



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **the Premier and Cabinet**

ABORIGINAL YOUTH EXPENDITURE REVIEW 2013

Executive Summary

On the 1 July 2013 the Aboriginal Affairs Cabinet Sub-committee (AACSC) requested a review of targeted expenditure on Aboriginal youth programs and services (the Review), in order to:

1. Identify systemic issues in the provision of State funded targeted Aboriginal youth services requiring policy change, system change or structural reform; and
2. Make recommendations to improve outcomes and funding arrangements and ensure programs meet the needs of both the community and Government.

The Review was undertaken by a cross-agency Project Team, led by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, between September and November 2013. Only targeted State Government funded programs were within scope, with mainstream services and wholly Commonwealth funded programs excluded from the Review. A total of 144 targeted Aboriginal youth programs were considered, representing approximately \$115 million in annual expenditure (2012/13 estimate) across 15 agencies.

Information about these 144 programs provided by agencies was assessed against criteria to identify the degree to which effectiveness could be demonstrated. The criteria included articulation and measurement of progress towards outcomes, alignment with an identified strategic framework, the extent of consultation with stakeholders in particular the Aboriginal community, governance and reporting structures in place, and the extent of program evaluation or performance measurement. To provide a robust evidence base broader, systemic issues were identified through stakeholder bi-lateral meetings, roundtable discussions, agency self-assessment in the evaluation template and existing qualitative assessments at a sector-wide level were taken into account.

On the ground validation of the information provided by agencies was beyond the scope and resourcing of the Review, and it is likely that there will be instances where a project is effective but agencies have been unable to demonstrate effectiveness. The hard work and commitment of front line service deliverers is acknowledged in this context, and the Review is focussed on identifying systemic issues rather than identifying flaws in individual programs.

The Review found that less than 15% of programs within scope could sufficiently demonstrate effectiveness. Areas identified as contributing to this result were poor articulation and measurement of outcomes or objectives, limited program evaluation, and poor or patchy engagement with the Aboriginal community. It also identified a range of systemic issues in the provision and funding of Aboriginal youth services including short term and non-integrated funding, fragmented and siloed approaches to service delivery, and poor linkages between related services delivered by different agencies.

The findings of the Review point to areas requiring change to improve project design, implementation and evaluation. It highlights the need for a renewed emphasis on outcomes and accountability, performance measurement; more effective contracting processes; partnerships and localised initiatives; and improved Aboriginal community and client engagement. This approach is consistent with a range of reform initiatives and effort being undertaken by State agencies and the community sector to improve outcomes for Aboriginal young people.

1.0 Terms of Reference

In July 2013 the AACSC requested a review of State expenditure on Aboriginal youth programs and services as the first of a proposed series of expenditure reviews aimed at improving the effectiveness of Government investment in programs and services to Aboriginal people.

The Review had the following Terms of Reference:

1. identify the amount of funding allocated to existing programs, and clarify the funding arrangements in place; and
2. assess the effectiveness of existing programs including against defined objectives, outcomes and key performance indicators.

The information obtained during these processes will support the:

3. identification of any systemic issues requiring policy change, system change or structural reform; and
4. development of recommendations to the Aboriginal Affairs Cabinet Sub-committee on opportunities to achieve improved outcomes and funding arrangements to ensure programs meet the needs of both the community and Government.

2.0 Scope and Method

2.1 Scope

Only State funded programs, including those that are delivered in-house, in partnership with the Commonwealth, by the not-for-profit and non-government sectors, or by local government or Aboriginal organisations, were considered. Wholly Commonwealth funded projects and State funded mainstream services such as hospitals, schools, prisons, and policing were excluded from the Review. In total, 144 projects across 15 agencies were within the Review's scope, representing approximately \$115 million in annual expenditure (2012/13 estimate).

The Review did not validate the information provided by State agencies through on the ground evaluation of program effectiveness. This would require significant resources and data beyond the scope of the Review. Although support was provided to agencies in completing evaluation templates, timing and self-reporting limitations may have resulted in the under reporting of projects within scope.

