

# **REVIEW OF COMMUNITY SERVICES SECTOR EXPENDITURE**

## **REPORT ON CONSULTATIONS**

**FOR**

**DEPARTMENT FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND FAMILY SUPPORT**

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July, 2016

# Review of Community Services Sector Expenditure – Report on Consultations

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## Background

In August 2015 a project was commenced to undertake a preliminary review of community sector services expenditure, including:

- An overview of the Department's current community services expenditure against core child protection functions and principles of service effectiveness, service efficiency, contemporary service design and delivery and service target groups
- Proposed opportunities for more effective expenditure on services consistent with the Department's primary priorities of promoting the safety and wellbeing of at risk children and families with the aim of preventing them coming into care and supporting children and young people in care
- Proposed opportunities to improve contract management processes
- A plan to implement the proposed changes.

The report of that review was completed in November 2015 and took the form of a discussion document to form the basis of a full consultation with community sector organisations, service user representatives and other key stakeholders, to inform future decisions regarding the better alignment of community sector services expenditure with the core functions of the Department and delivering against key priorities and community need.

A further project was initiated in February to take the high level plan outlined in the discussion document forward, including to:

- develop a detailed plan including deliverables, actions, responsibilities and time frames for the actions identified in the implementation plan; as well as identify any additional actions and tasks that may be required to fully deliver on the;
- develop a clear communication and consultation strategy to engage with the community services sector in relation to the Review and development of a contracting framework;
- undertake consultation with internal Departmental stakeholders and the community services sector regarding the proposals identified through the Review. This will include facilitating workshops and focus/consultation groups with a number of key stakeholders and representative groups. This could include direct consultation or partnering with them to facilitate broader consultation;
- in consultation with the Department develop a proposed contracting framework that delivers high level service streams with clearly identified outcomes for each service stream and considers the ongoing resourcing requirements for delivery under the proposed framework;
- develop and undertake a communication and education strategy for the delivery and implementation of the contracting framework.

A steering committee was formed comprising Departmental representatives and two representatives of the Community Sector Roundtable to oversight the work associated with the project. A project plan and timetable was endorsed by the Steering Committee and is at Attachment A.

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This report is an interim report that outlines the outcomes of consultations with sector organisations, service users and Departmental officers, offers recommendations on the key consultation issues for consideration by the Department's Corporate Executive, and proposes the way forward to implement each of these recommendations.

## Methodology

The report was circulated to sector organisations and to selected areas within the Department in February 2016 inviting feedback on the 8 key consultation questions outlined in the report by 8 April. Nine written responses were received including eight from sector organisations and one from within the Department.

These responses were analysed and summarised, with the summaries included in a PowerPoint presentation to form the basis of further consultation with sector organisations and key Departmental staff. The PowerPoint was updated on a weekly basis to also include a summary of previous workshop responses, to allow each subsequent workshop to comment on the full array of responses received to that point. Focus groups with service users/community groups were organised in conjunction with FIN WA using a different format. A number of service user comments related to Departmental responsibilities and services generally and were not relevant to the scope of this project. These will be communicated to the Department separately.

A total of 25 workshops/focus groups have now been conducted, 6 with metropolitan service providers, 8 with country service providers (by video link), 1 with the Community Sector Round Table, 4 with service users (including 3 hosted by Aboriginal organisations) and 6 with Departmental staff.

## Consultation Outcomes and Recommendations

The Discussion Document posed 8 consultation questions. The consultation outcomes reported below and related recommendations are in response to those questions.

### 1. Outcome Clusters

The report proposed that the current 46 service groups be reduced to a much smaller number of strategic service outcome clusters to facilitate flexible, innovative responses to the achievement of key community outcomes, as envisaged by the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy. Consultation question 1 posed the question as to what those outcome key outcome clusters might be.

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Support was strong among those consulted for the general proposition of a small number of outcome based clusters that give service providers the flexibility to respond with innovative service models to achieve stated outcomes and also to provide flexible service responses to the needs of individuals and families.

Much of the discussion centred around how specific or broad the outcome statements should be. There is some tension between the need for clearly defined and measurable outcomes and the need to reduce / do away with silos that seek to compartmentalise the lives of service users. There has been some discussion of the ability of service providers to provide the service integration at the service design and delivery end, provided contracts are outcome focussed and not dictating service models.

