

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES FORUM

COMMUNIQUE

7 December 2022 Quarterly Meeting

As a key Government Forum and through a shared understanding of emerging issues and trends, the Forum 2020 – 2022 has provided timely advice and collaboratively contributed to shaping and progressing a number of broader policy and reform initiatives.

At the 7 December final quarterly meeting of the Forum, the Forum received updates from the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations Working Group on its work to progress the priorities of the Forum and invited guests to present on specific topics of interest to the Forum.

The Co-Chairs thanked members for the opportunity over the last few months to meet with each of them individually to discuss their views and feedback on the Forum, on what has worked well; what were some of the challenges and learnings; and what were some of the areas that could be improved to increase the effectiveness of the Forum. Members overall reiterated their commitment and support of the Forum and its intent, and the relationships being built or enhanced between members. In particular members indicated that the Forum is a unique opportunity to tackle complex challenges that can only be addressed with the input and capability of both sectors. Members expressed their desire to help set the agenda and to bring to the Forum contemporary challenges.

The **National Principles for Child Safe Organisations Working Group** provided an update on its program of work, noting the ongoing development of a Child Safe Code of Conduct template that can be adapted by any state or local government agency, community sector service provider, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation, or private industry. Consultation is underway and broad and ongoing communications will be an area of focus. Updates were provided on the Child Safe Organisations campaign (campaign) and Child Safe Knowledge Hub. To assist in identifying further examples of implementation of the National Principles and building the Hub, the Working Group co-chairs asked members to consider the work occurring in their own agencies to implement the National Principles and to present on this work at a next Working Group meeting. During Children's Week, a range of child safe resources and information were launched to support organisations on an ongoing basis.

The **Department of Finance** provided an update on the development and implementation of the Outcomes Measurement Framework and the State Commissioning Strategy. The Department of Finance is leading the implementation of the Framework in consultation with government agencies and the community services sector. Government agencies are responsible for integrating the Framework into their community services commissioning and service delivery management. The Department of Finance will work closely with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (Office of Digital Government), as the coordinating agency, to investigate options for data sharing in delivering against this priority. The State Commissioning Strategy Implementation Plan will ensure alignment with and support the prioritisation of Aboriginal empowerment in alignment with the commitments made under the Closing the Gap National Agreement and Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy. The Forum noted other progress as part of the implementation of the State Commissioning Strategy, including the development of the Agency Commissioning Plan Framework which will further support agencies in developing their Agency Commissioning Plans.

There was considerable discussion by the Forum on another important topic of the Student Wellbeing and Care Taskforce being given priority by the **Department of Education**. Members noted the commencement of comprehensive consultation by the Department of Education to inform implementation of the Taskforce's goals. Consultation with school staff and families has also occurred in the 8 Education regions throughout WA. The Student Wellbeing and Care Taskforce will

help to build on and strengthen supports for student wellbeing, including better connecting and coordinating supports and improving performance data and information. The Taskforce aims to set clear expectations for, and embed effective approaches to, student wellbeing and care across the Western Australia public school system. Members offered their experience and networks to assist and contribute to the work of the Taskforce and ultimately improved outcomes for children.

The Honourable Simone McGurk, Minister for Child Protection; Women's Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services, also attended the final meeting for 2022 to thank and address the Forum on her vision and direction for the Forum beyond its term ending on 31 December 2022.

Minister McGurk reflected on the important role and work of the Forum since the commencement of the term from January 2020. While the onset of COVID-19 in 2020 brought its share of challenges it also led to important opportunities for the Forum to make a significant contribution to the State's recovery efforts. The Minister thanked members for their flexibility since 2020 and for its valued contributions and work to achieve and progress the assigned priorities of the Forum during the last three years amidst the challenges of the pandemic.

The Minister particularly acknowledged and recognised the Forum's valued work to inform and help shape important WA Government priorities and initiatives, including the *All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030*, supporting the Department of Health in the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccinations to vulnerable cohorts and community services workforce; and the State Commissioning Strategy and Implementation Plan, including the Outcomes Measurement Framework.

The Minister acknowledged the Forum has immense potential and is a unique structure which brings together the expertise and capability of senior leaders from the State Government and community services sector to work collaboratively to address emerging issues and complex challenges to deliver positive outcomes for all Western Australians. At the meeting, Minister McGurk shared her intention to extend the term of the Forum by an additional six months until 30 June 2023, and for the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations Working Group of the Forum to continue. During the six months, there is also an intent to further strengthen connections with the Aboriginal Advisory Council of WA and the Ministerial Multicultural Advisory Council, working towards broadening the membership of the Forum to include more representation from the Aboriginal, culturally and linguistically diverse and multicultural communities. The Forum will further continue to inform the implementation of the State Commissioning Strategy for community services, and jointly consider the Forum's role, priorities and program of work.

Subsequent to the 7 December meeting, a new Minister for Community Services has been appointed, and the Forum looks forward to working with the new Minister for Community Services, Hon Sabine Winton MLA in 2023.

Meeting notes once endorsed by the Forum, and Communiques from each of the Forum meetings are all available on the Forum's webpage.

Please feel free to distribute this Communique to your wider network, and if you would like to register to the Forum's mailing list or have general enquiries on the work of the Forum, please email the Forum Secretariat at SCF@dpc.wa.gov.au.

Thank you for your interest in the Forum. We wish everyone a joyous and safe festive season 2022.