



ACT|atsieb

ACT | Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander
Elected Body

Community Consultation

Report on Community Consultation
topic of Solutions Focused care and protection
and family violence (impact on children)

26 March 2018

Acknowledgement of Traditional Aboriginal Custodians

ATSIEB acknowledges that Canberra has been built on the lands of the Ngunnawal people. We pay our respects to the Ngunnawal people and acknowledge and celebrate their ongoing culture and contribution to the ACT and region.

ATSIEB also acknowledges that many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from across Australia have now made Canberra their home and we also acknowledge and celebrate their cultures and diversity and their contribution to the ACT and region.

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2 INTRODUCTION

Community consultation is an important element of engagement for the Elected Body. These consultations are designed to engage our diverse community and hear and understand their lived experience, perspectives and suggestions for change.

The process of consultation and engagement with the community is in accordance with the ATSIEB Community Consultation Plan 2018-2021. This report has been prepared as per s13A of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Act 2008*. The report from this consultation will describe:

- topic of the consultation;
- ATSIEB's view about the topic;
- issues raised by the community during consultation; and
- recommendations of ATSIEB in relation to the topic.

This was the first of four consultations to be held by the Elected Body this year. The consultation was held at the Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre on the 26 March from 4:30-7:30pm.

3 CONSULTATION TOPIC

The topic of the community consultation was child protection and family violence.

For **care and protection**, we sought to understand what currently occurs, what is the experience of children and their families as they engage with early intervention and primary prevention programs, come to the attention of child protection, potentially enter care and the pathways to exit care.

For **family violence (impact on children)** we sought to understand our communities experience of family violence. The community feedback on family violence was used to support the Elected Body's attendance at the Extraordinary meeting of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council in the following week.

For both areas we asked, how we might apply sustainable solutions to better support our children, families and communities to stay with family? The Elected Body believe culture is critical, we need to share our experience of policies and programs and acknowledge the historical impacts on our community. We also believe that community holds the answers to these problems – community *is* the solution.

The structure of the consultation was in three sections – the first was to introduce the topic and to understand the current situation and projects. In the second section, we shared our experience of how these services and programs are received in the community. In the final section, we looked at ways that we can improve or change the services to better meet the needs and expectations of the community.

In total 28 people attended the consultation this included members of the community and representatives from the following organisations:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body
- Community Services Directorate
- ACT Police
- ACT Together
- Uniting
- CREATE

3.1 ACT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AGREEMENT

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Whole of Government Agreement seeks to define and measure key areas of importance to the community. Within the theme of strong families, child protection measures are based on the numbers of families accessing family support programs and to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering out of home care.

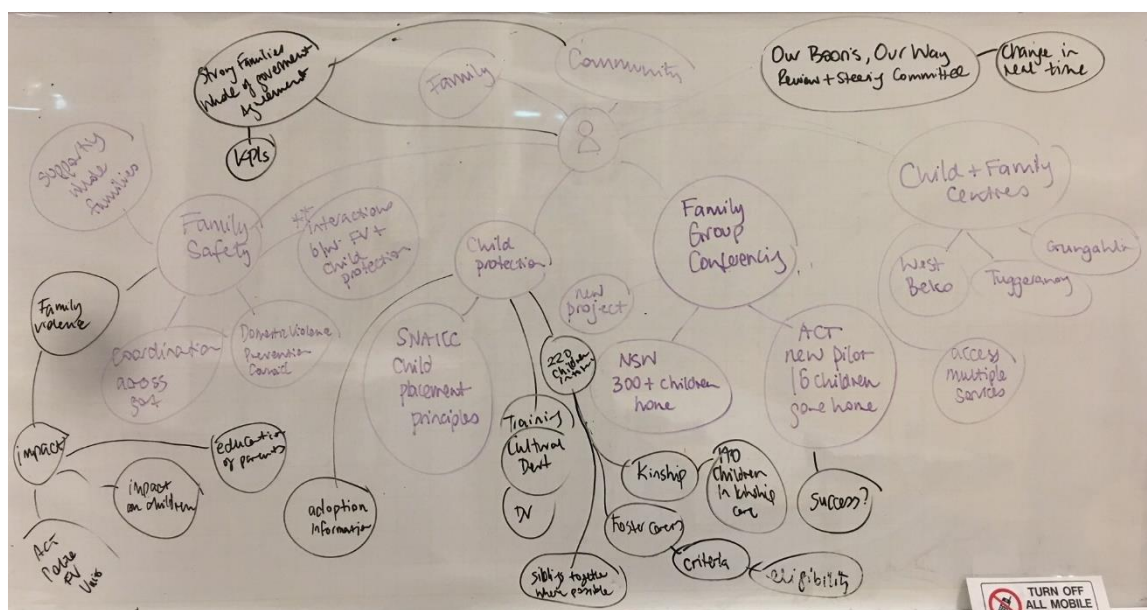
KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	MEASURE	2015-16	2016-17
Connected to strong family, social, cultural networks			
Supporting strong resilient families			
Increasing family safety and security	Percentage of children in care who have a cultural care plan		87%
	Achievement of family goals through completion of Growing Healthy Families or Circles of Security training	163 families	176 families
Children will have culturally appropriate care when interfacing with the child protection system	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by relationship of care giver, 30 June - % children placed in accordance with Aboriginal child placement principle.	60.4%	60.1%
	Reduce the re-substantiation rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care	26% of children with a substantiation in 2015-16 had a further substantiation in the next 12 months.	Data available in 2018
	Reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children coming into care	41	54
Improved connection to cultural enriching networks			
Community groups that practice, teach and promote culture	Increased application and award of OATSIA Cultural Grants Program	Seven applicants: grants totalling \$29,820	Six applicants: grants totalling \$21,880
Enable transport to cultural events and gatherings	Increased use of the Community Bus	n.p.	5,430 boardings
Culturally appropriate services and support where appropriate			
Representation on consultative/ advisory committees to ACT Education and Training, Health and Justice	Increasing representation and diversity of the community represented in co-design sessions		

Figure 1 Whole of Government Agreement indicators

3.2 CONSULTATION - CURRENT SITUATION AND PROJECTS

In this section, the current situation and improvement projects and reviews were presented to the audience. The list of presenters and topics is below:

Topic	Presenter
Current situation	Mark Collis
Family Group Conferencing Pilot	Jodie Robinson
Child and Family Centre programs - Growing Healthy Families at CFCs	Melanie Saballa
Family Safety programs	Jo Wood
Engagement and priority of the Review	Minister Stephen-Smith
Our Booris, Our Way: Review into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in contact with the child protection system	Barb Causon



Early intervention and Primary Prevention

Child and Family Centres at Gungahlin, West Belconnen and Tuggeranong provide programs and services for families to support them in accessing services and learning new skills to support parenting and family support.

Child protection

There are currently 220 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care. Of these, 140 children are in kinship care and 80 are placed with foster carers.

Child and Youth Protection Services have an active Cultural Services Team that is available to support case workers understand the cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in contact with child protection.

Child and Youth Protection Services are currently piloting Family Group Conferencing in the ACT. Part way through the pilot 16 children have gone home to their families. In NSW, in a similar program that has been running for longer, over 300 children have been reunited with their family.

Family Safety

Conversation around impact of family violence on children and the efforts of coordinating services and education across government led by the Family Safety team.

Minister

Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith reiterated the importance of the Our Booris, Our Way review and also the criticality of consultation to understand the community's views and expectations.

Our Booris, Our Way

The review, led by Chair, Barbara Causon, will analyse the circumstances for the approximately 350 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children currently engaging with the child protection system, on 1 January 2018, to understand their experience and evaluate whether the SNAICC Aboriginal Child Placement Principles of prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection have been followed and upheld.

The review will also look at systemic issues and make recommendations on how to address these.

