



Working Together Agreement

between

**NSW Family and Community Services, Community Services & Catholic
Education Commission NSW**

**in relation to educational services for children and young people in statutory
out of home care**

Introduction

This agreement provides a framework for a more coordinated approach between NSW Family and Community Services, Community Services division (Community Services) and the NSW Catholic schools sector, as represented by the Catholic Education Commission NSW, in relation to identifying, planning and responding to the educational needs of children and young people in statutory out of home care attending a Catholic school, including a pre-school.

The role of non-government organisations as having responsibility for providing case management for children and young people in statutory out of home care is reflected in the agreement.

Purpose

This agreement identifies systems, processes and strategies that support collaborative practice and joint responses to meet the educational needs of children and young people in statutory out of home care who are enrolled in or are applying to enrol in a NSW Catholic school, including a pre-school.

In particular this agreement aims to:

- Provide a framework for meeting the educational needs, including education planning, of children and young people in statutory out of home care, as a component of the child or young person's case planning
- Support collaborative, efficient and effective communication channels and modes of working together to improve the educational outcomes of children and young people in statutory out of home care
- Ensure children and young people in statutory out of home care receive coordinated service delivery at key stages or circumstances in their educational life, including transition
- Promote information sharing between each organisation about each other's policies, programs, services and other resources to facilitate better outcomes for children and young people in statutory out of home care.

Parties to this agreement

This is an agreement between NSW Family and Community Services, Community Services division and Catholic Education Commission NSW.

CEC joins this agreement in its role as a coordinating and representative body. CEC has no management role in respect of NSW Catholic schools.

Target Group

Children and young people covered by this agreement are those enrolled in, or applying to enrol in, a NSW Catholic school or pre-school and who are currently in



statutory out of home care, and for whom the Minister has parental responsibility or the Director General of Family and Community Services has parental care responsibility relating to residence and/or education and training.

This includes children and young people who are in statutory care and who are case managed by non-government organisations.

Legislative and policy context

The statutory responsibilities of Community Services are mandated through the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (The Act)*.

Community Services' *Service Provision Guidelines Out of Home Care* provide Community Services and non-government organisations the core policy and operational framework and requirements for delivering out of home care services.

Guiding principles

Community Services and Catholic Education Commission recognise the role of non-government agencies with case management responsibility for children and young people in statutory out of home care, and agree to facilitate access to educational services for children and young people case managed by non-government organisations the same way as they would facilitate access for children and young people case managed by Community Services.

Implementation of this agreement will be guided by the following principles:

- The safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people are the collective responsibility of the whole of government and the community and are delivered through a mix of non-government and state agencies.
- Community Services and Catholic schools will endeavour to work together, along with non-government organisations with case management responsibility, to achieve the best educational outcomes for children and young people in statutory out of home care
- Children and young people will be encouraged to participate, according to their age and development, in decision making in planning for their education and to support their social and emotional wellbeing at school.
- Community Services and Catholic schools, along with non-government organisations with case management responsibility, will endeavour to be sensitive to the needs and requirements of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and their Authorised Carers.
- The personal identity, language, and cultural and religious ties of children and young people in statutory out of home care will be maintained, and their relationships with family, significant others and their community recognised.
- Community Services and Catholic schools, along with non-government organisations with case management responsibility, will endeavour to work together to ensure Aboriginal children, young people and their families participate with as much self-determination as is possible, and be active participants in the development of education plans.
- The needs of the child or young person are the starting point for any joint work and decision making. Decision making in relation to the education of a child or young person in statutory out of home care should where practicable, involve those people who are significant to the child or young person. The



best interests of the child or young person are of key importance in any decisions.

- Intervening early to identify and respond to the educational needs of children and young people provides the best opportunity to support the educational participation and performance of children and young people in statutory out of home care.

Collaboration

This agreement does not alter existing policies, procedures, roles or responsibilities of Community Services, Catholic Education Commission, Catholic schools or non-government organisations with case management responsibility, when working to meet the educational needs of children and young people in statutory out of home care.