There was a fair degree of support generally for the 5 “illustrative” outcome areas contained in the discussion document, but with a need for major re-framing to provide a strengths based/solutions focussed approach to the wording. However no agreement was reached on wording and there were some calls for this to be the subject of further consultation.

There was discussion about whether Youth should be a separate target group and subject to an outcome statement in its own right rather than incorporated within the broader outcome categories. This would constitute a different approach to youth than other target groups that are each included across a range of outcome categories. A second issue was whether “at risk of needing care and protection” is too narrow a target group for Youth. The current Service Group of “Services to Young People at Risk” appears to adopt a very broad and somewhat vague definition of “risk” and it has been suggested that risk needs to incorporate negative outcomes in relation to a broad range of outcomes including offending, mental health, drug and alcohol, etc., or of “poor life outcomes” generally. Given the very small resourcing in this area, this would be a very ambitious target and also takes on responsibility for the outcomes of other Government agencies. This is not to say that the need for across government collaboration in relation to overlapping outcomes and target groups is not important. It clearly is however it would be expected that each Government agency will take responsibility for the outcomes that fall within its own mandate.

Another issue raised in discussions was the fact that a large part of services directed to victims of family and domestic violence (e.g. women’s refuges) are funded through the Commonwealth/State agreement regarding homelessness. Discussion centred around the scope for the State to include these services as part of a planning framework for family and domestic violence, when the accountability to the Commonwealth is in the context of homelessness. This issue will require further consideration.

In the context of this feedback, it is proposed that the outcome statements be framed around the key target groups in the community to which services are to be directed, and enunciate the outcomes/results that these services are aimed at achieving in their lives, using positive strengths based language. Below

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are a revised set of outcome statements based on what appear to be the major target groups of contracted services and it is suggested that these be the subject of more detailed consultation with the relevant sectors prior to finalisation:

- Children and young people at risk of needing care and protection are kept safe and afforded appropriate care in the context of their own families and communities.
- People who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless address the issues contributing to their risk of or actual homelessness and obtain and/or maintain stable accommodation.
- Children, young people and their families, who have suffered the impacts of child abuse, overcome the harmful effects of that abuse and their resilience and wellbeing is improved.
- People who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing family and domestic violence are and remain safe, overcome the harmful effects of that violence and their resilience and wellbeing is improved.
- Children and young people in the care of the Director General live in stable care arrangements, have their overall wellbeing improved and leave care with the resources to lead productive lives.

### **Recommendations:**

- (a) The principle of outcomes based contracting around a relatively small number of outcome areas or clusters be endorsed, with a goal of flexible, innovative service responses from the sector**
- (b) There be agreement that outcomes statements should be clear and measurable but framed in strengths/solutions based language**
- (c) The suggested target groups/outcome statements identified above form the basis for the outcome areas, with the wording of the outcome statements to be further developed, subject to consultation with relevant key stakeholders, to be undertaken by the relevant policy staff in the Department.**

### **2. Alignment of Contract dates within clusters**

The discussion document proposed that, prior to consideration of new or renewed contracts in a given outcome area, a collaborative planning process be undertaken with relevant sector organisations, service users and other relevant stakeholders to clearly identify the relevant community needs at both a state and local level and develop a strategic response strategy designed to achieve intended community outcome, as outlined in the Nature of the Relationship component of the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy Flow-chart.

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In order to give full effect to the results of that planning process, the discussion document proposed that the contract renewal dates for all the services in each outcome cluster be aligned to allow strategic service responses to achieving the desired outcomes for the relevant target group(s) to be considered in the context of the total resources available rather than a single contract at a time.

There was a fair bit of support for this provided it results in a reduction of administrative burden on service providers and not the reverse – certainly support for reduced numbers of contracts if this results. Other concerns expressed have been around audit/going concern issues if all of an organisation's contracts come up for renewal in the one year, and whether there are risks for smaller organisations.

The point was also made that larger, more complex tenders will need to allow more time, particularly if they require user consultation/co-design and innovative service responses.