2.2 Definitions

The following definitions were used to determine what programs, services or projects the Project Team would consider as "targeted Aboriginal Youth programs" and therefore within the Review's scope:

- Aboriginal – A person of Aboriginal origin who identifies as Aboriginal, which includes both Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders.
- Youth – individuals aged between 12-24. Targeted youth programs in WA have generally been found to provide services for this age cohort.
- Targeted Aboriginal Program – includes:
 - Aboriginal specific services – programs, services, projects and payments that explicitly target Aboriginal Australians;
 - substitute Aboriginal specific services – programs, services, projects and payments explicitly targeted to Aboriginal Australians, as an alternative to mainstream services; and
 - significant Aboriginal user services – programs, services, projects and payments that are allocated, where more than 50% of service users are Aboriginal.

2.3 Method

The Review was overseen by an interagency Project Board and undertaken by a Project Team between September 2013 and November 2013, led by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC). The Project Team included representation from the Departments of Aboriginal Affairs, Health, Education, Regional Development, and Child Protection and Family Support.

Data was collected from State agencies using a survey (evaluation template) containing questions based on the effectiveness criteria (provided in section 3.3). The responses to each criteria were scored on a scale of 0 – 5 and then analysed to identify trends.

A number of qualitative sources were reviewed to identify systemic issues. This included analysis of agency comments in the survey, review of existing research on youth services and a service provider roundtable. More detail on the assessment process, including the weighting given to each criterion and the evaluation rubrics is provided in Appendix A, and the evaluation template is provided at Appendix B.

2.4 Demonstrated effectiveness criteria

The criteria used to determine the degree to which State agencies could demonstrate the effectiveness of targeted programs were:

Intended project outcomes/ objectives	Demonstration that the impacts and changes the project is expected to have on the target group and community are articulated and are measured or measureable.
Strategic Framework	Demonstration of whether the program or service is aligned to a strategic framework including high level stated departmental, Ministerial, Cabinet, and government priorities or policy that has a level of Government endorsement.
Consultation	Demonstration of involvement and consultation with key stakeholders, in particular Aboriginal communities, in the design and delivery of programs/services.
Governance	Demonstration of appropriate project approval and reporting processes.
Progress to outcomes	Demonstration of a framework/process to measure program performance, including measurement of progress against performance indicators, outcomes/ objectives, and strategic framework. Indicators may be stated in a contract/agreement or may be internal to the agency. Ideally indicators are developed and expressed using the S.M.A.R.T. approach (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-bound).
Progress to strategic framework	Demonstration of a framework/process to measure progress against an identified strategic framework.

2.5 Intervention spectrum

An at-risk 'intervention spectrum' was developed, and was used by the Project Team to categorise programs using the survey responses. The levels within the spectrum are defined as:

Category	Definition
Participation	Projects open to all Aboriginal youth. Individuals choose to attend.
Engagement	Projects targeting 'at-risk' groups or offered to individuals because they fall within an 'at-risk' group.
Intervention	Projects targeting individuals who demonstrate 'at-risk' behaviour.
Statutory or Crisis Response	Projects where the State must intervene to prevent harm to the individual or society, including statutory measures.

4.0 Key Findings

This section outlines:

- amount of expenditure on Aboriginal youth services by agency, provider type and type of service in accordance with the intervention spectrum;
- aggregate results from the assessment of agency response against the effectiveness criteria; and
- systemic issues requiring policy change, system change or structural reform.

4.1 Funding by agency

The review identified that the Department of Corrective Services has the largest expenditure at \$56 million for 24 projects, representing 49% of baseline funding. This expenditure is largely due to three high value projects totalling \$47.9 million. The Department of Education has the second highest level of expenditure with a budget of \$18 million, accounting for 16% of funding. The remainder is dispersed between 13 agencies including the Mental Health Commission (8%), the Departments of Aboriginal Affairs (6%), Health (6%), Training and Workforce Development (4%) and Child Protection and Family Support (3%) (Figure 1).

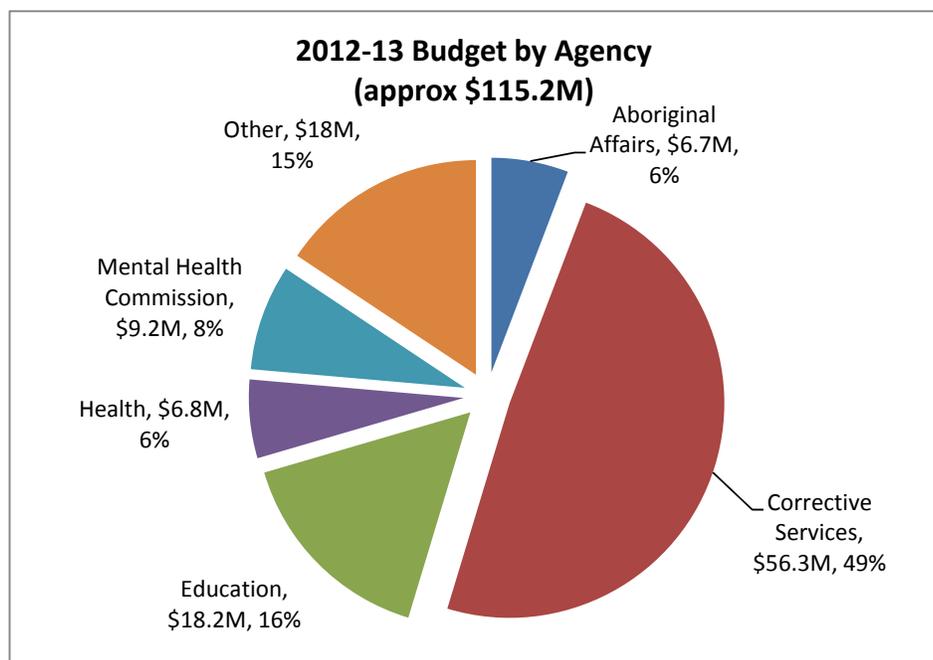


Figure 1: Expenditure on targeted Aboriginal youth programs by agency.

4.2 Provider type

The majority of funds were being spent on agency-delivered projects (\$70 million) with Not-For-Profits (\$19 million) and Aboriginal Corporations (\$19 million) delivering small to medium sized projects – the balance of funding was spent on projects delivered by a range of other organisations including sporting associations, local government and social enterprises. As mentioned, the Department of Corrective Services' projects comprised a substantial proportion of State Government funding. Excluding these projects, the funding is almost equally divided between Not-for-Profits, Aboriginal Corporations, and in-house State Government delivery.

4.3 Performance against effectiveness criteria

A total of 144 survey responses were returned by agencies and reviewed by the Project Team, representing approximately \$115 million in annual expenditure (2012/13 estimate).

A number of programs scored well against the effectiveness criteria. In particular programs delivered by the Department of Sport and Recreation and the Department of Education were above the average score in all criteria, with some notable examples of outcomes measurement, and community engagement (provided as case studies).

However, based on the available data and noting the limitations, less than 15% of programs could demonstrate overall effectiveness (defined as a weighted average score of 3 or greater) as measured against the criteria. The results identified:

- Many programs or services were not able to demonstrate articulation of outcomes and/or a process for measuring progress towards these intended outcomes and strategic frameworks.
- Most projects did not have specific, measurable and time-bound performance indicators, and did not actively evaluate the impact of the project.
- A third of projects were allowed to mature beyond the early establishment period despite not being able to demonstrate their effectiveness. The amount being spent on these mature underperforming projects totalled \$70 million.
- The majority of agencies did not demonstrate extensive consultation or partnership with the Aboriginal community in the design and delivery of projects.

An aggregate of all State agency performance against the effectiveness criteria is shown in Figure 2.

