



**Australian Government**

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**Department of Social Services**

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**Families and Communities Programme**

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**Families and Children Guidelines Overview**

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November 2014

## Preface

The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) has a suite of Programme Guidelines which provides information about each Programme that provides grants funding, and the suite of Activities that contribute to that Programme. They provide the key starting point for parties considering whether to participate in a Programme and form the basis for the business relationship between DSS and the grant recipient.

DSS recognises and supports the work of civil society organisations. The DSS approach to working with civil society is based on reducing red tape, providing greater flexibility and respecting the independence of the sector. This approach recognises that civil society organisations should be supported to self-manage the delivery of support to our communities rather than being burdened with unnecessary government requirements.

Programme Guidelines are provided to applicants for each grant funding round. The approach to grants funding described in the Guidelines aims to foster collaboration and innovation in the community across civil society freeing up resources to improve outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

The Programme Guidelines for each grant funding round include:

- a Programme Guidelines Overview document (this document) that provides an overview of how funding rounds may be conducted for each Activity (PBS administered line item) that contribute to the overall Programme outcome, and
- an Application Pack - a suite of documents with information specific to each grant funding round conducted within the Activity.

The simplified Programme arrangements establish the framework for the Department to move towards a single grant agreement per provider, implement new and improved financial reporting systems, reduce reporting and regulation, consolidate funding rounds and support greater service delivery innovation to meet the needs of clients.

DSS reserves the right to amend these documents from time to time by whatever means it may determine in its absolute discretion and will provide reasonable notice of these amendments.

## Version Control

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# 1 Programme overview – Families and Communities

## 1.1 Programme outcomes

The Department of Social Services (DSS) funds organisations to develop and maintain a cohesive Australian community and improved independence and self-sufficiency recognising that government contributions are only one source of funding for the operation of community services.

The Families and Communities Programme aims to support families, improve children's wellbeing and increase participation of vulnerable people in community life to enhance family and community functioning.

The following seven Activities make up the Programme and support the Commonwealth Government's priorities and responsibilities:

- Financial Wellbeing and Capability
- Families and Children
- Strengthening Communities
- Settlement Services
- Civil Society
- Families and Communities Service Improvement
- National Initiatives

## 1.2 Programme objectives

The Families and Communities Programme aims to strengthen relationships, support families, improve children's wellbeing and increase the participation in community life to strengthen family and community functioning, and reduce the costs of family breakdown. The Programme will provide a range of services, focussed strengthening relationships, and building parenting and financial management skills, providing support for better community connections, as well as services to help newly arrived migrants in their transition to life in Australia.

The Programme also aims to provide a foundation for integrated, community led programme delivery that understands and meets local needs and promotes innovation and collaboration. This will include the establishment of a platform for continued improvement in the way DSS does its business, clarifying and strengthening Commonwealth and State/Territory government responsibilities and fostering stronger relationships with civil society and partnering with service providers.

The Programme will provide a range of services, predominantly focussed on early intervention, prevention, and support, including assistance for relationship breakdown.

These services will be provided to families, children, young people, volunteers, multicultural communities, humanitarian entrants, migrants and other individuals with special circumstances.

# 2 Activity Overview – Families and Children

The Families and Children Activity is delivered under the Families and Communities Programme and provides support to families to improve the wellbeing of children and young people to enhance family and community functioning, as well as increasing the participation of vulnerable people in community life.

Organisations provide early intervention and prevention activities to improve the wellbeing of families and children, including after separation, enhance family functioning and economic engagement and strengthen communities.

## 2.1 Aims and objectives

The Families and Children Activity will provide integrated services for families to achieve improved child, youth, adult and family wellbeing, increased economic engagement and more cohesive communities. To achieve this objective, services must work collaboratively to provide an integrated suite of local services.

To support families, strengthen relationships, improve the wellbeing of children and young people and increase participation of people in community life to enhance family and community functioning.

## **2.2 Sub-Activities**

### **2.2.1 Family Law Services**

The Family Law Services Sub-Activity is funded by and under the policy responsibility of the Attorney-General's Department. The Family Law Services are an important component of the family law system, which also includes legal assistance services, family law courts and Department of Human Services - Child Support.

Family Law Services aim to provide alternatives to formal legal processes for families who are separated, separating or in dispute to improve their relationships and make arrangements in the best interests of their children. Family Law Services have a particular role to help families with complex needs, including those with family violence issues.

To achieve these aims, Family Law Services must have an emphasis on family and the best interest of children, therefore must be child-focused and work as part of a collaborative service delivery system with links across Family Law Services and the broader sector. Family Law Services should ensure:

- all families are provided with the information they need about service options available, including from other sectors and jurisdictions
- vulnerable families are actively connected to services and supports, and
- children and families at risk of harm receive a timely and well-coordinated response from those who can keep them safe.

Family Law Services should have an early intervention and prevention focus to work with families early in the life of the presenting issues.

The Family Law Services Sub-Activity has a number of components, including (but not limited to):

#### **Family Relationship Centres**

Family Relationship Centres are a highly visible entry point or gateway to the whole family support service system. Family Relationship Centres play an important role in improving family relationships. Centres provide information, support and referral services to all families and provide family dispute resolution and access to some legal assistance for separating or separated families.

Family Relationship Centres assist separating parents to focus on their children's needs and reach agreement on safe workable parenting arrangements, in the best interests of their children, outside of the court system.

Family Dispute Resolution practitioners must be independent and impartial, assisting the parties to identify the issues in dispute, develop options and helping them try to reach agreement. Where relevant, Family Dispute Resolution services should help parents to understand the financial costs and impact on their children of using the courts to resolve parenting matters. In cases involving violence or child abuse, Family Dispute Resolution is not compulsory and parents may wish to resolve their difficulties in court. However, where it is appropriate, parents may choose to resolve their disputes out of court in cases where there has been violence.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Children's Contact Services**

Children's Contact Services enable children of separated parents to have safe contact with the parent who they do not live with in circumstances where parents are unable to manage their own contact arrangements. Children's Contact Services provide a safe, neutral venue for the transfer of children between separated parents. Where there is a perceived or actual risk to the child, they provide supervised contact between a child and their parent or other family member. Parents may be ordered by a court to attend Children's Contact Services to facilitate changeover or have supervised visits with their children.

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<sup>1</sup> These requirements relating to Family Dispute Resolution in Family Relationship Centres also apply to services funded under the following Components of Family Law Services: Family Dispute Resolution, Regional Family Dispute Resolution and the Family Relationship Advice Line.

Children's Contact Services assist families to move, where possible, to self-managed contact arrangements, both in terms of changeover and unsupervised contact. Children's Contact Services must ensure that the children's best interests are kept at the centre of the contact process. Services should only accept cases after careful screening and assessment and where they consider that their facilities and resources allow them to deliver services that are safe and appropriate for all parties. Children's Contact Services are independent and are not bound to provide a service, even if expressly ordered by a court.

### **Supporting Children after Separation Program**

The Supporting Children after Separation Program aims to support the wellbeing of children under the age of 18 from separated or separating families who are experiencing issues with difficult family relationships. The services help children and young people deal with issues arising from the breakdown of their parents' relationship and the circumstances in which they find themselves and provide opportunities for them to participate in decisions that impact on them.

Supporting Children after Separation Program services provide a range of age appropriate interventions including individual counselling or group work for children. Services can also facilitate access to child inclusive practice as a component of family dispute resolution where assessed as appropriate.

