

Child Protection Systems Royal Commission

Progress report

September 2019



Safe and well

Supporting families, protecting children



Government of
South Australia



Readers are asked to note that references in this report to Aboriginal children, families and communities refer to people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

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Minister foreword

The state government is now in the third year of its five-year commitment to report annually on progress made to respond to recommendations from the 2016 South Australian Child Protection Systems Royal Commission (the royal commission).

We have now fully implemented the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*, with phase two of implementation commencing on 22 October 2018. The Act completes a number of royal commission recommendations that call for legislative change. The new Act has laid the foundations for reform to ensure safety and quality of care for children and young people across our state. It gives children and young people a greater say in the decisions that affect their lives and prioritises early intervention, timely decision-making and permanency. It embeds increased rights for carers, including better information-sharing and clear pathways for carers to seek reviews of certain decisions.

Importantly, the Act affirms our commitment to ensuring Aboriginal children are connected to their family, culture and community. We recognise the significance of cultural identity as a protective factor for Aboriginal children and families. It has underpinned our efforts to implement all five elements of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, increase our Aboriginal employment and strengthen our partnerships with Aboriginal stakeholders and service providers. We have appointed the inaugural Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People and are better reflecting our Aboriginal stakeholders in policy design, service development and delivery.

To support vulnerable families earlier, we have evolved the work of the Early Intervention Research Directorate (EIRD). In late 2018, the state government established an Early Intervention Taskforce. The work of this taskforce has led to the establishment of the Community and Family Services division in the Department of Human Services. This division brings together a range of child and family services, an important first step in reforming the system to reduce the number children coming into care.

Our partnerships with the non-government sector are vital in delivering the right services to children and families. Recognising this, the Department of Human Services recently began a series of co-design workshops to engage our partners in shaping the services we need to better support vulnerable families. In addition, the Department for Child Protection started a refreshed dialogue with providers by holding an inaugural Industry Day in September 2018. With a goal to grow its workforce and broaden its skills base, the Department for Child Protection has expanded the range of qualifications for child protection roles.

Because of deliberate and concerted efforts this year, South Australia has experienced strong growth in family based care. This growth is supporting permanency and belonging for children in care.

Alongside the work responding to the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission, our state joined other jurisdictions in responding to and implementing recommendations made by the 2017 Commonwealth Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Together these two royal commissions have delivered more than 500 recommendations for the state government to respond to.

Our government is committed to honouring each of the recommendations accepted in the initial response to the royal commission, and will continue to progress these while working towards a more holistic approach to reform, one which takes a contemporary view of child protection as a whole-of-government system with collective responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

To address this, we have developed a whole-of-government strategy for child protection reform that will focus on key themes and system level

programs of work that bring recommendations together and consider the entirety of our system. The strategy is intended to provide an overarching framework across government and demonstrate how past learnings are informing changes throughout our child protection system.

This could not be possible without the royal commission. Through this progress report we reflect on the past year's efforts to give life to our reform agenda. As we enter the next phase of our journey, we refresh our priorities and align them with our new plan for supporting families and protecting children. A plan that will better recognise the broader, interconnected programs of our work to keep children and families safe and well.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sanderson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hon Rachel Sanderson MP
Minister for Child Protection

Introduction

In 2016, the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission released its final report, *The Life They Deserve*, detailing its findings from a comprehensive investigation into South Australia’s child protection system, including the policies, practices and structures in place for children and young people at risk of harm.

In 2017, the Final Report of the Commonwealth Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was released. It highlighted serious failings in the way institutions across Australia protect children and young people, and deal with reports of sexual abuse when they occur. Findings of both the Commonwealth and state royal commissions have reinforced the need for a system that is better equipped to protect children and young people from harm and provide targeted support to vulnerable families. Collectively, these two royal commissions have delivered 512 recommendations for the state government to implement.

Across the two reports, our implementation and reporting approach to date has largely focused on addressing each of these 512 recommendations. While our aim is to bring reporting for both royal commissions together in the future, this report focuses primarily on our progress to address the findings of the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission. Since the last annual report in 2018, we have completed an additional 88 recommendations from the state royal commission.

Status	Total
Completed	164
Implementing	67
Planning	24
Not yet commenced	1
Total	256

Moving forward, our aim is to consolidate our reporting against state and Commonwealth royal commissions. While we have made considerable progress, our goal is not to simply meet individual recommendations. We aspire to deliver on their intent and in so doing, deliver better outcomes for children and families now and into the future. To share our ambitions for protecting vulnerable children in South Australia, we have developed a new strategy of reform for the broader child protection system.

