

TARGETED EARLIER INTERVENTION PROGRAM EVALUATION

DCJ response to the Recommendations

Early Intervention – Evidence and Strategy

May 2025

An independent evaluation of the Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) program conducted by Taylor Fry, in partnership with Social Ventures Australia and Gamarada Universal Indigenous Resources was completed in December 2024.

The evaluation had three components:

1. Process evaluation - to understand how well the program is designed and implemented to achieve client outcomes;
2. Outcomes evaluation - to understand the outcomes the TEI program has achieved for clients; and
3. Economic evaluation - to understand whether the benefits for TEI clients outweigh program costs.

The TEI evaluation found the program has a positive impact on safety outcomes for individual clients. The program as a whole is found to be effective in reducing contact with child protection and reducing the likelihood of children remaining in out-of-home care (OOHC), for individual clients whose data could be linked.

The Final Evaluation Report provided a list of 7 recommendations, which DCJ has used to inform program design, delivery and improvement.

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**TEI
Recommendation**

Increase funding and capacity of Aboriginal and Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to deliver TEI services

SUPPORTED

01

Context

To support the achievement of its stated investment targets, DCJ will also need to invest in building the capacity of new and emerging ACCOs to be able to deliver TEI successfully.

DCJ response

The NSW Government and DCJ, has committed to a target of investing 30% of early intervention program funds with ACCOs. Through the TEI recommissioning process, TEI intends to at least double the investment in ACCOs from 7.2%, as of August 2023. ACCO investment, as at December 2024, is 10.3%. DCJ will continue to increase investment in ACCOs when funds become available and support the growth in the ACCO market by identifying and supporting new and emerging ACCOs.

DCJ will continue to support building the evidence base for early intervention Aboriginal-led service delivery. DCJ commissioned and released the Aboriginal-led Early Support Programs Evidence Review in October 2023, which has been embedded into the new draft Community and Family Support Program Specifications. DCJ will continue to work with ACCOs to build the early intervention Aboriginal-led service delivery evidence base.

Through TEI recommissioning in 2024, DCJ has developed Aboriginal-led commissioning principles in consultation with the sector. DCJ is currently working with the ACCO sector to develop TEI co-commissioning initiatives to increase shared decision-making and authority through service system co-design.

DCJ will continue to explore opportunities for co-commissioning with ACCOs and Local Decision Making bodies.

Focus on increasing TEI access in high population-growth and remote areas.

SUPPORTED

02

Context

This will include supporting new and emerging providers in new suburban growth areas. The evaluation found a lack of outlets delivering Counselling services and Specialist Support services in the more remote districts even though these services were measured to be relatively effective in reducing the likelihood of child protection outcomes.

DCJ response

Through recent TEI recommissioning in 2024, more work has been done to better plan alignment of service delivery to need, but DCJ also recognises the significant levels of demand in some parts of NSW and acknowledges the challenges in meeting that demand within existing program resources.

Improvements to service system analysis through the TEI program data and the evaluation will assist in better targeting of service types in locations of demand and remote areas. DCJ commits to continuing to grow the capacity of new, emerging or expanding service providers especially in new suburban areas with limited existing community infrastructure.

Through TEI recommissioning, DCJ will review the availability of Counselling and Specialist Support services in remote areas, and continue to support online service delivery for various service types in the TEI program.



Greater opportunity for interim contract and funding reviews during a contract period.

SUPPORTED

03

Context

While increased contract durations should be continued, there should be more frequent opportunities for contract and funding reviews in response to changing circumstances.

DCJ response

The TEI program offers flexibility for contract reviews during the contract period, at a minimum annually with the Service Provider Program Logic annual review built into existing TEI contracts.

Service providers are encouraged to engage with DCJ to amend or vary contracts during the contract period in response to changing circumstances, within existing funding. The TEI streamlined contract amendment clause is currently widely utilised by the sector to amend contracts by agreement. DCJ commits to continual use of this clause and promoting and encouraging service providers to use this process, where appropriate.



Increased flexibility in service provision and provider awareness.

SUPPORTED

04

Context

Simplification of the overall TEI program design, to have fewer distinct service types and greater allowance for providers to deliver a wider range of activities within a district and adapt the target cohorts based on local need.

DCJ response

DCJ will continue to support flexibility in TEI service delivery to meet local needs and be guided by evidence of what works.

