

# Transitioning to the new Family Preservation system

November 2025



## Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Communities and Justice acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of NSW.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that contributed to the development of this document.

We advise this resource may contain images, or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

Transitioning to the new Family Preservation system

Published by The Department of Communities and Justice

[dcj.nsw.gov.au](https://dcj.nsw.gov.au)

First published: November 2025

### Copyright and disclaimer

© State of New South Wales through The Department of Communities and Justice 2025. Information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing, November 2025, and is subject to change. For more information, please visit [dcj.nsw.gov.au](https://dcj.nsw.gov.au)

# Contents

|          |   |           |
|----------|---|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Overview .....</b>   | <b>4</b>  |
| 1.1      | Introduction .....  | 5         |
| 1.2      | Background and purpose .....  | 5         |
| 1.3      | Guiding principles.....   | 6         |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Readying for transition.....</b>                                 | <b>7</b>  |
| 2.1      | Extending contracts to support transition.....                      | 8         |
| 2.2      | Approaching transition in practical phases.....                     | 8         |
| 2.3      | Governing for success.....  | 10        |
| 2.4      | Establishing roles and responsibilities .....                       | 12        |
| 2.5      | Communicating with purpose, transparency, and clarity .....         | 12        |
| 2.6      | Resuming Family Preservation forums.....                            | 13        |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Supporting families.....</b>                                     | <b>12</b> |
| 3.1      | Keeping children safe through transition.....                       | 13        |
| 3.2      | Knowing what to communicate with families and when .....            | 13        |
| 3.3      | Preparing families currently in service to exit .....               | 14        |
| 3.4      | Planning with families to transition.....                           | 15        |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Supporting the workforce .....</b>                               | <b>16</b> |
| 4.1      | Valuing and retaining staff in the sector .....                     | 17        |
| 4.2      | Leading and managing change effectively .....                       | 17        |
| 4.3      | Providing clear pathways for staff .....                            | 18        |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Phasing transition and maintaining service .....</b>             | <b>19</b> |
| 5.1      | Transitioning in three phases.....                                  | 20        |
| 5.2      | Managing referrals, service capacity, and vacancies.....            | 23        |
| 5.3      | Assessing and prioritising families most in need for referrals..... | 24        |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Appendices.....</b>  | <b>25</b> |
| 6.1      | Appendix A: Capacity target scenarios.....                          | 26        |

---

# 1

## Overview

---

## 1.1 Introduction

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) has been working with the sector over the last three and a half years to redesign the Family Preservation service system in NSW to improve the outcomes, experience, suitability, and accessibility for families who would benefit from working with a Family Preservation service. For Aboriginal children, young people, and families this also means increasing culturally safe, responsive, and community-led services that centre family-led decision making.

At the heart of the redesign is a commitment to making Family Preservation services more efficient and responsive to families' needs and more effective in helping them achieve positive outcomes.

This transition paper outlines DCJ's approach to moving from the current service landscape to the redesigned system. It sets out the principles, objectives, and key activities that will guide the transition to establish and implement the new system, ensuring families are supported throughout the process and service providers are equipped for change.

---

## 1.2 Background and purpose

The vision for a new Family Preservation system in NSW was set out in the Redesigning Family Preservation in NSW Discussion Paper (April 2024), reflecting a shared commitment to bold, system-wide reform. Informed by extensive engagement with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), non-ACCO service providers, DCJ districts, peak bodies, and government partners, the vision was refined through sector feedback and captured in the Finalising the Foundational Elements paper (December 2024).

In May 2025, DCJ released the *Family Preservation Funding Approach paper*, outlining the NSW Government's commitment to invest \$900 million over five years in Family Preservation. The funding approach was designed to be transparent and equitable, ensuring resources are directed to where they are needed most, with allocation proportionate to assessed need across districts. It is driven by child protection needs analysis data and includes a 40 per cent ACCO investment target (\$350 million over five years). Five-year contracts and sustainable unit costs provide security for service providers, supported by dedicated implementation funding.

Family Preservation procurement is currently underway, with new contracts set to commence in the new year. Tenders were open from June to early August 2025, and the process is expected to conclude in the coming months, when successful service providers will be publicly announced. Some current service providers may continue in the new system, potentially maintaining, reducing, or expanding their footprint. Others may exit, and new service providers may enter. These changes represent a significant shift in the Family Preservation system – one that stakeholders have long called for and was informed by extensive consultation.