The Steering Committee members are as follows:

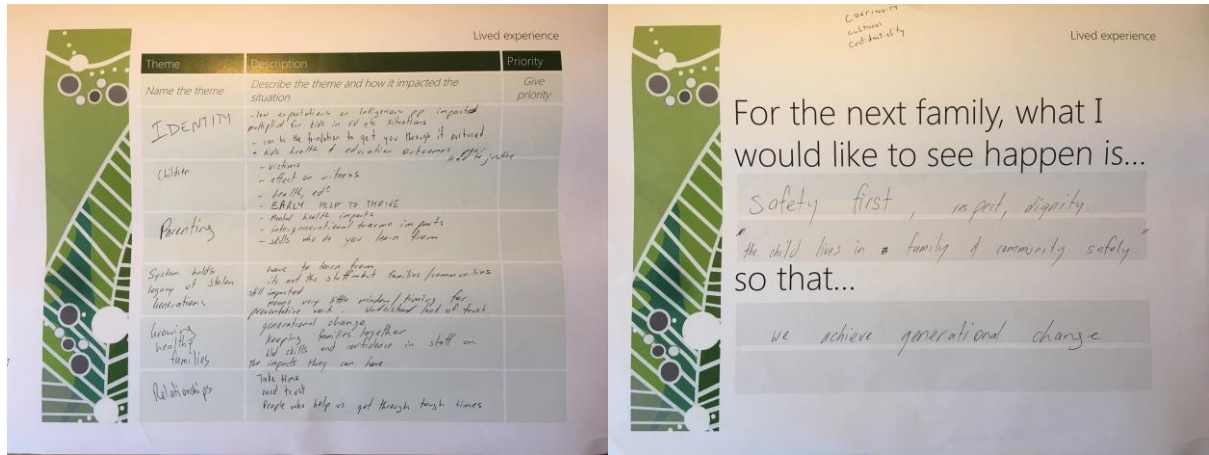
- Barbara Causon – Chair
- Nat Brown - Deputy Chair
- Alana Harris- Winnunga Nimmityjah
- Robyn Martin – Beryl Women Inc
- Leo Nickels – Aboriginal Legal Service
- Peter Williams – Gugan Gulwan
- Sharon Williams - Carer
- Caroline Hughes – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ATSIEB)
- Jo Chivers - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ATSIEB)

The Steering Committee members hold a diverse set of capabilities and lived experience in child protection and related areas like children and women's services, youth justice, legal support, human rights and service delivery.

3.3 CONSULTATION - SHARING OUR EXPERIENCE AND AMBITION

During this session, we broke into four groups and shared our experiences of domestic and family violence. From here we collected common themes and priorities and then crafted a statement that encapsulated the group's desire for the future. The feedback is pictured and recorded below.

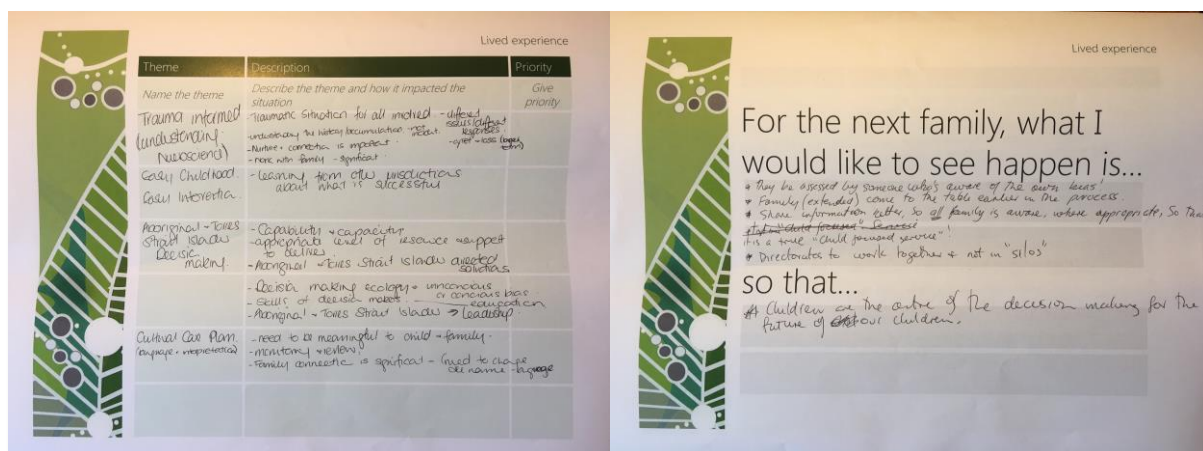
3.3.1 Group One



Theme	Description
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low expectations on Indigenous people impact multiplied for kids in family violence and other situations • Can be the foundation to get you through if nurtured • If kids' health and education is poor, it leads to engagement with the youth or adult justice system
Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims, effect on witness • Health and education • Early help to thrive
Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health impacts • Intergenerational trauma impacts • Skills – who do you learn from?
System holds legacy of Stolen Generations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have to learn from the legacy. • It's not the staff now, but families/communities are still impacted • Means very little window/timing for preventative work. • Understand the lack of trust.
Growing Healthy Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generational change, keeping families together. Build skills and confidence in staff on the impacts they can have.
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take time and need trust. • People who help us get through the tough times.

