Joint Governance Group Statement on delivery of  *A Step Up for Our Kids: Out of Home Care Strategy 2015-2020*

*A Step Up for Our Kids* is an ambitious Strategy to reform out of home care in the ACT. The vision of the reform for children and young people in care is *growing up strong, safe and connected*. The Strategy introduced a focus on trauma-informed approaches and made a substantial investment in children staying at home with their families safely. Where this is not possible the reform prioritises stable home-based care within the funded ACT Together Consortium.

The Mid-Strategy Evaluation confirms that the ‘impact of individual reforms are still developing’. It also provides an opportunity for all partners involved in the delivery of the Strategy to actively consider how the implementation of the reforms can be strengthened.

There is clearly work to do to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children coming into care. All partners involved in *A Step Up for Our Kids* support the *Our Booris, Our Way* review and look forward to the Steering Committee’s final report and recommendations. The interim recommendations are important steps to self-determination and meaningful change. There has been a steady increase in the number of kinship carers and placements with kin as an alternative to placement with foster carers, which is consistent with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles.

A key focus of the Strategy has been the investment in intensive parenting, and family preservation services to prevent children and young people entering out of home care. The services provided by Uniting Children and Family Services ACT is a demonstration of the commitment to preventing children and young people coming into care and being restored to families wherever possible.

The evaluation also demonstrates an increase in stability of out of home care placements since the implementation of the Strategy. ACT Together Consortium agencies (Barnardos Australia, OzChild, and Australia Childhood Foundation) are providing a continuum of trauma-informed care in order to achieve this result.

The most recent operational data (up to 30 June 2019) is showing positive trends, which will continue to be monitored through the quarterly Snapshot Report. The Minister for Children, Youth and Families tables the Snapshot Report in the Legislative Assembly in April and October, to regularly update the community on the reforms.

All partners in *A Step Up for Our Kids* are committed to continual improvement in the collection of data, and the monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy. Planning is currently underway for a post-Strategy evaluation.

Our aim of long-term, generational change can only be achieved through a collaborative and sustained effort. All partners involved in the implementation of *A Step Up for Our Kids* understand that each organisation has a crucial part to play in the overall success of the reforms.

All the partners involved in out of home care in Canberra are absolutely committed to children and young people growing up *strong, safe and connected* to family, community and culture.