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Your submission for this review:

Hello IPART Team, Please find attached SSI's submission regarding the draft report. We have mainly focused on the cultural maintenance and the unique needs of CALD children and families and the importance of having a uniform approach for all children in OOHHC. Please feel free to reach out to me on [REDACTED] Many thanks Ghassan

IPART Draft Report: Out-of-Home Care Costs and Pricing for CALD Children

Introduction The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) has conducted a review of the costs and pricing associated with out-of-home care for children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds. This summary highlights the main findings and recommendations.

Q 1

Addressing the needs for CALD children

The report addressed the additional needs of the CALD children and families, highlighting that:

- A payment of \$1,260 to the cultural support worker who will help with developing and implementing the cultural support plans with a ratio of up to 86 children.

The report did not consider:

- a- How implementation costs will be covered. The carers need to be supported with the costs of cultural activities, cultural food, books, clothes, etc. Some are also taking the children to their country of origin which includes airfares and other costs.
- b- The importance of having a nominated sum for cultural activities
- c- What would happen when a placement changes and a new cultural support plan is needed? How will the carer be supported? What about respite care?

IPART Draft Report highlighted the following points regarding CALD children:

- Challenge of identifying CALD children as many do not identify as CALD
- Many children and carers speak English fluently and do not need additional support
- DCJ identified that 17% of children in care are from CALD background

Challenge of identifying CALD children as lots do not identify CALD

If a child is from a CALD background, but does not identify as CALD, it is our responsibility as practitioners to help the child and link them with their heritage and community. A child or young person affected by abuse or trauma might be linking this experience to their culture. It is also possible they are experiencing shame and do not want their community to know about them. When the child starts embracing their culture, this is a starting point of the healing process. In summary, a cultural support plan is needed unless the child does not identify as CALD.

Lots of children and carers speak English fluently and do not need additional support

Culture is comprised of 3 core elements: language, faith and ethnicity. The report focused only on one element (linguistic), but not the other two elements needed in the support plan. When a cultural care plan is required, all three components of culture must be addressed to ensure the child or young person is meaningfully connected to their heritage or culture.

DCJ identified that 17% of children in care are from CALD background

In the absence of accurate data, it is hard to assume the accuracy of this statement. We need to understand the methodology for determining the percentage of CALD children in care, including those with a cultural support plan. It is also important to have accurate data on the time, resources and costs that go into supporting children from CALD backgrounds.

Q 2

Suggestions that DCJ pays the carers directly the carers allowance and the invoices.

For transparency and consistency across the sector, governance should be strengthened. Agencies should provide financial reports monthly (or quarterly) during their contract meetings which could include:

- Carers allowance and the rates
- Invoices related to subcontracting
- Other invoices related to the children or carers reimbursement.

If DCJ is going to be paying the carers directly, this will create a lot of dissatisfaction/inconvenience as the carers usually negotiate out of guidelines invoices and Agencies often provide flexibility with payments. These negotiations are unlikely to occur with DCJ.

SSI is paying their carers 4% above the market, in addition we are paying the activities like:

- Swimming lessons and any sporting activities
- Language schools and all the cultural activities
- Tutoring lessons to support the child meeting their educational milestones
- Health, including speech and OT
- Educational fees at private schools
- Childcare fees
- Dental and orthodontic
- Sometimes reimbursing the carers with mileage costs for transporting the child to and from school which is out of the area.

Usually, the financial plan is developed within the case plan and the Agency knows the needs of the child, carer and placement. Considerable logistics will be needed to develop the financial plan, have it approved by DCJ and negotiate the costs, if we go with the suggestion of DCJ paying the carers.

Q 3

Simplifying the packages.

Although the attempt is to simplify the packages, however this will not allow for flexibility with supporting a child from the “general bucket”.

The Agencies will also need to develop their financial systems to capture the packages from the first year and the subsequent years, where the amounts are different.

It was not clear if Agencies can still apply for additional packages when needed like the additional carer support package or complex needs package etc.

Q 4

Suggested fundings

- a- The administrative costs to DCJ seem to be high for each child
- b- The funding is less than what the agencies expect to be viable; these figures would limit the agencies from re-tendering and would exclude some who have a history of good practice.
- c- Table 13.8 states that Year 1 LT is valued at \$86,880. By default, all cases remain in the restoration phase until final Orders are issued. Are we indicating that, once final Orders transition a case from restoration to LT, it is classified as Year 1 LT, thereby qualifying for a funding amount of \$86,880?

Scenario:

Jane came into care in March 2025 and the matter is finalised in March 2027 as LT. As Jane is 7 years old with low needs, the agency will be funded for:

Year 1: \$100,880 (restoration: March 25 to March 26)

Year 2: \$ \$78,280 (restoration: March 26 to March 27)

Does it mean that Jane will have \$86,880 (Year 1 LT: March 27 to March 28)?

What would happen to these payments if the case plan goal does not last for 12 months? Will they be paid as pro-rata?

Recommendations:

- Uniform approach for all children in care for cultural maintenance
- Strengthening the reporting processes to DCJ for more transparency, rather than creating a new system.
- Clearer approach on the financial packages.

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