While the clients of Supporting Children after Separation Program are children under the age of 18, an important element is the development of links between other services and strong referral pathways within the local service system to ensure family members also receive services. As a result of engaging with a parent when providing a service to a child, services may refer parents and/or carers to complementary services that assist them to focus on the interests and needs of their children.

### **Parenting Orders Program – Post Separation Co-operative Parenting Services**

The Parenting Orders Program – Post Separation Co-operative Parenting services help separated or divorced families who are in high conflict to work out parenting arrangements in a manner which encourages consideration of what is in a child's best interests in establishing or maintaining relationships, while at the same time ensuring the safety of all parties. It helps parents manage their conflict, understand the effect their conflict is having on their children and to develop strategies to deal more constructively with each other and develop and manage parenting arrangements.

Parenting Orders Program – Post Separation Co-operative Parenting services use a variety of child-focused and child inclusive interventions and work where possible with all members of the family. Family members, including children, can receive a range of services such as counselling, multi-session or one-off group work education or family dispute resolution.

### **Family Dispute Resolution**

Family Dispute Resolution services assist families to reach agreement and to resolve their disputes related to family law issues about child and property related matters, outside of the court system. Clients may include grandparents and other extended family members affected by family separation.

The objectives of Family Dispute Resolution activities are:

- to assist separating families resolve disputes relating to separation and divorce and improve their post-separation relationships, and
- to improve people's management of issues relating to separation and divorce.

### **Regional Family Dispute Resolution**

Regional Family Dispute Resolution services assist families to reach agreement and to resolve their disputes related to family law issues, in particular child and property related matters, outside of the court system. Regional Family Dispute Resolution services may also include the provision of counselling and group work as part of meeting the needs of separated families in their community.

The objectives of Regional Family Dispute Resolution activities are:

- to assist separating families in regional areas resolve disputes relating to separation and divorce and improve their post-separation relationships, and
- to improve people's management of issues relating to separation and divorce.



### **Family Relationship Advice Line**

The Family Relationship Advice Line (the Advice Line) is a national non-face to face service comprising the following components:

- anonymity and confidentiality
- telephone information and advice
- telephone and online dispute resolution service, and
- telephone legal advice service.

The Advice Line provides:

- information about services to help maintain healthy relationships
- advice on family separation issues
- guidance on developing workable parenting arrangements after family separation
- advice about the impact of conflict on children
- telephone and online family dispute resolution for people who need assistance
- information about the family law system
- simple legal advice and information for separating families with children, and
- referral to a range of other services to help with family relationship and separation issues.

The Advice Line is to be available from 8.00am – 8.00pm (local time) Mondays to Fridays and 10.00am – 4.00pm (local time) on Saturdays. The Advice Line does not operate on national public holidays.

Anyone affected by family relationship or separation issues and difficulties, including parents, grandparents, carers, children, young people, step-parents or friends can call the Advice Line.

### **Family Law Counselling (delivered under the Family and Relationship Services Sub-Activity)**

Family Law Counselling services help people with relationship difficulties better manage their personal or interpersonal issues to do with children and family during marriage, separation and divorce.

Family Law Counselling Services aim to help clients:

- establish and maintain positive family relationships
- understand and better meet the care, welfare and development needs of children in their family context
- prevent relationship stress as appropriate
- manage transitions across the relationship life/cycle
- increase resilience to relationship stress or breakdown
- identify and assist clients to resolve underlying and/or contributing issues (such as illness, inadequate housing or unemployment)
- work collaboratively with other local community based organisations and government services
- raise awareness of relationship issues
- resolve parenting and child care issues, and
- prevent family breakdown and youth homelessness by working directly with young people and their families or caregivers.

Clients of Family Law Counselling services include family members with intact relationships, separated families, extended family members, individuals, children and young people, couples and significant others such as grandparents and kinship carers who have caring or other relationship responsibilities.

## **2.2.2 Family and Relationship Services**

Family and Relationship Services are a Sub-Activity under the Families and Children Activity and aim to strengthen family relationships, prevent breakdown and ensure the wellbeing and safety of children through the provision of broad-based counselling and education to families of different forms and sizes. These services are primarily early intervention and prevention and are targeted to critical family transition points including formation, extension, and separation.

The Family and Relationship Services Sub-Activity has a number of components, including (but not limited to):

### **Stronger Relationships trial**

The *Stronger Relationships* trial is a one year trial of providing \$200 vouchers to 100,000 couples to assist them to access relationship education and counselling including components of parenting education, conflict resolution or financial education. The *Stronger Relationships* trial will operate nationally from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015.

The objective of the trial is to provide incentives for couples to seek support to strengthen their relationships, especially at crucial life transition points such as moving in together, getting married and the birth of children.

### **2.2.3 Communities for Children Facilitating Partner**

Communities for Children Facilitating Partner (CfC FP) is a Sub-Activity under the Families and Children Activity that aims to deliver positive and sustainable outcomes for children and families in disadvantaged communities throughout Australia. CfC FPs are place-based and develop and facilitate a whole of community approach to support and enhance early childhood development and wellbeing for children from birth to 12 years, but may include children up to age 18 years. CfC FPs build on local strengths to meet local community needs and create capability within local service systems, using strong evidence of what works in early intervention and prevention. They collaborate with other organisations to provide a holistic service system for children and families. CfC FPs fund other organisations (known as Community Partners) to provide services including parenting support, group peer support, case management, home visiting services and other supports to promote child wellbeing.

CfC FPs are committed to evidence-based practice and actively support the provision of services that will improve outcomes for children and families. CfC FPs will use a proportion of their funding, as specified in their grant agreement, to fund services that are known to be high-quality and evidence-based. The remaining funds are used flexibly by the FP to undertake facilitation, coordination and collaborative work in their community or to fund soft-entry, innovative programmes.

CfC FPs have strong governance arrangements in place. CfC FPs establish and maintain CfC Committees which assist the FP to plan, guide and support the Activity. Committees are representative of their local communities and include clients, parents and local businesses, as well as local service providers. Community partners should also inform the identification of community needs and the planning of services.

CfC FPs play a facilitating and strategic role in the local area and contract all service delivery to Community Partners. If an appropriate Community Partner is not available in the community, the FP can deliver services but should work with local community organisations to build their capacity to deliver the necessary services in the future.

The CfC FPs use fair and transparent subcontracting arrangements, including the use of efficient and risk-based processes and funding terms that enable Community Partners to engage in longer-term planning for staffing and capacity building where possible.

### **2.2.4 Children and Parenting**

The Children and Parenting Sub-Activity provides funding to early intervention and prevention services and resources that are aimed at improving children's development and wellbeing and supporting the capacity of those in a parenting role. Services have a primary focus on children aged 0-12 years, but may include children up to age 18 years.

This Sub-Activity funds services that are outcome focused and committed to the use of evidence-based practice and programmes. Services use research and evaluation to continuously improve service quality. They are committed to initial and ongoing training, supervision and support for their staff to ensure the delivery of high quality services.

Services actively develop strategies to support access and engagement, such as cultural awareness and diversity; and flexible opening hours and service locations. Services use strengths-based, collaborative approaches in engaging with their clients.

The Children and Parenting Sub-Activity has a number of components, including (but not limited to):

### **Children and Parenting Support**

Services under this component provide support to children and families based on an early intervention and prevention approach. Services actively seek to identify issues that are or could impact on child or family outcomes and provide interventions or appropriate referral before these issues escalate.

