

31 July 2018

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, MP
Premier of New South Wales
52 Martin Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

**Joint Community Peak Bodies Statement on Tune Review, Ombudsman Report and
Fams Report: Time to act for the Protection of Vulnerable Children**

Dear Premier,

Three new reports have been released recently, which demonstrate the need for an urgent overhaul of the way NSW provides services to young people who are vulnerable and at risk.

The NSW Community Sector Peak Bodies (the Peaks) welcome the release of the Tune Review, the Ombudsman's special report '*More than Shelter*', and Fams' '*Investing in Children and Their Families*'.

The three reports quantify the crisis facing our community, and among other things, detail that:

- The number of children and young people in out-of-home-care (OOHC) has doubled in 10 years, and the number of children and young people in specialist homelessness services (SHS) is rising. In 2016-17 alone, more than 5,000 young people presented to a homelessness service, with more than one third under 16. These numbers must be drastically reduced.
- Expenditure is crisis-driven, meaning the system is neglecting the needs of vulnerable children and families and failing to end cycles of intergenerational abuse and neglect. Only 6.3 per cent of the overall 2016-17 budget investment for child protection focused on early intervention and prevention.
- The previous reforms had some \$302 million spent on programs with unknown effectiveness;
- More children are being classified as at Risk of Significant Harm, but no assistance is being provided – just 28 per cent of children who received a Risk of Significant Harm report had a face-to-face meeting in 2014-15. These numbers need to be dramatically increased; and

Aboriginal children and young people, their families and communities are disproportionately affected by these systems, and a distinct approach that reflects the principle of self-determination is needed to overcome this over-representation. Collectively, the Peaks stand with AbSec and are committed to the self-determination of Aboriginal communities, confident that supports that are designed and delivered through Aboriginal community-controlled processes, and directly accountable to the communities they serve, are best placed to address this over-representation and support Aboriginal children and families to thrive. AbSec have developed and released frameworks for Aboriginal-led solutions, and we stand with them in their call for NSW Government to engage with these approaches.

We need a system that is coordinated, integrated and evidence-informed. We need a system that is focused on early intervention and prevention. We need to know the outcomes of the reviews into the OOHC and youth homelessness systems. We need better measurement that contributes to building the evidence base of what works. We need more targeted interventions.

Your government described its latest budget as a budget for the people of NSW and one that is putting people first, which are very welcome signs from the sector. We think that it is now very clear that we all need to do more to not only extend, but target this commitment specifically to children and young people in out of home care, specialist homelessness services, foster care, at risk of harm, at risk of homelessness, and identified as falling behind.

We invite the Premier to meet with the Peaks in September 2018 to discuss how we can work together to redesign the service system to deliver better outcomes for children, young people, families and communities.

Sincerely,

The NSW Community Sector Peak Bodies

