

# Summary of workshop with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations on out-of-home care costs and pricing

29 April 2025

On 29 April 2025, IPART held a workshop with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) providing out-of-home care to receive feedback on its [Draft Report on out-of-home care costs and pricing](#).

This document provides a summary of the topics discussed.

There were 19 stakeholders who attended the workshop. The main points of discussion were around:

- Lack of support for the draft recommendation that DCJ consider centralising payment of care allowances, which may undermine relationships between ACCOs and carers. This may create uncertainty around who is providing case management
- The potential unintended consequences and concerns around the implementation of reimbursement of child-related expenses. There was opposition to any situation that required DCJ approval of ACCO expenditure related to an Aboriginal child's cultural connections, including connection to Country, as this would give DCJ inappropriate authority and would remove the autonomy and self-determination from ACCOs and the children and families they care for.
- The need for clear business rules for the reimbursement of child-related expenses
- Further consideration of incentives for transitioning children from non-ACCOs to ACCOs, to acknowledge the cultural embedded practice and cultural programs offered by ACCOs.

## Carers

Theme	Summary of discussion
<b>DCJ consider centralising the payment of care allowances and reimbursements of child-related expenses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We heard from AbSec that most ACCOs did not agree with the recommendation that DCJ consider centralising the payment of care allowances. There were views that it may adversely impact the relationship between ACCOs and carers, whereby ACCOs work and engage with carers and families, while DCJ holds the financial authority.</li><li>• Many stakeholders raised concerns with the recommendation that DCJ directly fund carers for child-related expenses. There were strong views that DCJ directly paying carers may have unintended consequences. Concerns raised included:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Having to justify expenses to DCJ before they approve reimbursements. Shifting the responsibility of the approval process to DCJ for child-related expenses particularly for cultural support would not be appropriate and takes away the authority and autonomy from ACCOs and the families they care for.</li></ul></li></ul>

IPART acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We pay respect to Elders both past and present. We recognise the unique cultural and spiritual relationship and celebrate the contributions of First Nations peoples.

Theme	Summary of discussion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some carers may not be in a financial position to pay for necessary medical expenses upfront and then later be reimbursed.</li> <li>That there could be a potential impact on an ACCO's accreditation, for example if DCJ did not approve reimbursements or there are expectations that a carer would be out-of-pocket, this may result in children no longer having financial means to attend required health appointments. Currently ACCOs often outlay these costs for carers in such situations.</li> <li>It may expose carers to the same frustrations (e.g. justifying expenses, timely reimbursement) experienced by ACCOs liaising with DCJ on the financial approvals processes.</li> <li>The efficiency of processes in DCJ to be able to reimburse expenses in a timely manner and how the reimbursement process would be implemented and handled.</li> <li>Administrative complexity of DCJ paying the allowance and reimbursements directly to carers.</li> <li>There was some support for the reimbursement of the actual costs for medical and therapeutic services, however this would require adherence to consistent business rules by DCJ and timely reimbursement.</li> <li>Potential solutions to increase transparency and consistency could be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standardise the care allowance for all carers</li> <li>Establish two separate funding streams, one for care allowances and one for funding of OOHC service delivery</li> <li>Clear business rules around what can be claimed and reimbursed. Currently some ACCOs experience inconsistent application of rules depending on the district they are working in.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Update of the care allowance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One stakeholder noted that the proposed fortnightly care allowance for 14-15 year olds and 16-17 year olds could potentially be amalgamated for simplicity. This is because there is only a \$26 difference between 14-15 year olds and 16-17 year olds in the proposed fortnightly care allowance. Based on their experience, the costs of caring are similar between both age groups.</li> </ul>

## Casework and administrative costs

Theme	Summary of discussion
<b>Casework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The casework undertaken in regional areas needs to be further considered, as there is additional time required to support children in regional areas, including travel time but also additional assistance where there may be a lack of support services available.</li> <li>The additional casework for children with a disability should be considered as there are many children with a disability in home-based care, not just in residential care.</li> <li>There should also be consideration for children who are interstate or not in placement, as there are additional costs associated with caring for those children.</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural care workers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A few stakeholders noted that the proposed caseload of 1 cultural care worker to 92 Aboriginal children was too high.</li> </ul>
<b>Administrative costs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A stakeholder queried whether the size of the ACCO was taken into consideration in the administrative cost analysis. A small-to-medium size organisation could have proportionately higher administrative costs when compared to larger non-ACCOs because there are less children to spread the costs.</li> <li>For the administrative costs analysis, a stakeholder noted there needs to be clearer explanation of why the lower quartile was used as a measure of efficiency and a need to be transparent about what has been included in administrative costs.</li> </ul>

## Costs of caring for Aboriginal children and pricing

Theme	Summary of discussion
<b>Cost of transitions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General support of an upfront payment at the initiation of the transition process to facilitate transitions, however concerns were raised about the cost per child basis and whether it adequately reflects what's required for ACCOs to support effective transitions. Withdrawing the current \$150,000 annual payment for transition would impact particularly smaller ACCOs.</li> <li>• Concerned that currently there are no incentives in the pricing for non-ACCOs to transition Aboriginal children in their care to ACCOs. Through their experience, many stakeholders noted their frustration with the lack of transitions yet how costly it has been to set up the capacity to accept new children into their care. Stakeholders raised the need to develop incentives to encourage the transition of Aboriginal children from non-ACCOs to ACCOs.</li> <li>• The work undertaken by ACCOs around cultural programs and cultural embedded practice is not the same as providing case management to an Aboriginal child. There needs to be consideration of the value placed on cultural work that ACCOs provide to children in OOHHC.</li> </ul>
<b>Timing of payments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A stakeholder queried how changes in case plan goals or level of need would impact the proposed timing of payment. For instance, if funding payments were made annually, how would changes throughout the year be managed.</li> </ul>
<b>Proposed benchmark costs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns about a potential decrease in funding and supporting children in placements. A stakeholder noted that most of their children are in longer term placements so they would not be receiving the upfront carer recruitment and assessment funding or carer establishment cost, so would see a decrease in funding.</li> </ul>