This strategy considers the entirety of the system and takes a thematic approach to programs of work. In doing this, we are furthering our commitment across government to create a child protection system that responds quickly and effectively to the diverse and complex needs of children and families in order to keep them safe and well. It outlines our extensive whole-of-government effort as part of a coordinated program across three focus areas: supporting families, protecting children in care, and investing in their futures. These focus areas will be underpinned by a strong system with quality and safeguarding at its core.

The three focus areas:

1. Supporting

We will provide earlier, intensive, targeted support to those families with multiple and complex needs, to reduce incidents of child abuse and neglect and prevent children entering the child protection system in the first place. The Child Protection Systems Royal Commission emphasised the need to build an evidence base and provide better coordinated services for families in need of support.

2. Protecting

We will protect children from experiencing any further harm when they come into care. The royal commission reinforced the critical importance of information sharing, involving children and young people and carers in decision-making and providing greater support to carers in their important role.

3. Investing

We will invest in children in care and in their transition from care to support them to lead productive lives as adults, and help to break intergenerational contact with the child protection system. The royal commission highlighted that children in care were experiencing poorer outcomes in adulthood - in health, education, employment and housing. It identified that greater support is needed for young people transitioning from care.

A grayscale photograph of a family walking away from the camera on a dirt path. A man in a dark jacket has his arm around a boy in a light-colored shirt. A woman in a dark top is on the left, and a young girl in a patterned dress is in the foreground. The image is overlaid with a large, semi-transparent pink shape that is a combination of a circle and a triangle. The word "Supporting" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font across the center of the pink shape.

Supporting



Supporting

The royal commission identified the need to grow our preventative and early intervention services to respond to children and families in need at the earliest opportunity. It also identified challenges for our record keeping and the importance of an electronic database that, instead of being an incident-based recording system, provides a complete picture of a child and their circumstances.

By delivering targeted support to vulnerable families, we will provide the best possible opportunities for children and young people to live safely with their families and avoid entry into the statutory child protection system.

Intensive support for families

In late 2018, the state government established a cross-government taskforce to lead the redesign of the state's child abuse and neglect early intervention and prevention system, with support from EIRD.

Based on the work of the taskforce, in March 2019 the EIRD System Reform Strategy was released, underpinning the development of a new Child and Family Support system inclusive of a number of programs from other government departments. The state government also announced the development of new Community and Family Service division which has been established within the Department of Human Services.

The Community and Family Services division consolidates Child and Family Assessment and Referral Networks (CFARNs), Child Wellbeing Practitioners, Family Practitioners and Strong Start services. The family-focused services help to coordinate case management and connect families to therapeutic services.

Other existing services that also form part of this new division include the Parenting and Family Support service and Community Development Coordinators who support community

engagement and development initiatives and improved outcomes for families within their communities.

These services employ over 200 people and deliver services to the value of approximately \$42 million, including \$15 million in non-government contracts. The services are intended to contribute to the development and implementation of initiatives to reduce the number of children entering the statutory child protection system.

In addition, the Community and Family Services division includes EIRD and Community Services. The division is responsible for recommissioning services following the co-design process that is currently underway for family preservation, targeted intensive support and other intensive non-government services that have functions relating to child abuse and neglect, early intervention and prevention.

Within this new system, we will intervene to provide the right type and intensity of supports, at the earliest possible time, in the places where children and families are living. Over time, we will increase the number of children able to be safely cared for in their home environment and decrease the number of children who need to enter statutory care.

Further information is detailed in the new EIRD System Reform Strategy and accompanying research report available at dhs.sa.gov.au/services/early-intervention-research-directorate

Alongside the intensive support services provided by the Department of Human Services, in June 2019 the state government announced \$1.6 million for the Department for Child Protection (DCP) to trial a new pilot, with the aim of helping more children and young people to remain safely with their families. This pilot focuses on family group conferencing, which is a facilitated, voluntary process led by family members to plan and make decisions that protect a child or young person at risk of removal. It is a critical step in ensuring everyone has the opportunity to be heard, including children and young people.

Enhancing the child safety pathway

The state government has continued to focus on improving how it receives, assesses and responds to notifications through the Child Safety Pathway, the front door to the child protection system and first point of contact for the community. The pathway is improving the way we manage child safety concerns and DCP's ability to refer more families to effective support services when they might otherwise have fallen through the gaps. Critical to this is the government's renewed commitment to preventing domestic, family and sexual violence in Australia, particularly in ensuring the safety of women and their children.

Responding to domestic and family violence

We know that families entering the child protection system often experience a broad and complex range of challenges, requiring coordinated supports and interventions. Recognising this, a new research project has been established to better understand how families with both domestic violence and child protection needs interact with and navigate services.

