**LOCAL ADVISORY GROUP GUIDELINES**

**(MOREE and DISTRICTS – Boggabilla, Toomelah and Mungindi)**

**Roles and responsibilities**

The role of the local advisory groups is to provide a governance structure through

which local Aboriginal communities can participate with FACS in decision making

regarding the care and protection of Aboriginal children – including on the need for

early intervention supports for vulnerable families before the point of removal.

The local advisory groups will develop individual frameworks to engage the local

Aboriginal community in identifying avenues of decision making that involve

Aboriginal families, services and community in the care and protection of Aboriginal

children. This will include – but is not limited to – the following:

1. Monitoring the implementation of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principles,

these guiding principles and the FACS *Aboriginal Cultural Inclusion*

*Framework 2015-2018* for the local Aboriginal community – including

reviewing practices within FACS that impede its ability to create cooperative

and respectful relationships with Aboriginal families and communities.

2. Monitoring and reviewing the implementation of cultural care planning, and in

doing so, have regard to the various pieces of work being progressed in this

area by the NSW Children’s Court, the Aboriginal Legal Service and the

FACS Aboriginal Strategic Branch, and others as relevant.

3. Identifying and assessing the effectiveness of current and/or culturally

appropriate service models and options to support families earlier and prevent

entry into the child protection system (e.g. Protecting Aboriginal Children

Together: PACT and the Aboriginal Intensive Family Based Service: IFBS),

and making adjustments to these models where appropriate.

4. Identifying and assessing the effectiveness of current and/or culturally

appropriate service models and options for families when they are involved in

the child protection system (e.g. Family Group Conferencing, Care Circles)

and making adjustments to these models where appropriate.

5. Considering innovative approaches to addressing community concerns

regarding prevention, early intervention and out-of-home care in the local

Aboriginal community.

6. Building the capacity of the local Aboriginal community to care for local

children in circumstances where emergency removals are necessary (i.e.

working with the community to increase the number of kinship carers).

7. Developing a process for community representatives to raise concerns with

FACS about individual cases and receive feedback.

8. Reviewing the membership of the local advisory group to ensure appropriate

community, NGO and government representation.

Local advisory groups will encourage FACS to adopt a strengths-based

approach in working with vulnerable Aboriginal families, Aboriginal carers and

communities, while ensuring that the best interests of the child are the

paramount consideration. Affected families may choose to engage the support

of GMAR members regarding individual cases (or any other issues). Individual

case or policy decisions made by the local advisory groups should be

reviewed and may be changed if new information comes to hand.

**Membership**

**Local advisory groups**

It will be critical that membership of the local advisory groups recognise community

knowledge and include Aboriginal community members and grass roots

organisations focused on promoting child safety and wellbeing. Established Local

Decision Making (LDM) and regional alliances with Aboriginal Community Working

Parties which may play an important role as existing governance structures or identifying alternative entities or individuals to participate.

**PANEL**

Membership Panel will consist of representatives from Moree Aboriginal community, Aboriginal NGOs representatives and a representative from Boggabilla, Toomelah and Mungindi communities.

The panel will be selected by Grandmothers against Removal founding members.

Government representatives could include staff from the relevant:

• FACS District, e.g. the Operations Director;

• FACS Community Services Centre (CSC), e.g. the Manager Client Services;

• FACS Aboriginal specialist / caseworker

**CRITERIA**

* Is an Aboriginal person known in Moree, Boggabilla, Toomelah and Mungindi and is respected in their local area.
* undergoes a Working with Children’s Check and has no criminal history, history of child abuse or mistreatment.
* has a basic understanding and knowledge of the *Children & Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*.
* signs a confidentiality agreement ensuring no information gained, while involved with Local Advisory Group, is discussed with any other person not involved with the delivery of Local Advisory Group, falling within the prescribed body confidentiality guidelines.

The number of government representatives should not outweigh the number of

community representatives on the local advisory group.

Given that the focus of the local advisory group is tapping into community knowledge

and expertise to promote early intervention and prevention strategies, it is important

that the membership of groups is not overly focussed on out-of-home care or other

tertiary support service providers as these services can also be consulted in an

expert capacity by invitation where appropriate.