



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Aboriginal community-controlled organisations critical to a stronger child protection system

The NSW peak body for Aboriginal child protection reiterates the importance of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and other non-government organisations in establishing a more effective and accountable system for Aboriginal children and young people.

The *Independent Review of Out of Home Care in NSW* report by David Tune highlighted serious systemic issues with the current out-of-home-care system in NSW, including the poor outcomes achieved for Aboriginal children and young people, and made a number of key recommendations to “transform” a system described as “ineffective and unsustainable; not client centred and failing vulnerable children and families with complex needs”.

Responding to recent suggestions by the Public Service Association (PSA) that out-of-home care services should be returned to the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS), AbSec’s CEO Tim Ireland sought a more nuanced conversation, noting that while costs in the non-government system were higher at the time of the Tune Review, the standards were also higher.

“As usual, numbers alone don’t tell the whole story. The reported disparity in costs between care provided by government and care provided by non-government agencies is easily explained,” Mr Ireland said.

“At the time of reporting, accredited non-government out-of-home care agencies delivered services in line with accreditation standards, while FACS provided non-accredited care that failed to meet minimum standards for vulnerable children. Government caseworkers faced much higher caseloads, meaning that individual children received less attention, and were not as well supported.”

Mr Ireland noted that the overarching recommendation of the Tune Review was for reform that allows FACS to focus on their core statutory role, with a separate commissioning body overseeing outcomes-focused investment to improve services for children and young people and their families.

“The Tune Review revealed Family and Community Services as a government department already struggling under the weight of competing priorities and growing responsibilities – certainly not needing even more added to their workload,” Mr Ireland said.

“Non-government agencies are vital to providing out-of-home care services to the most vulnerable children and young people in NSW. The role that Aboriginal agencies play is especially important, as these organisations tend to be strongly embedded in their communities and are uniquely placed to uphold to protect Aboriginal kids’ right to culture.”

“The transfer of out-of-home care services to accredited Aboriginal community-controlled organisations is a positive step toward self-determination – but much more needs to be done to transform the system and give authority for Aboriginal children back to Aboriginal communities,” Mr Ireland said.

“The Tune Review provides further proof that the existing child and family system simply is not delivering adequate outcomes for Aboriginal children.

“We ask the NSW Government to commit to working with AbSec to implement the recommendations of the Tune Review, transforming the system to empower Aboriginal communities to design and deliver the systems and services needed to keep Aboriginal children safe and support them to thrive.”

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