

# NGO and Civil Society Forum

## NSW strategic plan for children and young people

# INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The meeting was hosted by the Minister for Ageing, Disability Services and Multiculturalism, the Hon John Ajaka, MLC, and the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, Mr Andrew Johnson.

Gadigal Elder Uncle Chicka Madden gave the Welcome to Country, followed by a welcome and address by Minister Ajaka.

The meeting was attended by over 100 representatives from key NGO and Civil Society organisations across NSW to gain their input on the themes and directions for the Strategic Plan for Children and Young People.

Mr Johnson presented a report on the progress to date, incorporating inputs from children and young people who have been part of consultations across the State.



# INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT Continued

Several children and young people, who have been part of the consultation process, attended the forum to talk about their insights from participating and running consultations on the Strategic Plan. The children and young people who spoke at the forum were:

- Charlie Robinson and Cate Connor from Wildcare OOSH
- Amy Ibbott and Leevi Baker from Coonamble High School
- Maddison Gilholme and Ethan Krawshaw from Kirrawee High School
- Yvette Quinn and Jesse Hanna from the NSW Youth Advisory Council



Delegates were asked to consider two questions in their table groups:

- What is working well?
- What is not working well?

This was followed by a plenary discussion of these questions. The discussion also included comments on the other two questions used in the consultation sessions to date:

- What are the key priorities for children and young people in NSW?
- What are the qualities of a good society for children and young people?

The plenary session identified five themes for in-depth discussion in World Café style groups. The following is a summary of these discussions.

# 1. TRANSITIONING

Areas of key transitions: Understanding readiness for transition and who are the most vulnerable

- Starting school
- Y6 – Y7 – moving into high school
- Y10 – Y12 - working / Higher Education
- Ex-juvenile justice
- Out of home care
- Intensive English Centre
- Disability.



## To Do / Key points:

- Identify good ways of transitioning and raising awareness of transitioning issues – not a linear process
- Forming effective partnerships and networks of support
- Provide a sense of belonging and cultural connection
- Broaden peer programs e.g. Peer Education Program
- Start early to prepare for the transition
- Put individual needs first – don't assume what is needed
- Staff and professionals to be well equipped/resourced e.g. Prior relationship with children and young people (CYP)
- “Good transition” is defined by engaging with CYP and not relying solely on research
- Huge pressure to perform – work on expectations + resilience + choice + options + knowledge that different paths are OK (there is no right way) e.g. Resilience training
- Convince parents that different paths are OK
- Not losing early intervention focus – prevention
- Listen to the voice of those making the transition
- Need for life skills – define what they are and how we can address them – more effective implementation of life skills into the school curriculum. CYP to define what it means, not just disability, not just Board of Studies, not just low expectations.

## 2. MARGINALISED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

### Who is this group?

- Marginalised children and young people in particular locations - place based
- How are we getting the children and young people involved in this process? Going into the youth centres/justice system. There is cynicism from the youth
- Value what children and young people are saying. They are the source
- Specific outcomes for marginalised youth groups, articulation and identification of different groups.

### Issues:

- Domestic violence +OOHC and leaving Care Plans
- Impact on young people.

### Need a broader definition of what “voice” is:

- Making sure groups represent the community
- Relevant people representing them
- Need for various measures to obtain feedback, getting in on a local level
- Once you have the feedback make sure the interpretation is correct and not miscommunicated
- Various methods of communication – online etc.

## 2. MARGINALISED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE Continued

### Also:

- We listen a lot but don't respond
- Impact of perception of CYP
- Relationship development vital
- Identify transition points.

### Specific targeted outcomes need to be taken into account:

- Age appropriate
- Holistic – have effective partnerships
- Cultural - acknowledge differences
- Voices heard
- Training on how to receive alternative feedback
- Respond to causal factors.

### Early intervention:

- Speaking with case workers
- Mentoring
- Representation
- Empowering through various communication mechanisms (i.e. not everyone is going to publicly speak etc.)
- Alternative methods.

### Housing:

- Services provided
- How are children with disabilities being represented in this process
- What are the services available
- Early intervention process.



### 3. GIVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE A VOICE

Adults listening to CYP and doing something about it!

#### Priorities:

- Not just about giving children a voice but about adults listening to CYP
- 0-5 year old – challenges giving them a voice and working with parents for those that can't speak for themselves
- What is it about the system which makes the rule breakers attractive, flexibility to meet each persons needs not black and white rules
- Getting the voice of the right cross section of CYP – getting them to participate so we don't skew who we focus on, miss a group, don't always have the same kids participating.
- Rights based approach to child participation
- Shift from “voice” to responding/acting/practice + trauma informed care which is age related
- Give CYP ownership of the action/solution



### 3. GIVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE A VOICE Continued

- Integrated process, not in parallel
- Begin with encounter between CYP – person centred, individual, prepare – do background reading
- Communication with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse CYP at school
- Allow a professional to tell their story on their behalf, if they don't want to re-tell – give them an advocate
- Methodology for consultation – validation check, best practice
- Train teachers to listen and respond
- Empower CYP to feel safe in the school environment – ambassadors?
- Hearing what works well for them
- Identify “youth friendly” services
- Include in community strategy plans and play strategy – work with parents and early childhood professionals
- Peer-to-peer education and support
- Develop a sense of connectedness and belonging to the community
- Target the most marginalised and disadvantaged – juvenile justice very important, preparing for release
- Access to care
- Outreach – go into their space e.g. disabled – Auslan (non-verbal), juvenile justice and OOHC
- Empower carers
- NGO – Youth Advocate Council. Empower marginalised youth to participate, target for cross section of CYP, NOT always the same kids
- Focus on help-seeking for CYP
- Include CYP across the whole cycle – community project focus, work readiness programs
- Attitudes towards cognitive impairment – not believed, credibility
- Support for success – build resilience and safety.

