ATTACHMENT B

Australasian Autism Review Collaboration (AARC) Review Recommendations

Government Response, Action and Timing

AARC Recommendations	Government Response	Actions and Timing
1. Improve communication and information sharing Regular updating of FaHCSIA website and relevant guidelines. Improved clarity regarding the development of individual intervention plans, purchasing resources and other issues. Improved communication between all stakeholders, particularly regarding guideline changes. Continued dissemination of information regarding all aspects of the Package, including access to information and services to assist decision making	**SUPPORT** When approved, the HCWA documents to be uploaded onto FaHCSIA's HCWA web page. *Update HCWA EI Operational Guidelines and Application Form* to prioritise Individual Intervention Plans and include Positive Partnerships Matrix as a suggested Individual Plan development tool.	**Ongoing** **December 2011** • Notify Autism Advisors • Website notice • Email to service providers • Include in e-newsletters **HCWA Communication Strategy to be completed and released by February 2012**
2. Clarify information about approved interventions FaHCSIA to circulate a list of approved interventions and post on website.	**SUPPORT** *Develop a list or table based on Table 6* and make it accessible on the FaHCSIA website to promote clarity amongst all stakeholders about what is approved for	**December 2011** • Notify Autism Advisors • Website notice and link • Email to service providers • Include in e-newsletters to Autism Advisors, service

AARC Recommendations	Government Response	Actions and Timing
	funding and why. *Develop procedure for informing service providers of changes* and addressing issues that arise.	providers and families **Advise through the Service Provider e-newsletter.**
Provide brief outline of review methods and findings of current review on website in plain language, with hard copy available. Relevant criteria for evidence-based interventions and for good practice need to be tightened and made specific within the application process.	*Develop a Plain English summary of the Report* and make available on the FaHCSIA website to promote understanding of FaHCSIA's approach to evidence-based best practice. *Develop Occasional Paper* from the Report for public release of Review results. Update the Guidelines and application documentation in accordance with the Review.	**December 2011** • Autism Advisors • Website notice and link **February 2012** • Media release - Occasional Paper • Website notice and link **December 2012**
3. Regularly update information about evidence of effectiveness and best practice Options are to: • set-up automatic links to data bases • engage a research officer to review international studies received and rate them in accordance with the evidence and good practice rating mechanisms • engage a panel of experts	**SUPPORT** Autism and Early Intervention Branch to conduct annual in-house review and bi-annual expert review Utilise the Raising Children Network to review interventions as part of their current funding agreement.	**February 2012** • Internal communications • Once established could be included in e-newsletters • Ongoing Review

AARC Recommendations	Government Response	Actions and Timing
4. Reinvigorate the operationalisation of principles of good practice The requirement for providers to be multidisciplinary to be restated with possible exceptional cases made for isolated families in remote rural areas on a case by case basis.	**SUPPORT** Review current expectations and procedures regarding consortiums and sole-providers. Update the Guidelines and Application Form to emphasise and/or require multi-disciplinary collaboration. Update Best Practice Guidelines and provide to service providers Flexible service delivery model arrangements for outer regional and remote areas	**December 2011** **December 2011** **March 2012** **Ongoing**
Update 2006 Guidelines for Best Practice by Jacqui Roberts and Margot Prior and reprint.	Pending approval from DoHA, proceed with *update, printing, and distribution of Guidelines for Best Practice 2011.*	**March 2012** • Notify Autism Advisors • Website notice and link • Email to service providers • Include in e-newsletters to Autism Advisors, service providers and families
5. Improve collection of information on service providers' training, experience and expertise Staff delivering programs need to have demonstrated substantial experience and expertise in autism plus ongoing training and supervision. Changes to the provider's staff skill and experience profile need to be reported to FaHCSIA.	**SUPPORT** Update the HCWA EI Operational Guidelines and Application Form to include modifications to ensure that these criteria are answered.	**December 2011**

AARC Recommendations	Government Response	Actions and Timing
Full details of all providers regarding the status, professional experience and competence in the autism field required.	This information is collected through the Application process. The Application form is under review.	**December 2011**
6. Improve application process Full details of the program offered including all personnel, all components of intervention, time frame, setting, fees/charges, multidisciplinary input, and details of adherence to clinical guidelines should be provided. Applications should include reference to research evidence, direct evidence of intent to cover measurable outcomes, direct evidence of relevance to ASD and application of principles of good practice in ASD EI.	**SUPPORT** Update the selection criteria in the HCWA EI Operational Guidelines and Application Form to address these issues. This will clarify our expectations on best practice and encourage a consistent level of information.	**December 2011**
Providers should incorporate information on what measures will be used to demonstrate changes within and across the core domains of development in social, communicative, cognitive, adaptive, play, and self-care areas, and in improvement in problem behaviour areas.	Update the selection criteria in the HCWA EI Operational Guidelines and Application Form.	**December 2011**