We recognise the families receiving Family Preservation services hold a range of strengths and vulnerabilities which can be tested during times of system change. It is vital that DCJ and service providers keep children and their families at the centre of this transition, ensuring that we do not lose focus on the outcomes we are trying to achieve – that is to keep children safe, and at home.

DCJ recognises the impact this transition will have on the dedicated staff working in Family Preservation services. These changes will not be easy, but they are crucial for improving the quality and effectiveness of our services for the families that need them most. We are committed to supporting staff through this process and will work with service providers, the Australian Services Union (ASU) and peaks to retain talent in this sector.

This paper outlines DCJ's strategic approach to leading the transition from current to future state, working alongside current and future service providers to make sure families and the workforce are supported through the process. It also includes the guiding principles, objectives, key phases of work, roles and responsibilities, and governance arrangements necessary to achieve a successful transition.

A separate Family Preservation Implementation Plan will be published in early 2026. This will be developed in consultation with the peaks and detail how the sector will be supported to operationalise the new system, including expectations for service delivery, governance (including Aboriginal governance of the *Aboriginal Family Preservation* framework), workforce development, data and reporting, practice guidance, and sector collaboration.

It will provide a practical roadmap to help service providers deliver high-quality services from day one, and ensure families and staff are supported throughout the contract period.

---

## 1.3 Guiding principles

To support a smooth and effective transition to the new Family Preservation system, DCJ has established a set of guiding principles. These principles provide a clear and consistent foundation for decision making and help to navigate the complexity of change while maintaining a focus on quality of support for families, where possible.

DCJ's approach to transition is grounded in the following principles:

- **Service quality:** Services remain centred on the needs of children and families, ensuring that the impacts of transition are minimised and managed for each family.
- **Collaborative coordination:** DCJ and service providers to lead and manage change collectively, with clear roles and responsibilities and ways of working.
- **Transparent communication:** Maintain clear and timely engagement with all stakeholders to build trust and confidence.
- **Service provider readiness:** Equip service providers with the necessary resources and supports to deliver services under the new system.
- **Data integrity:** Safeguard client records and data to ensure continuity of care and informed service delivery.
- **Performance maintenance:** Sustain service quality and outcomes during the transition to minimise disruption
- **Workforce retention:** Retain skilled staff through redeployment, staff transfer, or priority employment with new service providers recognising their critical role and expertise in supporting families.
- **Prioritising families most at risk:** DCJ and service providers ensure the finite resources in the system are directed to families where children are most at risk of harm.

DCJ acknowledges that planning for and executing a transition approach in parallel with the Family Preservation procurement process presents unique challenges. Throughout this period, DCJ remains committed to upholding the integrity and probity of the procurement process. This commitment is supported by independent probity advisors who provide oversight and guidance to ensure all activities are conducted fairly, transparently and in line with procurement obligations.

---

# 2

Readying for transition

## 2.1 Extending contracts to support transition

DCJ is committed to leading a transition that is coordinated, well-paced, and responsive to the needs of families and the sector. We value the strong relationships built with the peaks and the sector over recent years. We acknowledge that timeframes for the Family Preservation commissioning have shifted, and while this has at times been frustrating, the sector has continued to show up, adapt, and deliver for families.

We are grateful for the patience, resilience, and ongoing collaboration shown throughout this process.

We have listened closely to feedback from across the peaks and the sector - particularly around the need for workforce and service stability over the holiday period, and the importance of a well-managed transition. In response, DCJ will extend current contracts for service providers delivering the soon-to-be decommissioned models for a period of three months, through to 30 June 2026.

These models include:

- Brighter Futures (including SafeCare in selected sites)
- Youth Hope
- Resilient Families
- Intensive Family Preservation (IFP)
- Intensive Family Based Services (IFBS)
- Permanency Support Program – Family Preservation (PSP-FP).

To support a coordinated transition, new contracts for Multisystemic Therapy – Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN), Functional Family Therapy – Child Welfare (FFT-CW) - High Track, and Nabu, and will commence on 1 April 2026 as planned. Procurement outcomes for these models will be communicated in December 2025.

Contracts for the new *Aboriginal Family Preservation* and *Families Together* frameworks will now commence on 1 July 2026. Procurement outcomes for these frameworks will be communicated in March 2026.

The extension of some existing contracts and staggered start for new contracts will:

- Take a coordinated and well-paced approach to transition.
- Maintain service quality and capacity.
- Provide workforce stability and retain skilled staff through transition.
- Enable new service providers time to prepare and establish services.