Generally this is seen as complex and potentially difficult, and something that should be done in collaboration with sector organisations. It was also pointed out that current across government reform initiatives may result in a move to realignment of contracting dates for common outcome areas between Government agencies, so that this proposal may well be a step in the direction of a broader Government approach.

In terms of priorities for which area to proceed next with the collaborative planning process, there has been a lot of support for Homelessness, with Family and Domestic Violence and Early Intervention also receiving support. Indications have been given that planning is already beginning in the areas of Homelessness and Early Intervention. It was also acknowledged that the timing of Commonwealth/State agreements and other factors outside of the Department's direct control, such as election commitments will have a bearing on the scheduling of contract dates, at least in the first instance.

### **Recommendation:**

**Once the outcome areas have been defined, work be undertaken, in consultation with sector organisations and consistent with the direction of across government reforms, with a view to achieving alignment of contract dates within each outcome area to the full extent that this is practicably achievable without undue adverse consequences.**

### **3. Departmental roles in collaborative planning**

Bearing in mind that the proposed collaborative planning process will entail a substantial body of work on an ongoing basis, the discussion document sought comment on the appropriate roles and responsibilities within the Department and other relevant resource implications.

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Service agencies have been less interested in this than in how the planning occurs and the need for genuine collaboration and opportunity for co-design. Concern has also been expressed by country organisations that the process not become metro-centric and that local planning outcomes are respected.

There has been acknowledgment that, as this is a new process, there will be resource implications for all.

Generally there has been support for the following allocation of roles:

- Policy and Learning Directorate provide strategic and policy direction/ coordinate collaborative planning process
- Aboriginal Engagement and Coordination provide cultural input and linkages
- Districts provide local context and coordinate local consultation;
- Service Standards & Contracting both informing the process and developing contracts to reflect the outcomes.

In the context of these defined roles, it may be time to consider the value of separate policy areas in Contracting Services, apparently with parallel policy and strategic responsibilities to Policy and Learning. This has not been raised in consultations, however the logic of this arrangement does seem strange and with the potential to create policy confusion.

### **Recommendations:**

- (a) The above broad allocations of responsibility for the collaborative planning process be endorsed**
- (b) Commensurate with the changing role definitions, current functional and resource allocations be examined as to their ongoing suitability, including but not limited to the role of the policy function in Contracting Services**
- (c) A detailed process be developed for collaborative planning both at a State-wide and local level, to reflect the principles of collaboration, co-design and localised solutions.**

### **4. Service Standards**

The discussion document noted that there is an inconsistent approach to the requirement for service standards between different contracted service groups and asked the question as to whether service standards should be developed for all service clusters in order to allow assessment of service quality.

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Generally there was very strong support for service standards across all outcome areas, provided it is not made overly complex, that standards be developed jointly with the sector and that the standards apply equally to Departmental services.

In particular it has been proposed that:

- Some common overarching standards be developed, supported by cluster specific standards where required
- Future standards are built on the standards that already exist
- Standards be aligned with Commonwealth standards as far as possible.

There has been considerable discussion as to whether standards be aspirational to support quality improve or mandated minimum standards, where failure to achieve may result in contractual breach or other contract management action. There were some suggestions that it might be desirable to have both. A proposal for independent quality evaluations had some limited support but was seen as overly expensive by most and likely to detract from funds available for service delivery.

### **Recommendations:**

- (a) It be agreed that standards be applied to all service areas.**
- (b) A separate reform project be initiated at the appropriate time to develop a framework for service quality standards across all service areas, jointly with sector and service user representatives.**

### **5. Outcomes for Aboriginal children and families**

As improving outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities is one of the key current priorities of the Department, the discussion document reviewed the adequacy of current contractual and other provisions to ensure that the community sector investment adequately reflects this priority.

On the issue of the proportion of Aboriginal clients in services aimed at preventing the need for care and protection and reunification services, service providers have questioned why there are not more referrals of Aboriginal families from the Department. Discussion within the Department has suggested that unwillingness of some Aboriginal families to accept referrals to some organisations may be a factor, though this requires closer examination.

