

Commissioning Conversations

Welcome to the fourth instalment of commissioning conversations. This will be the final instalment for 2021, and it's a bumper issue as we finish the year with an update on the many strands of work underway. We would like to take this opportunity to express a wholehearted thank you to everyone who has been on this commissioning journey with us over the past year. It has been a challenging year on a number of fronts, but your enthusiasm and determination to continue this important work has enabled us to take big strides, from the release of the Commissioning Approach and Roadmap to multiple sub-sectors commencing initial engagement and planning.

We wish you all a happy and safe holiday period, and hope you come back well rested for 2022 as we continue our commissioning journey together. We know that not all of you will be able to have as restful a break as you would like as you continue to provide critical support to our community. For this we cannot thank you enough, we are very lucky to be working toward the same goals with such committed and passionate partners, and look forward to continued work together in the New Year.

Commissioning Roadmap

We continue to gather feedback from the sector regarding the Commissioning Roadmap. Several organisations, including ACTCOSS and its members, chose to write to us with their thoughts and we thank them for doing so. The Minister will shortly respond formally to ACTCOSS. At this stage we are not anticipating issuing an updated version of the Roadmap but have heard sector calls for a greater level of detail regarding the timing of commissioning stages for each funding stream. We are working to make this available through the commissioning website in the new year.

If you have not yet provided your thoughts on the Commissioning Roadmap back to your relationship managers, we encourage you to do so. Alternatively, please feel free to provide them directly through to either the CSD or ACT Health Commissioning teams at CSDCommissioning@act.gov.au or HealthCommissioning@act.gov.au.

Overarching Commissioning Focus Areas

The following updates provide information on overarching or joint commissioning activities. Sub-sector specific updates are provided at the end of this instalment.

- Multi-funded organisations – in mid-October we held a series of workshops with organisations which hold funding agreements across a range of sub-sectors in both the Community Services (CSD) and ACT Health (ACTHD) Directorates. These workshops sought to better understand the challenges associated with being involved in several commissioning processes, as well as the strategies which could be utilised to support involvement. A write up from those workshops has been prepared and can be found online [here](#). The write up includes a response from Government about the actions it will take to give effect to some of the key strategies. We apologise for the delay in making this available.

- Cross-cutting organisations – The CSD Commissioning Team has met with several of the Ministerial Advisory Councils and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body to better understand how we should engage with cohorts whose interests need to be considered as part of commissioning processes across funding streams. This issue has also been raised by ACTHD with the NGO Leadership Group. These meetings have provided us with some really rich information, perspectives and strategies for engagement as we move forward with commissioning. Some consistent points we have heard include:
 - We need to engage with these cohorts from the outset of a process, so they are shaping and guiding the solutions.
 - Early engagement with these groups in commissioning will help to inform mainstream services, and support understanding of how services could be designed/ redesigned to be more culturally appropriate and inclusive. Where possible, information from these groups should be obtained once and used by government agencies to inform service design across a range of areas.
 - These groups often have existing communication channels. Where possible, we should tap into these and seek to provide commissioning updates.
 - Government needs to be willing to work in different ways to engage with these groups, for example: engagement on weekends or afterhours would make it easier for people to attend.
 - Our communication needs to be clear and easy to understand, introducing team members, explaining what we are doing and clearly articulating the difference we want commissioning to make in the lives of community members both now and into the future.
- The CSD Commissioning Team will meet with remaining Ministerial Advisory Councils in the coming months, as agendas allow, and we will continue to look into engaging with cross-cutting organisations for these important discussions.
- Peaks Body commissioning – This work got underway in early November through a meeting with affected organisations to explore the scope and intentions of commissioning peak functions in the coming months. The discussion identified some challenges which can be addressed immediately, along with others that require direction from Ministers. A write up from this meeting, which includes details on these challenges and an initial response from Government, is being prepared and will be circulated shortly. We plan to focus first on progressing work where Ministerial direction is not required.