AARC Recommendations	Government Response	Actions and Timing
Provide consistent advice to potential service providers seeking to join the panel.	Standard words review Staff trained and well informed	**Ongoing**
7. Autism Advisors Expand to include brokerage advice and case management support.	**NEEDS FURTHER CONSIDERATION** Focus of the program is service access. Review when Final Report on HCWA Evaluation is received and considered in early 2012.	**Not at this time.**
8. Improve monitoring and evaluation of services Ongoing monitoring of providers regarding effectiveness and fidelity of programs. Regular reports from providers.	**SUPPORT** Regular monitoring is undertaken within the Autism Section Relevant recommendations from the Review can be incorporated into the Quality Monitoring Framework. Quarterly Reporting is provided by Service Providers ASD Helpdesk monitors queries and complaints	**Ongoing** **Ongoing**
Accountability for funding via on-site visits, questionnaire or parent survey. Need to clarify and promulgate clear and consistent fee schedules and acceptable activities that can be claimed e.g. assessment.	Quality Monitoring Framework could incorporate these suggestions. Provide clarification through the operational guidelines	**Ongoing**

AARC Recommendations	Government Response	Actions and Timing
9. Innovation or changes to address identified problems in service delivery Consider tele-health methods to meet service delivery gaps in remote and rural areas.	**SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE** Investigate and encourage appropriate flexible service delivery options where possible.	**Ongoing** • Include as focus of Autism Advisor Forum • Promote in e-newsletters to Autism Advisors, service providers and families
10. Other issues Fees and Funding: - Inconsistencies of fees - Inadequate funding level - seven year olds cut-off disadvantaging some children.	s47C - deliberative processes Service Provider fees are market based however issues are addressed as they arise Review when Final Report on HCWA Evaluation is received and considered.	**Early 2012 and ongoing**
Make clear that HCWA is contribution only. Perceived conflict of interest for some Autism Advisors - need clear guidelines.	**SUPPORT** Messages to be more clearly articulated in the HCWA Communication Strategy and its products.	**February 2012**
Delays in availability of some interventions.	**SUPPORT** HCWA Communication Strategy to include an advertising campaign to recruit additional service providers.	**February 2012**
Disadvantaged groups include	**SUPPORT**	

AARC Recommendations	Government Response	Actions and Timing
CALD, Indigenous, socio-economically and educationally poorer families.	s47C - deliberative processes • Target additional service providers in rural and remote areas • Develop culturally appropriate information materials, procedures and partnerships • Improve ongoing communication with internal and external stakeholders to maximise access to HCWA Package by disadvantaged groups	**Ongoing**
Need for process to remove non-conforming services.	**SUPPORT** Process to be developed and articulated in both the HCWA EI Operational Guidelines and the Quality Monitoring Framework.	**March 2012**

ATTACHMENT C

Communication Strategy

The Review of Early Intervention Therapies was undertaken by the Australasian Autism Research Collaboration (AARC). This is the communication strategy proposed for communicating the outcome of the Review to HCWA Stakeholders.

1. Release of Review of Interventions and related documents

The following documentation from the Review will be released to HCWA Stakeholders and the general public:

- Executive Summary of Report including;
  - Research Paper style Executive Summary to be developed in the Autism Section
  - Table 6 - list of eligible and ineligible Intervention therapies accompanied by a plain English summary/explanation (The key deliverable of the Review), and
  - A summary of the Review and its findings.
- HCWA Early Intervention Operational Guidelines and Application Form
- Best Practice Guidelines by Roberts and Prior
- Occasional Paper

A handling strategy for addressing the removal of ineligible therapies from the HCWA Service Provider Panel has also been provided.

