



19<sup>th</sup> November 2014

**Submission to the Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs:  
Senate Inquiry into out-of-home care**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Senate Inquiry into Out-Of-Home Care, and to share some key considerations for the Inquiry. The Children's Youth and Families Agency Association (CYFAA) writes this submission in support of the range of information already submitted by CYFAA members in Western Australia, including Salvation Army Crossroads West, CREATE Foundation, Anglicare WA, MercyCare, UnitingCare West, Key Assets, FinWA, Centrecare, Parkerville Children and Youth Care, Wanslea Family Services, and Yorganop.

The Children's Youth and Families Agency Association (CYFAA) is the peak body representing Western Australian community sector agencies providing out-of-home care and related support services. CYFAA represents a variety of service providers, including those working in areas of prevention; early intervention; reunification; out-of-home care provision; advocacy for young people in care and care leavers; and support and advocacy for families of children in care. CYFAA provides a united voice for the community sector, actively working to promote best practice throughout both the non-government and government sector. CYFAA provides a response and consultation channel on key areas of reform, as well as initiating research into different out-of-home care and child protection practice areas.

There are approximately 4,500 children and young people in care in Western Australia, with this figure having doubled over the past 10 years. Over half of these children and young people in care are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Analysis of previous annual figures released by the Department for Child Protection and Family Support shows that whilst the annual growth rate of non-Aboriginal children in care was 4% in 2013-2014, that of Aboriginal children in care in the same period was 9%. The over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care is, we believe, the biggest challenge facing the sector and the WA community at large.

A growing number of children and young people in WA in care are being placed in out-of-home care placements with non-government and community sector agencies, at an annual growth rate of approximately 17% per year for the last four years. There is continued significant growth expected in this area in line with the WA Department for Child Protection and Family Support's Five Year Out of Home Care Strategic Plan.



Given the growth in the role of community sector agencies providing out-of-home care to children and young people, it is important that these agencies are heard and considered as part of the inquiry, and that the community sector organisations are supported, engaged and represented in work being done to address issues related to children and young people in care.

Rather than duplicate the individual submissions that Western Australian out-of-home care and family support service providers have already provided, CYFAA would like highlight and draw attention to some key areas that member agencies agree need to be addressed in relation to the Terms of Reference, as outline below:

- The growing representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care
- Understanding of the needs of and supports required by Kinship Carers, given growing number of children in these placements
- Recognition of the expanding role of community sector organisations in the provision of out of home care placements, and the requirements to ensure the ability of these organisations to provide quality services for children and young people
- Importance of key stakeholders being valued and respected through authentic partnerships in child protection practice – including children and young people, families of children in care, foster carers, and both government and non-government agencies.
- Recognition of the importance of ongoing consultation and research opportunities with consumers of child protection and out of home care services, as well as service providers, in order to support evidence-based practice
- Addressing inconsistencies in legislation and practice across jurisdictions affecting children and young people in care
- Recognition of the importance of resourcing early prevention, intervention and family support to prevent children and young people entering care, as well as reunification services to support children and young people returning to family
- A consistent national approach to inter-government agency responses to ensure priority and streamlined services for children and young people in care - e.g. through Rapid Response frameworks, or through Memorandum of Understandings between agencies

We would to thank the Inquiry again for the opportunity to raise what CYFAA, and the community sector in Western Australia, believe are some of the most important, challenging, and vital areas of focus of the current Inquiry. We welcome the Inquiry, as well



as ongoing opportunities for consultation on how the national out-of-home care and child protection sector can work to address the complex and multifaceted issues surrounding children and young people in care.

If you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter, or inform of further opportunities or forums for consultation, please do not hesitate to contact CYFAA.

Yours sincerely,

**Judith Wilkinson**  
**CYFAA Chair**

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