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Your submission for this review:

In addition to the attachment In November 2023, DCJ implemented their HCEA (high-cost emergency allocation) team/squad. With no initial communication to the NGO sector, they reviewed client files on their system ChildStory and created a plan to transition children out of high-cost placements with little or no knowledge of current casework occurring for the child and families. 100 DCJ staff were moved from critical positions to form this team in an attempt to reduce costs. in Dec 2023 we were informed to reduce the cost of food to a child in a high-cost placement to \$150 pw (this includes all household grocery items). when we requested the financial modelling behind this decision it was not provided. The amount has been increased but the scrutiny on spending is extreme with a lack of trust and transparency in the sector. Further to this - constant movement of key staff at a practice level in DCJ creates a lack of progress on casework tasks for children and families. The reporting is an administrative burden on the NGO sector and failure to read and review documents by DCJ creates further delays in decision making putting children at risk. Attached is further detail against each of the TOR areas. thank you for the opportunity.

(1)

Price increases under the current modelling have been reflective of CPI alone, however there are increased costs of service delivery we have had to absorb:

- Wages are the main cost of service delivery and have increased not only by CPI but Superannuation and insurance
- Superannuation in 2017 when PSP began was 9.5%, currently 11% and will increase to 11.5% on 1/7/24 & 12.0% on 1/7/25
- Administrative burden sitting with NGOs has increased significantly - increasing the overheads associated with PSP service delivery
- Insurance for NGOs has increased over 300% since the outcome of the Royal Commission.
- Legal fees and access to legal services. This is an additional cost that cannot be recouped by NGOs. Advice and training for casework staff and representation in matters such as claims and redress.
- Targeted carer recruitment, assessment and training. Need injection of funds for staff to be trained as assessors and training in regional NSW (not city centric). Additional costs of marketing for attracting carers to the sector.

(2)

Funding of YP under interim orders

- Where there is a significant amount of court ordered family time to support restoration – the funding provided is not sufficient to cover the casework support required
- This is amplified in our regional areas – e.g., Deniquin, Griffith where the distances travelled and time required for family time can be double or triple that of less remote areas.
- We have tried to apply for complex needs funds in such instances with considerable resistance from DCJ
- Placement establishment payment (approx. \$15, 300) cost to set up a new service are not adequate to provide a safe and therapeutic environment.
- The amount of support YP need when moving to independent living is under-estimated and under funded.
- Future Plans and leaving care plans have either/or options. A YP leaving care should not have to choose between university fees and driving lessons.

(3)

- Challenges of gaining funding to improve outcomes of YP with complex needs. Need clearer guidelines of what DCJ want to ensure a CN application is considered for additional funds
- How do we best demonstrate how we have exhausted funds so that there is less back and forth questions between DCJ and NGO to reduce the administrative burden – streamline processes
- Additionally, once funding for an IPA/Complex Needs/Additional Carer support is approved – there is in some instances a delay of 6-12 months before actual funds are received. This has a significant impact on the cashflow of the NGO
- Carer Allowances are also only increased by CPI
  - Increased cost of living on carers – food, interest rates
  - The above has likely also impacted on the decline in carer inquiries and carer conversions for the industry as a whole
  - Additionally, due to the reduced pool of respite carers as well as the increases in complexity of some of our YP entering care – there are more YP entering emergency placements/IPAs/ACAs/STEP etc

Additional considerations;

- Review of the CAT. This is critical. It is not a transparent process and not in line with the current contemporary OOHC setting in NSW.
- Decisions regarding the use of non-accredited agency staff should cease. This is not safe or regulated. The costs if reviewed are extreme.
- Cultural care and activities including children visiting “country” regularly is not adequate.
- Additional funds for providers in regional NSW, including the lack of infrastructure and transport of children to access services.
- Practice improvement and quality. Ongoing need to train the sector, review practice and improve practice.