Services could include community playgroups, supported playgroups, parenting courses, home visiting and peer support groups.

The geographic spread of services around the country is taken into account. Children and Parenting Support services do not duplicate existing Commonwealth or state and territory government child and parenting services. The presence of other similar services will be taken into account when assessing the needs of a community.

This component may also fund organisations that develop resources that provide information about children's development and parenting skills.

### **Intensive Family Support Services**

Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS) are evidence-informed and outcomes-based and focus on reducing child neglect and increasing the capacity of families to support their children to be safe, nurtured and thriving.

IFSS provides the most vulnerable families in identified communities in the Northern Territory and South Australia with practical parenting education and support to parents and caregivers in their communities and homes for up to 12 months, to help them improve the health, safety and wellbeing of their children.

IFSS providers will work closely with an implementation support partner to support the effective and robust delivery of an evidence-informed and outcomes based service, according to the implementation support needs of the IFSS provider and their workforce.

### **Child Support Advocacy**

Child Support Advocacy funding is provided to community organisations that regularly assist separated or separating parents with support and information regarding their interaction with the Child Support Scheme. These organisations can provide a variety of services which may include (but are not limited to):

- providing advice and support for members, and the sector, on Australian Government policies, programmes and services relating to families and children, particularly vulnerable and separated families who interact with the Child Support Scheme
- referring members, and the sector, to appropriate services such as lawyers, counsellors, Family Relationship Centres
- sharing information through events such as conferences and workshops or through their organisation's website
- responding to requests from DSS for input into submissions, reviews or consultative processes regarding child support policy issues, ensuring member's views are reflected in any advice provided, if required, and
- ensuring mechanisms are in place to continuously capture, record and analyse the issues raised by their members and their network.

## **2.2.5 Young People**

This Young People Sub-Activity supports early intervention and prevention services for young people. These services assist young people and their families to improve family relationships, promote family functioning, and support engagement with work, education, training and the community. Focus is on vulnerable young people who are at risk of disengaging with family and community, including those at risk of homelessness.

The Young People Sub-Activity will focus on community-based interventions for young people aged 12 to 18 years (12-21 for Newly Arrived Youth Specialist Services), who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and their families. Intervention services may provide counselling, group work, mediation and practical support to the whole family, to help break the cycle of homelessness. Service providers may also purchase other services to meet the individual needs of clients, such as specialised mental health services.

## 2.2.6 Adult Specialist Support

The Adult Specialist Support Sub-Activity provides specialist services and support to improve outcomes and enhance wellbeing for people adversely affected by past institutional and child-welfare practices and policies.

Services funded under the Adult Specialist Support Sub-Activity should be underpinned by evidence-based practice, design and delivery principles that ensure:

- a tailored, flexible and holistic approach to support each client's needs
- the importance of validating and respecting the different histories of people affected by former policies and practices
- the client is central to all service design and delivery
- people are empowered to make their own informed choices about their healing
- service delivery staff have appropriate specialist skills / training and understand the unique and varied impacts of past institutional practices
- people affected by past practices and policies are included in planning, and
- where service delivery organisations have existing links to institutions involved with past child welfare practices and policies which may have adversely affected individuals, services will be transparent and, where necessary, publically acknowledge their involvement in past practices, confirm their commitment to deliver high-quality and independent services, and outline their policies for handling real and perceived conflicts of interest.

The Adult Specialist Support Sub-Activity has a number of components, including (but not limited to):

### Find and Connect Support Services

The Find and Connect component includes a support service in each state and territory, a national web resource to assist with records tracing and access, and advocacy groups that are funded to support stakeholders and present consolidated views and directions to Government and the sector. The Find and Connect Support Services provide specialist counselling, referral services, peer, education and social support programmes and assistance to locate and access records and reconnect with family members (where possible) for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants.

### Forced Adoption Support Services

Services under this component provide specialist support to people affected by forced adoption. The services complement and enhance existing services funded by the state and territory governments and aim to improve access to peer support, professional counselling and records and family tracing.

### Royal Commission Community-Based Support Services

This component includes a range of community-based support services to provide support to people affected by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission). These services provide a broad range of assistance including counselling, information and referral and case management to ensure victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, and their families, are able to access support and participate in the Royal Commission.

## 2.3 Applicant eligibility

The following entity types meet the eligibility requirements to be invited to apply for a grant for this Activity:

- a. Incorporated Associations (incorporated under state/territory legislation, commonly have 'Association' or 'Incorporated' or 'Inc.' in their legal name)
- b. Incorporated Cooperatives (also incorporated under state/territory legislation, commonly have 'Cooperative' in their legal name)
- c. Companies (incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001* – may be a proprietary company (limited by shares or by guarantee) or a public company)
- d. Aboriginal Corporations (incorporated under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006*)
- e. Organisations established through a specific piece of Commonwealth or state/territory legislation (public benevolent institutions, churches, universities, unions etc.)
- f. Partnerships
- g. Trustees on behalf of a Trust.

Not-for-profit entity types specified above meet the eligibility requirements.

For-profit entity types specified above may be invited in special circumstances.

The following entity types may be invited in special circumstances:

- h. State and territory Governments
- i. Local Governments
- j. Where there is no suitable alternative, an individual or – jointly and separately – individuals. Where j) is used, it also needs to be stated who the decision maker is on the issue.

### **2.3.1 Family and Relationship Services**

#### **Family and Relationship Services - *Stronger Relationships* trial**

The service providers will be either:

- Family and Relationships Services (FaRS) providers who have chosen to opt in to be on the list of pre-approved providers, or
- Not-for-profits who are providers of relationship education or counselling who have a demonstrated track record of providing services to at least 100 couples per year.

### **2.3.2 Flexibility**

Grant recipients will be expected to monitor changes in their communities and adjust the services they deliver to meet the changing needs of families and children. Grant recipients may also be asked to vary their existing service type or activity delivery area to meet changing demands.

## **2.4 Participants/clients/recipients/target group**

### **2.4.1 Family Law Services**

Family Law Services aim to improve family relationships in the best interests of children by providing safe alternatives to formal legal processes for families who are separated, separating or in dispute to improve their relationships and make arrangements in the best interests of their children.

### **2.4.2 Family and Relationship Services**

Family and Relationship Services support family members with intact relationships, separated families, extended family members, individuals, children and young people, couples and significant others such as grandparents and kinship carers who have caring or other relationship responsibilities.

Priority should be given to:

- couples forming long-term relationships
- families experiencing relationship issues, or who are at risk of breakdown
- families with children at risk of abuse or neglect, and
- families experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability.

The Target Group for the *Stronger Relationships* trial Component are couples who register via the DSS *Stronger Relationships* trial website and provide their reference number to the service provider.

All couples who are in committed relationships, and where both members of the couple are at least 18 years old, are eligible to participate in the *Stronger Relationships* trial at any stage in their relationships. This includes engaged, married, de-facto and same-sex couples.

Couples who are not eligible are encouraged to contact the Family Relationships Advice Line on 1800 050 321 or visit [Family Relationships Online](#) for information on other available services.

### **2.4.3 Communities for Children Facilitating Partner**

The Communities for Children Facilitating Partner Sub-Activity targets vulnerable children and families in disadvantaged communities, with a particular focus on providing early intervention and prevention services for children at risk of poor outcomes or at risk of abuse and neglect. The primary focus is on children 0-12 years.

