again in early December 2022. A placeholder will be sent out in the coming weeks.



Closing comments – Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith

- Thank you to Chris Redmond for facilitating today’s discussion.
- Thank you to our panel – Jodie Griffiths-Cook, Selina Walker, Morag McArthur & Anne-Maree Sabellico as facilitator, for sharing your reflections, expertise and advice.
- Thank you to our community sector partners Youth Coalition of the ACT (Dr Justin Barker) and Families ACT (Will Mollison and Yvonne Gritschneider) for hosting today’s event.
- We appreciate everyone taking the time to attend and participate, and look forward to the on-going work we will do together.



Thank you!

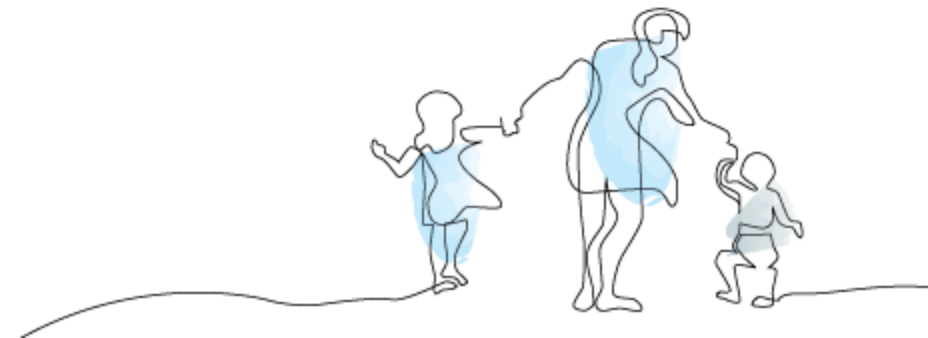
Next Steps-Reform & Strategy Implementation Branch

CBRStepsUp@act.gov.au



Feedback: Considerations and Opportunities

- There is much scope for the community sector and government to work together better in the child youth and family space.
- Some of the key areas of focus are:
 - Need for ongoing accountability to and co-design with people with lived experience (children, youth and families) and their representatives
 - New early intensive (and ongoing) supports needed for families where complex circumstances are occurring (inclusive of families where there might be parents and/or children with disability), to seek to find/build tailored responses, connect to supports/treatments etc as required. Note – a diverse array of options needed, given the diversity of needs and what works for families in different situations.
 - Increase navigator type support (run by non government) for families where complex circumstances might arise – without need of referral via CYPs services.



Feedback: Considerations and Opportunities cont.

- Recognition that some families will need ongoing (long-term) intensive supports – and that provision of such support to enable families to stay together can be a better investment in many ways, not solely economically, and can allow for better outcomes than might be possible in the out of home care pathways.
- Better mechanisms for collecting data/ sharing information and the challenges between government and non government sectors, for identifying the service system gaps (and new gaps as they emerge), and responding quickly.
- Recognition that the rights of children and the rights of families are intertwined (not competing) and need to be responded to accordingly.
- Importance of family-led solutions (supported by independent supports) as early and as frequently as needed.
- Universal design approaches required across the entire service system, to seek to ensure parents with disability, children with disability etc (including those facing intersectional barriers) are not disadvantaged/facing discrimination, and that barriers are being identified and addressed early.
- Recognition of impact of poverty on families in difficult situations - and strategies to assist accordingly
- Independent advocacy and legal support for all families at risk of interactions with statutory child protection services, the entire way through any processes that occur.

