

04 November 2015

Mr Terry Symonds
Deputy Secretary
Portfolio Strategy and Reform
Department of Health and Human Services
50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, Victoria, 3000

c/- roadmapforreform@dhhs.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr Symonds,

I write to provide a formal submission to the Department of Health and Human Services with regard to your Roadmap for Reform: Strong Families, Safe Children project. I understand that submissions are being received until 13 November 2015.

As you are aware, the Caroline Chisholm Society has endorsed the attached position statement and discussion paper which were prepared following the report of the Victorian Auditor General's Review of Early Intervention Services for Vulnerable Children and Families.

The Society supports significant reform to residential, foster and kinship care as we believe there is a need to support children entering and leaving care. However, if such reform is to succeed, it must be matched with a focus on 1) easier to access early intervention services (e.g. short term appointments and/or groups co-delivered with universal services), 2) greater casework capacity (e.g. early intervention home-visiting caseworkers helping keep families together) and 3) better planning and information systems (e.g. resolving issues with IRIS). These can only occur if community capacity is increased.

With regard to greater casework capacity, I offer these remarks; case management is what we do to keep families safe for children – and it has two different contexts, namely as risk management (measured by reduction in risk at Child Protection) compared to a therapeutic action (that can be measured by outcomes). We are currently funded for the earlier. Both are reasonable but it is challenging to see how you would fund prevention of engagement with Child Protection using the latter paradigm.

With regard to the need for community capacity, I offer these remarks; just as Child Protection needs "community based" workers to ensure that the community is supporting pathways for reduced duplication for clients so too do secondary services like ChildFirst and Integrated Family Services need workers dedicated to helping universal services make early referrals rather than waiting and making reports to Child Protection. These linkages are critical to effective operation of this service sector.

I welcome the forthcoming 'Symposium' and hope it will provide an opportunity to clarify the value of our work.

Yours Sincerely,



Helen Cooney
Chief Executive Officer

Locations

Caroline Springs
1 Darebin Place
Caroline Springs VIC 3023
Tel: 03 9361 7000
Fax: 03 9361 7099

Moonee Ponds
12 Shuter Street
Moonee Ponds VIC 3039
Tel: 03 9361 7000
Fax: 03 9326 1045

Goulburn Valley
15A St Andrews Road
Shepparton VIC 3630
Tel: 03 5821 0826
Fax: 03 5831 7755