Priority should be given to:

- families with children at risk of abuse or neglect
- families experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability, and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, in line with the Australian Government's commitment to Closing the Gap.

CfC FPs also consider the needs of men and fathers and actively involve them when providing support to children and their families, where appropriate. Services have a primary focus on children aged 0-12 years, but may include children up to age 18 years.

#### **2.4.4 Children and Parenting**

Individual Children and Parenting services may be targeted towards a specific group of vulnerable and disadvantaged children and families who are at risk of poor outcomes. These groups could include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, parents/carers supporting children (including children with disability or chronic medical condition) with additional needs, families who lack social supports, and families experiencing mental illness, alcohol and other drug or domestic violence issues. Services have a primary focus on children aged 0-12 years, but may include children up to age 18 years.

Services should develop strategies to ensure that all groups, including vulnerable and disadvantaged clients, can access their services, while not necessarily targeting services to only the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. Services should consider the needs of men and fathers and actively involve them when providing support to children and their families, where appropriate.

The Intensive Family Support Services are available to Indigenous and non-Indigenous families in identified communities with children aged 0-12 years of age where there are child neglect concerns. Priority access will be given to families involved with state/territory government child protection services and on Child Protection Income Management (CPIM).

Through IFSS, families on CPIM will not only be supported to stabilise their financial situations, but will also be supported to make positive and sustained life changes to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of their children.

IFSS is not responsible for the delivery of specialist and/or clinical interventions but will work with families who have high and complex needs and support them to access specialist services (e.g. drug and alcohol, domestic violence, mental health services).

#### **2.4.5 Young People**

The target group for the Young People Sub-Activity includes (but is not limited to) young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

#### **2.4.6 Adult Specialist Support**

The target group for the Adult Specialist Support Sub-Activity is people adversely affected by past institutional and child welfare practices and policies. Many of these practices and policies were considered to be based on child welfare, but in fact often involved abusive, negligent or illegal acts that had detrimental impact on the target group.

The target group includes:

- Forgotten Australians: individuals who spent a period of time as children in children's Homes, orphanages and other forms of out-of-home 'care' last century up until the 1989 (they are not contemporary care leavers)
- Former Child Migrants: individuals who arrived in Australia through historical child migration schemes until 1970 and who were subsequently placed in homes and orphanages
- People affected by forced adoption and removal practices and policies, and
- Individuals and other family members affected by the processes of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

## 2.5 Funding for the Activity

A total of \$1.55 billion has been allocated to this Activity by the Australian Government, comprising \$865.87 million over four years from the Families and Children's Appropriation of the Department of Social Services and \$689.76<sup>2</sup> million over four years from the Family Relationship Services Appropriation of the Attorney-General's Department. All amounts are GST exclusive.

Funding amounts are inclusive of discretionary grants awarded under these Programme Guidelines and funding provided through other process such as procurement. Funding amounts included in these Programme Guidelines are estimates and may change in the course of the budget year as government priorities change.

As a part of the Families and Children Activity, organisations may choose to use up to 10% of their funding for innovative projects. This will be negotiated as part of the grant agreement.

The Minister for Social Services has overall responsibility for the Adult Specialist Support; Family and Relationship Services; Community for Children Facilitating Partner; Children and Parenting and Young People Sub-Activities.

Where DSS has invited applications for grants, the final decision about service delivery areas, sites and proposals for service delivery will be made by the Departmental delegate.

Service delivery areas or catchment areas designated within the grant agreement must not change without prior written agreement from DSS.

DSS may at its discretion facilitate flexible grants in circumstances where service providers have met requirements for specific groups within a specified area and wish to reallocate all or part of any remaining funds to another Activity they are funded to deliver in another Activity Delivery Area under the same grant agreement.

DSS may negotiate grant agreements ranging up to a five year term based on the grant purpose, degree of risk and priorities for funding.

### 2.5.1 Family Law Services

The Attorney-General has responsibility for the Family Law Services Sub-Activity. The Family Law Services Sub-Activity is administered by DSS. Funding will be provided through the Family Law Services Sub-Activity to more than 70 community organisations operating across Australia. From time to time, the Australian Government may direct additional or supplementary funding to services. This could include funding for:

- targeted services in areas experiencing short term high need or requiring emergency assistance, or
- pilot programmes, possibly in partnership with other agencies.

A current Family Law Service provider may be asked to apply for time limited, short-term funding. In addition, direct sourcing for selection processes may be undertaken. For example, if a Family Law Service Provider was unable to continue to deliver services in a particular location, the Australian Government may direct funding to another suitable organisation to provide these services.

Family Law Services are, at the service provider's discretion, permitted to charge fees. While Family Law Services may charge fees, clients must not be refused service or referred to other organisations on the basis of incapacity to pay fees.

Where fees are charged, service providers must:

- publicly display their fees policy, and
- inform clients of their fees policy.

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<sup>2</sup> Not all funding provided under the Family Relationships Services Appropriation is administered by the Department of Social Services.

The first hour of Family Dispute Resolution services delivered through a Family Relationship Centre must be provided at no cost to the client. The second and third hour of Family Dispute Resolution can be charged at \$30 per hour for clients with an individual income of over \$50,000.

## 2.5.2 Family and Relationship Services

Some Family and Relationship Services are permitted to charge fees on a sliding scale depending on income. However, clients must not be refused services or referred to other organisations on the basis of incapacity to pay fees.

Where fees are charged, service providers must:

- publically display their fee policy, and
- inform clients of their fee policy.

In accordance with the Fair Work Australia decision of 1 February 2012 to increase wages in the Social and Community Services (SACS) sector, the DSS will provide supplementation funding to organisations employing SACS workers delivering Family and Children Activities. To be eligible for supplementation funding organisations must be delivering in-scope Commonwealth funded programmes and have employed staff under the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010 (SACS Modern Award), specifically under one of the following Schedules:

- Schedule B – Classification Definitions - Social and Community Services Employees, and
- Schedule C – Classification Definitions - Crisis Accommodation Employees.

Organisations affected by the Western Australia Industrial Relation Commission SACS Decision of 29 August 2013 may also be entitled to SACS supplementation.

## 2.6 Eligible and ineligible activities

The grant may be used for:

- staff salaries and on-costs which can be directly attributed to the provision of Families and Children Activity in the identified service area or areas as per the grant agreement
- employee training for paid and unpaid staff including Committee and Board members, that is relevant, appropriate and in line with the Families and Children Activity, and
- operating and administration expenses directly related to the delivery services, such as:
  - telephones
  - rent and outgoings
  - computer/IT/website/software
  - insurance
  - utilities
  - postage
  - stationery and printing
  - accounting and auditing
  - travel/accommodation costs, and
  - assets as defined in the Terms and Conditions that can be reasonably attributed to meeting agreement deliverables.

Grants are not provided for:

- purchase of land
- the covering of retrospective costs
- costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application or related documentation
- major construction/capital works
- overseas travel, and
- activities for which other Commonwealth, State, Territory or Local Government bodies have primary responsibility.



## **2.7 Activity links and working with other agencies and services**

Families and Children providers must work collaboratively with each other and with relevant government and non-government agencies that provide services to the target group. To ensure effective integration with appropriate services, providers must build and maintain effective relationships with a broad network of relevant services, which may include:

- other providers under the Families and Communities Programme, particularly those also funded under the Families and Children Sub-Activity
- services funded by state and territory governments that service the target group/s
- the Department of Human Services (Centrelink and Child Support)
- medical services such as general practitioners
- mental health services
- alcohol and other drug services
- family violence services
- legal assistance services
- family law courts
- domestic and family violence services
- homelessness services
- education services
- housing services, and
- any other relevant services, such as financial counselling and health services.