Researchers from EIRD and Flinders University will look at two collaborations already underway in Adelaide's South – the first between DCP and Kornar Winmil Yunti (KWY) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Services, and the second between DCP and Women's Safety Services SA. This is a valuable opportunity to test the strengths of our existing collaborations to develop more connected services for children and their families. The knowledge generated from this research will support and inform a new Child and Family Support System.

In March 2019, the state government released *Committed to Safety: A Framework for Addressing Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence*. The framework outlines how the state government will coordinate efforts to prevent and respond to domestic, family and sexual violence to improve the safety of all women and their children in South Australia. It is an important step in connecting the efforts across government to achieve a comprehensive, safety driven approach. It has a strong focus on providing coordinated and targeted support to specific population groups, such as young people, Aboriginal women and communities, and women and their children.

Better record keeping for information sharing

In September 2018, DCP received an externally commissioned review into the long-term viability of the Connected Client and Case Management System (C3MS). The objective of this review was to ensure that technology adequately supports child protection services now and into the future. The review identified that C3MS is not efficient in supporting the department's work.

A phased approach has been recommended to prepare for a longer-term transformation of C3MS, beginning with initiatives to address short term needs. DCP has begun the first phase of C3MS enhancement to scope opportunities and high level benefits of system transformation. This will increase the ability of our workforce to access key information, prevent duplication of data and support information sharing between agencies for more efficient and connected decision-making to keep children safe from harm.

Additional highlights:

- > Commenced an intensive family support program trial to ensure children remain safe from abuse and neglect, including one in Northern Adelaide and an Aboriginal-specific service in Western Adelaide.
- > Developed and implemented an Electronic Log Sheet (ELS) that DCP uses when recording notifications of abuse and neglect. This increases efficiency by pre-populating fields within C3MS.
- > Introduced the Common Approach within the Department for Education's Student Support Services. This is a solutions-focused and flexible assessment framework supporting staff to focus on strengths, place the child at the centre of the conversation, and consider all aspects of a family's circumstances.





Protecting



Protecting

Keeping children safe is enshrined in the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*, which acknowledges that every South Australian has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. When children cannot live safely in their homes, we must step in quickly and decisively to protect them from harm.

The royal commission identified a number of failings in the way we responded to notifications and how we undertook assessments leading to the arrival of children in care. When we need to intervene in a family, the Act compels us to do this with timeliness, informed decision-making and a greater emphasis on permanency, stability and family reunification where appropriate.

We recognise that in order to protect children, we not only need to deliver the right services, but these services must be delivered at the right time, and in partnership with carers who are supported properly to perform their vital role.

Working with children checks

On 1 July 2019, stronger, more transparent and effective screening laws came into effect under the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016*. The new laws mean that anyone working or volunteering with children must have a Working with Children Check (WWCC). The checks are valid for five years, transferable between jobs and align South Australia with new national standards.

These changes replace a number of different clearances, such as a child-related employment screening, and allow individuals to apply for a WWCC themselves, instead of the previous system where only an employer or volunteer organisation could initiate a screening request. The recent legislative amendments embed free volunteer screening checks for all South Australians into law, making it more accessible for organisations employing people who volunteer with children and young people.

Coordinated notification responses

In October 2018, the state government implemented the remaining provisions of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*. The Act provides greater scope for information sharing, allowing agencies to develop a more holistic understanding of a child or young person's needs and risk of harm, and to better coordinate appropriate services to support children, young people and their families including earlier supports and interventions. The Act requires government and non-government services to work in partnership to provide meaningful and connected support for families. In addition to an investigatory response from DCP, new provisions allow for the department to refer matters to 'State Authorities' for an alternative response that more appropriately addresses the presenting risk to a child or young person.

The Act also allows contracted government and non-government organisations, as a 'State Authority', to share information about a child or young person's safety and wellbeing to manage risks and better deliver services. Referring cases to other responders such as Child Wellbeing Practitioners and non-government organisations is an essential measure in reducing the number of notifications closed with no action, providing the most appropriate service response at the most appropriate time. This ensures DCP remains available to respond to the most serious and critical cases of abuse and neglect.

In March 2019, the Department for Health and Wellbeing (SA Health) began providing specialist services through the newly established Child Protection Service (CPS) at the Lyell McEwin Hospital. The Northern CPS is the third unit established in addition to services at Flinders Medical Centre and the Women's and Children's Hospital. The CPS unit is a non-statutory pathway that can respond to notifications of child abuse or neglect, with referrals made by DCP and South Australia Police. It provides specialist services to support timely expert assessment and therapeutic interventions. With Lyell McEwin as the second largest birthing hospital in South Australia, the new unit is appropriately positioned as the northern hub for health-led child protection services.