Table 1 – Information to be released and time-frame

Document	Responsibility	Timing	Communication Strategies
Executive Summary – to be developed from the Review Report Edited Table 6 ('Traffic Light' table)– listing of eligible and ineligible therapies with attached Plain English Summary	Autism Section	December 2011	Parliamentary Secretary Media release Website notice and link Notify STOs, and Autism Advisors Website notice and link Email to service providers Include in e-newsletters to Autism Advisors, service providers and families
Updated **HCWA Early Intervention Operational Guidelines and Application Form**	Autism Section	December 2011	Notify STOs, and Autism Advisors Website notice and link Email to service providers Include in e-newsletters to Autism Advisors, service providers and families
Occasional Paper	Autism Section and Research and Analysis Branch	February 2012	Parliamentary Secretary Media Release Website notice and links Notify STOs, and Autism Advisors Website notice and link Email to service providers Include in e-newsletters to Autism Advisors, service providers and families
Updated Guidelines for Best Practice – to be updated by authors and professionally printed (funding allocated within Autism budget)	Autism Section and Consultants – Roberts and Prior	March 2012	Parliamentary Secretary Media Release Website notice and links Notify STOs, and Autism Advisors Website notice and link Email to service providers Include in e-newsletters to Autism Advisors, service providers and families

Handling Strategy

The Final Report on the Review of Early Intervention Therapies, by the Australasian Autism Research Collaboration (AARC), was received by the Department on 11 August 2011.

The review examined the existing and proposed autism interventions and an evaluation of the assessment processes used by FaHCSIA in the Early Intervention Services component of the HCWA Package. A detailed review of 62 therapies identified that nine therapies being provided under the HCWA Panel do not have a strong evidence base (See Table 2). All HCWA service provider applications are now being assessed using this information and to date there has been no negative feedback from service providers.

Following the Review an audit was undertaken of the FaHCSIA website of HCWA Service Provider fee schedules to ascertain how many service providers were providing ineligible therapies. The audit identified 24 service providers (from a total of over 900) who offer therapies that have been deemed ineligible by the Review. Only one of these service providers is offering two ineligible therapies as well as other evidence based therapies. Therefore there is no likelihood of service providers being removed from the HCWA Service Provider Panel.

To implement the recommendations of the review it is proposed that the ineligible interventions are removed. A three month withdrawal process is planned which will allow service providers sufficient time to inform their clients and make any transitional arrangements. A final date of 31 March 2011 would be the cut off for all ineligible interventions to be removed from the HCWA Package. Service providers may continue to offer these therapies under private business arrangements.

Table 2 - Audit of HCWA Service Providers offering ineligible therapies and proposed actions

Ineligible Therapy	**HCWA providers advertising therapy on their fee schedule**	**Recommended ineligible due to lack of evidence; not suitable for HCWA eligible children; not specific to Autism.**	**Proposed Actions**
Cognitive Behaviour Therapy	**2**	Not Autism specific	Department to send Letters/emails to relevant service providers including: • Explanation of Review and findings • Reasons why therapy is not eligible • FaHCSIA expectations about removing therapy from fee schedule, ceasing to provide it as a HCWA therapy within 3 months, and providing affected families with explanation • How to obtain further information or make a complaint Helpdesk staff- standard words developed around interventions
Phonological Awareness/literacy groups	**1**	Not relevant to HCWA age-group	
Sensory Integration Therapy	**11**	Lack of evidence	
Sensory Diet	**1**	Lack of evidence	
FastForword	**1**	Not autism specific	
PROMPT	**2**	Not autism specific	
Hanen "It takes two to talk"	**4**	Lack of evidence	
Social Eyes	**1**	Not appropriate to HCWA age-group	
Physiotherapy	**1**	No evidence	

2. **Overlap/integration with HCWA Evaluation Phase 2 Recommendations**
   - The Review of early intervention therapies was aimed at updating FaHCSIA's knowledge of the evidence of effectiveness of autism specific interventions and informing our processes for promoting and facilitating best practice interventions.
   - The three phase HCWA Evaluation was designed to examine all aspects of the Package and provide recommendations for how it could be improved and modified where necessary.
   - There is some overlap in the findings and recommendations within the HCWA Evaluation phase one and two reports, and the Final Report of the Review (outlined below). It is proposed that the Department's response to recommendations from the Review that are also within the scope of the Evaluation be generally deferred until the Final HCWA Evaluation Report has been received and considered by the Department.

