

Dear Colleagues across the Community Services Industry

The Community Services Industry Alliance (CSIA) was established in 2014 by a foundation membership of community services organisations. We are here to advance the Community Services Industry and support organisations to contribute to better outcomes for people and their communities. Through our work, CSIA collaborates with Industry and Government partners to think deeply about the future, challenge and re-imagine approaches to investing, and create, test and implement evidence-based solutions for lasting change.

BACKGROUND

This year, the Director General of the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs has made a commitment to transition investment and care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system over to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations within the next ten years.

In full commitment to this vision, CSIA is working with our members and stakeholders to identify opportunities for Industry to support the transition.

CSIA acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are over-represented in the child protection system, and we understand that the best way to address this is by working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to determine culturally appropriate policy and practice approaches that achieve positive outcomes.

Alongside this, we also support the full implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, recognising the importance of connection to family, community, culture and Country in child and family welfare policy, legislation, and practice.

THE CHANGE

We know that more is needed than simply 'handing over' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the current child protection system to community-controlled organisations. This change needs to be much more ambitious and transformative. Led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, this pathway can be underpinned by a collective responsibility across community organisations, Government, and the broader community, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people at the heart of the process.

In practice, this means funding to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system will need to be transferred to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. At the same time, a system wide approach is needed for all organisations to increase their capacity and capability to improve responses to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, and their families.

OUR COMMITMENT

To date, we have talked of good intentions but often failed to step into the test of meaningful change. These past experiences have taught us that remaining comfortable in a state of good intentions is not enough. We must try harder. We must put our words into action.

To this end, CSIA has been engaging with our members and stakeholders to consider our collective and individual roles in facilitating this process. We have identified that building trust and relationships alongside 'real' action is critical to meaningful change, and that this will require:

- **Truth telling and reconciliation** – acknowledging past and present policies that continue to harm Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, their families, and communities. Recognising this truth, and the impact of the past, aligns with our commitment to supporting self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- **New thinking and new approaches** to services and supports led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their organisations, with (where appropriate) the support of organisations currently delivering these services.
- **Attention to the issues of readiness** across the system, including for organisations and Government, that form barriers to change occurring, and a commitment to dealing with challenges that arise along the way.

We are committed to walking alongside community-controlled organisations, to participating in the work required to achieve this change, as determined, and directed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Whatever that path may look like, and we recognise that we may not always get things right, we believe that the benefits of realising this change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people families and community far outweigh these challenges.

In the spirit of action, we are dedicated to playing our part in:

- **Working on being a better partner** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, organisations, and communities.
- **Establishing a clear roadmap for change** around which Government and Industry can coordinate our part in these efforts – including developing new models of care and systems for the transition of funding and services.
- **Investing in the capability and capacity** shifts required for our organisations to work differently, where we are led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We look forward to working with you all on this shared journey as we move forwards together.

Yours Sincerely

Belinda Drew
CEO
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SUPPORTED BY:

