



Transition Program Office Policy Paper 1: Transition Cohort Priorities

The O'Farrell Government is committed to the transfer of Out-Of-Home Care (OOHC) service provision to non-government service providers, which will take place over the next 5 to 10 years.

In order to fulfil this commitment, the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) was formed to provide advice to the Hon. PruGoward MP, Minister for Family and Community Services, on the broader reforms needed to reduce entries to OOHC, maximise restorations and shape a new OOHC system for NSW. The MAG's vision for this transition is *to achieve the best possible outcomes for children, young people and their families by growing and delivering a quality, sustainable, non-government OOHC service system for NSW*. This vision is guided by the following principles, outlined in the OOHC Transition Plan:

- Services and placements built around the child or young person's and their family's needs.
- Placement stability and cultural support.
- Early intervention for children and families.
- Informed choice for children, young people and carers.
- All Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC will be cared for by Aboriginal carers, supported by Aboriginal caseworkers employed by local Aboriginal managed agencies.
- All children and young people have appropriate cultural plans and supports in line with the Placement Principle.
- Partnerships between the non-government sector and Community Services.
- Case management responsibility transferred to the non-government agency.
- Transition will occur in a timely manner.

The following cohort transfer priorities (graph attached) have been identified in order to show how the transfers will occur over time to non-Aboriginal, partnership and Aboriginal agencies.

1. The Transfer of Non-Aboriginal Children and Young People

Year one

- All non-Aboriginal children in statutory foster care who are between the ages of 0-5 will be transferred where their carer is willing. This includes siblings and/or unrelated children and young people living in the same household.
- In addition to this criterion, the children and young people must have a Final Order, with the exception of those entering care ("new entries"), who can be on Interim Orders.

Year two and beyond

- All children and young people in statutory foster care and statutory relative and kinship care placement types will be transferred.

- All carers will be transferred over time, including those who may initially express reluctance.
- Where possible children and young people will be transferred by age cohort, beginning with the youngest cohorts.

2. The Transfer of Non-Aboriginal Children and Young People who Fall Outside of the Above Criteria

Year one

These transfers can occur in the following circumstances:

- where carers are willing to transfer
- where agencies are also willing and have the capacity to accept the transfer.

3. The Transfer of Aboriginal Children and Young People

The Transition Plan contains three key principles for Aboriginal children and young people:

- Principle 3: Placement stability and cultural support are paramount.
- Principle 5: Ultimately, all Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC will be cared for by Aboriginal carers, supported by Aboriginal caseworkers employed by local Aboriginal managed agencies.
- Principle 6: All Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC must be placed in a culturally appropriate setting with a strong preference for placements in Aboriginal community controlled organisations or in non-Aboriginal agencies working in partnership with a local Aboriginal agency, with a view to developing capacity and independence.

Aboriginal children and young people entering care will no longer be placed in non-Aboriginal agencies, unless there is a partnership in place. Instead, they will be placed in Aboriginal community controlled agencies, by Aboriginal staff in ways that ensure stability and strong cultural support.

Community Services will provide placements and support for those Aboriginal children and young people who are unable to be placed in Aboriginal or partnership agencies at the time they enter the OOHC system. This is only until placements in Aboriginal agencies or partnership agencies become available.

Considerations in the transfer of Aboriginal children and young people include:

- From the beginning of the transition, Aboriginal children and young people in general foster care and statutory relative and kinship care will only be placed with, or transferred to Aboriginal agencies or to those non-Aboriginal agencies in a partnership agreement with local Aboriginal organisations.

Decisions relating to any exception *must* involve Aboriginal agencies throughout the entire process of joint decision making. For example, if an exception needs to be made for sibling groups comprising Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children.

- Non-Aboriginal carers of Aboriginal children and young people will be able to transfer to an Aboriginal or partnership agency if they are willing. These carers and their families will benefit from the opportunities for cultural connection and support.

Given existing limited capacities within the Aboriginal sector, this transfer strategy will have a number of significant implications:

- In areas where there is currently no capacity and/or partnership arrangement in place, Community Services will not be able to transfer Aboriginal children and young people to non-government services.
- In areas where there is no capacity and/or partnership arrangement in place, Community Services will not be able to place Aboriginal children and young people entering care for the first time with a non-government agency.
- The proportion of Aboriginal children and young people in Community Services care will therefore increase until capacity issues are addressed.

4. Estimated Transfers to NGOs

The numbers and graphs in the attached “Estimated Transfers to NGOs” are based on prioritising:

- all new entries to care
- the transfer of children 0-5 years of age and any other children or young people (statutory only) in the same household
- the transfer of children aged six to eight years and any other children or young people (statutory only) in the same household after finalising the transfer of children aged 0-5 years and their households.

5. Challenges in Transfer Decisions

Inevitably there will be times when circumstances challenge the smooth transition of children and young people. For example, transfer decisions may be complicated in situations where a carer has the care of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children; or a carer may have a number of children subject to a mix of court orders.

No policy can be expected to direct or control every situation and it is important that when challenges arise, professionals exercise good professional judgement in collaboration with sector partners. In all cases where smooth transfer is challenged, decisions should be made on the basis of what is the right thing to do for the children or young people.

Cohort Transfer Priorities					KEY	YES	Conditional	No						
Agency Type	Cohort		Aboriginality of CYP		Statutory Placement Type		Age of youngest placement			Court Order		Carer Willingness		
	Year	Aboriginal	Non Aboriginal	Foster Care	Relative Kinship Care	0-5yo	6-8yo	9yo+	Final Order	Interim Order	Enthusiastic	Willing	Unwilling	
Accredited Generic	1	Siblings only			If allocated					New entry only				
	2+													
Partnership (Accredited PLUS Local Aboriginal)	1		Siblings only		If allocated					New entry only				
	2+													
Aboriginal	1		Siblings only							New entry only				
	2+													

Estimated Transfers to NGOs

Table 1: Statutory Foster and Relative Kinship NON-ABORIGINAL children and young people transferred (including new entries)					
Age of youngest placement	30/06/12	30/06/13	30/06/14	30/06/15	30/06/16
Aged 0-5 years	167	1165	1982	2242	2242
Aged 6-8 years	0	0	0	33	270
Siblings of priority cohorts	89	496	904	1176	1456
Total	256	1661	2886	3451	3968
Table 2: Statutory Foster and Relative Kinship ABORIGINAL children and young people transferred (including new entries)					
Age of youngest placement	30/06/12	30/06/13	30/06/14	30/06/15	30/06/16
Aged 0-5 years	93	291	495	560	560
Aged 6-8 years	0	0	0	18	145
Siblings of priority cohorts	41	232	422	549	680
Total	134	523	917	1127	1385
Total transferred	390	2184	3803	4578	5353
Table 3: Statutory Foster and Relative Kinship children and young people left with CS (including new entries)					
Left with CS	30/06/12	30/06/13	30/06/14	30/06/15	30/06/16
Aged 0-5 years	2542	1346	325	0	0
Aged 6-8 years	1531	1344	1157	981	488
Aged 9 and above	3359	2948	2537	2263	1981
Total remaining	7432	5638	4019	3244	2469
Total children and young people	7822	7822	7822	7822	7822

