FINAL
Local Government NSW response to NSW Family and Community Services Targeted Earlier Intervention Programs
Updated 4 December 2015

1. Service system design is the framework that establishes the roles, boundaries and connection points which ensure our services work together as a client centred system. In providing your feedback, please consider:

- **Opportunities for our organisations to work together more effectively**
- **Ways to improve the flexibility of FACS programs and/or approaches**
- **New or existing system components that most effectively improve our ability to take a more holistic approach to service delivery and reach clients before crisis interventions are required**
- **System components that we could share to improve service delivery and client outcomes (eg system principles, information, performance measures, assessment tools, governance structures etc)**

Do you have any other feedback you would like to provide on service system design?

Local Government builds the capacity of local communities by supporting the participation of people in decisions which affect their lives, helping them to become self-reliant and by representing the issues and interests of the community to the other spheres of government, private and other stakeholders.

Community development in Local Government helps to build strong and cohesive communities. Local Government is an ideal provider of community services because of local positioning, democratic accountability, financial accountability, stability and organisational infrastructure. Through its planning processes, Local Government ensures its community services remain consumer orientated, responsive and flexible.

Local Government currently develops Community Strategic Plans which reflect community needs and priorities. The Community Strategic Plan is based on social justice principles "to ensure that all people that councils serve get equal opportunity for access to services and resources, that their rights are recognised, and that they are consulted in appropriate and meaningful ways and otherwise have the opportunity to participate in decision-making that affects their lives". These plans could be used to inform the future focus points for the TEI program.

The system is structured to share workload among many different service providers and Local Government often fills the gaps which are not covered by specific funding programs. Local Government currently makes a significant investment in the local youth services system through running youth programs, providing buildings for youth groups to meet, and through local youth advisory councils. Councils often develop overarching strategies to address the needs of young people in the area and council Youth Workers hold interagency meetings with other youth service providers in the region. It is important to ensure that this support continues and that Local Government is engaged as an active partner in planning services in the local area.

LGNSW supports the FACS localisation agenda as long as consideration is given to the relationships between boundaries of Aboriginal Land Councils and Local Government. Opportunities to work with councils on a regional level are encouraged and should reflect regional groups which are relevant to the communities involved. Specific geographic restriction can decrease responsiveness and flexibility of program.

Other service system issues which impact on effectiveness include competitive tendering which tends to engender anti-collaborative approaches to the dis-benefit of young people, women and other disadvantaged groups. There is also a danger that services may be duplicated in order to build a greater share of funding.

A focus on client centredness is appropriate for direct services but it is important to recognise that prevention approaches focus on the needs of vulnerable members of a community in the context of where they live in and within a universal service system framework. A truly preventive service system must impede any escalation of vulnerable members of a community into casework services as a client. Programs which build community capacity and support the participation of vulnerable groups are essential to the success of a client centred system.

2. Service delivery is how we work, interact and meet outcomes for different client groups. In providing your feedback please consider:

- **Types of services or practices have the most impact on improving outcomes for clients and why**
- **Ways to improve the quality and effectiveness of FACS service delivery**
- **How to better support clients who are experiencing mental health issues, substance abuse and/or domestic and family violence issues**
- **How we improve local collaboration, decision making and learning**
- **What other organisations need to be engaged to ensure the best outcomes for our clients**

Do you have any other feedback you would like to provide on service delivery?

Local Government is a key partner in ensuring local collaboration in the provision of community development services which benefit families and children and young people. Not only does Local Government provide an opportunity for social participation of families and children and young people at a local level, it is engaged in providing a number of services for use by the community, such as neighbourhood centres, recreation and leisure facilities, libraries and provides venues for local events. In addition, Local Government is a significant provider of children's services such as mobile playgroups, family day care, long day care centres and preschools, especially in rural and remote areas, recognising these services are an essential to child development and family support.

The key strength of these services is their local bases as well as local management. They go well beyond health services. Other universal approaches such as community development and playgroups can provide successful and effective "soft entry points" that establish and maintain trust relationships with communities, including vulnerable members of the community, that can then provide the basis for accessing targeted services when needed.

Community Development workers in Local Government, like Youth Development Officers (YDOs) in are often part-funded under the Community Builders program and are provided mainly by councils. A large part of the Community Development role is to undertake sector development initiatives, including coordinating the local service interagency meetings and bringing together services to plan for the community in their Local Government Area. There are also many regions where council Community Development Officers collaborate to undertake wider sector development, including being core to local system realignment, collaboration and innovation.

Community Development officers are seen as key to sharing information and collaborating between services. Many also undertake valuable LGA-wide prevention, community strengthening and community development work for families, children and young people. Local decision making is seen as the most responsive and effective way to improve outcomes. Locally based services provide ease of access to those who need services and enable connections with other mainstream services which are locally based.

