Family is Culture: Independent Review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People in OOHC in NSW - Call for public submissions

The Independent Review (the Review) is examining the reasons for the high and increasing rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People in Out of Home Care (OOHC) in NSW. The final report will be delivered to the Minister for Family and Community Services in 2018 and will include recommendations and strategies for change.

The Review is seeking public submissions that address the Review’s Terms of Reference and would like people and organisations interested in having their say, to focus on the following issues:

1. The reasons for the high and increasing rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and young people in OOHC in NSW;
2. The application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles in NSW; and
3. Strategies to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People currently in OOHC and entering care in NSW, including improving pathways to family reunification.

Submission questions have been provided to help prompt you, however they are only a guide and you are encouraged to write what you need to say.

The Review welcomes submissions from people with lived experience of Child Protection/OOHC, peak bodies, advocacy groups, academics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and other interested individuals.

If you or someone you know is involved in a current child protection or OOHC matter please understand that this Review cannot influence the outcome of that matter.

To complete your submission, please sign the consent form at the end of this document (pages 5 and 6) to ensure that your submission can be considered.

To report concerns that a child or young person is at risk of harm, abuse or neglect, contact the NSW Child Protection Helpline: 13 21 11 (24 hours, 7 days).
Submissions process
Closing date: Submissions must be received by close of business **19 December 2017**

Lodging Submissions
Submissions can be either handwritten and mailed, or completed electronically by email. If emailing your submission, your document must be saved in either Word format or PDF, attached to your email, and sent to:

**Email:** submissions@familyisculture.nsw.gov.au

You will receive an email acknowledging receipt of your emailed submission.

**Written submissions** should be mailed to:

Public Submissions
Family is Culture: Independent Review
Locked Bag 9001
Alexandria, NSW
1435

If you are mailing your submission and require a written acknowledgement of your submission, please be sure to include a return address.

If you have any questions about your submission please contact the Independent Review: contact@familyisculture.nsw.gov.au or call us Toll Free: 1800 431 168.
Submission guiding questions
Submissions are invited to address any or all of the following questions:

1. **What are the main reasons for the high number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young people entering into and in OOHC in NSW?**
   *In answering this question you may wish to consider:*
   - Legislation
   - Identified systemic issues
   - Current child protection and OOHC policy
   - Current court processes
   - Child protection and OOHC practice
   - Other factors such as historical, socio-economic, political

2. **What are the current strengths and weaknesses of the child protection/OOHC system in NSW, specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with regard to:**
   2.1 Prevention and early intervention
   2.2 Participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in decisions making
   2.3 Partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations
   2.4 Placement decisions, including carer assessment
   2.4 Maintaining connection to family, culture & community
   2.5 Independent oversight and accountability of decisions regarding children and families

3. **What can be done to reduce the high number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People in OOHC in NSW?**
   *In answering this question you may wish to consider:*
   - What does evidence in other jurisdictions demonstrate? (National/international)?
   - Legislative/policy/practice change including comparative examples of reform (national/international)?
   - What can make a difference right now?
   - What can make a difference in the future (future reform)?
4. What are the barriers to change in NSW and how can these be remedied?

5. Questions for submissions based on personal experience:
   The Review is considering ways that the system can be changed and what changes may make a positive difference to children and families. Sharing your experience will help the Review to understand what change may look like.

The questions below are only a guide to help you write your story. Use this guide if it is helpful, and so that your story is within the Terms of Reference of the Review.

All questions refer to you, or to the person you know who you are writing about:
- What happened to you/the person you know?
- What happened at the time/point of removal?
- What was your experience of child protection and OOHC?
- Who do you believe made the key decisions about you or the child?
- Was anything done during the time in OOHC to connect with family, kin and culture?
- What should have been done differently?
- What has this experience meant for you now and for your future?
- What changes to the system could make a difference right now?
- What changes need to be made for the future?
- What message do you want to give the decision-makers and policy-makers?

Where can I access help and support?
We understand sharing your story may be upsetting to talk about. We appreciate the time you have taken to share your experiences with us.

If you need support, we have provided a list of services that can help you.

24 hour counselling
Lifeline
24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention
If you need immediate support call Lifeline on 13 11 14.

Aboriginal Services
Link Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation
Website: www.linkupnsw.org.au  Phone 1800 624 332.
Provides counselling, healing and culturally appropriate support for Indigenous Australians.
Healing Foundation
Website: www.healingfoundation.org.au
Service to help build the capacity of Indigenous organisations and support the development of the Link-Up network.
Phone (02) 6272 7500

Consent
In making this submissions I note that:

- All content of submissions made to the Review are automatically treated as confidential and will be viewed and read only by the Independent Review team, for the purpose of the Review.
- Organisations will be acknowledged as making a submission, on both the web page and the final report unless requested not to in the consent form below. Organisations will also be asked permission to reproduce their submission in full on the Family is Culture web page. Permission to reproduce does not however mean that all submissions will be published and this will be at the discretion of the Chair.
- Individuals making a submission have the option to be acknowledged in the list of submissions in final report or not. Use the consent form to advise your preference.
- If you or your organisation wishes your information to be considered for use in the final report, you must confirm your consent as outlined below.

All submissions must be signed by the individual, nominated representative or principle officer of the organization making the submission.

If a submission is not signed, it will not be considered.

Full name (please print) __________________________________________

I am submitting as (please tick to indicate):
[ ] Individual [ ] Organisation

Contact details (email, phone, address) __________________________________________

________________________________________
I consent to contact from the Review for further information or clarification about this submission  □ Yes  □ No
I wish to be provided with a summary of the findings of this report when published  □ Yes  □ No

Signature: ____________________________________________

Date: ____________________________________________

If making the submission as an individual
I consent to acknowledgment in the final report  □ Yes  □ No
I consent to information contained in this submission being attributed to me, by name, in the final report  □ Yes  □ No

If making the submission as an organisation/group:

Name of the organisation/group ____________________________________________

Position/Office Holder in organization ____________________________________________

I confirm I have the authority to make a submission on behalf of this organisation/group  □ Yes
I agree to information contained in this submission being attributed to this organisation/group in the final report  □ Yes  □ No

I agree to this submission being reproduced in full on the Review website  □ Yes  □ No