

Informal Kinship Care Review Recommendations

Communities Tasmania Response

March 2021

Acknowledgement

The Department of Communities Tasmania extends our sincere thanks to the informal kinship carers for their participation in the Informal Kinship Care Review (the Review). The carer's experiences and views have influenced the Review's recommendations.

The Department also extends our thanks and acknowledges the participation of other interested stakeholders who dedicated their time and participated in the Review.



Communities Tasmania Response to the Informal Kinship Care Review Recommendations

Communities Tasmania’s response to each of the eight recommendations is outlined in the table below. All eight recommendations have been accepted.

Initiatives undertaken in response to the recommendations will fall under the banner of the ‘Informal Kinship Care Program’.

On the 15 March 2021, the Government announced immediate funding of \$500k to begin implementation of initiatives under the Informal Kinship Care Program over the next 12 months. Support for longer term/ongoing initiatives will be considered through the 2021-22 State Budget process.

The Informal Kinship Care, Liaison and Support Pilot Program will be progressed immediately, including a dedicated Liaison and Support Officer in the North West through Mission Australia.

Communities Tasmania will also develop options for extending more existing Government programs to informal kinship carers. Communities Tasmania will also undertake targeted case reviews to examine decision making and promote greater clarity for informal kinship carers.

Other key initiatives include:

- New training opportunities for informal kinship carers;
- An information portal for informal kinship carers;
- Increased brokerage for the new Informal Kinship Care Program;
- Community based respite services for informal carers; and
- Extension of access to supports and concessions for informal kinship carers.

The Minister will write to relevant Government ministers and officials and advocate at a State and National level for continued advancement of recognition and support for informal kinship care.

Recommendations	Communities Tasmania response to the recommendations
<p>Recommendation 1: Establish and pilot an Informal Kinship Care Support and Liaison Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and fund a pilot program located in the North West (or North of the State as an outpost from the Advice and Referral Line (ARL), dedicated to improving advice, support and referral to assist informal kinship carers navigate the complex systems and arrangements. The primary functions and responsibilities will involve a focus of overseeing and/or coordination in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inform policy and practice within the ARL and Family Support Services through action learning and contributing to practice review, including information changes to the Children, Youth and Families (CYF) Practice Manual. 	<p>Accepted*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A non-government Informal Kinship Care Liaison and Support Officer in the North West through Mission Australia will be funded from the remaining stimulus funding. It will be linked to the ARL and responsible for identified tasks from Recommendations 1 and 2. • A Government Informal Kinship Care position based in the ARL in the South will be responsible for identified tasks from a number of Recommendations. • A policy position will be progressed immediately to consult with stakeholders and develop informal kinship care

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Educate internal and external participants, through targeted information to understand the demographics and issues of practical concern to this carer cohort. ○ Deliver community campaigns to remove stigma and normalise informal kinship care arrangements. ● Undertake targeted audit and case review of historic cases to identify best practice approaches to inform the ARL. 	<p>information, including the information portal.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: Expand the eligibility of the Grandchildren Living with Grandparents Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extend coverage of the Grandchildren Living with Grandparents Program; and ● Consider renaming the service to a more inclusive informal kinship care service and to build ready access, and agile and integrated family support services, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supporting families to return to programs with targeted episodes of support; ○ Supporting transfer of guardianship and/or primary care; and ○ Extending access to a life stage approach matched to milestones in children and carers' real needs, such as early adolescence, moving into high school and then college. 	<p>Accepted*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A non-government Informal Kinship Care Liaison and Support Officer will commence in the North West through Mission Australia. It will be linked to the ARL and responsible for identified tasks from Recommendations 1 and 2. ● Increased brokerage will be made available under the new Informal Kinship Care Program (formerly Grandparents Living with Grandparents Program).
<p>Recommendation 3: Expand the availability of training and awareness raising programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expand the availability of existing training and awareness programs delivered by the community sector to informal kinship carers, to build capacity across an identified range of practices and capabilities that enhances coping mechanisms specifically for informal kinship carers, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parenting and behavioural management training; ○ Bringing Up Great Kids Program; ○ Mediation, Conflict Resolution and Communication; and ○ Leadership and mentoring training for members of voluntary support organisations to enhance peer support in managing complexities and relationships. 	<p>Accepted*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Immediate funding for training will be provided to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ expand the availability of existing training and awareness programs to informal kinship carers; and ○ to build capacity across an identified range of practices and capabilities.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match funding levels to enable support groups or community support providers to access these programs and resources. 	
<p>Recommendation 4: Improve the availability of information and resource material for informal kinship carers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop digital information that facilitates links to information to and from other agencies (state and federal) through an easy to access portal for informal kinship carers and support services. • In the interim, provide one-off grants for voluntary kinship care support groups to compile and distribute a fact sheet and digital information that is reliable, easy to access and uses simple language for use by informal kinship carers, covering eligibility for financial assistance and services, access to service providers and peer group contacts; and undertake peer support and mentoring of informal kinship carers. 	<p><i>Accepted</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital information (including a fact sheet) will be developed that facilitates links to information to and from other agencies (state and federal) through an easy to access portal for informal kinship carers and support services. • It is considered that an interim measure will not be required, instead Communities Tasmania will work with advocacy groups in the development of content for the digital resource.
<p>Recommendation 5: Review relevant Child Safety Service Client Files</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake targeted audits and case reviews to examine the decision-making rationale of Child Safety Service cases where the classification of children in care with grandparents, from the same situation and same parents, may be presently both informal and formal. 	<p><i>Accepted</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities Tasmania will undertake targeted audits and case reviews to examine the decision-making rationale of CSS cases where there are formal and informal arrangements in place within the same kinship care household. • Information will be developed based on the findings to provide informal kinship carers with the decision-making rationale. This information will be placed on the portal (Recommendation 4).
<p>Recommendation 6: Examine policy options to improve support</p> <p>6A. Explore government policy options and definitions that might be available to improve access to informal kinship carers, who are the responsible adults and have primary care responsibilities to meet the needs of children in their care, to improve support in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and schooling; • Health and professional counselling; and • Household and travel expenses. 	<p><i>Accepted</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A resource within Communities Tasmania will explore options to improve access and support to informal kinship carers in: education and schooling; health and professional counselling; and household and travel expenses.