### **2.7.1 Family Law Services**

All Family Law Services must provide integrated services as part of the family law system and work in collaboration with other services and the community. These would include specialist Family Violence, Drug and Alcohol and legal services. A collaborative service system helps to ensure that:

- families are provided with the information and support they need about service options available, including from other services, sectors and jurisdictions
- families are actively connected, through appropriate referrals, to services and supports, as early as possible, and
- children and families at risk of harm receive a timely and well-coordinated response from those who can help keep them safe.

### **2.7.2 Family and Relationship Services**

Effective links with other agencies and services provide the opportunity to work collaboratively to provide more integrated services for families. To maximise referrals and co-ordinated service delivery when problems first emerge for children or families, Family and Relationship Services must develop collaborative arrangements with:

- other Families and Children service providers
- local schools
- medical services such as general practitioners and Child and Maternal Health Nurses
- relevant Local, State and Commonwealth government agencies
- other government-funded services
- community groups, and
- other organisations that support the community.

*Stronger Relationships* trial services will have a network of referral pathways and be expected to refer clients to other appropriate support services when issues arise that cannot be addressed by the trial services, for example drug and alcohol services or mental health services.

### **2.7.3 Communities for Children Facilitating Partner**

The CfC FP will convene a CfC Committee for each site to engage a broad range of community representatives, including clients, parents, businesses, community partners and other community groups.

## 2.7.4 Children and Parenting

Services are committed to building collaborative relationships with other service providers to avoid duplication and to support timely and warm referrals for their clients. Services will participate in any relevant local service planning committees, networks or partnerships.

## 2.8 Specialist requirements (e.g. Legislative requirements)

In delivering the Activity, organisations are required to comply with all relevant laws; and comply with DSS Policies as specified at [Doing Business with DSS](#).

Family and Children Activity service providers will comply with Commonwealth legislation including:

- The *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)* in performing the obligations outlined in the grant agreement
- The *Copyright Act 1968 (the Act)* in regards to undertaking the Activity
- The *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Commonwealth) (FOI Act)*
- The *Family Law Act 1975 (Family Law Act)*
- The *Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Act 2006*
- The Family Law (Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners) Regulations 2008
- The *Marriage Act 1961*
- *Age Discrimination Act 2004*
- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, and
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*.

Service providers must also comply with all relevant State and Territory legislation, including State and Territory legislation applicable to working with children and vulnerable people.

Australia's *Multicultural Access and Equity Policy: Respecting diversity. Improving responsiveness* obliges Australian Government agencies to ensure that cultural and linguistic diversity is not a barrier for people engaging with government and accessing services to which they are entitled, for example, by providing access to language services where appropriate. Grant applicants should consider whether services, projects, activities or events may require the use of professional translating or interpreting services in order to communicate with non-English speakers. If required, based on an assessment of the target group, costs for translating and interpreting services should be factored into grant applications. For further information on the Multicultural Access and Equity Policy please refer to the [DSS website](#).

### 2.8.1 Family and Relationship Services

Grant recipients that deliver marriage education (as required) must be approved as an organisation conducting marriage education programmes under Section 9C of the *Marriage Act 1961*. The provision of marriage education services can be approved by the Minister of Social Services under the *Marriage Act 1961*.

The delivery of Family and Relationship Services is linked to the *Family Law Act 1975*.

There are currently no accreditation rules for family counsellors. Family counsellors must be authorised by an approved or designated organisation funded under the Family Relationship Services Program<sup>3</sup> in order to deliver family counselling under the *Family Law Act 1975*. This ensures that the counsellors are covered by the provisions in the *Family Law Act 1975* relating to confidentiality and inadmissibility of communications made during family counselling.

### 2.8.2 Adult Specialist Support

Providers who will deliver services under Adult Specialist Support Sub-Activity must comply with all relevant Commonwealth and State and Territory legislation and regulations. It is particularly important that all services meet all requirements for working with vulnerable people and state-based working with children checks.

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<sup>3</sup> The Family Relationship Services Program is referred to here to reflect what is currently written in the legislation.

The scope of services provided under this stream is broad, but highly specialised, so requires skills and expertise such as:

- suitably qualified staff (with access to appropriate supervision and debriefing arrangements) with experience in working with complex trauma and with a deep understanding of the often complex emotional support and therapeutic needs of people affected by past institutional and child-welfare practices and policies, and
- staff experienced in records tracing and family searches that can help connect clients to their history and, where possible, their families.

## **2.9 Information technology**

Family and Children's Activity grant recipients must have systems\* in place to allow them to meet their data collection and reporting obligations outlined in their Schedule.

Performance information (e.g. client characteristics and service delivery information) will be required to be collected by service providers at the client level and entered directly into the department's client data capture system, its predecessor or via a DSS approved alternative mechanism.

Where collection of client level data is not appropriate for instance due to the Activity involving a large group, aggregate reporting will be permitted.

The Data System protocols and requirements are available at [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au).

The new application will:

- Be a web based portal
- Allow submission of data through external approved third party applications, and
- Support submission of data through other approved methods.

Performance information required to be collected may include (but is not limited to):

- Client consent (where required)
- Client identity characteristics
- Client demographic characteristics
- Service delivery information, and
- Client outcomes.

Please note there are no minimum Information Technology requirements for grant recipients.

## **2.10 Activity performance and reporting**

DSS focuses on outcomes; however, other information, not related to outcomes includes information that can be used to monitor ongoing operation of the grant recipient's service delivery/project; and track issues that may affect the operation of the grant recipient's service delivery/project.

DSS Performance Indicators focus on three key questions:

1. Are we achieving what we expected?
2. How well is it being done?
3. How much is being done?

Performance Indicators based on these questions may be included in the grant agreement for the grant recipient.

Performance against agreed targets for the indicators, and additional information needed to evaluate service delivery/project performance, must be reported in progress reports and a final report as outlined in the grant agreement with DSS.

Full details of reporting requirements will be listed in the grant agreement for each grant recipient.

## 2.11 Financial reporting

The Activity will be managed to ensure the efficient and effective use of public monies. This will be consistent with best value in social services principles; the DSS grant agreement and will aim to maintain viable services and act to prevent fraud upon the Commonwealth.

Acquittal documents must be provided to DSS as outlined in the grant agreement.

Funding must only be used for the purposes for which it was provided.

## 2.12 DSS responsibilities and accountabilities under the Activity

The Minister for Social Services has overall responsibility for the Families and Communities Programme.

DSS will:

- meet the Australian Government's terms and conditions of the grant agreement established with organisations
- ensure that services provided under the programme are accountable to the Australian Government under the terms and conditions agreed in the grant agreement
- administer the operation of the programme in a timely manner
- identify suitable providers to deliver the activities required as per the grant agreement
- work in partnership with the provider to ensure the programme is implemented and will provide the service provider with constructive feedback,
- ensure that the outcomes contained within the Programme Guidelines are being met and evaluate the provider's performance against the programme outcomes, and
- information on the successful grants will be published on the [DSS website](#) within the required timeframes.

### 2.12.1 Family Law Services

This section sets out the responsibilities and accountabilities of the Minister for Social Services, the Attorney-General, and the departments.