This approach ensures the transition is practical and focused, supporting families and the workforce without compromising service quality.

## 2.2 Approaching transition in practical phases

The transition from the current system to the new Family Preservation system is complex, with a variety of changes coming into effect in a short period of time.

These changes include:

- **Introducing five-year contracts, block funding, and minimum contract values** - providing greater security for service providers.
- **Adopting a needs-based funding model** - driven by child protection administrative data, to reallocate funding across the state to areas of greatest need.



- **Directing 40 per cent of funding to ACCOs** – as recommended in the Family is Culture Review, and in line with NSW Government’s Closing the Gap commitments.
- **Setting fair, transparent, and consistent unit costs** – providing more sustainable funding for service providers.
- **Decommissioning models** - Brighter Futures (including SafeCare), Youth Hope, Resilient Families, IFP, IFBS, PSP-FP, and FFT-CW – Low Track.
- **Establishing two new frameworks** - *Aboriginal Family Preservation and Families Together*.
- **Strengthening retained models** - MST-CAN, FFT-CW High Track, and Nabu.
- **Standing up new operational systems and processes** – ChildStory, infoSare, and data collection and reporting requirements.

These changes will affect families receiving Family Preservation services, many of whom are facing complex and challenging circumstances. The impacts may vary and, in some cases, be difficult to predict - making it essential to maintain a strong focus on the quality of services.

The workforce will also be affected - staff may decide to pursue other employment opportunities or transition into new roles as the system evolves.

Leading through complexity requires clarity and adaptability. DCJ’s transition approach sets out the key activities needed to move forward, while remaining flexible enough to respond to changing circumstances on the ground. This approach has been shaped in close collaboration with the ASU and peaks, whose advice and expertise have been invaluable in understanding the various dimensions of this change.

The transition will take place through three phases, shifting the current system to the new system.

Central to this approach is adjusting the capacity in different parts of the system at key increments – making sure that the places available to families align to the number and location of places available from 1 July 2026, when all contracts for the full suite of Family Preservation - all models and new frameworks - will be in place.

While all parts of the system will be impacted, the most significant changes will come from the shift from soon-to-be decommissioned models to the new *Aboriginal Family Preservation and Families Together* frameworks, with the changes unfolding at each of the three phases.

There will be less impact for service providers delivering MST-CAN, FFT-CW – High Track, and Nabu with any required adjustments occurring in Phase One only.

The three phases include:

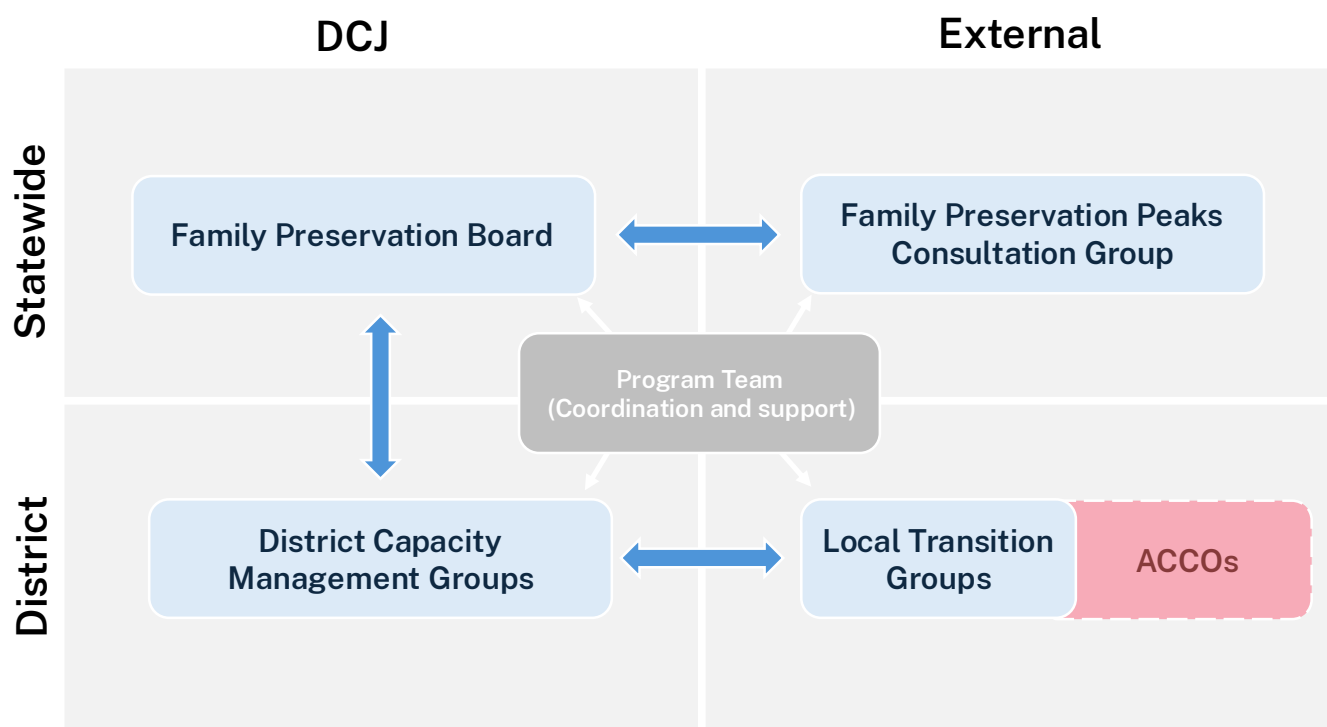
- **Transition Phase One:** Preparation (November 2025 – March 2026), including:
  - **Soon-to-be decommissioned models to frameworks:** setting capacity targets informed by current service delivery, geography, and contract volumes and potential future service delivery, geography, and contract volumes.
  - **MST-CAN, FFT-CW, and Nabu:** setting capacity targets informed by confirmed future service delivery, geography, and contract volumes.
- **Transition Phase Two:** Adjustment (April 2026 – June 2026), including:
  - **Soon-to-be decommissioned models to frameworks:** adjusting capacity targets informed by confirmed future service delivery, geography, and contract volumes.
- **Transition Phase Three:** Establishment (July 2026 – September 2026), including:
  - **Soon-to-be decommissioned models to frameworks:** adjusting capacity targets informed by future service providers readiness as outlined in their establishment plans.

Further detail on the phases can be found in the [\*Transitioning in three phases\*](#) section of this paper.

## 2.3 Governing for success

Strong, responsive leadership, and effective governance are essential to successfully transition to the new Family Preservation system. DCJ has a range of business-as-usual structures it will rely upon to operationalise transition, and will establish internal statewide and district-based governance to provide oversight of transition planning, monitor delivery, and identify, unblock, and escalate any risk or issues that arise during the transition period.

The key DCJ governance groups are the Family Preservation Board, Family Preservation Peaks Consultation Group, District Capacity Management Groups, and Local Transition Groups.



### Statewide

#### Family Preservation Board

The Family Preservation Board (the Board) is comprised of senior leaders across DCJ.

The Board meets monthly and is responsible for:

- Providing strategic oversight of the transition and recommissioning process.
- Tracking system wide progress using aggregate data.
- Monitoring and managing risks, to support key decisions.
- Escalating critical issues to executive leadership.
- Ensuring that all actions reflect our commitment to transparency, integrity, and continuous improvement, and that the transition remains focused on outcomes for children and families.

#### Family Preservation Peaks Consultation Group

The Family Preservation Peaks Consultation Group is chaired by the Acting Deputy Secretary for System Reform, and includes Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA), Fams, AbSec, and the ASU.

The group meets monthly and is responsible for:

- Advising on impacts for delivery plans on Family Preservation recommissioning.
- Identifying and managing sector wide risks and issues and support coordination across partners to enable clear and effective Family Preservation planning, design and implementation.
- Advising on engagement and communication approaches and strategic messaging across the sector, to enable meaningful collaboration.
- Highlighting and advising on interdependencies with other DCJ or government programs that may impact upon achieving successful Family Preservation Recommissioning outcomes.

## Districts

### District Capacity Management Groups

District Capacity Management Groups will be internal groups and include senior representatives from DCJ Commissioning and Planning (C&P) and DCJ Child Protection and Permanency (CPP), supported by the program team. All members of District Capacity Management Groups will sign confidentiality agreements to protect sensitive information and uphold probity throughout the transition.

The District Capacity Management Groups will meet fortnightly and will be responsible for:

- Developing and overseeing district transition plans to manage referrals, exit families appropriately, and fill vacancies.
- Monitoring service provider capacity, viability, targets, and escalating concerns as needed.
- Maintaining clear communication with caseworkers and hubs on referral processes.
- Tracking local data to identify risks and respond quickly.
- Escalating risks and sharing updates with the Program team.

### Local Transition Groups

The Local Transition Groups will be external groups and include representatives from current service providers and future service providers, DCJ C&P and CPP in each district, and - where appropriate - representatives from peaks and ASU. The groups must handle information sensitively and not disclose personal information about families or staff.

The Local Transition Groups will meet regularly and will be responsible for:

- Identifying other programs and services (including DCJ funded services and services funded by other government agencies) available in their locations that may be utilised to support the breadth of families.
- Discussing how best to plan for the transition of families.
- Supporting workforce transition, including from one service provider to another service provider.
- Discussing district wide trends and issues and escalating risks and updates with the Program team.

It will be important for the Local Transition Groups to be able to speak to the totality of the transition within their district. We appreciate that some conversations will be specific to ACCOs, Aboriginal staff, and Aboriginal families. We expect that ACCO members of the Local Transition Groups - who by definition are accountable to community - will work with and engage the broader community as they participate in this process. As the peak for Aboriginal children and families, AbSec can also be involved in these conversations.

## 2.4 Establishing roles and responsibilities

Clear roles and responsibilities are essential to ensure a smooth and coordinated transition. Each stakeholder has a defined role in supporting families, managing risks, and maintaining service quality:

- **The DCJ Program team** is leading the design and delivery of the transition. This includes setting capacity targets, developing tools and messaging, and managing sector-wide communications. The Program team will monitor risks, escalate issues to the Family Preservation Board, and ensure confidentiality and probity throughout.
- **C&P teams** are continuing to manage contracts, monitor service provider capacity and vacancies and advise on referral pathways. The team will work with CPP teams to prioritise referrals, support service providers through contract closure and handovers and escalate market and workforce risks.
- **CPP teams** are continuing to support families during the transition. They will match families to services, submit referrals based on prioritisation and capacity, use alternative pathways when needed, and collaborate with C&P teams and service providers including where there are open and allocated cases.
- **Family and Community Services Insights Analysis and Research (FACSIAR)** is providing the data and insights needed to guide decision-making. Their analytics will support planning, performance monitoring, and early risk identification, helping teams stay informed and responsive.
- **Current service providers** will support families to complete services during Phase 1 and 2. They will prepare for operational changes, identify families for exit or transitions (where possible), and collaborate with incoming service providers. They will also be responsible for managing workforce impacts in their organisations.
- **Future service providers** will prepare for service delivery, onboard staff and ensure continuity of care through coordinated handovers.
- **Peaks** will provide support to their members and the sector and advocate key risks, issues, and priorities to DCJ, and participate as members of the Family Preservation Peaks Consultation Group.
- **ASU** will provide support to their members through the transition period, advocating key risks, issues and priorities to service providers and DCJ, and participate as members of the Family Preservation Peaks Consultation Group.

## 2.5 Communicating with purpose, transparency, and clarity

A clear and consistent communications approach will be critical to supporting the sector through the transition. We appreciate that procurement processes, their outcomes, and the transition to the new service system may strain the relationships between the sector and DCJ, as well as between service providers themselves. DCJ remains committed to maintaining considerate and respectful communications throughout this process – and expects others to do the same.

The Family Preservation Program team will lead statewide communications to DCJ and the sector, which may include communicating across the sector as whole, to current service providers only, to tendering service providers only, to future service providers only, and to DCJ only. Where possible, DCJ will distribute any messages to the broadest possible group and provide consistent messaging across audiences. DCJ will utilise the appropriate channels, including via Procurement Central, targeted frequently asked questions (FAQs), and website updates. On conclusion of procurement, DCJ will provide information about future service providers and their service geographies.

Contract Managers will play a central role as the primary conduit between DCJ and current service providers and future service providers, ensuring timely and tailored information reaches the frontline. Communications will be proactive, responsive to emerging needs, and designed to build confidence across the sector. This includes equipping service providers and families with the information they need to navigate changes, while maintaining transparency and clarity at every stage.

DCJ will develop clear and practical communication resources to support stakeholders throughout each phase of the transition. These materials will provide accessible information and guidance to help stakeholders understand the changes and their implications. They will also assist service providers, DCJ staff, and sector partners - including peaks and the ASU - in shaping their own communication approaches with families, staff, and communities. This coordinated approach will support consistent and informed messaging across the sector during this period of reform.