Community Services and Catholic Schools, along with non-government organisations with case management responsibility, will endeavour to support the implementation of this agreement at a state, regional, local and school level through:

- Promoting communication and dissemination of information, such as face-to-face meetings, briefings and joint training, including relevant non-government organisations
- Community Services will nominate key contacts to liaise with the Principal of the school. Principals will provide the first point of contact for information, collaboration and assistance if required
- Providing in principle agreement to support requests from either organisation for collaboration on national and/or state based research projects regarding children in out of home care provided the proposed research satisfies the research guidelines of both Community Services and Catholic Education Commission
- Communication of this agreement to relevant Community Services staff, school staff and non-government organisations with case management responsibility
- Working collaboratively to establish regular and timely communication, information sharing and modes of working together between key staff from Community Services, Catholic Education Commission, Catholic schools and non-government organisations, in order to support and enhance joint work, and resolve issues where they may arise, such as: transfer/or enrolment at a new school; education planning; school enrolment and attendance; suspensions and expulsions; and placement and transition procedures
- Referrals for support and assistance where a child or young person is at risk of disengaging from education (these processes should support the early identification and resolution of service delivery issues)

Preferred Roles and Priority Tasks

This framework recognises Community Services, non-government agencies with case management responsibility and NSW Catholic schools. The following section reflects specific functions that support effective collaboration in meeting the educational needs of children and young people in statutory out of home care.



Role of Community Services & Non-Government Organisations with case management responsibility for a child or young person in the Parental Responsibility of the Minister	Key Agent
a) Provide relevant information to schools and Principals about children and young people who are entering, and who are in, statutory out of home care.	Caseworker, Manager Casework or Non-Government Organisation equivalent
b) Share relevant information on Community Services (or non government organisation with case management responsibility) policies, program services, procedures, resources, access and eligibility.	Caseworker, Manager Casework, Manager Client Services or Non-Government Organisation equivalent
c) Work collaboratively with schools in the development, implementation, monitoring and review of Education Plans for children and young people in statutory out of home care, consistent with the school's policy and procedures and the Community Services Education Plan Pathway.	Manager Casework, Caseworker, Interagency Pathway Coordinator or Non-Government Organisation equivalent
d) Develop communication channels and work collaboratively with schools to improve the educational outcomes of children and young people in statutory out of home care.	Caseworker, Manager Casework, Manager Client Services, Interagency Pathway Coordinator or Non-Government Organisation equivalent
e) Facilitate coordination and integration of the child or young person's Case Plan with their Education Plan and Health Plan.	Caseworker, Manager Casework or Non-Government Organisation equivalent
Intended Role of Catholic Schools	Key Staff
a) Assess and identify a child or young person in statutory out of home care's educational needs and strengths and put strategies in place to meet their individual educational needs.	Principals or their delegate
b) Lead the development, implementation, monitoring and review of Education Plans, in partnership with other key stakeholders, for all children and young people in statutory out of home care, consistent with the school's policy and procedures and the Community Services Education Plan Pathway.	Principals or their delegate
c) Sharing relevant information on the school's policies, programs, services, procedures, resources, access and eligibility. Share relevant information about a child or young person in statutory out of home care with Community Services, non government organisations with case management responsibility, Authorised Carers and other relevant agencies as identified in the <i>Checklist for school principals</i> .	Principals or their delegate
d) Develop communication channels and ways of working with Community Services and non-government organisations to improve the educational outcomes of children and young people in statutory out of home care.	Principals or their delegate



Dispute resolution

No child or young person is to be left without adequate support while interagency issues are being resolved.

Any disputes or disagreements about plans, procedures, actions or service delivery should be resolved between the parties involved at the most local level possible within 2 weeks.

Community Services Interagency Pathway Coordinators and/or Manager Client Services and the School Principal or their delegate can provide support as required.

The development of an action plan that addresses the issues in conflict, strategies to deal with these, and timeframes and review dates should be used where appropriate.

Regional level support in dealing with local level matters will be provided by Community Services Director Child and Family and the School Principal or their delegate as required.

As needed local level disputes will be escalated to regional level for support in resolving the matter.

Governance

This agreement will be activated once it has been signed by the Chief Executive Community Services and the Executive Director Catholic Education Commission.

Either party may seek variation of this agreement by notifying the other. Variations must be agreed on by the Chief Executive Officer Community Services and the Executive Director Catholic Education Commission.

Dr Brian Croke

Executive Director

Catholic Education Commission NSW

Brian Croke

Date:

28-8-12

Maree Walk

Chief Executive

NSW Department of Family and

Community Services, Community Services

Maree Walk

Date:

14-8-12