Suggested strategies to improve focus in this area have included:

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- Requiring organisations to outline their planned strategies to engage with and provide culturally secure service to Aboriginal people in the tender process;
- Setting targets for the number/proportion of clients to be Aboriginal, though not all agree, and some support targets that are aspirational only;
- Building cultural competence of organisations and incorporating this into service design;
- The need to recruit more Aboriginal staff (though this can be difficult – impediments including competition from other well-organised sectors and requirements for formal qualifications) with a possible sector wide workforce development strategy being needed; and
- The two-way benefits of partnering with Aboriginal organisations.

In addition to exploring contractual requirements, requirements for culturally appropriate services would also be appropriately reflected in service standards applying both to contracted and Departmental services.

Generally there is strong support for supporting the development of more Aboriginal controlled organisations, with the comment that this needs to be a long term investment strategy, and the establishment of a peak organisation or peaks being supported as well as partnering with existing organisations.

Discussion with some service users reinforced the view that many Aboriginal people are more comfortable receiving services from an Aboriginal controlled organisation or, at very least, from an organisation that employs commensurate numbers of Aboriginal staff. Comments included:

- The value of in home services (e.g. former homemaker service); Best Start regarded as a good service but being discontinued
- Need to involve Aboriginal people in the development of services
- Local community centres can provide a non-threatening location where people are more comfortable to receive services
- If non-Aboriginal organisation – need Aboriginal staff so Aboriginal people feel comfortable. Not just one Aboriginal person, but a team to support each other within a non-Aboriginal organisation.

The view was that there are a large number of Aboriginal controlled organisations currently operating in other related sectors that would be very interested in expanding their work to include this sector.

### **Recommendations:**

- (a) The need to strengthen contractual requirements and accountability for priority to be given to strategies to engage with Aboriginal people and to deliver culturally appropriate services be endorsed, and this issue also be considered in further development of service standards**

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- (b) The development of those requirements be developed in close association with the reform project focussed on improving outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities**
- (c) Together with sector organisations and other relevant stakeholders, explore the merits and feasibility of an Aboriginal workforce development strategy for the sector.**

### **6. Individualisation and service user input**

The Discussion Document invited suggestions for additional strategies to ascertain the views and wishes of service users and to achieve a more individualised approach to service delivery.

There was general support for individualised models of service delivery and that this should be about how we do business, not just an add-on. There was also comment that, with more flexible contracting arrangements based around outcomes rather than specified services; this should provide scope for individual service co-design with service users. There was acknowledgement that individual funding packages, such as in disability and aged care, may not be suited to the bulk of contracted services in this sector however, as a mechanism to achieve a more person centred or individualised approach, it may have value in some areas.

There is general agreement for a flexible range of options for engaging service users and seeking their input into service planning and design, and that this should be an ongoing process not just something that occurs at the end. Also if users are consulted it is important that they receive feedback on decisions made and how their input was used.

Another comment was that individualised services require appropriate funding.

Service users claim that the more effective services provide a positive, trusting relationship that is affirming, not judging and are about working with, not doing to. Building trust occurs over a period of time – it cannot be done overnight. They also advocated for the provision of help before problems become insurmountable – early intervention to prevent children from needing care and protection.

As with the issue of culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal people, the issue of service user input into service planning and more individualised models of service delivery would appropriately be included in the next generation of service standards for both contracted and Departmental services.

### Recommendation:

#### 7. Additional improvements required

Consultation Question 7 in the Discussion Document invited comment on any further improvements that should be made to the contracting of services that had not been canvassed in the report. Many of the comments raised in this question were a repeat of those issues raised under other questions. Most thought that the issues raised in the report covered the main issues.

One issue raised is the number of change projects occurring simultaneously and the need to draw these together, including providing clear information to the sector about how they all interrelate.

Another was the problems associated with multiple contract managers for a single organisation under the current portfolio system. There was strong support for the concept of each organisation having only one contract manager who got to know the organisation and their business well. Associated with this was a suggestion that contract manager duties be allocated on an area basis rather than by portfolio, so that they get to develop an understanding of local issues and context.

### Recommendation:

**The current portfolio system of allocating contract management responsibilities be reviewed and consideration given to alternatives such as geographical area responsibility and single contract manager per organisation.**

#### 8. Contract management in metropolitan districts

This issue had been raised in initial consultation with Metropolitan District Directors, who proposed that contract managers again be located in metropolitan districts, as is still the case in country districts.