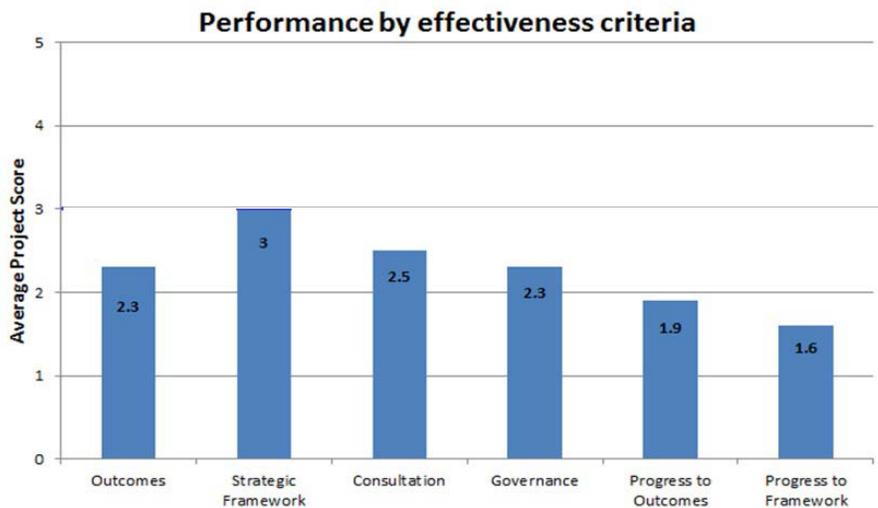


Figure 2: Average score (out of 5) for targeted Aboriginal programs or services, against effectiveness criteria.

4.4 Systemic issues

Discussions with key stakeholders, including a service provider roundtable, related policy work and qualitative responses in the evaluation template identified a degree of consensus around the following systemic issues:

- lack of evidence about the effectiveness of existing expenditure;
- fragmented and short term funding;
- under investment in services to divert at-risk youth from entrenchment in the statutory child protection or youth justice systems, or to assist them in exiting these systems;
- complex and poorly coordinated policy and service delivery environment; and
- poor or patchy service design, including limited effective community engagement.

Lack of robust evaluation of outcomes

The majority of programs did not have clear aims and objectives and reported on outputs (e.g. number of workshops held) rather than outcomes achieved (e.g. reduced recidivism, employment of participants). While it is acknowledged that measuring outcomes can be difficult, in most cases little or no attempt is made to measure effectiveness.

Meaningful data and longitudinal research to inform investment into services that work is required to minimise repeatedly investing in services or projects with no demonstrated long term impact.

Agencies were asked how they would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of projects. A greater focus on outcome measures and indicators was identified by 40% of projects, while 25% identified better evaluation processes and improved consultation, engagement and partnership in service design and delivery. These comments align with the Review's findings.

Fragmentation of effort and funding

Funding for non-Government providers of Aboriginal youth programs is generally fragmented and short term, with high administrative costs and uncertainty for providers. It also undermines the financial sustainability of service providers, and the ongoing relationships between providers and youth-at-risk which are seen by many in the sector as crucial in achieving outcomes.

Resources spent in time intensive grant applications and administration could be better used to improve services, through building capacity, greater community engagement and better evaluation. Funding issues are not unique to State funded youth services, with Commonwealth funding also dominated by short term contracting with limited or no pathways to more sustainable funding sources.

Investment balance

Over 100 of the 144 programs reviewed were categorised as participation or engagement, accounting for 43% of expenditure. These projects were delivered by 14 agencies led by the Departments of Education, Health, Child Protection and Family Support, and Sport and Recreation. In general, these programs are poorly coordinated with "the sum worth less than the parts" due to fragmentation of funding and effort. They are often limited to keeping young people safe and occupied, rather than building on that foundation to address underlying issues and increase participation in education, training and employment.

Seven programs accounting for 46% of expenditure were categorised as statutory or crisis services in the juvenile justice system (e.g. juvenile justice teams, youth diversion, bail options). Only 11% of expenditure is on projects targeting individuals who demonstrate at-risk behaviour (e.g. offending) but are not yet entrenched offenders.

