



Families and Children (FaC) Activity

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A very happy New Year, everyone! We hope that you had a well-deserved break over the holiday period. It seems 2024 is off and racing! We look forward to working together over the coming year.

Welcome to the first issue of the FaC Activity newsletter for 2024.

This issue covers:

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Please feel free to share this newsletter with other staff in your organisation. If staff would like to receive the newsletter directly, they can send a request by emailing families@dss.gov.au.



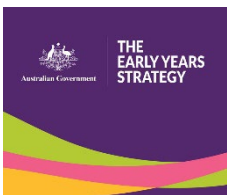
Surveys for child, youth and parenting services

Thank you to all Children and Parenting Support, Communities for Children Facilitating Partner and Family Mental Health Support Services providers who participated in our recent surveys for child, youth and parenting services.

The surveys are now closed. We are delighted with the number of responses the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) received.

We look forward to learning more about the valuable services you provide for children and families around Australia. Your input to these surveys, along with other activities the department is undertaking over the coming months, will improve our understanding of the children, youth and parents/carers programs delivered under the FaC Activity. These activities will include in-house research, as well as external engagement with service providers, clients and stakeholders. AIFS is supporting the department with a number of these activities.

The department will share any key insights from the review in mid-2024. We will continue to keep the sector updated on how this work progresses.



Early Years Strategy consultation

The department has released the draft [Early Years Strategy](#) (the Strategy) for consultation. The Strategy aims to deliver the best outcomes for Australia's children into the future. It highlights how important the early years are for a child's development and success.

In addition to the draft Strategy, the department has also released the [Early Years Strategy Consultation Report 2023](#). The report synthesises the views of a range of stakeholders, including children, parents and families, who participated in consultations over a 7-month period to inform the Early Years Strategy.

To give your feedback on the draft Strategy, visit the [Early Years Strategy page on the DSS Engage website](#) before 9 February 2024. Please feel free to tell your stakeholder networks about the survey for their opportunity to have their say.

Further information on the Strategy can be found on the [DSS website](#).



Call for evaluation reports on DSS-funded children and parenting programs

Please email us any completed evaluations you have commissioned or undertaken from 2018 and onwards, on any of the following programs:

- Children and Parenting Support
- Communities for Children Facilitating Partner
- Family Mental Health Support Services.

If you have any evaluation reports you would like to share, please send them through by **27 February** to families@dss.gov.au.

These insights from evaluations will help us to learn more about the valuable services you deliver and what works for families and children.



Resources and webinars

The [Child Family Community Australia Information Exchange \(CFCA\)](#) from AIFS publishes a range of resources on their website.

Recent CFCA resources you may want to check out:

- [How to recognise complex trauma in infants and children and promote wellbeing](#)
Webinar, Dec 2023
- [Engaging young children \(0-5 years\) in nature play](#)
Practice guide, Nov 2023
- [The impact of vaping on adolescent mental health](#)
Policy and practice paper, Oct 2023
- [What influences supportive peer relationships in the middle years?](#)
Short article, Sept 2023

The AIFS [Evidence and Evaluation Support](#) team held a webinar in November on [Using surveys to understand your service: Research and practice perspectives](#). This webinar provided valuable insights into how service providers can use surveys to better understand their clients' needs and whether they are being met. A video and transcript of the webinar are available on the [AIFS website](#).

You can watch other past and upcoming [webinars](#) on the AIFS website.

You can also [subscribe to the AIFS newsletter](#) to keep up to date with resources available from AIFS.



Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families update

Stronger Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), Stronger Families (SASF) Part 2 is being delivered by Wunan Foundation, an Aboriginal Corporation based in the East Kimberly. You can find more information about this project on the [DSS website](#).

Tranche 2 is beginning

The first set of 5 sites (Tranche 1) are nearing the end of their engagement period. There have been positive developments in all sites towards a closer relationship between each funded partner and the respective ACCO.

Following an expression of interest process, 5 CfC FP providers have been selected to be part of the second set of sites (Tranche 2). Tranche 2 will begin in January 2024, and continue until the project ends in June 2024.

The selected sites and organisations are listed below. Please note that Tranche 2 sites are in the early stages of engagement, and the exact sites and ACCOs are still being determined.

- **Lismore, NSW** – YWCA Australia
- **Dubbo, NSW** – CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes
- **East Kimberly, WA** – Save the Children – 54 Reasons
- **TBC** – Mission Australia
- **East Gippsland, VIC** – Uniting Vic Tas

On 30 November 2023, Wunan Foundation organised an all-day workshop, in Adelaide. This provided an opportunity for Tranche 1 participants to meet in person and share learnings from the project with each other, the department, Wunan Foundation and Tranche 2 participants. The important discussions held showed the real impacts of this project, and the hard work and trust all participants have put into this project.

Early learnings from the SASF Part 2 project so far:

1. The unique strengths of ACCO providers are generally well recognised, understood, and supported by non-ACCO partners with a desire to preference ACCO ways of knowing and doing.
2. All Leading Regions locations continue to develop their partnership at different paces, depending on their history and operating environment.
3. Generating enough staff capacity for ACCOs (particularly those in more remote areas) is a key challenge for expanding their service delivery footprint.
4. The voice of community needs to be centred in best practice approach to partner identification (and will be integrated into the Tranche 2 process).
5. Tools and resources developed through this project need to build on the existing evidence base and support establishment of sustainable ACCO-led delivery.



Data Exchange (DEX) update

Data Exchange Recording Gender Values

In response to consultations held in 2022, about implementation of the [ABS' latest Standards for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables](#), the way gender is reported into the Data Exchange is changing.

On Tuesday 14 November 2023, the Data Exchange team released gender value changes into the Data Exchange 'staging environment'. This will allow service providers to test how these changes will impact reporting into the Data Exchange for those organisations who report using a Bulk File Upload method or a System to System Transfer method.

The main change will be the retiring of 'Intersex indeterminate' as a value and introducing 'Non-binary' and '[I/They] use a different term'. It is anticipated the gender value change will be implemented into the 'live' Data Exchange reporting environment from 2 March 2024, which will be confirmed in a future update.

To subscribe to the Data Exchange Updates go the [notifications and updates](#) page of the DEX website.

To support service providers to start testing the gender values changes in the Data Exchange, a staging environment technical specifications document for both [Bulk File Upload](#) and [Web Services](#) is now available on the [Data Exchange website](#).

End of Reporting period

A friendly reminder that all service providers must enter data into the Data Exchange for the current reporting period (1 July to 31 December 2023) by 30 January 2024.

The department strongly encourages providers to enter data as soon as possible to avoid any last minute issues that might occur when uploading data.

If you need help, please contact the Data Exchange Helpdesk by sending an email to dssdataexchange.helpdesk@dss.gov.au or calling 1800 020 283 between 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday.