

Appendix 3: Queensland—Families, Youth and Community Care

Queensland

The information provided during the discussions is outlined below, under the following topic areas

- approach to family support services
- services provided or funded
- service delivery mechanisms
- data currently being collected or planned to be collected
- developments or initiatives which are planned in relation to family support

Approach to family support services

Approach to planning

Planning of family support services in Queensland is based on a partnership with community sector agencies. The department aims to ensure that services are integrated with those delivered by other agencies, to provide seamless, client-centred solutions.

The department considers that integration of service delivery is important, to provide a mix of services which will meet the varying needs of families throughout their lifecycle, and which meet the needs of people at a local community level.

A place planning approach is being implemented across 12 regions.

There are a number of current initiatives affecting the development of family support services.

New child protection legislation proclaimed in March 2000 places emphasis on the principle of supporting families in their care of children, in the context of children's safety and best interests being paramount. This policy and legislative framework emphasises the use of family support services as an integral part of the broader system for protecting children, evident in the Child Protection Strategic Plan.

The Putting Families First draft policy has been released in which the focus is on giving children the best start possible (early intervention); valuing and supporting the nurturing role of families (promoting resiliency); and creating safe, supportive communities for families (social capital).

Access to good quality child care and early education services are important for both social and economic reasons, and the Queensland Government has developed the Queensland Child Care Strategic Plan to ensure a responsive, high quality and sustainable child care system.

Approach to funding

Family support services in Queensland are mainly funded by Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland (FYCCQ) and delivered by community sector agencies.

Family support services are predominantly funded through the Child Protection and Family Support funding area. This program was created in February 2000 through the consolidation of five funding programs, including those providing funds to child abuse prevention, family support services and alternative care agencies. Some organisations may previously have been receiving funds through a number of funding programs to provide very similar services. The vast majority of funding is provided on a recurrent basis.

The creation of the Child Protection and Family Support funding area was prompted by the department's Funding Reform Strategy which seeks to implement a more contemporary approach to the funding of non-government community services, focussing on the achievement of quality client outcomes. Funded agencies will continue to submit financial information as well as reporting against agreed activity and outcome indicators. Key elements of the strategy are:

- a single set of generic funding guidelines for the whole department
- 'bundling' of the current 48 funding programs (including those described below) into eight key funding areas
- implementation of triennial funding
- moving to organisation-level funding agreements as distinct from service outlet-level agreements as a step towards implementing whole-of-government funding agreements
- implementing a performance management framework that measures service delivery and service outcomes
- implementing a needs-based planning framework which informs resource allocation processes
- implementing a place management approach to meeting the needs of individuals, families and communities.

Family support services may also be funded through Community Support Services and Child Care areas.

Services provided or funded

Services provided

A limited range of family support services is provided directly by FYCCQ. Brief counselling and support services may be provided to prevent the need for statutory child protection intervention. These are short-term, goal-oriented supportive counselling services to address the welfare-related needs of children, young people and families. Respite placements may be provided for children at risk of harm. Information and referrals are provided to other family support services that are provided by community agencies.

The Positive Parenting Coordination Section offers an information and resource service including a collection of books, videos and brochures on parenting, teenagers and general family themes. The resources are available for loan and/or purchase.

FYCCQ has also established an extended hours family and adolescent support service in Brisbane, which will commence in May 2001. This will help families and young people to respond to conflict or crisis. Although some services will be targeted to particular groups, such as young offenders, some services will be within the broad scope of family support.

Queensland Health directly delivers parent education programs (called Positive Parenting Programs) from 15 locations across the State.

Services funded

FYCCQ's Funding Reform Strategy includes bundling of funding programs into eight key funding areas. Family support services are mainly funded through the Child Protection and Family Support area, and also through the Community Support Services and Child Care areas. Disability Services Queensland, within the same portfolio as FYCCQ, also provides funds for family support services.

Child Protection and Family Support

The Child Protection and Family Support Program seeks to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by preventing and responding to harm and risk of harm through the provision of a range of services that are responsive to needs and build on family, community and cultural strengths. Early intervention, family support, child abuse prevention and alternative care services are funded through the program. Activities for which funds are provided are family support including parent education, community awareness about child abuse prevention, counselling and support, practical assistance, family counselling and mediation, in-home family support and intensive work with families to improve parenting.

Financial assistance is provided to eligible community organisations to meet salary and operating costs associated with service delivery of funded activities.

The Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services and the department in Queensland will jointly fund two Good Beginnings programs from 2000–2001.

Child Care

The Child Care area provides funds for a highly flexible and innovative network of integrated child care, family support and child protection services in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in north Queensland.

Also through the Child Care area funds have been allocated to pilot one-stop community service centres ('hubs') improving access to child and family support in a number of communities. They will have a cross-agency focus and be located in a variety of agencies, including child care centres.

Community Support Services

The Community Support Services area provides funds for some family support services, which may be out of the scope of the study as the programs are very general in nature and not specifically concerned with family support.

Personal histories

In common with several other jurisdictions, the FYCCQ provides services to help former children in care to learn more about their family history. Specialist services in the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development perform a similar role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were removed from their land and families.

Disability Services

A small number of services are funded by Disability Services Queensland (now a separate department) to provide early intervention and support for families where a child has a disability.

Service delivery mechanisms

Department services and funded agencies provide a range of services, using a variety of strategies:

- research and development of parenting resources, education and training
- individual and family counselling
- home visiting
- centre-based support programs and activities for families
- information and referral
- self-help groups
- outreach services
- advocacy
- linking family members
- caravan park play schemes
- mobile services for remote communities

In addition, peak agencies such as Queensland Council of Social Service (QLD COSS), volunteer centres and peak organisations receive funding, some of which is directed to providing support, resources and training for family support workers.

Data collection

Data collected from agencies to provide family support is limited to financial information obtained through the service agreement process. Limited activity information is collected on a manual basis, along with occasional snapshots of particular activities and one-off evaluations.

The department is planning to commence automated data collection around the key outcome areas which will involve agencies providing information on activities, clients, service agreement performance indicators and contract management issues such as budgets.

Developments and initiatives

A range of new initiatives has been announced as part of Putting Families First, including multi-function 'hubs' (mentioned above) and a survey of Queensland families to investigate issues that are of most importance to them, and their expectations of government. Funds of \$500,000 were allocated in 1999–2000 for media and information about services and support available for families, such as the Parentline telephone support service.