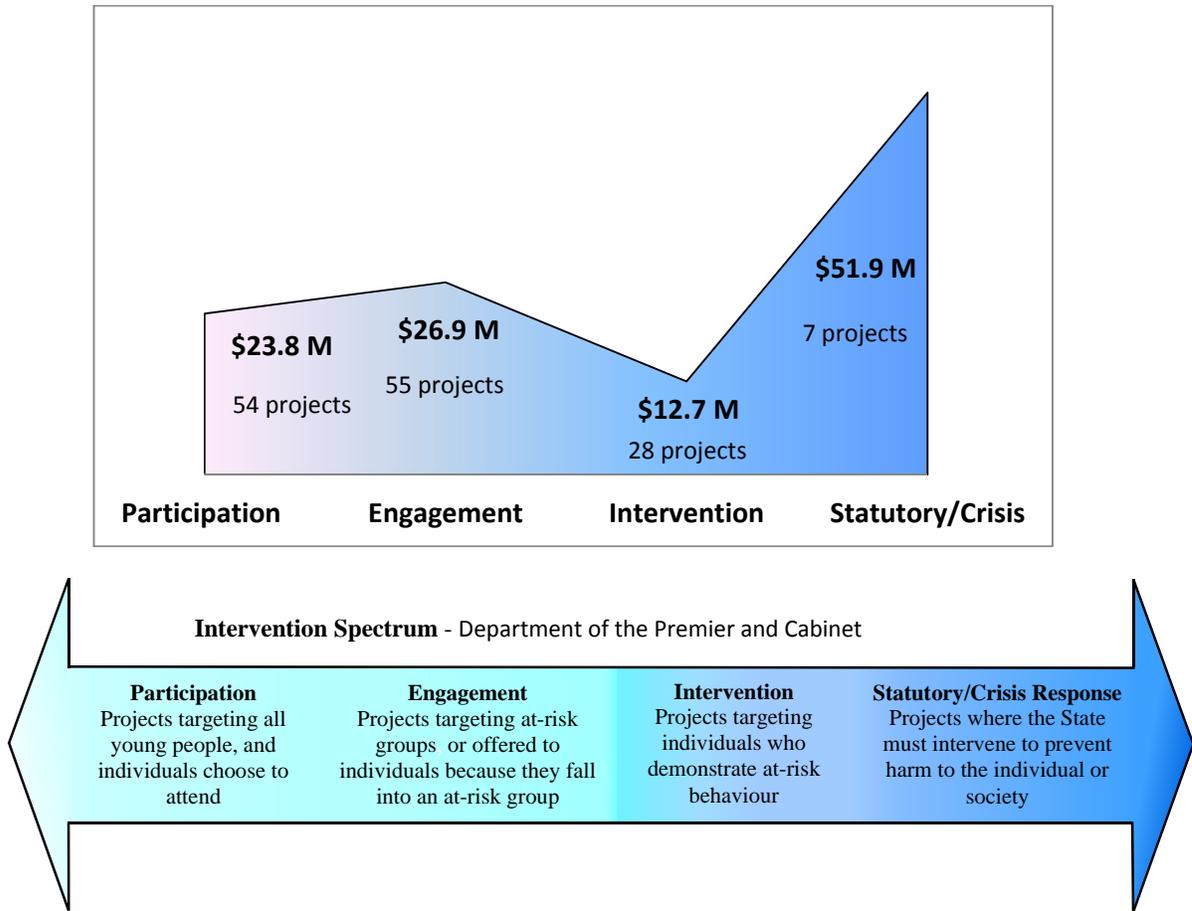


Figure 1: Cumulative expenditure and number of projects within each level of the Intervention spectrum (DPC, 2013).

Complex policy and service delivery environment

The Review identified an unclear policy environment, with numerous operating frameworks across government relating to young people, and inadequate coordination between agencies in the planning and delivery of services. In general, agencies separately fund discrete and narrowly focused services. The fragmented nature of services and the supporting policy environment also creates system inefficiencies, where duplicative and overlapping programs can co-exist.

Design and engagement: poor or patchy, lack of community and end-user engagement/buy-in

Services across a range of Government agencies were frequently marked by inadequate consultation with Aboriginal people in service design and a lack of connectedness between both State and Not-For-Profit organisations in the planning and delivery of those services. There is also a propensity for services to focus on keeping at-risk young people engaged for a short period of time but do not address underlying issues or make lasting changes to their behaviours or social outcomes.

Case study 1: Example projects that scored well across the effectiveness criteria

North West Metropolitan Project – Department of Sport and Recreation
Total project value <\$500,000

The North West Metropolitan Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) and Aboriginal Children and Adolescent Sport and Active Recreation Project is a three-year initiative targeting low participation groups, specifically CaLD and Aboriginal children and young people, in the Cities of Stirling, Wanneroo and Joondalup. The project uses a 'community development' approach as a key strategy to enhance community inclusion.