Table 3 – Comparison of Recommendations from Review and HCWA Evaluation Phase 2 and proposed responses

Review of Therapies	HCWA Evaluation – Phase 2	Timeframe for actions
Scope		
Focus on specifics of the Early Intervention Services - eligibility of proposed therapies or interventions , and - FaHCSIA's process for administering the Early Intervention Services	*Considers all of the HCWA Package as well as broader issues such as the workforce availability*	Review – the majority of recommendations immediately relevant to improving operation of HCWA Early Intervention services and will be implemented to maintain best practice. *Evaluation* – More strategic issues. *Require consideration of recommendations in Final Report due by* ***December 2011.*** *Response to some of the issues raised in both reports can be delayed until the Final Evaluation Report is considered in early to mid-2012*
Recommendations		
Table of eligible and ineligible early intervention therapies	*Not in scope*	Immediate use and promotion of list
Improve communication and information sharing - Update guidelines and website - Clarify resources, service plans in guidelines - Better dissemination of info on all components of the Package	*Education and information activities* - *Update listed services* - *Monitor changes to Early Days Workshops delivery* - *Improve ED Workshops*	Review – process initiated and ongoing. Communication strategy complete – awaiting endorsement, and guidelines under review *Evaluation – Monitor and review Early Days Workshops as part of contract management process.*

Review of Therapies	HCWA Evaluation – Phase 2	Timeframe for actions
Clarify information on eligible interventions - Provide Table 6 to stakeholders - Provide summary of review process and findings - Update operational guidelines	*Not in scope*	Operational Guidelines and Application Form under review –**December 2011**
Regular updates on evidence of best practice - Develop process for updating knowledge on evidence	*Not in scope*	Develop internal process by **March 2012**
Reinvigorate operationalisation of principles of best practice - Restate focus on multi-disciplinary practice - Update Guidelines for Best Practice by Roberts and Prior	*Phase 3 to explore how multi-disciplinary model is working*	Begin promoting multidisciplinary approach through HCWA Communication Strategy Update Guidelines for Best Practice by Roberts and Prior – **March 2012** *Consider with HCWA Evaluation Final Report –* ***mid 2012.***
Training and expertise of service providers - Require improved demonstration of service provider training and expertise in applications for panel	*Sector Capacity and service access* - *Allied health workforce issues* - *Service delivery flexibility* - *New models for Indigenous access*	Update Guidelines for Best Practice by Roberts and Prior – **February 2012** *Sector capacity - Consider with HCWA Evaluation Final Report –* ***mid 2012***
Application process - More detail about provider training and expertise and about programs - Expert advice re problematic therapies - Reference best practice and evidence - Review research regularly - Consistent advice to applicants	*Not in scope*	Application process - implement where appropriate, as soon as possible – **December 2011.** Expert advice and reviewing evidence – develop internal process.
Autism Advisors - case management - conflict of interest	*Support to Access Services* - *formalise additional support to AAs* - *encourage communication between Package providers*	*Consider with HCWA Evaluation Final Report –* ***mid 2012.***

Review of Therapies	HCWA Evaluation – Phase 2	Timeframe for actions
Monitoring and evaluation of service providers and interventions - monitor effectiveness and fidelity of programs - reporting - accountability with $$ - consistent fee schedules	*Not in scope*	Complete HCWA Monitoring Framework by **December 2011.**
Innovative service delivery - telehealth	*Need different service models in regional and remote areas and for Indigenous and CALD*	Promote innovative service delivery and telehealth. Review guidelines with aim of encouraging flexibility.
Fees and funding - inconsistencies - inadequate funding - age cut-off	*Early Intervention Service Provider Panel* - *monitor fees* - *reduce administrative load* - *clarify and review resources policy*	*Consider with HCWA Evaluation Final Report –* ***mid 2012.***
Indigenous and CALD disadvantage - identify and implement strategies for increasing access	*Registration and Access* - *translated HCWA materials* - *culturally appropriate materials for Indigenous* - *research re barriers to accessing diagnosis* - *accessing diagnosis and criteria* - *monitor rates of registration*	Translation and culturally appropriate delivery and materials are being addressed in HCWA Communication Strategy. Registration rates already monitored re disadvantaged groups. *Consider with HCWA Evaluation Final Report –* ***mid 2012.***
	Management - *Support of STOs*	*Consider with HCWA Evaluation Final Report –* ***mid 2012.***
	Phase 3 - *Diagnosis issues* - *Integration with State and Territory service* - *Transition to school* - *Multidisciplinary model*	*Consider with HCWA Evaluation Final Report –* ***mid 2012.***