



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department

Family Relationships Services Program Review

Key points and overview – September 2024

Conduct of FRSP Review

- Mark Dreyfus KC MP requested the FRSP be reviewed in 2023.
- Mr Graeme Head AO, subsequently succeeded by Mr Andrew Metcalfe AO, acted as lead reviewer.
- The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) provided technical support for the review
- Terms of Reference: to seek to ensure that the FRSP meets the contemporary needs of separated and separating Australian families

Support for Separating Families

Review of the Family Relationships Services Program

Andrew Metcalfe AO

Lead Reviewer

June 2024



Review Process

- Widespread consultations including site visits across the country
- Meetings with stakeholders directly and indirectly associated with the FRSP
- AIFS also collected data directly from service providers, professionals in the sector and clients
- Over 60 separate consultations or meetings
- Workshops with specific groups
- AGD thanks everyone who contributed their time and shared their views with the review

Guiding principles

Review noted FRSP operates within two complementary sets of guiding principles

Family law system principles

- Child-focussed
- Accessible
- Inclusive
- Safe
- Simple

Government service delivery principles

- Place-based
- Accessible
- Connected
- Client-centric
- Empowering
- Simple
- Secure

Recommendation summary

1. Reframe objective of FRSP
2. Change program name
3. Develop an information strategy
4. Restructure the program
5. Case management to be part of program
6. CIP to be part of program
7. Develop common charging framework
8. Establish dedicated First Nations funding stream
9. Encourage partnerships with specialists orgs
10. Maintain FLPNs
11. Establish MOUs for legally assisted FDR
12. Establish additional Hubs
13. Maintain FRAL and consider expanding function
14. Implement an outcomes framework
15. AGD to strengthen direct relationships with grant recipients
16. Develop a strategic framework

Key findings

- FRSP has significant value and assists families in complex circumstances, facing risks and challenges
- Focus has changed from trying to keep families together to supporting them to separate while maintaining a view on the best interests of the child(ren)
- **Major changes to the program structure** recommended and for the program to operate in line with a strategic plan
- More to be done to make services accessible universally and to enhance service offerings – eg child inclusive practice
- Opportunities to reduce administrative complexity and more strategic forward planning

Recommendations 1-3

1 – Reframe objective

Focus on assisting separated or separating families to manage separation outside the court system

Reflects where program is now

2 – Change name

Supporting Separating Families Program reflects purpose more clearly

3 – Information and awareness strategy

Raise awareness of the services. Be conscious of the likely increase in demand

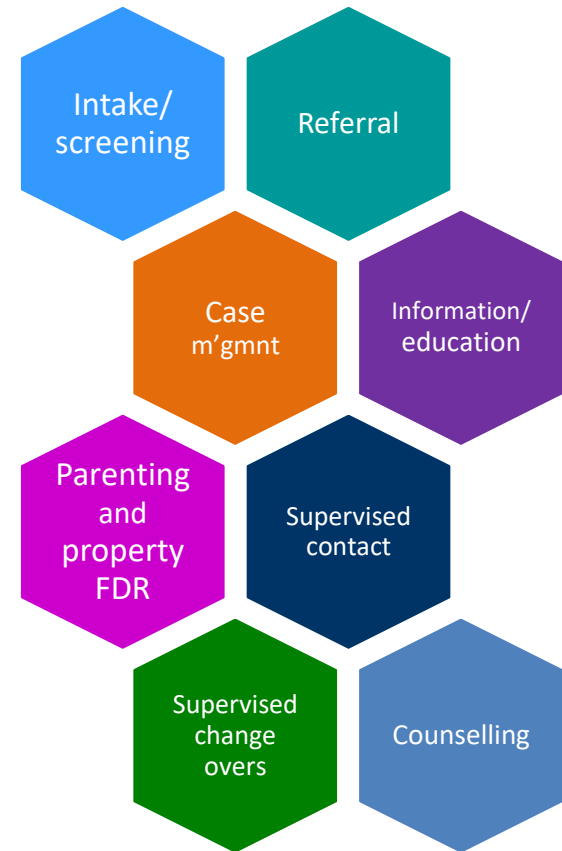
Rec 4 - Program structure

- The most significant recommendation of the review.
- The approach to funding and delivering services under the FRSP should be restructured.
- 10 overlapping program streams not productive:
 - FRC, FLC, FDR, RFDR, FNFDR, FRAL, CCS, POP, SCASP, FLPN
- Creates complexity and different patterns of access to services
- Not optimal for clients, grant recipients or government.
- Services should be delivered through Hubs, ensuring more comprehensive access to services for families.
- Integration not necessarily require co-location.
- Envisages consortia in bidding for funding.

Proposed program structure

- Retain FRAL and FLPN as separate elements.
- **Combine 7 functions into a central Hub model:**
 - FRC, FLC, FDR, RFDR, CCS, POP, SCASP.
- Create dedicated First Nations Hub stream (may be separately branded) covering the same services.

Core service offerings of a Hub:



Recommendations 5-6

5 – Case management to be specifically funded; and

6 – Child inclusive process should be specifically funded

Both recommendations reflect the value of families having access to these services if required and, in the case of CIP, if consent is granted.

Case management specifically takes account of presence of FDV and more complex circumstances.

Does not mean that referrals to specialist services are no longer required.

Acknowledges that other providers are funded for FDV responses.

Recommendations 7-9

7 – Common charging framework should be developed

Reflect that where people have some capacity to pay many will. No one denied service on basis of incapacity to pay.

8 – New, dedicated funding stream to establish multi-functional service Hubs for First Nations families

Should offer the same services as FRC Hubs, but may be separately branded. Period of co-design required.

9 – Hubs to build partnerships with specialist organisations to meet particular needs

Examples include migrants, people with disability, LGBTIAQ+, Defence personnel.

Recommendations 10 - 12

10 – maintain FLPN

Includes supporting a National Coordinator.

11 – All Hubs to establish MOUs with legal assistance providers to access legally assisted FDR

Notes that the NLAP review has recommended additional substantial funding to legal assistance providers, including to provide legal aid in family law matters.

12 – Establish additional Hubs to meet demand

Notes population has grown and distribution has shifted.

Recommendations 13 - 16

13 – Maintain FRAL

Including considering ways to enhance its virtual service delivery.

14 – Outcomes framework

Recognises the importance of outcomes measurement.

15 – Strong relationships between AGD and grant recipients

Closer relationships foster a partnership approach.

16 – Strategic Framework

Includes enhanced planning at the provider and program level.

Next steps

- Engage with government to confirm views
 - Targeted consultations, building on the work already undertaken by Mr Metcalfe.
 - Consider stakeholder views.
 - Consider locations for services.
 - Investigate financial implications of the recommendations.
 - Make recommendations.
 - Formal government decision making.

Consultation

- Aiming for initial discussions in September/October.
- Will invite views from a wide range of stakeholders – peaks, providers, other government agencies:
 - Diversity of views including across number of providers based on location, number of grants received, type of services offered. By invitation, but not mandatory to participate
- Focus on the most significant recommendations.

Issues

- Keen to explore key issues such as:
 - Views on the creation of Hubs
 - including how to identify the number and location
 - Expansion of case management
 - how to determine who needs case management
 - Digital service delivery
 - including what more is needed to make this accessible
 - Views on user's capacity to pay and fee paying

Timeframes

- Government decision-making processes can be lengthy – anticipating that proposals and recommendations made by October/November 2024 may be formalised by March-May 2025.
- Remains a tight fiscal environment.
- Depending on government decisions, will then consider if current grants to be extended or conclude as expected.

Thank You...