Growing family based care

In August 2018, DCP began a new approach to engaging carers and non-government service providers to strengthen the focus on family based care. The department has worked collaboratively with service providers and peak bodies to progress activity to develop a statewide foster care recruitment strategy, including solutions to help keep our current family based carers. South Australia has moved closer to the national rate of children in family based care and DCP has increased the number of placements by nearly 250 in the last year.

Recognising that family based care provides most children with the best environment to thrive, the department has recently launched a new online carer platform to promote the important and valued role that carers play, and provide information to support them in their caring role.

This has been detailed in DCP's *In Care Strategy*, which features bold and deliberate action across five priority areas, one of which is solely focused on growing family based care. The strategy deliberately changes the way we talk about the care we provide to children and young people who are unable to safely live with their parents. Continuing to talk about this as 'out-of-home care' would be out of step with aspirations to provide children with a sense of home and belonging. It recognises that the future success of the care system relies on its capacity to provide permanency and stability, as well as nurturing environments for children and young people.

In July 2018, Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers – SA Inc established a professional advocacy service for foster and kinship carers of children and young people under the

guardianship of the Chief Executive, DCP. This complements the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*, which strengthens the rights of carers to be involved in decision-making processes relating to the health, safety, wellbeing and welfare of a child or young person in their care. The Act also assists in our work to increase permanency and stability for children and young people by providing for Long Term Guardianship (Specified Person) orders.

Transforming non-family based care

In mid-2018, DCP undertook an audit of all children and young people in residential and commercial care. This audit has better informed placement matching and supported the development of a new model in DCP that delivers tailored placement and support packages for children and young people who enter care.

Our state is committed to ensuring Aboriginal children and young people in care build and maintain strong connections with their culture, identity, community and family. Getting it right for Aboriginal children and young people is a top priority for the government. DCP is focused on supporting growth in the number of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and the range of services they provide. A new Aboriginal-specific residential care service delivered by an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation was recently established and is now one of two services provided by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. Further work is underway to strengthen relationships between government and recognised community-controlled organisations to support the placement and care of Aboriginal children and young people.

This is part of DCP's contract and procurement reform program and is also a key piece of work in DCP's *In Care Strategy*. The strategy details our commitment to transform non-family based care into a therapeutic care setting that understands and heals trauma and supports children's development. It also aims to broaden the diversity of non-family based care options and reduce the overall proportion of children and young people in residential and commercial care.

Holistic assessment of health needs

Supporting the health and wellbeing of children and young people in care is essential in our practice and has been strengthened by the establishment of clinics for children in care at the Women's and Children's Hospital, Lyell McEwin Hospital and Flinders Medical Centre. The clinics

aim to provide a comprehensive, child-friendly, trauma-informed health intervention to improve the overall health and wellbeing of children and young people in care, and identify and respond to their physical, developmental, psychological and mental health needs. The clinics are operated by SA Health and provide comprehensive assessments to children and young people under guardianship.

It is now a requirement of the SA Health Standards that a preliminary health assessment be conducted for all children within 30 days of their placement under guardianship or custody of the Chief Executive, DCP. Following this, a comprehensive health and development assessment must be conducted within three months of the child or young person entering care. All assessments include a psychosocial component as well as a development screening, physical health assessment, immunisation check, medication review and a review of current social, emotional and mental health care needs.

Additional highlights:

- > Introduced Complex Case Review Meetings, guided by the Lead Psychiatric Director, for a multi-agency, integrated approach to assessment and service delivery for children with highly complex needs.
- > Improved the Child Abuse Report Line customer service experience for notifiers, including implementing call back features and decreasing the number of notifications being closed with no action.
- > Enhanced permanency planning and timely decision-making through the establishment of a Reunification Court pilot a collaboration between DCP and the Adelaide Youth Court.



A photograph of a family of four walking outdoors. From left to right: a woman with blonde hair in a floral dress, a woman with glasses in a black t-shirt with a white owl graphic, a man with a beard in a dark polo shirt, and a young girl in a grey t-shirt with a hot air balloon graphic. A large yellow diagonal shape is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the word 'Investing' in white text.

Investing



Investing

The royal commission identified that young people leaving care are more likely to experience challenges in education, health, life skills, housing and relationships. These young people often navigate challenges without the safety net offered by a traditional family structure.

We recognise that providing care for children and young people is about more than protecting them from harm and meeting their basic needs. We need to invest early in the development of young people in care, ensuring they participate meaningfully in decisions about their future.

A therapeutic approach to specialised needs

In December 2018, DCP announced the appointment of a Lead Psychiatric Director to help strengthen its approach to working with vulnerable children and families. This is a critical step in reshaping our service system. The position is part of the development of a therapeutic care model and strengthening learning and development approaches to promote excellence in practice.

