COMMUNIQUE #1

The Steering Committee for the Our Booris, Our Way review was formally established in January 2018. This was following two co-design workshops in November and December 2017 to establish the committee, membership, governance and terms of reference for the review.

The Steering Committee has met formally at two meetings in February and March 2018.

At the first Steering Committee meeting on February 12, 2018 the foundations of the review including scope, governance and the methodology were discussed.

At the second meeting, the Steering Committee invited SNAICC - National Voice for Our Children is the national non-governmental peak body representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to present. SNAICC representative and Manager of Social Policy and Research, Mr John Burton presented on the development of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principles and its five elements.

1. **Prevention** - Each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child has the right to be brought up within their own family and community.

2. **Partnership** - The participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives, external to the statutory agency, is required in all child protection decision making, including intake, assessment, intervention, placement and care including judicial decision-making processes.

3. **Placement** - Placement of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child in out of home care is prioritised according to a formal hierarchy that prioritises kinship care.

4. **Participation** - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, parents and family members are entitled to participate in all child protection decisions affecting them regarding intervention, placement and care, including judicial decisions.

5. **Connection** - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care are supported to maintain connection to their family, community and culture, especially children placed with non-Indigenous carers.

Mr Burton also raised areas where the ACT appears to be behind other states and territories in the formal recognition of the principles through legislation and formal application within child protection processes.

Formal elements of the Steering Committee governance were also discussed including the terms of reference, methodology and risk register.

The Steering Committee then invited members of the Child and Youth Protection Services team to present on the formal process by which reports are made and how assessments and appraisals are conducted.

**Next Meeting**

At the next meeting, the Steering Committee has invited both Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith and the Director-General of Community Services Directorate, Michael De’Ath to engage with the Steering Committee.
What will be reviewed?

The review will analyse the circumstances for the approximately 350 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children currently engaging with the child protection system to understand their experience and evaluate whether the SNAICC Aboriginal Child Placement Principles of prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection have been followed and upheld.

The review will also look at systemic issues and make recommendations on how to address these.

What is the outcome of the review?

The Steering Committee is committed to finding ways to reduce the number of children entering care, improving their experience if they are in care and increasing opportunities to exit care through restoration to their families.

How did the review come about?

The Family Matters report released in 2017 found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the ACT were twelve times more likely to be in out-of-home care than other cohorts of children.

In June 2017, the ACT government announced a review into the high numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in contact with the child protection system.

The review will be guided by a wholly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Steering Committee and will be conducted in accordance with the principles of self-determination.

Who is on the Steering Committee?

The Steering Committee members are as follows:

- Barbara Causon – Chair
- Alana Harris- Winnunga Nimmityjah
- Robyn Martin – Beryl Women Inc
- Leo Nickels – Aboriginal Legal Service
- Peter Williams – Gugan Gulwan
- Sharon Williams - Carer
- Nat Brown - Deputy Chair
- Caroline Hughes – ATSIEB
- Jo Chivers - ATSIEB

The Steering Committee members hold a diverse set of capabilities and lived experience in child protection and related areas like children and women’s services, youth justice, legal support, human rights and service delivery.

How can you contribute to the Review?

The Steering Committee is keen to ensure that individuals, families or organisations who wish to share their experience with the child protection system feel empowered to do so. The committee are currently establishing opportunities and channels for communication directly with the community.

Contact details

In the meantime, if you wish to reach out and speak with the Committee, please email:

ACTreview@act.gov.au

This email address is monitored only by the review team to keep your information private and confidential.