



## What are the key areas for action?

Rapid Response will provide for:

- Prioritised access to government services.
- Collaborative case management, care planning and review processes that are inclusive of the views of carers, children and young people and their families, professionals and service providers.
- Strengthened service system capacity to provide quality and timely psychological, developmental, health and educational assessments.
- Information sharing practices to support joint assessment and planning.
- A mechanism for achieving positive outcomes for children and young people in out-of-home care, including that they:
  - live safely in stable care;
  - have strong physical, social and mental health;
  - attend, participate and achieve in quality education; and
  - leave care equipped with the resources to live productive lives.

## Endorsement

The following agencies have endorsed<sup>1</sup> and support the implementation of the Rapid Response framework in Western Australia:

- Department of Communities
- Department of Education
- WA Health
- Department of Justice
- Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
- Department of Training and Workforce Development
- Mental Health Commission
- Western Australia Police

<sup>1</sup> In 2009, State Government agencies represented on the then Child Safety Directors' Group committed to implementing Rapid Response in Western Australia.

# Rapid Response

Prioritising services for children and young people in care





## Message from the Minister

Children and young people who enter care are often exposed, through no fault of their own, to a range of complex issues and trauma.

The State Government is committed to ensuring that when a child enters care, they are provided with the support, safety and services that they require to address these setbacks.

Rapid Response is an important part of this commitment. The framework ensures that a range of government agencies – not just the Department of Communities – contribute to supporting children in care by providing them with priority access to the services that they require.

By working together across Government, this framework goes a long way to ensuring that the State Government as a whole, is committed to enhancing the lives of some of our most vulnerable citizens.

Simone McGurk MLA

**Minister for Child Protection**

## Whose responsibility is it to protect children?

Protecting children is everyone's responsibility. Parents, communities, government and business all have a role to play. A unified approach is needed to recognise that the protection of children is not simply a matter for statutory child protection bodies (National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020).

Nationally and internationally, it is recognised that children who require protection and are taken into care are a more vulnerable group and may experience higher levels of disadvantage across a range of areas.

## What is Rapid Response?

Rapid Response is a Cabinet endorsed across-government framework to help address specific and complex health, psychological, housing, educational and employment needs. The target groups include children and young people who are currently in the care of the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Communities (Communities) and care leavers until they reach 25 years of age.

## Why do we need Rapid Response?

In Western Australia, the number of children coming into care as a result of abuse and/or neglect has more than doubled in the last 10 years, and the needs of these children are now more complex and challenging. Additionally, Aboriginal children now represent the majority of children in care.

Rapid Response supports a proactive approach to service provision before issues become entrenched. Many services provided to children and young people in care and care leavers are not adequately meeting their needs. They often have difficulty in accessing health, housing, education, social and employment services. These children and young people require a high level of priority access to such services, along with the development of targeted services.

To meet and overcome these challenges, Communities is committed to implementing reforms under the Building a Better Future: Out-of-Home Care Reforms in Western Australia to better meet the needs of children and young people in the care system. Central to this is working in partnership with the community services sector and other government agencies. It is only with our shared efforts that these vulnerable children will truly have improved life outcomes.

## What are the needs of young people who have been in care?

Young people who are leaving care, in particular those who have had multiple placements (for a variety of reasons), also benefit from priority access to appropriate services. Many young people experience poorer outcomes including:

- inadequate housing or homelessness;
- poorer educational outcomes (for example, they are less likely to complete Year 12);
- long term unemployment;
- difficulties with life skills (such as budgeting, self-care and nutrition);
- mental health problems; and/or
- drug and alcohol issues.