Our government has strengthened its focus on the needs of children and young people in care with disabilities through the recruitment of a team of staff with disability expertise. These specialist disability experts work across the agency to help identify children and young people with a disability and ensure they access services that best support their needs. This includes supporting eligible children and young people in care to access a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plan that is appropriate to their specific needs and engaging with registered NDIS providers to deliver the specialist services they require. For children and young people in care, a 12-month

joint Interagency Therapeutic Needs Panel (ITNP) pilot project has been developed in partnership between SA Health and DCP. The pilot aims to provide high level therapeutic planning and case direction for children in care with therapeutic needs.

The ITNP service model enables a high-level, interagency response to children and young people under guardianship who are presenting with complex and specialist needs. The project started in February 2019 with the recruitment of a specialist social worker in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). A trial fortnightly panel was convened in April 2019 with regular fortnightly panels occurring thereafter. The ITNP project strengthens the partnership between SA Health and DCP to support high quality, therapeutic services to children and young people in care, and complements the recently established Complex Case Review Meetings (CCRM). These meetings bring together workers from DCP and the broader service system providing a mechanism for multi-agency input and accountability for the ongoing planning for children and young people in care with complex needs, providing an escalation pathway when required. The CCRM differs from the ITNP, which accepts routine referrals for children that are seen and assessed in care clinics as a referral, rather than escalation pathway. Together, the CCRM and ITNP provide holistic, therapeutic assessments and service delivery for children and young people with complex, therapeutic and specialised needs.

Improving educational outcomes

The Department for Education has implemented initiatives to build the capacity of schools and preschools to improve learning outcomes for children and young people in care. Professional development and training for trauma-informed practice in education is being delivered to education staff and school communities. Trauma-informed practice supports the development of learning environments that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of students experiencing trauma. The Department for Education has conducted two audits of children in care on reduced hours of attendance to ensure strategies are put in place to re-engage them in mainstream education.

In addition, the implementation of the One Plan project has commenced. The project focuses on replacing a range of different learning plans with a single learning plan for school children with high support needs, students with disability, Aboriginal children and young people, and children under guardianship.

The Department for Education has adopted a simpler approach to supporting mainstream preschool and school students with disability. The new Inclusive Education Support Program began at the start of 2019, with an expanded range of new criteria which aligns with the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability. Funding supports for children and students with complex social, emotional, behaviour and health care needs are now included in the program.

Supporting transition to adulthood and independence

The trend of young people staying at home with their family for longer and leaving home older is experienced across Australia. In January 2019, carer payments became available to family based carers of young people up to age 21. This supports young people to remain with their care family and engage in further education and training, providing them with greater opportunities as adults. The state government has continued providing funding to Relationships Australia for post-care services including counselling, case management and mentoring, and has commenced reshaping our model of supported independent living and DCP transition from care supports.

A funding agreement has also been initiated between DCP and the CREATE Foundation to provide all young people in care turning 16 and 17 years with a Go Your Own Way Kit to help in the development of their care plans and support them to transition independently and successfully. The kit includes a workbook for young people and their caseworker who, with support from carers or other significant people, can plan the young person's transition to independence. Due to the success of this project, funding has now been extended into the 2019-20 financial year. The state government has since engaged the CREATE Foundation to deliver a new, three-year pilot program, titled 'CREATE your Future.' The training program aims to connect young people aged 16 to 25 to each other to reduce social isolation, provide them with an opportunity to meaningfully consider and discuss their transition to independence, and empower them to acquire and build upon independent living skills. The program consists of a series of modules that take an experimental approach to learning, and encourages young people to explore their own knowledge, beliefs and experiences. To further support the transition of young people into adult life, the government launched the Transition to Adult Life Intensive Pilot Program (TALI) in August 2018. TALI is a two-year pilot program that is delivered by two leading community organisations in regional South Australia. Through the program, young people are able to access peer mentoring to address life skills and needs including housing, health, education, employment, finances and parenting, as well as connection to culture, country and community.

