

# Minister for Child Protection SA

## Direct Experience Group

Communique May 2024

### Update

The Direct Experience Group (DEG) held its 3rd formal meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

### Information from the meeting

The focus of the Quarterly meeting was Topic #1 DEG's 2024 Work plan: ***Post Removal Family Connection***.

Preparation activities prior to meeting included:

- Collating of Direct Experience Insights
- Review of key research and data.
- Developing understanding of key problem areas and impact
- Defining change needed
- Development of Theory of Change

Utilizing direct experience knowledge DEG defined the impact needed to improve Post Removal Family Connection into the following goal statements.

1. ***Children in out of home care are connected with their siblings, biological parents, extended family, communities and culture***

and

2. ***Biological parents, extended family and communities are able to support their children whilst placed in care (short- or long-term orders).***

To further refine their understanding and recommendations DEG invited representatives from Department for Child Protection (DCP) and the CREATE Foundation who attended the 27<sup>th</sup> May meeting at separate timeslots.

Discussions with DCP representatives included:

- Overview of roles and responsibilities of guest speakers
- Perspective on work plan topic area and its importance to improving outcomes for children currently in care or at risk of entering the child protection system.
- Tension between legislation, policy and case manager application
- Work force shortages and experience within workforce
- Case manager responsibility for case direction

Questions asked of DCP representatives included:

- Processes pertaining to Audits, annual reviews, case planning
- Inconsistency of post removal experience
- Mechanisms to ensure children's voices are heard
- Decision making processes

Information provided by DCP was broad, focused largely on the departments written policy guidelines. There were no questions taken on notice by DCP representatives, or follow-up actions required.

Presentation by CREATE representatives included:

- Purpose and role of the CREATE Foundation
- Research with young people regarding sibling contact at national and South Australian level and information about public access to research.
- SA practice guideline project for DCP workers and carers regarding sibling contact

DEG members were asked to provide some of their insights regarding sibling and family contact however this was determined beyond the scope of the Quarterly meeting.

Information provided was broad. There were no questions taken on notice by CREATE representatives. A follow-up action was created, to determine opportunities for DEG Members and/or other biological parents with lived experience of child protection systems to have further input into practice guidelines.

DEG members were able to reflect on the new information provided by both DCP and CREATE guest speakers and incorporate new information or ideas into the relevant Theory of Changes and DEG recommendations.

Findings and Recommendations, regarding Post Removal Family Contact will be presented to the Minister for Child Protection on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2024.

## Chairperson

The meeting was chaired by Breony Carbines (Dana Shen was apology)

## Attendance

The meeting was attended by: Five Core members in person, one online (identity withheld)

Apologies: Two core members (identity withheld)

Coopted members

- Rachael Dean – DEG Peer Support Worker (Life Without Barriers)
- Rebecca St Clair – DEG Peer Communication Specialist (The Reily Foundation)
- Breony Carbines – DEG Executive Office (The Reily Foundation)
- Nadia Berginetti – Chief Executive Officer (The Reily Foundation)
- Kerrie Mcann – (Life Without Barriers)
- Kitty McLean (Director, Quality and Practice - DCP)
- Rohan Bennet (Executive Director, Service Delivery and Practice- DCP)
- Sarah Chew (National Advocacy and Influencing Manager - CREATE Foundation)
- Laura Hooper (State Program and Engagement Coordinator – CREATE Foundation)

## Meeting Close

The next meeting of the Direct Experience Group will be held on the 19th August 2024.

## Approved Quotes

- *“Overwhelmingly children’s voices and actions show us they want to see their siblings, their parents and other biological family members, and this should be heard and acted upon” DEG MEMBER*
- *“When our children have time with us, we should feel free to interact naturally with our children, without the burden of walking on eggshells” DEG MEMBER*
- *Parents and extended family play crucial roles in our children’s lives. Regardless of custodial rights, we should have the confidence to voice concerns and have them genuinely heard and respected” DEG MEMBER*
- *“A child’s sense of belonging and connection to their family is not a 9-5pm job. We need a flexible and supportive child protection system that meets children’s needs” DEG MEMBER*
- *“DEG believe children deserve a system that works together to keep them connected with everyone involved in their life. Breaking bonds between children and their family does not work in the short or long term. Our recommendations are about strengthening bonds not breaking bonds”. GROUP STATEMENT*