Evaluation of Commissioning

In line with previous updates on the evaluation of commissioning, work is underway to design mechanisms to record and track the experience of participating in the commissioning process, and the impact this has on the relationship between government and the NGO sector. We hope to have more news on this before the end of the year.

Procurement and Commissioning Webinar (25 November 2021)

On Thursday 25 November 2021, CSD, ACTHD and Procurement ACT held a webinar for government and NGO sector staff to build and strengthen understanding about how procurement works in a commissioning context. This was a joint learning opportunity building commissioning capability for both sector and government stakeholders.

The webinar was well attended with over 200 people participating. We would like to thank attendees for their insightful questions and robust discussion. The PowerPoint slides from the presentation and a recording which runs through content from the webinar will shortly be uploaded to both the Commissioning and the Procurement ACT websites. A link will be circulated to the commissioning mailing list once these items have been uploaded.

Attendees requested that the next joint webinar be on the shift to outcomes and measurement. We will do some internal work to plan and prepare for this.

Next CSD Sector Update Forum

The next forum will take place on Tuesday 7 December 2021. Key agenda items will be:

- An update on the next iteration of *A Step Up for Our Kids*;
- Commissioning update, focussed on findings from multi-funded organisations workshops and next steps for Peak Body commissioning;
- An update on work to raise the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility; and
- An update on the Child and Family Reform work.

Other Commissioning news

The Commissioning website has a tab for [commissioning processes which are in progress](#). It provides a place where people can find out about commissioning activities underway across various sub-sectors. Further content will be uploaded soon with a focus on engagement opportunities in the new year. Updates on activities in some sub-sectors are provided below.

Homelessness

- In November 2021, Homelessness Services undertook procurement processes to engage two consultant teams to deliver two programs of work which include i) OneLink evaluation and ii) designing and facilitating a series of engagement activities as part of the strategic partnership timeline between the ACT Government and the specialist homelessness sector.
- After the successful consultants are identified, Homelessness Services will work closely with the consultants to design methodologies and tools for the engagement activities. It is planned that starting from January 2022, a series of workshops and focused group discussions will be organised with key stakeholders.
- To inform these engagement activities, Homelessness Services has continued its on-going process of collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data about service needs and service gaps from six-month performance report and data collected from Specialist Homelessness Information Platform.

A Step Up for Our Kids

- Key foundational work has been completed for:
 - A Post Strategy Evaluation and Report to understand the extent to which the *A Step Up for Our Kids* Out of Home Care Strategy 2015 – 2020 achieved its objectives and informed decision-making with respect to service improvement, design, and delivery.

- Out of Home Care data modelling using the ACT Child Protection National Minimum Data Set from 2012-13 to 2020-21, to provide demand projections and contextual data on child protection and intensive family support services demand.
- Stage 1 and Stage 2 stakeholder engagement including early commissioning work to ensure the voice of the end user was heard, capture individual and group experiences and identify areas which worked and areas for improvement.
- Development of a sourcing strategy incorporating commissioning and procurement practices to inform the services for the next out of home care Strategy.
- Feedback from the Stages 1 & 2 stakeholder engagement and early commissioning program has been captured in the following:
 - The [Stage One Listening Report](#) has been published. This Report captures what we heard from stakeholders on their experiences of child protection and out of home care in the ACT.
 - The [Stage Two Listening Report](#) has been published. This Report captures what we heard from stakeholders with a focus on how diverse communities experience child protection and out of home care in the ACT.
 - The [What We Know Overview](#) have been published. This document provides a summary of current shifts and challenges and outlines priorities and commitments for the next stage of reform.
- Meetings with Funded Agencies are in the process of being scheduled for November and early December 2021. These meetings will discuss the policy intent for the next out of home care Strategy. A broadcast communication will be distributed to the community and sector at the conclusion of these meetings.
- Regular updates on the progress of *A Step Up* will be available for interested stakeholders on the CSD website and the YourSay page.

