

# DCP Child and Youth Engagement Strategy 2021 – 2023

**OUR VISION** is to build a better child protection system, one that listens and empowers children and young people to have their voices heard, and together make decisions to support their needs and improve the child protection system.

Our Strategy was built by young people and reflects what they have said is important to them. We recognise the importance of always working to create culturally safe and strong spaces for Aboriginal children and young people to participate and have their voices heard.



## What is important to children and young people:

### IDENTITY *"Listen, involve, respect"*

We recognise children and young people are the experts in their own lives and value their unique identity, culture, beliefs and knowledge.

We support children and young people to develop a strong and positive sense of self, which we recognise for Aboriginal children and young people is linked to identification, connection with family, community and culture. We continue to support a child's opportunity to learn and connect with their culture so they can make informed decisions about their identity.

We empower children and young people to have a voice based on who they are and what they need.

### CHILD CENTRED *"Firsthand experience shouldn't be ignored"*

We work to see ourselves through the eyes of children and young people; their rights and needs are central to how we engage.

We value and respect children and young people have their own views and voice in decision making and empower them to participate.

All our actions have purpose, we know why we are engaging and how it will influence change.

### OPPORTUNITY *"Provide a platform for voices to be heard"*

We create safe space for children and young people to feel comfortable to express themselves freely, to share their views and experiences.

We value diversity and the unique contributions of children and young people and ensure opportunities provide for their different needs and abilities.

We ensure children and young people are informed and able to access the opportunities and spaces available to share their views and stories.

### ACTION *"Listen and do something about it"*

We actively listen, notice and respond to what children and young people tell us.

Children and young people are able to provide a voice of influence to decisions which lead to real change.

We ensure children and young people receive feedback and know about what happens in response to their concerns.

## Our goals: We will achieve this by:

### PARTICIPATION

For children and young people to be actively engaged in having a say in how we improve the work we do

Centering the voices of children and young people and developing opportunities for them to play an active part in improving our system

Putting in place procedures that respect and strengthen cultural safety to support engagement of all children and young people

Improving our feedback systems and processes so that children and young people of diverse backgrounds can share their experiences

- Create a Young Persons Group (No Capes for Change) that works with DCP to inform decision makers and provide advice on DCP projects, programs and policies.
- Increase representation of children and young people in care by providing opportunities for diverse and inclusive groups to be established, which are representative and inclusive of the voices of younger children (12 years and under), Aboriginal, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTQIA+ children and young people and those with disability. We will do this acknowledging cultural safety for Aboriginal children is best achieved when they are supported by peers of their same culture.
- Have technology that enables children and young people to participate and provide their views on relevant DCP policies, projects and programs, including technology that is culturally appropriate and accessible for Aboriginal children and young people.

- Create guidelines, tools and resources for staff to support and guide them in having safe consultations with Young Person's Groups across DCP.
- Implement the DCP Practice papers that support working with diverse groups of children and young people, including Aboriginal children and young people.
- Develop a procedure that values and recognises the contribution of children and young people's participation.

- Partner with children and young people to improve feedback tools so they can share their experiences with DCP on the services they receive, ensuring tools are culturally inclusive and appropriate for Aboriginal children and young people and children and young people with disability.
- Improve the number of children and young people participating in significant decisions, including attending and participating in case plans, annual reviews and viewpoint surveys.
- Enhance access to complaints processes, by working with children and young people to understand how they want to share their feedback and express their concerns.
- Co-design a webpage on the DCP internet with children and young people that provides an engaging, one stop shop for key information.

### LEARNING

To learn from children and young people, to reflect and improve our work based on what they tell us

Continuing to improve our system to listen, understand and respond, based on what children and young people tell us about their experiences

Increasing our understanding of the importance of engaging with children and young people and promote their participation

- Coordinate how we collect information that represents the views of children and young people from multiple sources.
- Conduct quality audits to help us understand how children and young people are involved in decisions that impact them.
- Implement an incident management system to enable us to understand themes relating to incidents, complaints and feedback.
- Reflect these learnings into policy development and service design.

- Create a visual identity (developed by children and young people) that is a collective representation of the voices of children and young people who experience the child protection system.
- Develop resources for staff to improve their skills and confidence in engaging children and young people in decision making.
- Build an intranet page for DCP staff to access information about child and youth engagement including tools and resources that supports effective engagement.
- Generate opportunities for children and young people to co-facilitate and co-present at DCP forums on issues important to them.

### PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATION

To work better with our partner agencies to improve outcomes for children and young people

Ensuring children and young people know about the range of services available to them and support their access to them

Strengthening our existing partnerships with partner agencies and oversight bodies to improve services to children and young people

- Increasing children and young people's awareness and understanding of their rights in care including the rights of Aboriginal children and young people to be connected to family, community, culture and Country, which is integral to their safety, wellbeing and development.
- Building children and young people's understanding of and access to services provided by partner agencies and oversight bodies including culturally responsive supports and services available for Aboriginal children and young people; including access to culture and community.
- Improving young people's awareness and access to information when transitioning from care in partnership with post care services and CREATE.

- Enhancing partnerships with the child protection sector, funded organisations and oversight bodies, including Aboriginal community organisations who share their cultural knowledge, so that we receive timely feedback on the views of children and young people who use their services.
- Utilising contemporary research that represents the diverse voices of children and young people to ensure our work is evidence based and best practice.