Enhancing cultural connection and identity

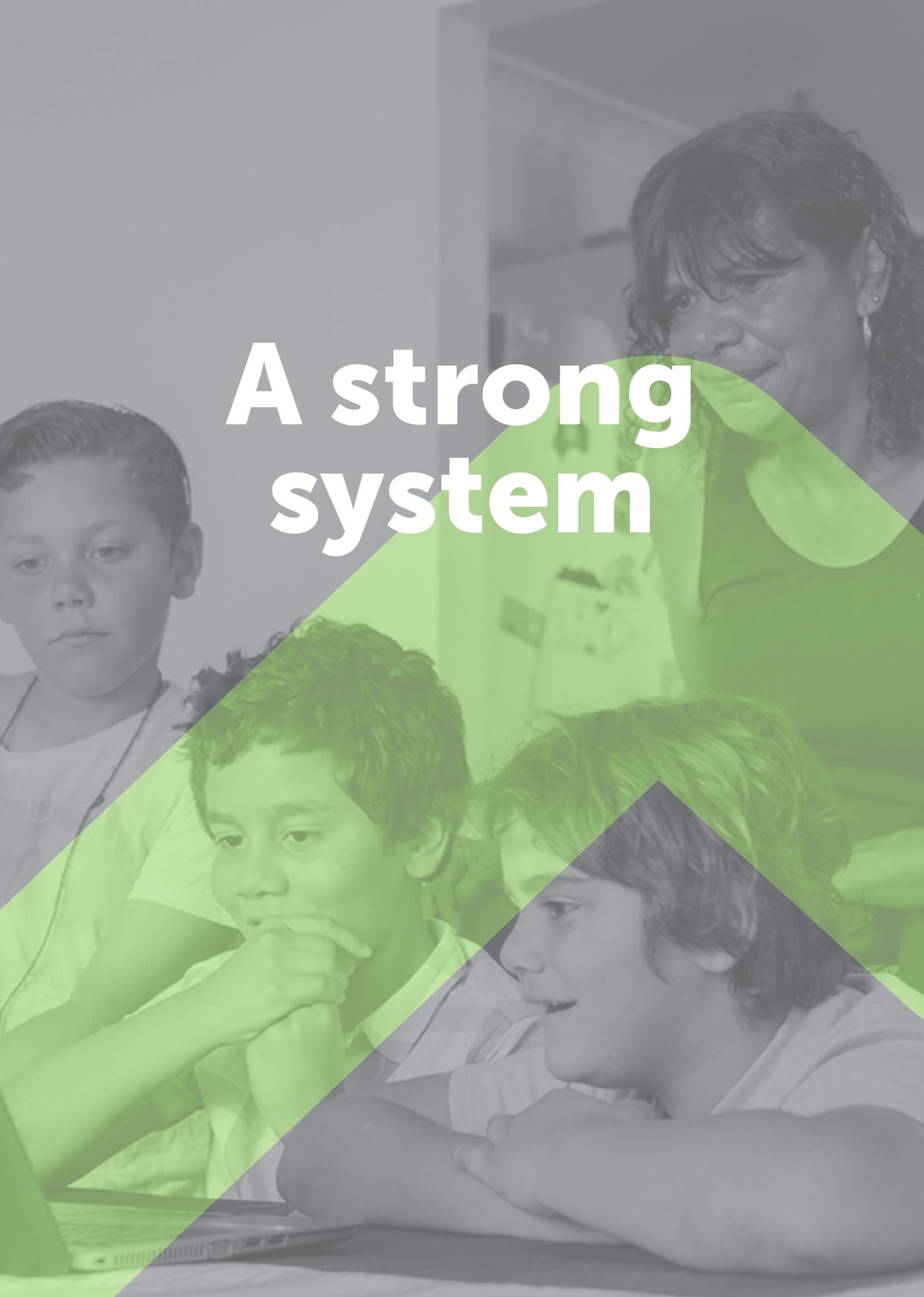
In December 2018, DCP implemented the Winangay Aboriginal Kinship Carer Assessment Tool to support assessments of carers for Aboriginal children and young people across South Australia. The Winangay assessment tool is culturally appropriate, strength-based and developed on a strong foundation of Australian and international research. It was created to assess and support new and existing kinship carers. Through a series of interviews, it identifies carer strengths, concerns and unmet needs.

To continue our strong commitment to ensuring better outcomes for Aboriginal children in kinship care, DCP is working with Winangay to extend the tool to temporary placement assessments. DCP has since implemented a range of other practice tools, including the Aboriginal Cultural Identity Support Tool and mandated the Aboriginal Cultural Footprint program for all DCP staff as a step towards embedding culturally accountable practices when engaging Aboriginal children and families.

Additional highlights:

- > Launched the Sortli (Sort out your life) free mobile phone application to connect young people with information about services and entitlements as they transition to adulthood.
- > Increased the proportion of children and young people with a current documented and approved case plan from 53.4% in June 2018 to 88.9% in June 2019.
- > Established the Lead Practitioner and Lead Aboriginal Practitioner roles in DCP to help design a new practice approach and strategically align its clinical governance frameworks.