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There is very little support for returning contract management to metropolitan districts, particularly from organisations with services that span multiple districts. It was acknowledged that the connection between metropolitan districts and sector organisations has diminished since contract management was centralised in head office and that this issue needs to be addressed. However the return of contract managers to districts was not seen by most as the solution.

One suggestion was that the community development role needs to be reinstated in districts and that this is more the key to re-building the connection between Departmental districts and the sector. Others saw this as unrealistic unless additional resources were provided. Greater involvement of districts in the collaborative planning process and the creation of Family Support Networks were seen as two initiatives likely to increase this connectivity, however none of these were seen as offering a complete solution. This is an issue that warrants further attention.

### **Recommendation:**

**It is not recommended that contract managers again be located in districts, although this could be reconsidered on a case by case basis if there were enough localised contracted services specific to that district to warrant such placement. The issue of rebuilding the connections between Departmental districts and sector organisations needs to be considered as a separate issue.**

### **Implementation Responsibilities and Project Planning**

Following decisions by Corporate Executive on the recommendations above, a detailed plan for the project implementation phase will be developed in conjunction with SSC and Reform Directorates for endorsement by the subsequent meeting of the Steering Committee.

The detailed plan for the implementation phase of the project will include a communication strategy involving ongoing consultation with sector organisations and service user representatives.

It is not suggested that the implementation of all of these recommendations fall within the ambit of this project. Indeed the project resourcing would not allow this. Proposals for allocation of responsibilities for the implementation of the above recommendations are outlined below. Those implementation responsibilities to remain an ongoing focus of this project are in bold, i.e. primarily in relation to issues 2, 3, 5 and 6.

1. **Outcome Clusters** – once agreement is reached on the broad outcome areas, the work of further developing the outcome wording be undertaken by the relevant policy staff in consultation with the relevant sector and other stakeholders. **The consultant to be involved on an as needed basis.**

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2. **Alignment of contract dates with clusters** – the consultant to work with SSC Directorate and in consultation with sector organisations to explore ways to achieve this.
3. **Collaborative Planning Process** – this to be a major focus of the consultant’s work: to work on the detailed design of this together with relevant directorates including the Reform Directorate, and in collaboration with sector organisations and user advocates. The Department to further review the related functional and resourcing issues.
4. **Service Quality Standards** – this to be developed as a separate reform project, independent of this project.
5. **Improved outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities** – the consultant to work together with SSC, AEC and Reform Directorates to develop more detailed proposals on relevant contractual provisions to support this key priority.
6. **Individualisation and service user input** – the consultant to work together with SSC and Reform Directorates to develop relevant contractual provisions to achieve a more individualised focus in service contracts.
7. **Additional improvements** – SSC Directorate to examine alternatives to the current portfolio allocation of contract management responsibility, including the feasibility of area based contract management and allocation of one contract manager per organisation.
8. **Metropolitan Districts** – It is suggested that a project be initiated within Metropolitan Services and in partnership with SSC Directorate with a view to developing further proposals to create better connectivity between metropolitan districts and sector organisations.

### Recommendation:

The allocation of implementation responsibilities outlined above be endorsed.

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**Attachment A**

### Implementation Plan Overview

Actions	Feb 16	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 17
Draft strategy to Corporate Executive & CS Round Table – receive feedback & amend												
Establish project steering group & support team												
Circulate draft report and consultation questions to sector, consumer groups and Department (w/c 29/2) for preliminary feedback by 8/4												
Plan workshops/consultations with Dept. and external representative organisations												
Analyse feedback & refine consultation questions & issues												
Conduct consultations including workshops/focus groups; video conferences and individual discussions												
Analyse consultation results												
Report to Corporate Executive with options and recommendations												
Corporate Executive decisions												
Communicate internally and externally												
Design phase – develop details of new approach in continuing consultation with key stakeholders, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realignment of service groups with endorsed community outcomes</li> <li>• Developing five-year contracting schedule</li> </ul>												

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Actions	Feb 16	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designing collaborative service planning process</li> </ul>												
Corporate Executive sign off on design detail												
Commence implementation of contract management changes												
Commence implementation of collaborative planning process												