<p>Recommendation 6: Examine policy options to improve support</p> <p>6B. Consider options for extending criteria to existing Government programs to improve the Government’s support to informal kinship carers, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ticket to Play Program to children living in informal kinship care arrangements • Concessions on the cost of Tasmanian Government services including electricity, water and public transport • Relevant training available to formal kinship carers • Companion Card to informal kinship carers, entitling informal kinship carers and children in their care to free tickets at participating venues and events; and • Quarantine a portion of funding for community based respite services for informal carers. 	<p><i>Accepted in principle, subject to extension being considered appropriate*</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options will be considered for extending criteria for existing programs to improve Government’s support to informal kinship carers such as Ticket to Play, Companion Card and concessions on electricity, water, public transport. • Community based respite services for informal carers will be made available. • Expanding training for informal kinship carers is addressed by Recommendation 3.
<p>Recommendation 7: Consider changes to the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the requirements for informal kinship care to be referenced as a specific carer cohort in need of support services and assistance in the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997; and to embed the objective of ensuring children remain connected to their families, communities and culture “to create and maintain stability and permanency in the kinship care placements”. 	<p><i>Accepted</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration will be given to amendments to the <i>Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997</i> that promote: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ recognition of informal kinship care as a specific carer cohort in need of support services and assistance; and ○ embedding the objective of ensuring children remain connected to their families, communities and culture “to create and maintain stability and permanency in the kinship care placements”
<p>Recommendation 8: Continue national advocacy</p> <p>Tasmanian Government Ministers and Officials continue to utilise national forums to actively advocate for kinship care including prioritising the following key recommendations from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Senate Enquiry (2014):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a comprehensive review to establish the additional costs associated with all kinship care and predict the savings if these children were required to enter foster or residential out of home care; 	<p><i>Accepted</i></p> <p>The Minister will write to Tasmanian Government Ministers and Officials to encourage them to continue to utilise national forums to actively advocate for kinship care, especially in prioritising the following four key recommendations from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Senate Enquiry (2014):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a comprehensive review to establish the additional costs associated with all kinship care and predict the savings if these children were required to



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish a national registration system to better identify kinship care families to whom financial assistance and support services should be provided;• Children in kinship care have health cards in their own right and a Medicare card in their own name held by the primary carer; and• Review the allocation of Commonwealth Grandparent Advisor positions, under the Grandparents Advisor Program, to ensure high demand and regional area needs are adequately met.	<p>enter foster or residential out of home care;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish a national registration system to better identify kinship care families to whom financial assistance and support services should be provided;• Children in kinship care have health cards in their own right and a Medicare card in their own name held by the primary carer; and• Review the allocation of Commonwealth Grandparent Advisor positions, under the Grandparents Advisor Program, to ensure high demand and regional area needs are adequately met. <p>Communities Tasmania will also note and act on opportunities for advocating, as a deliberate strategy to respond to this recommendation.</p>
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* *Some longer term/ongoing initiatives will be subject to normal State Budget process.*



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