This project builds on the City of Stirling's CaLD and Aboriginal Youth Sport, Recreation and Leisure project and the Edmund Rice Centre (ERC) Multicultural Youth Sport and Recreation project. Engagement and fostering relationships with sport and active recreation deliverers and local community service providers is another objective of the program.

The project is guided by and measured against clear objectives and outcomes. The service design was informed by a robust consultation process involving workshops with Aboriginal organisations, community groups, and Not-For-Profit service providers. These workshops were used to identify gaps in current services being delivered in the area, and from this a model of service delivery for the program was designed.

A leadership group of CaLD and Aboriginal youth was also established to develop and deliver culturally appropriate programs to fellow youth in the community. The program provides linkages to traineeships within State Sporting Associations.

Case study 2: Example projects that scored well across the effectiveness criteria

Follow the Dream: Partnerships for Success – Department of Education
Total project value >\$10 million

Follow the Dream: Partnerships for Success is a voluntary program for aspirant Aboriginal secondary school students. The program provides after-school tuition and individualised mentoring, support and case management to assist and support students to complete Year 12 and obtain a successful post-secondary school destination. It addresses the key focus area of 'pathways to real post-school options' in the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014. The Department of Education has an agreement with The Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation to co-fund and co-manage the program, as well as to broker private sector support.

The program is hosted at 25 public schools throughout Western Australia, and is characterised by the following key features:

- The program is managed locally, with funding and system level coordination and support provided by the Aboriginal Education Office in the Department of Education.
- Program governance includes a local Steering Committee that involves and empowers Aboriginal parents, program partners, and other community members in local-level decisions about the program, and ensures that the program meets the needs of the students and the local community. The role of the Steering Committee is to set and monitor the strategic and operational priorities at each site, review local program expenditure and education outcomes of participating students, and support the Program Coordinator and principal to solve and manage contentious and/or sensitive local-level issues that arise.
- Each school in the program provides a well-resourced learning centre, tuition and supplementary, personalised learning opportunities specifically for the students in the program after school hours.
- The learning and support program that is offered at each site is tailored to the specific needs of the participating students and their circumstances and typically includes activities such as subject and career counselling, cultural activities, university visits and preparation courses, study skills seminars, guest speakers, leadership development camps and opportunities, and tours of local industry and post-school employment opportunity sites.

The program's objectives, specifically, are to increase the proportion of Aboriginal students who achieve a WACE and an ATAR that allows university entry; have high levels of literacy and numeracy; have a broad range of post-school education, training, and employment options and opportunities, and achieve a successful post-school transition.

The key performance indicators for the program are:

- Percentage of participants obtaining a Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE)
- Percentage of participants obtaining an Australian Tertiary Admissions Ranking (ATAR)
- Percentage of participants obtaining a successful post-secondary school destination (university, bridging, apprentice/traineeship, other training and employment).

The project has been independently evaluated to assess its effectiveness.

6.0 Next Steps

The findings of the Review identifies the need for reform of Government investment in Aboriginal youth services. The key reform objectives are to:

- Foster **stronger partnerships** and collaborative approaches that include connections with the community at a local level;
- Enable **integrated and sustainable service delivery**, and reduce fragmentation of funding and effort;
- Build-in **performance measurement** based on outcomes; and
- **Refocus investment** to programs that address the complex needs of young people who are at risk, but fall between the traditional boundaries of agency responsibilities.

To drive this reform a set of priorities and principles have been developed to clarify State Government investment in Aboriginal youth programs and services. The priorities and principles provide policy direction to Government agencies and respond to the Review's findings that:

- investment in engagement and participation services is fragmented and often limited to keeping young people safe and occupied, rather than building on that foundation to address underlying issues and increase participation in education, training and employment; and
- there is under-investment in intervention services for youth who are at risk but are not in the statutory child protection or youth justice systems.

The principles specifically address the systemic issues that limit the effectiveness of programs and services for Aboriginal youth, with a focus on strengthening partnerships through local collaboration and engagement, clear articulation of target populations, built in performance frameworks, and ensuring that underlying issues of family dysfunction, substance abuse and mental health are addressed. The South East Corridor Youth Partnership Project and the redesign of the Broome Youth Services are two emerging initiatives that demonstrate application of the reform objectives (refer case study 3).

