

Terms of Reference

Alternative Care Arrangements Taskforce

Purpose

The Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) uses alternative care arrangements, such as serviced apartments, hotels and motel accommodation as a last resort option, in emergency situations. It is recognised that these care arrangements do not provide children and young people (CYP) with the permanency they require. The placement of CYP in these alternative care arrangements has steadily risen over time. Further analysis is required to better understand the needs, underlying drivers and systemic issues that lead to CYP being placed in these arrangements.

The Alternative Care Arrangements Taskforce (ACAT) has been established to identify and implement specific and targeted short, medium and long-term strategies and initiatives to create permanency and improve outcomes for CYP in alternative care arrangements that will:

- increase transitions to more suitable and permanent homes;
- reduce the duration of these arrangements;
- prevent entries into these arrangements.

Objectives

The ACAT objectives are to:

- a) identify strategic or complex issues and provide recommendations on solutions for underlying barriers across the service sector and within FACS that result in CYP entering and remaining in alternative care arrangements
- b) develop operational solutions to transition CYP to more suitable and permanent homes
- c) oversee and coordinate the progress of all initiatives designed to address the use of alternative accommodation arrangements for CYP
- d) apply themes and findings from the Office of the Senior Practitioner from reviews undertaken in relation to CYP in alternative arrangements to improve outcomes
- e) develop systems to increase oversight and visibility of CYP case managed by the non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector in alternative care arrangements
- f) standardise oversight mechanisms within Districts and NGOs to monitor and report on CYP in alternative accommodation arrangements
- g) standardise data collection, recording and storage requirements for information held across multiple FACS systems relating to CYP in alternative accommodation arrangements, including financial data
- h) ensure proactive linkages are made between FACS directorates, projects and reforms, such as the Permanency Support Program, Out-of-home Care (OOHC) Recommissioning, Their Futures Matter and Aboriginal service reform initiatives
- i) identify effective systems that limit or prevent the use of alternative accommodation arrangements and/or increase transition of CYP to permanent homes
- j) identify risks and issues and provide advice on mitigation strategies
- k) Prepare a final report that provides a clear way forward for the supported transition of CYP from alternative accommodation arrangements and reduced reliance on the use of these arrangements in future

Governance

Membership

1. Executive Director, Child and Family, Commissioning (Chair)
2. Director, Better OOHC Outcomes, Child and Family, Commissioning
3. Director, Design and Stewardship, Child and Family, Commissioning
4. Director, Implementation and Performance, Child and Family, Commissioning
5. Director, Statewide Contracts, Partnerships, Commissioning
6. Manager, Aboriginal Outcomes, Child and Family, Commissioning
7. Director, Metro Intensive Support Services /Central Access Unit, Statewide Services
8. Director, Practice Quality, Office of the Senior Practitioner
9. Director Practice Support Western Cluster, Office of the Senior Practitioner
10. Director, Cross Cluster Operations and Business Support, Office of the Deputy Secretary, Operations Executive (Northern, Southern and Western Clusters)
11. Director, Community Services, Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains Districts
12. Director, Commissioning and Planning, Hunter, New England and Central Coast Districts
13. Executive District Director, South Eastern, Northern and Sydney Districts
14. Director Adoptions and Permanency Services

Other representatives to be invited to Working Group meetings as required.

Advisors

The Taskforce will seek support and advice from representatives from ChildStory, the Office of the Children's Guardian and Ernst and Young as and when required. Consultation with other subject matter experts will be sought on approval of the Taskforce.

Secretariat

Secretariat support will be provided by Child and Family, Commissioning. Resources from other divisions may also be drawn on to support the work of the Taskforce.

Meetings

The Taskforce will meet fortnightly for 1.5 hours, or as required. Taskforce members will attend each meeting in person with telephone conferencing made available for members who are unable to attend in person. Where Taskforce members are unable to participate in a meeting, a suitable delegate will be identified to attend in their place.

Review

The role of the Working Group will be reviewed in three (3) months or as required.

Reporting Arrangements

The Taskforce will report to the Minister's Office weekly and the Deputy Secretary, Commissioning fortnightly on the progress of strategies and initiatives.