A strong system



A strong system

Our efforts to support children and young people across the child protection continuum are underpinned by a system built on quality and safety. Although the royal commission's enquiries focused substantially on the reforms needed within the statutory child protection system, the need to improve safety, collaboration and transparency across the broader system was also a key theme.

We are committed to supporting our workforce to strive for excellence, engage better with our partners and carers, and embed principles and practice that promote children's safety, empowerment and voice.

Growing a skilled and stable workforce

DCP changed its recruitment processes in the second half of 2018. By accepting an expanded range of qualifications for child protection worker roles, the state government aims to reduce vacancies and improve outcomes for children and young people. Employees in case manager roles can now hold degree level qualifications in a broader range of relevant disciplines in addition to social work, such as health and human services. This approach is in line with recruitment practices in other jurisdictions and is sustained by the training and support offered to new employees in the department.

In December 2018, the state government released the first Aboriginal Affairs Action Plan to deliver positive and practical on-the-ground outcomes through 32 specific activities over the next two years. The action plan is focused on creating opportunities for Aboriginal employment across South Australia.

DCP also recently released its internal Aboriginal Action Plan, which sets out a range of actions that the department will take to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children in care. The

action plan acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle as a guiding framework for action, and commits to active efforts across five core elements – Prevention, Partnership, Placement, Participation and Connection, with Identification as a precursor to implementation of the Principle.

The DCP Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2019-2022 supports this action plan. The department is a leader in growing Aboriginal employment as a vital part of its diverse and talented workforce. In March 2019, Aboriginal child protection staff came together for the annual Statewide Aboriginal Network forum. The two-day workshop was a unique opportunity for Aboriginal staff across DCP to discuss ways of improving practices and service delivery for Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities.

After careful deliberation, DCP has decided to move away from Solution Based Casework (SBC) and to develop an internally designed approach to best meet the needs of South Australian children, young people and families. The practice approach will be guided by the report *'Assessing the Quality and Comprehensiveness of Child Protection Frameworks'* from the Australian Centre for Child Protection, released in 2018. It will reflect current research, theories and other knowledge, and best practice. This approach will also strive to integrate DCP's current tools and guidance, and will include new supports for practice where gaps are identified. The approach will incorporate reflective and cultural supervision, workforce training and professional development, trauma-informed practice and cultural accountability.

Enhancing quality and safeguarding

In June 2019, the SA Ombudsman delivered its report following an investigation into the tragic deaths of a mother and her two children in 2016. In direct response to the recommendations made by the Ombudsman, DCP executed an authorisation under the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* that provides for the disclosure of information in accordance with the Information Sharing Guidelines for Promoting Safety and Wellbeing (ISG). The authorisation enables DCP employees to divulge information where it is necessary to protect a person from serious risk of harm for the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and their families.

In October 2018, DCP implemented new provisions under the Act requiring any person employed in a children's residential facility established or licensed by DCP to undergo a psychological assessment. All residential facilities, including those delivered by the department, must comply with the child safe environments requirements under the Act. It also strengthens South Australia's licensing scheme for residential facilities that are not directly delivered by the department. DCP has started regular performance data analysis with its regional offices and is now working to establish a performance framework and develop measures to benchmark standards and ensure consistency across residential care facilities.

DCP has also begun work to develop an integrated incident management system bringing together critical information including care concerns, adverse events, information from staff, and complaints made by children and young people. The new system will support informed decision-making relating to staff conduct and the safety of children.

A multi-agency integrated data project

The state government is trialling a pilot project to facilitate better information sharing between agencies and provide frontline workers and strategic decision makers with a fuller picture of South Australia's vulnerable children and their families. The project, led by the Office for Data Analytics, pioneers a multi-agency approach to sharing data under the *Public Sector (Data Sharing) Act 2016*.

Once operational, it will provide a near real-time dashboard to DCP to inform at strategic and operational levels. The dashboard will also provide

analytic and data support to the work of the new Community and Family Services division in the Department of Human Services and will build the state government's capacity to collaborate on complex child protection issues. Importantly, it highlights the use of data as a valuable public resource to improve the delivery of child focused and needs-based services, programs and policies.

Partnering together for better outcomes

In September 2018, DCP hosted its inaugural Industry Day. This event brought together representatives from across government, peak bodies and non-government organisations with 135 attendees representing 63 organisations. The Industry Day is just one example of how the state government is supporting industry partnerships to build a culture of cooperation and collaboration. In addition, DCP has held six sector briefing events to support care providers during the implementation of procurement and contract reform activities.

These events will continue to inform and support providers through change, ensuring the state government can best meet the needs of children and young people in care. Changes are focused on increasing family based placements and reviewing key service models such as disability, Aboriginal practice and independent living. Contract reform will help ensure DCP's contracts can adapt, evolve and align to the identified models of care and departmental strategies.