"For the next family, what I would like to see happen is safety first, respect, dignity so the child lives in a family and community safely so that we achieve generational change."

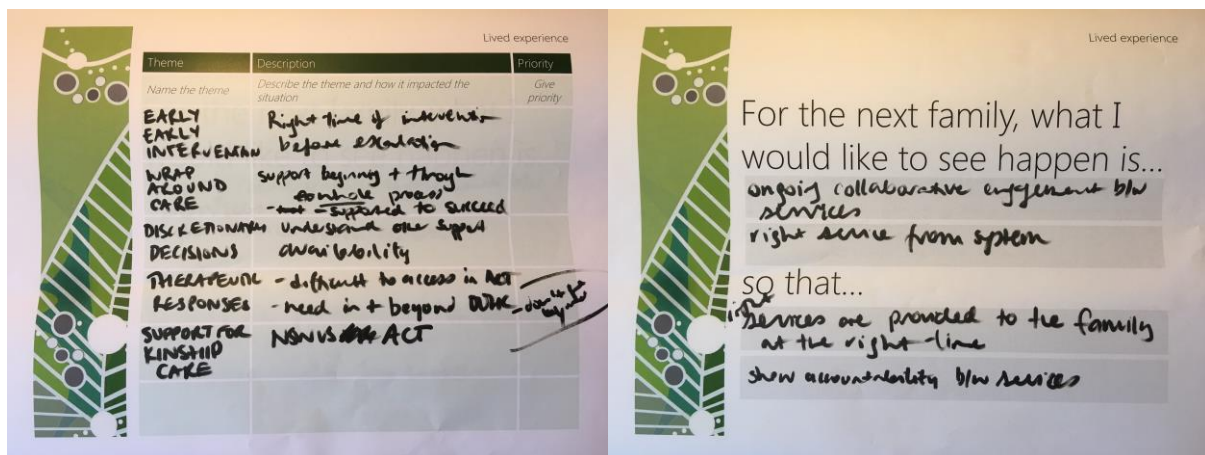
3.3.2 Group Two



Theme	Description
Trauma-informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traumatic situation for all involve • Different issues, different responses • Understanding the history and accumulation – not just this incident • Nurture and connection is important • Work with family is significant
Early childhood, early intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning from other jurisdictions about what is successful
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build capability and capacity • Appropriate level of resource and support to deliver • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander directed solutions
Cultural Care plans (language and interpretation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to be meaningful to child and family • Monitoring and review • Family connection is significant – need to change the name and language

“For the next family, what I would like to see happen is that they be assessed by someone who’s aware of their own bias, the family (extended) come to the table earlier in the processes, and that information is shared better, so all family is aware, where appropriate, so that it is a true child-focussed service and that directorates work together and not in “silos” so that children are the centre of the decision making for the future of our children.”