Non-Statutory Children, Youth and Family Services (Community Development Program, Children's Services Program, and Child, Youth and Family Services Program)

- CSD met with the Children Services Program Advisory Committee on 29 October 2021 to commence the commissioning conversations. The conversation focussed on areas of the program that need to be improved, what stakeholders need to be engaged throughout the process and what the timeframe should be. A one-year process of redesign was preferred.
- CSD met with the Directors Group for Child, Youth and Family Services on 9 November 2021 and the Practice Leaders Group on 16 November 2021 to discuss timeframes for a commissioning process for their services. A two-year process was the preferred outcome.
- Relationship Managers are continuing to discuss the commissioning process and Roadmap during service visits to respond to any questions that organisations have.

Family Safety

- Family Safety has commenced initial thinking on the transition to commissioning and how it may impact on the services they fund. The principles which guide commissioning (for example: working closely with NGO Sector Partners, and being guided by the voice of diverse lived experience) have been utilised in the development of several Family Safety initiatives. This positions the team, and our NGO Sector Partners, to have positive commissioning discussions moving forward.

Safe and Connected Youth

- In the [previous instalment of Commissioning Conversations](#) we shared the Safe and Connected Youth: Coordinated Service Response strategy paper. This paper indicated the next steps of commissioning the expanded service offering (announced in the recent ACT Budget) were in train. This work has progressed well thanks to the strong foundations laid in the early stages. The pilot program and expansion work has benefited from an approach that has seen all the partners (government, service partners, and other stakeholders including people with lived experience) come together and be committed to community involvement, flexibility, learning and building relationships.
- The tender was released to market on 5 November 2021 and will close on 16 December 2021.
- Tender responses are being sought for two service components:
 - Early Preservation Outreach; and
 - Therapeutic Respite Accommodation and Post-Exit Outreach.
- This work continues to be underpinned and driven by our collective goal of delivering evidence-based coordinated services to children and young people (aged 8 to 15 years) and their families so they can thrive as a family unit.
- An Industry Briefing was held on 16 November 2021. The tender documentation can be accessed at www.tenders.act.gov.au and all enquiries can be directed through Tenders ACT via phone: (02) 6207 7377 or email: tendersact@act.gov.au

Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus sector

- Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus commissioning process commenced on 23 November 2021 with the first commissioning webinar. The online event focused on setting the scene for future commissioning activities in the sexually transmissible infections and blood borne viruses subsector.
- Stakeholders who attended were provided with an overview of the commissioning cycle and the progress of the subsector's needs analysis to date; including key themes drawn from Kirby Institute health and economic burden of disease data, feedback provided by the sector and industry trends both in Australia and internationally.
- Further commissioning consultation with sector partners and consumers will be occurring during 2022, if you are interested in participating contact shbbvpolicy@act.gov.au.

Alcohol and Other Drug sector

- The ACT Health Directorate hosted a forum on 3 November 2021. The goal of the session was to feedback to the sector what the directorate had heard through consultation, highlight the many strengths of the alcohol and drug sector in the ACT, and create a shared view of the information needed going forward.
- The session highlighted the opportunities for improvement going forward and existing Government commitments in the alcohol and other drugs space.
- The Commissioning timeline was discussed, with key collaboration activities to be undertaken in 2022.

Community Support (ACT Health)

- The community support commissioning process will commence soon with a discussion paper that will be circulated broadly to sector partners and other stakeholders. The objective of the paper is to start the discussion about the future of the community support services for Canberrans. This will be further developed at a planned roundtable in early 2022 with all interested stakeholders.

Useful Links

Joint ACT Government [Commissioning website](#).

For additional information on **ACT Health Directorate** commissioning health services in the community visit [Commissioning health services in the community | Health \(act.gov.au\)](#).

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Community Services Directorate



ACT Health Directorate



www.act.gov.au/commissioning