To ensure DCP service providers are supported throughout contract reform, dedicated engagement mechanisms have been established to provide key messages, updates on reform activities, support information sharing and to encourage feedback. In December 2018, DCP launched a service provider section on its public facing website, bringing together a range of useful information, resources and event details for service providers and the broader child protection sector. The section details previous and upcoming briefing and procurement events, provides feedback and consultation channels, and includes helpful resources such as contract guidelines and service specifications.

To further communicate reform decisions and news, DCP distributes a regular e-newsletter to care providers, advocates, peak bodies, academics and the broader care sector on relevant, reform-focused news involving DCP.

Governance and accountability

The Child Protection Reform Portfolio Management Board (PMB) was originally established in 2017 to oversee the implementation of recommendations in response to the Royal Commission. PMB meets monthly and includes chief executives and senior executives from government agencies responsible for leading reform. The DCP Chief Executive chairs PMB. In light of the new consolidated approach to child protection reform, PMB has diversified its role to provide strategic direction and oversight of the whole-of-government strategy. This will bring together numerous royal commissions and inquiries, including the original focus of the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission. PMB enables essential governance and communication channels to ensure effective collaboration

and decision-making as the state government develops a contemporary child protection system.

In addition to PMB, the Children and Families Secretaries (CAFS) was established in 2014 to oversee key national priority areas for children and families through Community Services Ministers. DCP is the current secretariat for the CAFS, which gives broad oversight of identified national priorities. CAFS provides jurisdictions with a platform to collaborate on innovative policy approaches to child and family issues. CAFS membership comprises the heads of departments responsible for child protection across Australia. The chair rotates bi-annually across each jurisdiction, with the DCP Chief Executive currently chairing CAFS until the end of the 2020 financial year.

Through participating in the Australia-wide implementation of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 Fourth Action Plan, South Australia is building stronger relationships with partner jurisdictions and collaborative action to achieve better outcomes for children and young people.

Additional highlights:

- > Enabled frontline child protection staff to be mobile in their work through the progressive roll out of 700 laptops with secure C3MS connectivity to all DCP office locations across South Australia.
- > Initiated the Digital Workspace Program to provide DCP with a modern, mobile and user-centric platform for managing information, workflows, reporting and other activities.
- > Began engagement with children and young people to support the co-design of a DCP Child and Youth Engagement Strategy that supports their voice in decision-making.



Next steps

As our government moves towards a consolidated reform approach, we are transforming our learnings from the royal commissions into a strategy for our diverse and interconnected programs of work occurring across government.

We will continue to meet the intent of the royal commission's recommendations and ensure our future initiatives build on our achievements. As we enter the next chapter of our reform journey, we have focused our priorities under four areas essential in delivering a connected and sustainable child protection system.

The 2019 Annual Report for the Commonwealth royal commission will be presented in a similar structure and, in future years, we look forward to sharing our collective progress in a single annual report. Going forward we will focus on:

Supporting

- > Better understanding how all children and young people in South Australia are developing and progressing over time.
- > Recognising the multiple, complex challenges that some families experience and identifying families, particularly young parents, who would benefit from early support.
- > Intervening earlier and providing targeted intensive support services in the places where children and families are living based on predictive risk factors.
- > Supporting families to safely care for their children at home and reducing the need for children and young people to come into care.

Protecting

- > Building workforce capacity to manage risk and enhance the non-statutory pathways for mandatory reporters to act on child wellbeing concerns.
- > Protecting children and young people from further harm when in care.
- > Investing in family group conferencing and embedding family-led decision-making to support children to be reunified with their families.
- > Delivering a care model that prioritises opportunities for children and young people

to reside in family based care and develop a sense of permanence and belonging to help heal past trauma.

- > Using predictive analytics, evidence and practice wisdom to ensure our resources are directed to deliver the most benefit and meet need.

Investing

- > Providing support that meets the diverse and specialised needs of children and young people in care.
- > Including trauma-responsive and development-focused services.
- > Improving school attendance and the educational performance of children in care.
- > Engaging young people in planning their future, preparing them as well rounded adults able to access further education and employment.

A strong system

- > Investing in the collection and use of data to inform planning and service design.
- > Ensuring resources are directed towards evidence-based services designed for specific populations that are integrated and centrally managed.
- > Strategically commissioning services to stimulate market diversity and meet the needs of children in care.
- > Building a trauma-responsive carer population and government and non-government workforce.
- > Embedding a restorative and relational practice approach.
- > Supporting DCP staff to use professional judgement and clinical expertise.
- > Enhancing systems and structures to embed stronger safeguarding.