



Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group

Communique Meeting 07/2024 – 24-25 June 2024

The Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group (Advisory Group) held its seventh meeting on the land of the Menang people in Kinjarling (Albany). Members received the Welcome to Country by Aunty Averil Dean Menang Goreng Elder and Mr Larry Blight, Knowledge Holder, Kurrah Mia Pty Ltd at the Hilton Garden Inn Albany.

The meeting had a focus on Department of Communities' (Communities) Child Protection Systems. Advisory Group members also discussed local and emerging issues with Director General, Mike Rowe and received an update on the Agency Capability Review.

The Hon Sabine Winton MLA, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Protection, Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence and Community Services, joined online to discuss the Child Protection and Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence as areas where government and the community must work together urgently to generate culturally informed solutions for Aboriginal children and families.

Key presentations at the meeting included:

Child Protection System

- The child protection portfolio, governed by the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*, is responsible for the protection and care of Western Australian children and young people particularly those who come into the care of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The portfolio provides proactive supports to families and children who are vulnerable and at risk of entering care. Communities established the Specialist Child Protection Unit which aims to strengthen child protection expertise at senior leadership levels, improve the stewardship of the child protection system and drive improved outcomes for both children in care and their families, and those at risk of entering the system.

Care Plan Review Panel

- The Care Plan Review Panel (the Panel) is to review care planning decisions or modified care planning decisions made by Communities for children in the CEO's care of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (the Act) and report to the CEO on its recommendations of the Act. The CEO must confirm, vary, or reverse the care planning decision, substitute another decision, or refer the matter back to the Panel for further consideration and report. Members of the Panel are appointed by the CEO based on their experience, skills, attributes, or qualifications to effectively perform the functions of the Panel of the Act.
- The Advisory Group has been identified as a key stakeholder to promote the Panel and consult with in relation to enhancing accessibility to Aboriginal Children in care and their families.

Acknowledgment of Country

The Department of Communities acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to their Elders past and present.

Out-of-Home Care Reform Program

- The new out of home care (OOHC) system offers a suite of care arrangements that provide different levels of support to children with different and changing needs. By laying the groundwork for sustainable care models, the focus is on promoting an OOHC system that is cost-effective, culturally secure and most importantly, responsive to the needs of children.
- Communities has purchased services that prioritises the needs and best interests of the child or young person. Communities is introducing a model of funding that is based on individual children's needs, with five new placement types. This system will also ensure that Child Protection Workers have more placement options to support children and young people when they need it most.

Update on Safe and Supported: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031

- The Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031 (Safe and Supported) recognises that all Australians need to work together to keep children and young people safe and achieve best outcomes for those who are vulnerable and/or experiencing disadvantage. The Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan (one of two first action plans under Safe and Supported), will be the key mechanism for the Australian Government in responding to Closing the Gap Target 12: Reduce the rate of overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent by 2031.

Aboriginal Employee Engagement

- The Advisory Group members hosted the Communities' Aboriginal Employee Network (AEN) breakfast again to talk about their current roles and relationships in Communities. This provided a valuable opportunity for members to meet Aboriginal employees and develop a connection with the AEN as a foundation to work together.

Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations

- Connecting with local Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations (ACCOs) was once again a priority for the Advisory Group. Members were pleased to take the opportunity to visit the Yorganop Association Incorporated. Yorganop is an Aboriginal community-controlled foster care organisation. Yorganop services are specifically designed by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal children and their families. Yorganop have recently been awarded a contract to deliver OOHC services in the Great Southern.
- In addition to the site visit, the Advisory Group hosted a meet and greet event with guests from the Albany District Leadership Group, ACCOs and providers funded across Communities' service delivery areas including Great Southern Noongar Aboriginal Corporation and Yorgum Healing Services Aboriginal Corporation.

The next meeting of the Advisory Group will be held in late 2024.

Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group

5 Newman Court Walyalup (Fremantle) WA 6160

Email: advisorygroupsecretariat@communities.wa.gov.au

Acknowledgment of Country

The Department of Communities acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to their Elders past and present.