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Your submission for this review:

Submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) Review of Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) Costs and Pricing To Whom It May Concern, I am writing to provide my submission regarding the ongoing review of out-of-home care (OOHC) costs and pricing in New South Wales. While I appreciate the intentions behind this review, I would like to express some significant concerns regarding the proposed changes and their potential negative impacts, particularly on children in care, their families, and the broader OOHC framework.

Negative Impacts

- 1. Reputation and Trust in Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organizations (ACCOs):** While the aim to increase the involvement of ACCOs in OOHC is commendable, it is crucial to acknowledge that many ACCOs currently have a poor reputation among both carers and families. This lack of trust can impede effective collaboration and support for Aboriginal children and families. If ACCOs are not seen as reliable or effective, the intended benefits of this transition may not materialize, leaving children in precarious situations without adequate support.
- 2. Dissatisfaction Among Carers:** Many foster and kinship carers have expressed dissatisfaction since transitioning to ACCOs. Reports indicate that these carers feel unsupported, undervalued, and overwhelmed by administrative burdens. This dissatisfaction can lead to increased turnover, further destabilizing the lives of children who rely on consistent and nurturing care.
- 3. Inadequate Therapeutic Care:** A concerning trend is the movement of children without proper therapeutic care. Many children are being shuffled between placements merely to meet administrative requirements or "tick boxes," rather than being provided with the individualized support they need. This lack of therapeutic intervention can have lasting negative effects on their emotional and psychological well-being, compounding the trauma they have already experienced.
- 4. False Identification and Permanency Pathways:** There are alarming instances where families are falsely identifying as Aboriginal upon entering OOHC, which complicates the permanency pathways for children. This misidentification can lead to inappropriate placements and exacerbate the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in the system. As a result, the intended benefits of culturally appropriate care may be undermined, further entrenching systemic issues within OOHC.
- 5. Administrative Burden:** The current model, with its heavy emphasis on administration, detracts from the time and resources that could be spent on direct care and support for children. This burden not only affects the quality of care but also contributes to the dissatisfaction expressed by many carers and service providers.

Positive Aspects

Despite these concerns, I recognize some positive intentions behind the proposed changes:

- 1. Increased Funding for Carers:** The proposed increase in care allowances is a step in the right direction. Providing financial support that reflects the actual costs incurred by carers can help improve their capacity to provide stable and nurturing environments for children.
- 2. Streamlined Funding Model:** Moving towards a single yearly payment per child can simplify the funding process and enhance financial sustainability. This could lead to more predictable funding streams for both carers and service providers.
- 3. Enhanced Accountability:** The proposed measures to increase accountability and visibility within the OOHC system have the potential to drive improvements in service delivery and outcomes for children and families.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while the review of OOHC costs and pricing presents opportunities for positive change, it is essential to address the serious concerns raised by stakeholders involved in the system. Ensuring that children receive the therapeutic care they need, fostering trust in ACCOs, and supporting the well-being of carers must remain at the forefront of this review. I urge IPART to consider these concerns carefully to create a system that genuinely supports the best interests of children and families in New South Wales. Thank you for considering my submission.