



MEDIA RELEASE

Four Corners Program Didn't Tell the Full Story

The Four Corners program on Monday 14 October raised major concerns about child protection services, specifically residential care. Did it tell the whole story? “No” says Ms Belinda Drew, CEO, Community Services Industry Alliance.

“Let me be clear the Community Services Industry Alliance does not in any way condone poor treatment or neglect of children in care. The issues raised in the program reflect multiple failings in the child protection system, some that are within the control of organisations and some that are not. If we are to address them, it will achieve nothing to focus on individual organisations, we need to focus on the system” said Ms Drew commenting on the programs spotlight on individual not-for-profit and for profit providers.

Providers are one part of the multi-layered and complex statutory child protections system. This system significantly influences the nature of services provided to children, young people and their families. “Successive inquiries into statutory child protection systems across multiple jurisdictions is evidence of this” said Ms Drew.

These systems are different in every state and territory. State Governments are the policy maker, funder and regulator and in some States, take on case management responsibility. The current system is rigid and inflexible and this is reflected in the contracts that services have with government agencies. Ms Drew said, “This affects placements, the type of services that can be provided and the relationship with the agency.”

“We applaud Four Corners highlighting the issue and advocating for the improved care of children and young people, public scrutiny is important. But the program did not go far enough in terms of articulating the complex, multi-jurisdictional nature of the response to children” said Ms Drew. There is no consistent national policy and funding approach to children in care in Australia. This must change for the sake of children, young people, their families and for those who seek to support them.

The program raised concerns about the cost of children in care giving examples of \$1million and hundreds of thousands of dollars. This needs to be explored further to understand the true cost of delivering services for children in care. What is government investing in – and what is the outcome for children in care? Through this analysis we can better target investment.

Ms Drew said “We should be shocked and appalled by what was reported. But we need to understand and focus on the inflexibility and restrictions of the current system to make any meaningful change. We can't continue to address these problems with band aid solutions and simple acts of blame”.

Ms Drew calls for a whole different approach to investing in child protection services. One that is less restrictive and allows individualised child centred care based on best practice within the industry. This is not a problem of knowing what to do or having new and innovative models to draw on. “Our industry knows a lot about what works and what doesn't work – we

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need to be able to get on with it and this will not happen without a different approach to investing in these services.”

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