3.3.3 Group Three



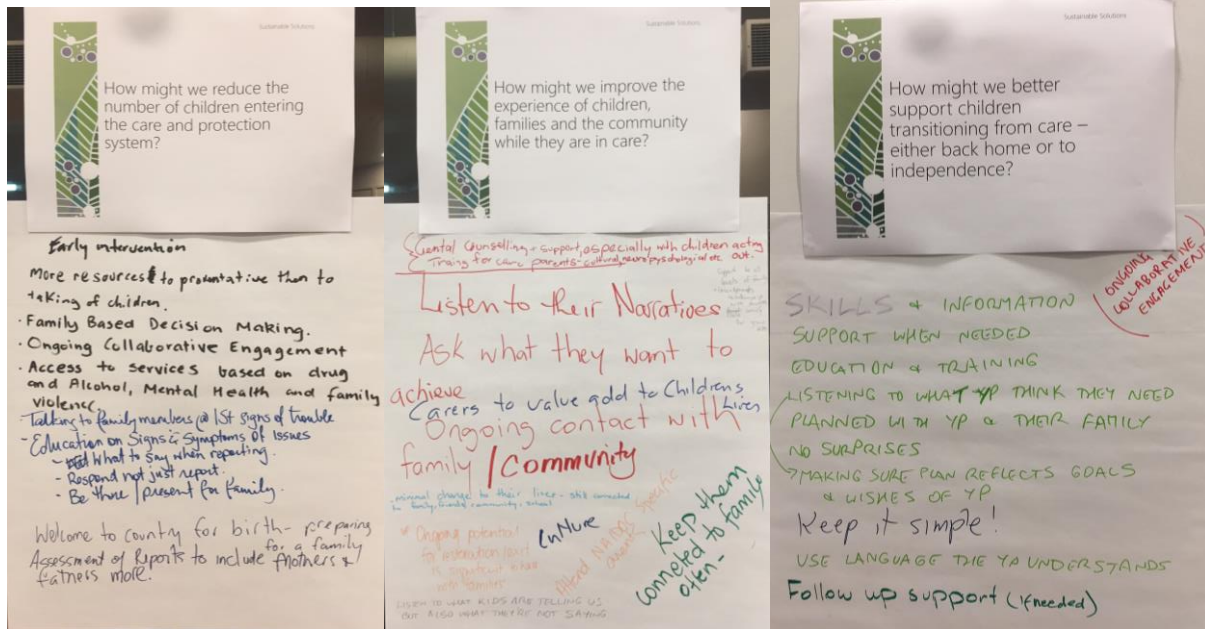
Theme	Description
Early, early intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right time of intervention before escalation
Wrap around care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support beginning and through whole process – families need to be supported to succeed (not expected to fail arbitrary thresholds)
Discretionary decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and have greater transparency as to what is available beyond basic child protection system
Therapeutic responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to access in ACT, need in, and beyond, out of home care
Support for kinship care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived different level of support between ACT and NSW – should be the same

“For the next family, what I would like to see happen is ongoing collaborative engagement between the family and services and for the right service from the system so that the right services are provide to the family at the right time and there is accountability between the services.”

3.4 CONSULTATION - SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

The final session of the consultation – we broke away from the groups and travelled around the room to contribute thoughts and information to the questions.

This information has been summarised and analysed in the recommendations.



How might we, as a community, prevent family violence and harm to our children?

Ongoing coll about engagement.

Shared responsibility

What is it? **mutual understanding**

Monitoring **Learnt Behavior**

Support Our Families **Learning from others**

the relationship programs **Lack of ATSI decision making**

Solution focus

unconscious bias

Encourage + Respect Family Diversity - Spirituality + Art & Cultural Conv

celebrate children & families

bring

Early work on prevention

not protecting into people

What are the most significant barriers to supporting children who have experienced family violence?

o Fear of being removed

o EARLY SUPPORT

o LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

o Lack of services for children

o Listening to children

o Talking " " "

↳ building resilience

↳ more info for children

Child friendly support - what fits the child

Understanding the impact of F.V.

Knowing what supports are available outside ATSI organisations

Access to services

What actions do you think we personally should be taking to protect our children from family violence?

- Children given mentors (community role models) volunteers

Work in Collaboration.

Putting children into safer environments

Promote services

this Safety is ∴ Prioritise

More skills work (ongoing) with children's parents (and children support)

Education for Parents + children + encouragement + support to put practical steps in place

Options - photo for P - linked @ the moment - often not available

Safe spaces - families sleeping in cars

Building Respectful Relationship skills ✓

Children wanting to reconnect with family

Calling out the violence - making perpetrators accountable! (community)

What specific programs of services need improvement so our children get better outcomes around the impacts and consequences of family violence in their life?

Resources - trauma therapy

Counseling

Education - School.

Culturally Gendered Support for kids

NEED Life skill programs

how to be a child (have fun in safe environment), parents to have to be trained

- Basic Parenting Courses.