### Main points:

- Mechanisms for sharing information for CYP – be better at providing information to each other
- Importance of leadership in driving collaboration - leadership at every level is vital – community through to service providers
- Need for info about where these services are available
- Match-making children to the right service
- Leveraging all the services together through collaboration with shared approach to outcomes
- Lack of dedicated resourcing remains a problem
- Central hubs – need somewhere where teenagers can meet others - need meeting opportunities - share information and support - online interactive forums
- Duplication – need to better understand and co-ordinate role activities - get people to work together for individual children – working together for one child - breaking down information – make it easier to share
- Need to break down silos of various groups
- Impact of privacy legislation on how people work together
- Funding – how to address “who’s” client is the child – need to work better for the child
- Better data capture so we can follow children and share information for the interests of the children
- To advocate better we need to have data
- Collaboration - interaction between federal and state government – agencies and funding
- Need to bring together state and territory advocates/commissioner roles to better share information
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities of state based agencies (e.g.. ACYP, Guardian)
- Focus on outcomes for children, young people – how agencies and organisations work together to achieve this

## 4. INTERAGENCY CO-ORDINATION Continued

### Main points continued:

- Need to map services for young people so that we can find the right services for the child
- Need to audit/census of NFP's to identify what is out there
- Plan needs to address
  - Agreements and arrangements of how agencies can work together, especially with regards to funding
  - Needs strategies to assist young people to find the right service at the right time – online info + capacity to guide people to the right place
- Advocate other services whose job it is to bring all this information together – could this be a commercial offering so it is sustainable + could continue to exist despite funding
- Role of social media in bringing people and organisations together
- Need to better “crowd source” information to bring to agencies
- Early intervention:
  - Collective impact: being outcomes focused so we can work together to have the right people in the room
  - Bringing data that exists together to better inform and build on services
  - Importance of interdisciplinary work - bringing people together
- Need to work out how to partner effectively - addressing the challenges of relationships and the fact that sometimes an agency needs to “step back” (lose) control for a better outcome
- KPI's and program funding - how can these be better used to leverage better co-operation
- Contracting – need to consider better how this drives positive collaboration amongst NGO's
- Local level engagement and collaboration is critical – critical intention implementation focus – need to go beyond ideas into real action
- Leadership in driving integration and co-operation
- Sponsoring projects and being responsible
- Place-based approaches very important

## 4. INTERAGENCY CO-ORDINATION Continued

### Main points continued:

- Developing circles of trust amongst agencies – what sustains good relationships?
- Knowing what is available is critical to making good collaboration happen
- How do we better use an interagency infrastructure approach – there is such a need for an online directory. Better leverage HSNET and other online services to take them out to other services
- Connectedness for children and young people transitioning between services – warm referrals and supported transition
- Lack of funding and support of engagement and community development is a problem
- NGO's need to look at the whole person effective partnership – not just reacting to “the issue” – need to bring other agencies in to address the whole issue
- Roles of peak organisations in better driving connections and partnerships
- Focusing on outcomes – easy to disagree on strategy, better to focus on outcomes
- Plan needs to ensure it links youth groups into interagencies – critical to connect
- At the local level – people need decision making autonomy to be able to be flexible
- Accountability of NGO's – around process conversations and mechanisms (while contracts can do this there is a need to be flexible)
- Key problem - funding is short term – very hard to work in an interagency way

## 5. THE PLAN

- Need for long-term plan, which is supported by government
- By focusing on outcomes co-ordination will follow
- Plan should be for all CYP not just those at risk
- Universal platform.

### 10-year/long term with review

- With short and medium elements
- Must be able to measure and track

### Start with the outcomes – gain agreement. This shapes everything.

- Then develop strategies
- This brings coordination
- Ensure it address age cohorts and key outcomes
- Local connections/implementation – local young people involvement + local government

### Strategy has to be inclusive and tailored

- Re: Aboriginal, disability, CALD



## 5. THE PLAN Continued

- Local voice and engagement of CYP important
- Not just about NSW Government. Places for other stakeholders
- Action based elements with accountability for delivery – needs to be measured
- Require local government, NGO's etc. to develop a plan which shows how it will be achieved, but also measures performance
- Bi-partisan
- Needs a budget connection
- Base principles of rights
  - Non-discrimination
  - Voice
- Best interests of CYP
- Cultural strengthening and safeguards (re: Aboriginal CYP)
- Continue strong involvement of CYP
- Achievable targets and timeframes (deliverable)
- Stakeholders – as related to key themes
  - Involve through regional consults
  - Interdepartmental committees
- Lead agencies – no buck-passing
- Map rules and responsibilities
- Evaluation component independent

## 5. THE PLAN Continued

- Co-ordinate with Commonwealth
  - Lead and connect with other states and nations
  - Inform National plan for CYP
  - No buck passing
  - Make use of Convention on Rights of Child
  - Continue to widely discuss and update people
- CYP's electoral involvement
  - 50% of 18 yo
  - What about 16-17 yrs
  - How can we achieve electoral accountability for a plan for CYP
- Access hard to reach voices
- Plan for ALL CYP in NSW – Make it Universal
- Recognise and align – eg: NEST, plans and frameworks
- Is a lot of consensus really key
- Plan should invest in key priorities – CSP from CYP
- Governance: NZ model: Universal plan for CYP – across all agencies and publish progress – owned by each agency, legislated.



# THANK YOU