Reducing unnecessary bureaucratic burdens, working in partnership with the community and Not-For-Profit sector and taking a more outcomes focused approach to delivering services is also in line with existing Government policy (the Delivering Community Services in Partnership policy).

The Investment Priorities and Principles are available on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website.

Case study 3: Projects demonstrating application of the reform objectives

South East Corridor Youth Partnership Project

The South East Corridor Youth Partnership Project has recently been established with the aim of developing and piloting a sustainable client-centred model of service delivery for at risk youth in the south eastern corridor of Perth. It involves 16 youth service providers including State agencies, local governments and the Not-For-Profit sector.

The organising structure of the project has evolved from the collaborative work of the South East Metropolitan Human Services Managers' Forum and its Youth Council. A Not-For-Profit organisation is funded to steer and align the activities of youth service providers and State agencies within the partnership, and to monitor outcomes resulting from the collaboration.

The expected benefits are a more effective service for young people, sharing of administrative and training resources between organisations, and the measuring of outcomes across multiple services.

Redesign of Broome Youth Services

The Department of Child Protection and Family Support (CPFS) is working with non-government service providers and Aboriginal corporations to redesign CPFS funded youth services in Broome.

The initiative arose out of the recognition that there were gaps in services to address existing and emergent community needs. To improve service delivery a services hub with a single coordinating body was established to coordinate and support service providers across multiple sites.

The approach is expected to result in significant reductions in administrative costs and service duplication, with the savings derived being channelled back into improved case management, and out of hours outreach and diversion services, and increased capacity to deliver services at multiple sites.

APPENDIX A: Response Assessment Method

The Evaluation Framework consisted of six criteria that were considered indicative of a project's effectiveness, based on information provided in the templates. Each criteria was weighted as follows:

Area	Evaluation Criteria	Weighting
Project design and delivery	1. Intended project outcomes/objectives	20%
	2. Strategic framework	15%
	3. Consultation	10%
	4. Governance	20%
Project performance	5. Progress towards stated outcomes/objectives	20%
	6. Progress towards strategic framework	15%

Evaluation Rubrics provided the Project Team with guidance on how to assign scores, for example:

Evaluation Criteria 1: Intended project outcomes/objectives

Score	Guide
0-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no stated project outcomes/objectives; or • Project outcomes/objectives do not meet the given definition.
2-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project outcomes/objectives meet the definition. • Project outcomes/objectives are not S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-bound).
4-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project outcomes/objectives meet the given definition. • Project outcomes/objectives are S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-bound).

Evaluation process

The evaluation process is summarised as follows:

1. Compliance:

- Evaluation templates were reviewed to ensure the information provided was complete and in scope for the Review.
- Where information was not complete or required clarification, agencies were asked to provide further information within a strict timeframe.

2. Assessment against evaluation criteria:

- The evaluation handbook was distributed to each Assessor.
- Each completed evaluation template was evaluated by two separate assessors against the evaluation criteria, with Project Team members restricted from evaluating their home agency's templates.
- A moderation process in the form of a consensus meeting was held for each assessment to agree upon final scores and comments.
- Scores for each criteria and comments were then entered into an Excel database and a final weighted score determined.

3. Database and weighted scoring:

- The database was developed to store data on projects and final scores of assessed evaluation templates.
- The database was the central data source for the Review and was used as the main tool for the Project Team's analysis.

Systemic issues analysis

- Analysis into systemic issues occurred in parallel to the assessment of evaluation templates.
- Sources for the systemic issues included recent and related policy analysis undertaken by DPC, information provided by stakeholders (both government agency and Not-for-Profit service providers) during bi-lateral meetings and a roundtable discussion held with key Aboriginal and Not-for-Profit stakeholders.
- The roundtable discussion meeting held on 22 October 2013 provided an opportunity for stakeholder input into the systemic issues analysis and discuss priorities for next steps.

Post-review follow-up

- At the conclusion of the Review, final scores were distributed to each agency for their consideration. Agencies were then invited to discuss the results with the Project Sponsor and Coordinator.
- Bi-lateral meetings were subsequently held with Directors General of each agency, or their senior representatives.
- Through this process, each agency had an opportunity to comment on the Review's findings, give fresh insight into the effectiveness of some projects and to discuss potential next steps.



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