- care that is trauma informed - healing in the day to day

- Keep it Simple around education of what FV is

- Career education + Housing

- parent ed. + training

4 KEY ISSUES

Over the course of the consultation, participants identified key themes; these were:

Child-centred	Together
<p>Need greater focus on the child, their needs, safety and learning.</p> <p>Seek to understand child and family beyond this episode or interaction – understand history and culture and its impact on families and support with appropriate early intervention services and practices.</p>	<p>These complex issues are not solved by one person or organisation – they are solved with collaboration and understanding.</p> <p>Seek to engage with the extended family early to support family-based support and changes. Extended family includes grandparents and other relatives who have close family relationships with the child/ren and family and who can provide insight into what is happening inside the family structure.</p> <p>Ensure that supports are in place throughout engagement, not simply at the end</p>
Self-determination and culture	Services and Education
<p>Culture provides more than identity – it provides strength and sanctuary. It needs to be not an additional plan or parallel consideration – it needs to be in the fabric of every interaction and engagement.</p>	<p>Accessibility and availability of trauma-informed services is low and there needs to be a better understanding of trauma to facilitate provision of appropriate services. Also, service should be available across mainstream and ACCO delivered services to facilitate choice and self-determination.</p>

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

ATSIEB considers child protection and family violence to be priority areas for our community. The community needs opportunities to heal and raise families safely and strong in cultural understanding and identity. These two areas form the basis of focusing on our family and community and support and present the greatest opportunity for early intervention to break the cycle on inter-generational trauma and separation.

The greatest area of need was the fact that no participant was able to identify a support program for family violence that was available to the community.

As a result of the consultation, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body has formulated the following recommendations:

1	Child Centred
1.1	Greater attention paid to impact on children and families in both child protection and domestic and family violence situations
1.2	Access to high-quality cultural training for child protection or family violence support workers
1.3	Increased availability and assistance from Cultural Services Team
1.4	Access to support before crisis point
1.5	Provide access to mentoring program for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to bring generations and heal inter-generational trauma
2	Self-determination and culture
2.1	All engagements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families need to be aware and respectful of culture.
2.2	Welcome to country at birth of child
2.3	Provide additional support for kinship carers to ensure they know their rights and responsibilities.
3	Together
3.1	Engagement of child, family and wider community is important - shared decision making
3.2	Family Group Conferencing pilot be extended in terms of resource and scope to accommodate more families and help prevent children entering the out-of-home care system with rigorous evaluation to ensure it is achieving the desired outcome of children staying with families safely.
3.3	Provide support throughout engagement with family – do not abandon during periods of change or required achievement of thresholds, ensure supports are around child and parents

4 Services and Education

- 4.1 Increase access to **early intervention programs** parenting support and education programs Providing more channels and services for support of families before they reach crisis. Early intervention is relevant to children, parenting, mental health, drug and alcohol and domestic violence.
-
- 4.2 All services should be delivered using a clinical and professional trauma-informed framework
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- 4.3 Map availability of service supports across the service system across both Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (for example Gugan Gulwan and Winnunga) and mainstream organisations and make information available on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strong Families Portal.
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- 4.4 Services should be available across mainstream and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (for example Gugan Gulwan and Winnunga) delivered services to facilitate choice and self-determination.
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- 4.5 Need greater education in the community on definitions of family violence and impact on children
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6 CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The consultation followed the following format:

Agenda	Presenter
Elected Body Introductory Brief	
Welcome and Elected Body introductions and acknowledgement of country	Katrina Fanning
Introduce topic and key areas	Katrina Fanning
Whole-of-Government Agreement and Annual Report outcomes	Katrina Fanning
Current situation & projects - Three-minute updates	
Current situation and statistics – be clear on number of children in kinship vs foster/institutional care	Mark Collis
Family Group Conferencing Pilot	Jodie Robinson
Child Family Centres programs - Growing Healthy Families at CFCs	Melanie Saballa
Family Safety programs	Jo Wood
Engagement and priority of the Review	Minister Stephen-Smith
Our Booris, Our Way Review into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in contact with the child protection system	Barb Causon
Lived Experience	
Share experiences with care and protection and domestic and family violence and understand stories and consequences for children and families	Facilitator
Sustainable Solutions	
Next time, what I would like to see happen...	Facilitator
Close	
Thanks and next steps, invitation for next consultation	Katrina Fanning