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Mallee Family Care calls for major reforms to support regional families

Family and children's programs must be reformed to better serve regional communities, according to Mallee Family Care (MFC), in its submission to the Department of Social Services' review of Family and Children (FaC) programs.

MFC highlighted the critical need for program reform in its comprehensive submission, emphasising that current service delivery models often fail to address the unique challenges faced by regional, rural, and remote communities across its 165,841 square kilometre service area.

"As a major provider of community service programs across the Mallee region since 1979, we understand the practical considerations needed for effective program reform," MFC CEO Teresa Jayet said.

"The current one-size-fits-all approach does not adequately meet the diverse needs of families, particularly in regional and remote areas. We need flexible, locally-tailored solutions that recognise the complex challenges our communities face."

In its submission to the Department, MFC advocated for significant changes to program design and delivery, including moving away from strictly evidence-based approaches to enable cultural adaptation, introducing flexible delivery models, and improving funding frameworks to support essential services such as transport and technology access.

Drawing on its experience serving over 7,000 clients through more than 70 programs, MFC emphasised the importance of addressing practical barriers that prevent families from accessing vital support services. The organisation identified transport limitations, venue availability, and workforce recruitment as critical challenges that particularly affect regional service delivery.

"Regional areas have unique needs when it comes to service delivery. The high cost and limited availability of transport and venues has already made it difficult to deliver consistent services, which exacerbates existing inequities. It is therefore essential that funding models reflect the true costs of regional service delivery," Ms Jayet said.

The submission also highlighted the need to strengthen partnerships between mainstream providers and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations while supporting capacity building across the sector. MFC recommended developing clear protocols for shared service delivery and ensuring adequate resourcing for partnership activities.



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"Our experience as both a Communities for Children Facilitating Partner and provider of Children and Parenting Support services has shown us the importance of genuine collaboration and flexible service delivery models," Ms Jayet explained. "These partnerships are essential for ensuring culturally appropriate and effective support for all families in our community."

MFC's recommendations align with its strategic priorities of early intervention, addressing inequities, and building organisational capacity to meet evolving community needs.

"MFC is ready to continue working with our partners and funding bodies to enhance these vital early intervention services for Mallee families. Our goal is to ensure that every family, no matter where they live, has access to the support services they deserve," Ms Jayet said.

A full copy of Mallee Family Care's submission is available at malleefamilycare.org.au

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About Mallee Family Care

Mallee Family Care is a place-based organisation committed to fostering resilient families and thriving children in the Mallee region. Through comprehensive services in child protection, family support, housing and mental health, MFC addresses the root causes of disadvantage, helping to build stronger, more equitable communities.



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