



**Hon Simone McGurk MLA**  
Minister for Child Protection; Women's Interests;  
Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services

Our ref: 74-24784  
Your ref: A985843

Hon Dr Sally Talbot MLC  
Chair  
Select Committee into Child Development Services  
Legislative Council  
[sccds@parliament.wa.gov.au](mailto:sccds@parliament.wa.gov.au)

Dear Dr Talbot

Thank you for your correspondence received 29 September 2022 regarding a Select Committee established to examine child development services and related programs in Western Australia (WA) and your invitation to make a submission to the Inquiry.

The Department of Communities (Communities) was established in 2017 to deliver community services to some of the most vulnerable Western Australians. While the remit of child development services are broadly to provide a range of assessment, early intervention and treatment services to children with developmental delay or difficulties that impact on function, participation and/or parent-child relationship, I am pleased to submit the following information regarding Communities programs, services and initiatives relevant to the Inquiry:

*Children and Community Services Act 2004*

Last year Parliament passed significant reforms to legislation to deliver better outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people through strengthening connection to family, culture and Country. Amendments to the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (the Act) include strengthening the intent of section 22 (s.22) which requires prescribed public authorities to prioritise Communities' requests for assistance for:

- children in care
- those children under a special guardianship order; and
- care leavers who qualify for assistance up to the age of 25.

Under changes to the Act, which came into effect on 1 May 2022, the Department of Education, Department of Training and Workforce Development, Department of Justice (Corrective Services Division only); Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, Mental Health Commission are now all prescribed public authorities.

In addition, WA Health's five Health Service Providers will become prescribed public authorities from 1 November 2022. These amendments strengthen the existing *Rapid Response Framework* which is a cross-government framework designed to coordinate and



prioritise services for children in care and care leavers. Responding to the needs of these vulnerable children is a shared responsibility across government and data and evidence has shown, that the best outcomes are achieved through early intervention strategies that support children and their families at the earliest opportunity.

### Health Navigator Pilot Program

Communities and the Department of Health are working in partnership to deliver the Health Navigator Pilot Program (HNPP) in WA. The HNPP will test new ways of working to improve collaboration and coordination between services to better meet the health needs of children and young people in out-of-home care. The Pilot will operate in two sites of the Mirrabooka and South West child protection districts.

### Early Childcare Regulation

The Education and Care Regulatory Unit are responsible for regulating and enforcing compliance of early childhood education and care services. The Education and Care Regulatory Unit:

- assesses applications for provider approvals, service approvals
- assesses education and care services against the National Quality Standard
- supports and promotes continuous quality improvements in education and care services
- investigates incidents and complaints
- monitors and enforces compliance.

It also seeks to protect children from harm; stop unlawful conduct; ensure compliance with the law; and raise awareness of legislative requirements by publishing enforcement actions and using other compliance tools. The Education and Care Regulatory Unit ensures that all services are informed of their compliance roles and responsibilities, while providing them with appropriate support. Further information about this unit and their function relevant to your Inquiry is available online at [Education and Care Regulatory Unit \(www.wa.gov.au\)](http://www.wa.gov.au).

### Early Years Partnership (previously Early Years Initiative)

The Early Years Partnership (EYP) aims to improve children's well-being and school readiness in four WA communities and in doing so learn what it takes to create change for children across Western Australia.

EYP commenced in 2018 as a 10-year partnership and commitment between four communities, State Government and the Minderoo Foundation. It is a commitment to work differently with communities to improve the health, learning and development of children from conception to four years. The initiative is overseen by a Board with high-level representation from partner agencies.

Remote, very remote, regional and metropolitan areas make up the community sites for the EYP which includes four partner communities in WA – Armadale West, Central Great Southern (including the Shires of Katanning, Kojonup, Gnowangerup and Broomehill-Tambellup), Derby (including Mowanjum and Pandanus Park) and Bidyadanga. The EYP aims to build on the existing strengths of community, assets and knowledge to create



---

evidence-informed solutions that meet local needs and improve child wellbeing and school readiness.

The McGowan Government remains committed to ensuring children are safe and supported. I thank you for the opportunity to provide information within my Portfolios relevant to the Terms of Reference.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simone McGurk'.

HON SIMONE McGURK MLA

**MINISTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION; WOMEN'S INTERESTS;  
PREVENTION OF FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE; COMMUNITY SERVICES**

25 October 2022