

Multicultural Child & Family Program

Submission related to IPART Review

The NSW Government is seeking to improve the performance and financial sustainability of the out-of-home care system and has requested that IPART investigate and report on the cost and pricing of out-of-home care provided in NSW.

SSI embeds culturally competent and responsive practice. It demonstrates this through its leadership, programs, resources, and research. It is a leader in how to put cultural relevance in practice. It recognises the meaning of culture as a way of life for people including values and norms. It recognises culture can mean different things to different people.

SSI's cultural expertise places it in a good position to be culturally responsive with CALD children by prioritising care services for children from CALD backgrounds or work with its carers to respond to the child's individual care and cultural needs. SSI also recognizes that many children have mixed heritages, including Aboriginal and that all children have their individual cultural needs.

SSI respects the right of indigenous people to self-determination and to be supported by Aboriginal communities and services. MCFP also adheres to the Permanency Support Program (PSP) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Placement principles which prioritise children being placed with family, kin/community, and prioritizing Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organizations before considering non-Aboriginal placements/organizations.

Children cultural needs are inconsistent with CALD and First Nations

Every child has a right to a safe, happy and permanent home connected to family and community. We do this by strengthening children through culture. Settlement Services International (SSI), through its Multicultural Child and Family Program (MCFP), is committed to meeting children's permanent care needs and achieving positive outcomes for children and young people by providing safe, stable and nurturing homes. All MCFP services, staff and carers are dedicated to culturally aware, culturally responsive and culturally proactive practice that is focused on the best interests of children, young people and their families. We believe children in care who are supported to learn about and maintain a connection to their ethnic background, religion and language have better outcomes. These connections help children to understand where they have come from and to develop their sense of belonging and identity. Helping children stay connected with their cultural background, language and faith also helps children maintain positive relationships with their birth parents, extended family and community. We

recognise the importance of this should children be returned to parental care, and in staying connected into their adult years.

- Culture is central, and will remain at the forefront of our policy, procedures and practice.
- Culture is core to making or changing placements and facilitating permanency.
- Ongoing development of cross-cultural skills are a requirement for all staff, volunteers and carers and supported through culturally responsive training.
- Cultural care planning and review involves input from children, families and other significant family and/or community members.
- Family details and histories are sought and recorded, and events of significance celebrated for children and young people.
- First language is used when communicating to children, carers and families.
- Recruitment, training, and support is ongoing for bilingual carers and caseworkers to maximise the number of adults who communicate with children and young people in their first language.
- Collaboration with ethnic specific services, ethnic leaders, organisations and communities increase capacity to engage with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.
- Community-based connections facilitate opportunities for children, young people, families and carers to access services to support their needs and improve outcomes.
- Culturally competent practices are integrated in individual casework with children, carers and family, across program systems and organisational levels.
- Culture is dynamic and practice should be continually monitored through purposeful use of data and client feedback to ensure culturally responsive practice.
- The cultural needs of the child change with the age, placement, developmental milestones and many other factors.

Issues:

- The current PSP funding focuses on the cultural needs of the children from First Nations while disregarding the cohort of CALD children.
- Children from First Nations are entitled to a cultural payment when entering care, followed by annual payments each year, however the children from CALD background would only be entitled to a one-off payment at the point of entry in care.
- There is also a large difference with the cultural packages for a CALD child versus a child from a First Nation.
- There is no consideration related to the age or developmental milestones of the child.
- The data related to the CALD children is still minimal where at least three elements: faith, ethnicity and language should be captured.
- The current package does not consider the needs of the child when they change placement and therefore a new cultural support plan is needed.

Considerations:

All children in care need to have an equal support for cultural packages. These packages need to consider the age and development of the child, as well the change of placement.

Other considerations:

- Cost of Insurance to the agencies due to the abuse, complaints, and other factors. It would be great to consider including these costs within the packages.
- There are a lot of assessments, family group conferences, therapy, family time and too many other tests. There should be a formula regarding the expectations of the agencies meeting a certain number of these costs while the remaining ones to be covered through the Department.

- Consideration to be given for the agencies and the Department to be represented by the same Legal Representative during Court proceedings.
- CALD carers from first generation, grandparents and other kinship carers have limited capacity and need extra support due to language barriers, do not drive and other factors. Considerations to be given to additional support for the kinship placements.
- Other considerations to be given to costs where the children are not Australian citizens and therefore all the fees need to be paid in full, including childcare, medical appointments and medication, therapy and others.

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