DCJ has made significant progress, in consultation with the sector to meet this recommendation through updating the Program Specifications in preparation for commencement of the new Community and Family Support Program, in 2026. These changes include:

- merging the Targeted Earlier Intervention and Family Connect and Support programs into one program;
- streamlining Program Activities and Service Types to reduce duplication; and
- simplifying program data reporting.

The new draft Community and Family Support Program Specifications have reinforced the practice principle, and service system outcomes, of flexible and responsive service delivery. This involves supporting diverse engagement methods to reach different client groups, recognising and responding to changes in communities, and providing different levels and types of support to people depending on their needs.

Key updated program requirements include ensuring free and accessible services with flexible timeframes. This requires services to be delivered:

- in accessible locations;
- available at no cost to clients;
- with no eligibility criteria for access; and
- with no specific time limit on the duration of service needed to achieve positive outcomes.

DCJ will also clarify with providers how much flexibility already exists under the existing program design.



Support for community engagement and partnership development.

SUPPORTED

05

Context

DCJ should look to provide sufficient facilitation or funding for providers to participate in local forums and to undertake outreach to build partnerships in their local communities which enables effective referrals.

DCJ response

DCJ has increased the focus on community engagement in the new draft Community and Family Support Program Specifications. The TEI Community Strengthening program activity highlights the importance of strong community wellbeing in helping children, young people and families thrive, especially when they are in need. Using community development approaches, Community Strengthening aims to build social and community connections and enhance cohesion by connecting members of a community in need with their broader networks.

Key strengths of neighbourhood and community centres, highlighted in the program, are their ability to develop authentic partnership with the community, provide a soft entry to other supports and services, and deliver and sustain vital social infrastructure.

One of the key program requirements of the updated Program Specification is added emphasis on referral pathways and sector collaboration, with service providers encouraged to build and maintain strong relationships with local services, establish local referral pathways, and attend and participate in networking and information sharing events and interagency groups.

DCJ will continue to support the Community Sector Coordination Service Type to deliver sector coordination, planning and collaboration. DCJ will also look at reinvigorating interagency meetings and local provider forums in locations where these have lapsed, do not exist, or are not operating as effectively as they could.



Update outcomes measurement approaches.

SUPPORTED

06

Context

Outcome measurement approaches should be updated, in particular, to reflect cultural outcomes and consider principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty. Better recording of individual clients will facilitate better outcomes measurement and allows for a better understanding of program reach.



DCJ response

The work to reflect outcomes relevant to Aboriginal people is well underway in close collaboration with TEI and FCS funded ACCOs. The co-designed Outcomes for Aboriginal People in the Community and Family Support program framework, which recognises that culture is at the heart of everything, has been included in the new draft Community and Family Support Program Specifications. DCJ will continue to engage with ACCOs to explore opportunities to record data which is meaningful to Aboriginal communities as part of the program's outcomes measurement approach.

The TEI program is committed to the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance. ACCOs in the TEI program currently have access to all data collected and reported by their organisation and can access and share that data with their stakeholders and community at any time. TEI program data at an NSW and Local Government Area level is also currently publicly available. DCJ acknowledges and commits to continue to work with ACCOs to support their engagement and leadership in decision-making about data with their communities.

This recommendation also calls for better recording of individual clients, as this will facilitate better outcomes measurement. DCJ already has a Data Quality Improvement Strategy in place and many of the data quality issues observed through the evaluation are already in the process of being addressed. The TEI Data Collection and Reporting Guide is also being updated for the new program.

DCJ will also work with the Local Community Services Association to look for ways to strengthen outcomes measurement for the Community Strengthening program activity.

Define the focus of future evaluations.

SUPPORTED

07

Context

While this evaluation has played an important role in confirming the impact created by TEI overall, it would be useful for future evaluations to focus on understanding what service provision factors led to these kinds of outcomes.

DCJ response

DCJ commits to working with State Peaks and the sector on defining the focus of future evaluations.

This may include:

- Understanding which factors lead to greater positive outcomes for clients, including the specific impact of different TEI program activities and service types;
- Focusing on better quantifying Community Strengthening outcomes;
- Investing in local Aboriginal-led early intervention program evaluations; and
- Tracking longer-term outcomes for people supported in the TEI program.