Appropriate levels of funding to support a continuum of service provision are required to ensure that families, children and young people are prevented from exposure to at risk situations. Should funding for the Community Development roles be changed/altered significantly under the reform process, a major structural and collaborative component of youth and community service provision in NSW would be lost.

Funding for locally based facilities, such as neighbourhood centres, youth centres, child and family health centres is also required to ensure that communities have access to a broad constellation of services working together to meet their needs.

3. Program improvement is about continuous improvement to ensure we get better at what we do and the services we deliver. In providing your feedback please consider:

- **How FACS can deliver more effective client centred services**
- **Examples of where our organisations work well together to effectively influence outcomes for clients**
- **How our organisations could work better together to effectively influence outcomes for clients**
- **What data should be used to measure success for our clients and our services. Should any of these be shared measures?**

Do you have any other feedback you would like to provide on program improvement?

Councils devise and maintain strategies for involving families, children and young people in community planning and service development to build strong communities. Youth Advisory Councils are one effective means of inviting the active participation of young people and other youth service stakeholders in planning, services and programs. Engagement of families, children and young people in planning and delivery of services, community activities and social activities can enhance self-respect, competence and connection to family and community and have significant benefits for the delivery of services.

Local Government holds in depth information on the needs of the local community, which informs their planning. This local information could be better utilised by Family and Community Services to build a profile of a local community in order to inform and target service provision. Information from other government agencies should be accessed to augment this profile. From this a regional profile could be developed.

Given anticipated increased demand for services, further collaboration between Local and State government agencies is required to ensure that early intervention programs are adequately resourced.

Further efficiencies may be achieved through reviewing administration of the funding streams in terms of length of contract terms, delay times in responding to identified needs and reporting requirements. The outcomes of the program need to be collected rather than just program outputs.

There is concern among council providers of Community Development services that the proposed reforms will result in cuts to particular programs or transfer of funding away from councils. LGNSW seeks the assurances of FACS that Local Government will continue to be regarded as a key partner in supporting local communities, and that cuts will not be made.

Whilst LGNSW supports a focus of targeting funding to the most disadvantaged communities, cuts to services run the risk of depleting the coordination, resourcing and capacity building role of Local Government in creating a broadly supportive community environment. Universal services must address barriers to access for vulnerable families and children. If these are not addressed then the universal service system cannot be leveraged to provide targeted support programs.

This issue would be best addressed through the co-design of any reforms to the service system, which are built on strong prevention and community development approaches that include the views of vulnerable families and young people about what would successfully work best to improve their engagement with and access to support.

The service system needs an in-built capacity to be flexible and responsive, both to the needs of individuals as well as the needs of communities. The co-design of effective service systems is essential for particular communities of geography and culture.

4. Program support is about the systems, processes and technology that underpin effective service delivery. In providing your feedback please consider:

- **How we can make better use of technology to support the delivery of services to our shared clients**
- **What support FACS can provide to help improve the effectiveness of your work**
- **What program support systems, processes or technology would help us work better together to improve outcomes for shared clients**
- **What kinds of services do we need more of in the system**

Do you have any other feedback you would like to provide on program support?

A unified approach between all the government departments which interface with the community, with a shared outcomes oriented framework is recommended. This system should also be underpinned by reliable population performance data.

There are opportunities for improved service information sharing, electronic referral systems and data collection at a local level. Information collected by councils in the community engagement processes used to inform their Community Strategic Plans can build a community profile which can inform planning at all levels of government.

Efficiencies can be achieved by creating a system that is well-connected allows for the flow of accurate, timely and clear information. Locally based collaborations which identify shared outcomes are a valuable way of developing effective local structures which can make change for young people and result in better aligned local systems.

Support needs to be provided to providers to develop client management systems. For Local Government, these types of systems are also required for other funded programs (such as Community Care). There needs to be support for the development of client management systems which are consistent across a multitude of government funded programs and are transferable between Local Government and other agencies.

Local Government is concerned to ensure that State funded programs permit and promote the development and use of rural and remote models where appropriate to mitigate the disadvantage arising from location, including adequate financial provision for travel costs of outreaching services to remote or isolated communities. These programs should be adequately resourced to ensure all charges in partnership or funded programs are affordable.

5. The reform – how we manage the reform process. In providing your feedback please consider:

- **What reform-related information or processes is your organisation most interested in**
- **How we should communicate with your organisation during the reform process – centrally, at district level, at local network level or other**
- **Who you think are the key participants that should be involved in local planning processes**

Do you have any other feedback you would like to provide on reform processes?

Given the important role Local Government plays in the funding and delivery of TEI programs, LGNSW, as the peak body for Local Government in NSW is disappointed that it has been brought into the consultation on the program reform at a late stage in the process.

Local Government needs to be included in future design stages, so that local knowledge which reflects the needs of local children, young people, families and communities informs system design.