#### 2.12.1.1 Role of the Attorney-General and the Minister for Social Services

The Minister for Social Services has overall responsibility for the Families and Communities Programme. The Attorney-General has policy responsibility for Family Law Services Sub-Activity within the Families and Children Activity and Families and Communities Programme.

#### 2.12.1.2 Departments' responsibilities

Both DSS and the Attorney General's Department (AGD) are committed to working in partnership with Family Law Services - service providers directly and through industry representative bodies.

The AGD will:

- identify current or future policy issues concerning family law services under the Families and Children Activity
- develop new policy relating to family law services under the Families and Children Activity
- facilitate improved integration and collaboration between family law services and the broader family law system
- conduct reviews and commission research and evaluations of family law services. AGD periodically undertakes or commissions programme evaluations and reviews to ensure its programmes are high quality, effective, efficient and appropriately targeted to the needs of families. Where AGD plans to undertake these types of data collection, it will notify service providers of:
  - its intention to vary or collect data
  - the focus of the evaluation or data collection
  - provide a rationale for the evaluation
  - who is conducting the evaluation or collecting the data
  - the time period in which it is to be collected and the reporting mechanism

- where applicable, the involvement sought from the service provider
- any special strategies or other information relevant to the collection of data, and
- foreshadow the type of information that is likely to be available from the evaluation, which might benefit the service providers.
- administer the grant agreement for the Legal Advice Service component of the Family Relationship Advice Line, and
- where DSS has invited applications for funding, the final decision about service delivery areas, sites and proposals for service delivery will be made by the Attorney-General or departmental Chief Executive (including a Chief Executive's delegate).

DSS administers activities funded under the Family Law Services on behalf of AGD.

DSS will:

- be responsible for programme delivery
- document and promote the value and contribution of the Family Law Services Sector
- recognise Sector diversity in consultation processes and Sector development initiatives
- work towards:
  - improved information sharing, including the quality and relevance of data available to service providers and greater access to publicly funded research and data
  - reduced red tape and streamlined reporting
  - simplified and improved consistency of financial arrangements including across state and federal jurisdictions, and
  - improved grant and procurement processes
- publish successful grants on the [DSS website](#) within required timeframes
- work with service providers to better measure service effectiveness and client outcomes
- together with AGD, conduct reviews and commission research and evaluations of family law services
- support further development of an integrated service system and coordination of initiatives across government
- review and update Programme Guidelines and associated documentation as needed, providing notice of at least one month prior to the changes coming into effect, in consultation with AGD
- negotiate grant agreements in consultation with existing funded service providers or where necessary, with preferred applicants based on the outcomes of any selection processes
- in relation to proposed changes to service delivery areas or catchment areas, designated within the grant agreement, consider them, in consultation with AGD, and
- in consultation with AGD may at its discretion facilitate flexible funding in circumstances where service providers:
  - have met grant agreement requirements within a specified Activity Delivery Area, and
  - wish to reallocate all or part of any remaining funds for the delivery of a Service Type or Service Types, under the same grant agreement, to the delivery of that Service Type or those Service Types in another catchment area or areas.
- DSS is responsible for managing all selection processes in accordance with its business practices. AGD has the option of nominating a representative to participate on each selection panel.
- The Minister for Social Services is responsible for selection processes for services, with the Attorney-General making the final decision and jointly announcing new services where selected and/or renewed.

## **2.13 Grant recipients responsibilities and accountabilities under the Activity**

In entering into a grant agreement with DSS, the grant recipient must comply with all requirements outlined in the suite of documents that comprise the agreement including these Programme Guidelines, the grant agreement and the [Standard Agreement Terms and Conditions](#).

Grant recipients are responsible for ensuring:

- the terms and conditions of the grant agreement are met
- service provision is effective, efficient, and appropriately targeted
- highest standards of duty of care are applied

- services are operated in line with, and comply with the requirements as set out within all state and territory and Commonwealth legislation and regulations
- Indigenous Australians have equal and equitable access to services
- they work collaboratively to deliver the programme, and
- they contribute to the overall development and improvement of the programme such as sharing best practice.

## 2.14 Risk management strategy

All DSS grant agreements are managed according to their level of risk. Organisations will be subject to a Provider Capacity Risk Assessment prior to the negotiation of grant agreements. Organisations may also be required to participate in a Financial Viability Assessment during the Assessment process of an application. A periodic monitoring process is undertaken during the term of an agreement which monitors service delivery and is used to provide evidence for ongoing risk assessments.

## 2.15 Special conditions applying to this Activity

### Family and Relationship Services – *Stronger Relationships* trial providers

Family and Relationship Service providers of the *Stronger Relationships* trial must also read and comply with the *Stronger Relationships* trial Operational Guidelines.

Service providers are required to participate in the evaluation of the *Stronger Relationships* trial. Information requested by the evaluator must be provided in a timely manner.

# 3 Application Process

## 3.1 Overview of the application process

All grant processes will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Commonwealth Grant Guidelines (Commonwealth Grant Guidelines will cease 30 June 2014 and will be replaced with Commonwealth Grant Rules 1 July 2014) and will be for purposes that are consistent with the objectives and priorities of the Families and Children's Activity.

## 3.2 Programme Guidelines

Applicants for grants funding rounds conducted for this Activity will be provided with the Programme Guidelines suite of documents comprising:

- the Programme Guidelines Overview (this document)
- an Application Pack - a suite of documents with information specific to each grant funding round conducted within the Activity.

### 3.2.1 Application Pack

The Application Pack will comprise the following documents:

#### Funding Round Summary

This document includes the following information:

- objectives and requirements of the funding round
- the type of selection process being used
- opening and closing dates
- the value of the funding round
- how to submit an application
- selection criteria, and
- eligibility criteria.

#### Application Form

This document asks you to address selection criteria relating to the particular funding round you are applying for and also requires you to complete general information about you as the provider applying

for funding.

## **DSS Streamlined Grant Agreement template – General Grant Conditions**

The signed grant agreement will include information relating to the Grant objectives, the activities to be undertaken, the duration of the grant, payment, reporting requirements, supplementary terms and conditions, and signatures of DSS and providers.

Applicants for funding rounds may also be provided with the following additional information as part of the Application pack including:

### **Questions and Answers**

This document aims to answer any questions and provide additional information relating to the activity and the application process for each individual activity that you are applying for funding. This will include operational guidelines if applicable.

### **3.3 Achieving value for money**

In assessing the extent to which the application represents value for money, DSS will have regard to the following:

- the relative merit of each application
- the overall objective/s to be achieved in providing the funding
- the relative cost of the proposal, or of elements of the proposal
- the extent to which the applicant has demonstrated a capacity to fund the proposal taking into consideration all possible sources of finance, including debt finance
- the geographic location of the proposal, and
- the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrates that the proposal will be located in a community with one or more of the following features:
  - the community is identified as a priority community by DSS
  - the community has high levels of the target population or of a special needs group
  - the community has high population growth in the target population or has anticipated high population growth in the target population.

### **3.4 Choice of selection process**

When undertaking a selection process DSS will consider the proportionality of scale, nature, funding amount, complexity and risks involved in the funding round. DSS will consider proportionality to inform the choice of the application and selection process, the type of grant agreement to be used and the reporting and acquittal requirements.

