

Families and Children Activity: Children, Youth and Parenting Programs Discussion Paper

Summary of yourtown's advocacy submission 2025



What is it about?

The Australian Government Department of Social Services has developed a discussion paper detailing the findings of an internal review of its Families and Children (FaC) Activity programs. The FaC Activity is a collection of funded services for families, including vulnerable or at-risk families. The discussion paper explores the benefits of the FaC programs for families, youth and children, as well as the opportunities and challenges in relation to the service provision and program implementation.

Why is it important?

The Australian Government is investing more than \$215 million per year in the FaC Activity programs to support more than 270,000 children and parents each year. These programs aim to provide prevention and early intervention supports to help children's wellbeing and development, family functioning, and children's mental health. The findings of the review and consultation may influence the direction of the FaC Activity.

Some of yourtown's key messages:

1. Increasing awareness and help-seeking

FaC Activity programs need the funding and flexibility to promote their services and help-seeking behaviour so that the community feel safe accessing support while in the early intervention stage and before symptoms increase. This will allow programs to target schools, community hubs, etc, so that children, young people and families are aware of available supports. Promotion activities can provide information on issues (e.g. mental health) that are surrounded by stigma. This in turn can support greater literacy about the early signs of issues and promote help seeking at the early intervention stage.

2. Allowing services to provide support early in the pathway of a problem

The definition of early intervention should allow services to provide support early in the pathway of a problem and should be shaped by community needs and the current service structure to minimise the risk of gaps in service structure and duplication of services. Restricting the definition of early intervention to the early childhood development stage of 0-5 years would leave a gap in services for families whose children are older than five years of age and are showing initial signs of problems and/or are at risk of problems. This cohort of children would be at risk of developing more severe issues if they do not have options for early intervention support.

3. Engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and CALD families in the ways they prefer

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) families may feel vulnerable around new services. DSS should fund services that can demonstrate cultural awareness of and sensitivities towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CALD communities and families by using different methods, including digital technology, to meet and engage with these communities and families in the settings and modes they prefer. The Data Exchange (DEX) requirements should be adjusted so that the information collected from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CALD families is less intrusive and more culturally appropriate.

4. Strengthening the community sector

The community sector invests in a range of organisation support systems to ensure quality services are supported, delivered safely, and have the capacity and resources to provide outcomes for communities. Grants need to reflect the true costs and challenges in operating programs and services, particularly for costs associated with technology, compliance, safeguarding, evaluation, co-design, administration, and time required to build trust and relationships with the community and clients from vulnerable cohorts.



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