The Families and Children Activity funds a diverse range of service types and other activities. Due to the size and complexity of the Families and Children Activity, access to funding will be available through a variety of means and at various times throughout the funding period. DSS proposes to undertake a mix of the following selection processes to achieve the objectives and priorities for the Families and Children Activity.

#### **3.4.1 Open competitive selection process**

An open competitive selection process is open to all providers operating in the market place. Open processes are advertised through the media, the [DSS website](#) and other sources in order to attract as much interest as possible. Open competitive grant rounds have open and closed nominated dates, with eligible applications being assessed against the nominated selection criteria.

#### **3.4.2 Restricted competitive selection process**

A restricted (or targeted) selection process is used where there are few providers available due to highly specialised services being required, there are geographical considerations, specific expertise is required or there are time constraints. A restricted grant round is still competitive, but only opens to a small number of potential grant recipients based on the specialised requirements of the granting activity

or project under consideration. Potential grant recipients are invited to apply and will still need to be assessed against nominated selection criteria.

### **3.4.3 Direct selection process**

A direct selection process is a closed non-competitive process, where an approach is made directly to an existing, high performing provider to expand their current service delivery activities or deliver new services. It involves assessment of a provider's capacity to deliver an expanded service or capability to deliver a new service through use of selection criteria and/or an assessment of a provider's current performance.

### **3.4.4 Expressions of Interest (EOI) process**

DSS may call for EOIs to test the market to ascertain the extent of potential applicants. An EOI will be advertised as the first in a two stage process. The second stage involves applicants selected through the EOI process applying in either a targeted or direct process.

DSS may advertise any funding process:

- in major national newspapers and other selected newspapers
- on the [DSS website](#), and
- on the [Government grants website](#).

Any advertisement will inform potential applicants of where to obtain application information for the relevant process. Processes will be provided on the [DSS website](#) under the Grants tab.

DSS from time to time may conduct a direct selection in the event that there is a change in government policy, a shift in demographics, unforeseen circumstances or due to service provider failure.

## **3.5 Service delivery areas**

It is expected that if a service area changes, the grant recipient will be able to meet the cost of delivering the Activity in the revised area through its own efficiencies and within the funding provided.

Service delivery areas or catchment areas designated within the grant agreement must not change without prior written agreement from DSS. However, grant recipients are encouraged to monitor demographic changes in their broader region and discuss varying their catchment areas with DSS if this helps address an emerging need not being met in that area. Where service delivery areas or catchment areas require definition, this will be provided in the Application Pack.

DSS may also, at its discretion, facilitate flexible grants in circumstances where grant recipients have met grant agreement requirements within a specified service area and wish to reallocate all or part of any remaining funds to another service they are funded to deliver in another service delivery area under the same grant agreement.

## **3.6 Selection criteria**

This section sets out the full suite of selection criteria that may be used for any funding process under the Families and Children Activity. Some Sub-Activities may have specialist criteria applied.

Depending on the Activity/Sub-Activity and type of funding process, a reduced set of assessment criteria may be set by the appropriate departmental delegate exercising their ability to waive certain criteria. The final set of selection criteria will be reflected in the Application Pack.

The equally weighted selection criteria are:

- demonstrate your understanding of the need for the funded Activity in the specified community and/or specified target group
- describe how the implementation of your proposal will achieve the Activity objectives for all stakeholders, including value for money within the Grant funding
- demonstrate your experience in effectively developing, delivering, managing and monitoring Activities to achieve Activity objectives for all stakeholders, and
- demonstrate your organisation's capacity and your staff capability (experience and qualifications) to deliver the Activity objectives in the specified community and/or specified target group.





Applicants will need to demonstrate/address the following, across all selection criteria:

- appropriateness of the proposal to the objectives of the Activity
- potential for the proposal to meet the objectives of the Activity
- the need for the proposal to be carried out
- the governance, expertise and capacity of the applicant, including the applicant's financial, risk and audit/fraud strategic plans, and evidence of sound governance
- the applicant's track record in delivering quality Activity services, where applicable
- relevant stakeholders (target groups, communities, government etc)
- evidence base, where applicable
- the applicant's viable and sustainable financial model
- value for money (of the proposed outcomes, projected deliverables, location, community benefit and the amount of funding sought as detailed in the Application Form)
- the broad assessment requirements outlined in the relevant attachment, and
- other assessment criteria specifically relating to the Activity being funded.

When applying for grant funding for the following Sub-Activities the following specialist criteria applies.

### **3.6.1 Adult Specialist Support Sub-Activity**

- Demonstrated independence from organisations or individuals that may have been involved with past institutional and child-welfare practices and policies.
- The organisation should provide information about any potential conflicts of interest (actual or perceived) arising from any involvement with past institutional and child-welfare practices and policies that were detrimental to the people affected by the practices. This should include information about how such conflicts of interest could be appropriately managed. Where links to these institutions exist, organisations will be transparent and, where necessary, publically acknowledge their involvement in past practices and confirm their commitment to deliver high-quality and independent services.

## **3.7 How to submit an application**

To apply under this process, applicants will need to complete the Application Form and respond to selection criteria as detailed above. Applications must be received electronically by the closing date and time as stated in the Application Pack.

All applicants including current service providers will need to respond fully to the Selection Criteria in the Application Form and provide the information required in the format and to the extent specified.

Applications can only be submitted during the application round for the Activity and for the locations or sites as defined in the Application Form.

Your application is not an agreement or contract. Meeting the selection criteria does not guarantee funding. Funding is limited and applications will be assessed and prioritised according to the extent to which they meet the selection criteria. Only applications meeting the selection criteria to a high degree are likely to be considered for funding. All information requested on the application must be provided to enable your application to be fully considered.

### **3.7.1 Applicant responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that their application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information to DSS is a serious offence, applicants or their partners who do so may be prosecuted under section 137.1 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995*.

Make sure you keep a copy of your application and any supporting papers, either electronically or in hard copy, for your own records.

Only one application per organisation/region will be assessed. If more than one application is submitted, only the latest application will be considered.

### **3.7.2 What needs to be included?**

DSS will not assess applications that do not contain all required attachments (see Application Form checklist) outlined in the Application Form where an Application Form is provided for completion by applicants.

### **3.7.3 What should not be included?**

Any attachments to the Application Form which are not specifically requested in the Application Form will not be considered as part of the assessment process.

### **3.7.4 What happens if you provide more than the specified number of words?**

The Application Form specifies a word limit for each selection criteria. Text beyond the word limits will not be considered as a part of the assessment process.

### **3.7.5 Closing date and time**

The timeframe for submission of applications for any funding process will be set out in the Application Pack.

In order to be received by DSS, the application must be submitted in full via the method prescribed in the Application Pack..

The applications must be received by DSS within the application period to be considered.

### **3.7.6 Late applications**

DSS may reject any application lodged after the closing date. If an application is late, DSS may determine that there were exceptional circumstances beyond the applicant's control that meant the deadline could not be met. The applicant will need to supply documentary evidence to support any exceptional circumstances. DSS has no obligation to accept a late application. Any decision by DSS to accept or not accept a late application will be final.

### **3.7.7 Questions and answers during the application period**

Details of 'Questions and Answers' facilities and contact details will be provided on the [DSS website](#) under the Grants tab. DSS will respond to emailed questions within five working days.

**Note:** A list of 'Frequently Asked Questions' is available on DSS's website. Responses to questions of interest to all applicants may be added to the list during the application period.

DSS will only respond to requests for information that seek clarification of issues to allow them to better understand the requirements of the Application Form and Programme Guidelines.

### **3.7.8 Questions after the application period**

DSS will **not** accept or respond to any applicant requests for information or correspondence about the status or progress of their application during the assessment phase.

### **3.7.9 Application acknowledgement**

Unless prior agreement has been reached with DSS an application will not be considered lodged until it is received by DSS. The applicant will receive email notification from DSS within 48 hours of an application being lodged correctly. If the applicant has not received notification in this timeframe, the applicant should contact DSS to confirm that the form has been lodged correctly.

## **3.8 Conflicts of Interest**

Applicants must identify, in their application, any potential or actual conflicts of interest they believe will or may arise from submitting the application. This should address their responsibilities to the Australian Government and other parties in the course of the Activity.

A conflict of interest can arise when an applicant's integrity, objectivity or fairness in performing the services is at risk due to a pecuniary interest of a person or organisation associated with the applicant or a conflicting business arrangement.

Applicants must specify in their applications how any actual or perceived conflict of interest will be addressed and monitored to ensure it does not compromise the outcomes desired for this grant process.

DSS reserves the right to assess the potential impact of the conflict or perceived conflict and what plans, if any, are proposed to address the conflict of interest in relation to the application for funding.

DSS may reject an application if DSS is not satisfied that there are arrangements in place to appropriately address/manage a perceived or actual conflict of interest.

DSS also has mechanisms in place for identifying and managing potential or actual conflicts of interest such as requiring assessment staff to sign conflict of interest declarations prior to undertaking the assessment of applications.

Follow this link for more information on the [Conflict of Interest Policy for DSS](#) employees and contractors (who are treated as agency staff and required to abide by this policy and the APS Values and Code of Conduct).

## **4 Terms and conditions applying to Selection/s**

### **4.1 Liability issues**

DSS is not liable to the applicant in relation to the selection process, including without limitation, when DSS:

- varies or terminates all or any part of the selection process or any negotiations with the applicant
- decides not to acquire any or all of the services sought through the selection process
- varies the selection process, and/or
- exercises or fails to exercise any of its other rights under, or in relation to the Programme Guidelines.

### **4.2 DSS's rights**

DSS reserves the right to amend the Programme Guidelines by whatever means it may determine at its absolute discretion and will provide reasonable notice of these amendments.

### **4.3 Disclaimer**

DSS, its officers, agents and advisors:

- are not, and will not be, responsible or liable for the accuracy or completeness of any information in or provided in connection with the Programme Guidelines
- make no express or implied representation or warranty that any statement as to future matters will prove correct
- disclaim any and all liability arising from any information provided to the applicant, including, without limitation, errors in, or omissions contained in, that information
- except so far as liability under any statute applies, accept no responsibility arising from errors or omissions contained in any information in this document and the Application Form, and
- accept no liability for any loss or damage suffered by any person as a result of that person, or any other person, placing reliance on the contents of these documents, or any other information provided by DSS.

### **4.4 Fraud**

DSS is committed to the Commonwealth Fraud Control Policy and Guidelines. Applicants should familiarise themselves with [the DSS Fraud Control Policy Statement](#). The Fraud Control Policy Statement also underpins an applicant's respective fraud and risk minimisation responsibilities when dealing with DSS.

One key responsibility outlined in the DSS Fraud Control Policy Statement is to report all fraud concerns by:

- leaving an anonymous voicemail message on the DSS Fraud Hotline (1800 133 611), or
- emailing [fraud@DSS.gov.au](mailto:fraud@DSS.gov.au).

## 4.5 Personal information

Any personal information you provide is protected under the *Privacy Act 1988*. It can only be disclosed to someone else if you have been given reasonable notice of the disclosure; where disclosure is authorised or required by law or is reasonably necessary for the enforcement of the criminal law; if it will prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to a person's life or health; or if you have consented to the disclosure.

If you have questions or concerns about how your personal information is handled you can contact the Privacy Officer at DSS on 02 6244 1449, the Privacy Commissioner on 1300 363 992 (local call cost, but calls from mobile and pay phones may incur higher charges) or the Australian Government Privacy Officer by emailing: [privacy@privacy.gov.au](mailto:privacy@privacy.gov.au).

## 4.6 Freedom of Information

All documents in the possession of DSS including those in relation to the Activity are subject to the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (FOI Act).

The FOI Act creates a general right of access to documents in the possession of DSS and this right of access is limited only by the exceptions and exemptions necessary for the protection of essential public interests and private and business affairs of persons in respect of whom the information relates.

Decisions regarding requests for access under the FOI Act will be made by an authorised decision-maker in accordance with the requirements of the FOI Act.

All FOI requests are to be referred to the FOI Coordinator, Public Law Branch, in DSS.

By mail:           FOI Coordinator  
                      Department of Social Services  
                      Public Law Branch,  
                      PO Box 7576  
                      CANBERRA BUSINESS CENTRE  
                      ACT 2610

By email:         foi@DSS.gov.au

For more information on making a request for access to documents in the possession of DSS under the FOI Act, please visit the [Freedom of Information](#) page on the DSS website.

# 5 Financial and Other Arrangements

## 5.1 Financial arrangements

DSS uses standard grant agreements. Grants will only be provided in accordance with an executed grant agreement. The terms and conditions of DSS's grant agreements cannot be changed. The grant agreement will contain the entire agreement between the parties. There is no binding agreement on any parties until the grant agreement is agreed to and signed by the delegate and the applicant's authorised representative.

The grant agreement is the legal agreement between DSS and the grant recipient over the grant period. In managing the grant provided, the grant recipient must comply with all the requirements of the grant agreement.

Grant recipients are responsible for ensuring that:

- the terms and conditions of the grant agreement are met
- service provision is effective, efficient, and appropriately targeted

- highest standards of duty of care are applied, and
- services are operated in line with, and comply with the requirements as set out within all State and Territory and Commonwealth legislation and regulations.

Grant recipients should also be aware of any case based law that may apply or affect their service delivery.

The Terms and Conditions of the grant agreement are available on the [DSS website](#).

## 6 Complaints

### 6.1 Applicants/grant recipients

Applicants and grant recipients can contact the complaints service with complaints about DSS's service(s), the selection process or the service of another of DSS grant recipients.

Details of what constitutes an eligible complaint can be provided upon request by DSS. Applicants and grant recipients can lodge complaints through the following channels:

Telephone: 1800 634 035

Fax: (02) 6204 4587

Mail: The Department of Social Services Complaints  
PO Box 7576  
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610

If an applicant or grant recipient is at any time dissatisfied with DSS's handling of a complaint, they can contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman through the [Ombudsman Website](#) or on 1300 362 072.

### 6.2 Client/customer

It is a requirement of your grant agreement to have a transparent and accessible complaints handling policy. This policy should acknowledge the complainant's right to complain directly to you, outline the process for both dealing with the complaint and provide options for escalation both within your organisation and to DSS if necessary. Ensure that you provide information about your complaints handling policy and processes in all correspondence to guarantee it is readily available to the public.

## 7 Contact information

Contact information for the Activity:

Address: Tuggeranong Office Park  
Soward Way (cnr Athllon Drive)  
Greenway ACT 2900

Mail: PO Box 7576  
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610

Phone: 1800 625 136. If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment, you can use the [National Relay Service](#) to contact any of DSS's listed phone numbers.

Email: [grants@dss.gov.au](mailto:grants@dss.gov.au)

## 8 Glossary

N/A