---

## 2.6 Resuming Family Preservation forums

In November 2025, DCJ will hold a dedicated sector briefing to outline this transition plan. Following this, will recommence monthly Family Preservation forums, with a clear focus on supporting the sector through the transition period, noting there will be limitations to what can be discussed during a live procurement process. These forums will:

- Engage existing service providers to prepare for upcoming changes.
- Focus on capacity targets, resources, and messaging to families.
- Provide a space to ask clarifying questions, share concerns, risks and issues, and best practice approaches.

From April onwards, the forums will broaden to include new service providers and a focus on implementation, ensuring all service providers are supported to deliver services effectively and in line with community needs. As with DCJ's usual sector forums, there will be opportunity for service providers to raise questions and concerns and have DCJ address them.

Any questions or issues raised in forums is separate to information obtained through the procurement process and accordingly cannot be a consideration for tender evaluation. This means service providers are encouraged to ask questions and raise concerns without fear that it will affect their tender outcome.

---

# 3

Supporting families

---

## 3.1 Keeping children safe through transition

The safety of children and young people remains paramount throughout the transition. As during regular service delivery, service providers and their staff will be working with children and their families through transition who will be experiencing broad and complex challenges. DCJ recognises that service providers will have significant insights into the strengths and needs of the families which they are working with, and how these might contribute to safety to the child.

While the transition will be a time of flux for Family Preservation service providers, DCJ will continue to exclusively hold the statutory powers and obligations to assess whether a child is at risk of significant harm and take action as appropriate. DCJ will continue to rely on its usual policies, mandates and processes during this period and will not be creating exceptional processes and rules for prioritising and responding to families who are working with Family Preservation service providers. This will ensure that DCJ continues to prioritise children most at risk of harm, regardless of whether they are working with a Family Preservation service provider or not.

It will be important for DCJ – both at triage and allocated cases - to be aware of and utilise the breadth of other services available for families in their district. This will help ensure as many families as possible are supported through transition and will help reduce risk to children during this period.

As mandatory reporters, service providers are required to report any children they suspect to be at risk of significant harm to the Helpline in line with the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG). That report can be assessed by DCJ and if appropriate, allocated to a DCJ caseworker.

When making a report to the Helpline, service providers should clearly state they are a Family Preservation service provider, the concerns they hold for the safety of the child, where relevant the current and planned supports in place, and if the Family Preservation service has ceased or is ongoing.

If a service provider is working with a family for which DCJ has an open and allocated case, the service provider is expected to work closely with the DCJ caseworker to help understand the risks to the child and what steps may be taken through the transition period. This may include actions to be taken if and when the family completes their service with the service provider, or to transition to a new service provider.

Family Preservation service providers will continue to hold the ability to build networks, and work alongside other agencies and services to ensure families are supported and children are safe.

---

## 3.2 Knowing what to communicate with families and when

We recognise that service providers have strong relationships with families and are best placed to judge what messages are appropriate to deliver to families, and the timing and approach for how they are communicated. We expect that service providers will continue to use their professional judgement throughout the transition period to help families understand the impact this transition has for them, if at all, and how they will be supported through this change.

Service providers will need to work together to make sure families receive clear and timely information and advice about the expected duration of their service delivery, the nature and intensity of that service, and whether there will be any changes to the staff or organisations they work with. Where the family has an open case with DCJ, service providers will need to collaborate with DCJ to make sure there is an agreed approach in place and families are receiving consistent messaging. Throughout this, service providers should ensure families are aware of the choices available to them.

To support service providers to have these conversations, DCJ will provide clear and consistent guidance setting out the key impacts for families at each phase of transition. This will include standardised messaging and template communication resources that can be tailored to meet the needs of families.



The information contained in this transition plan should help service providers and staff to analyse the specific impacts this change will have for the families they work with. Throughout the transition, DCJ will provide information and advice to service providers on what messages can be delivered to families and when.

### 3.3 Preparing families currently in service to exit

We understand that change can bring uncertainty, and our priority is to minimise disruption and maintain service quality wherever possible.

Families currently in service are supported by a range of models, each with its own program specifications, including expected service duration and intensity. As we move into the transition phases, this plan will override those expectations. In some cases, families may receive a shorter duration or reduced intensity of service than originally anticipated.

As these models are being decommissioned, DCJ and service providers will work towards exiting families as these contracts come to an end. This will be the general approach to minimise disruption and “handovers” for most families.

DCJ recognises that in limited and exceptional circumstances, some families who satisfy the eligibility and suitability criteria for the new Family Preservation system may need to transition.

Families will be supported to exit in one of two phases:

1. **Transition Phase One** by 31 March 2026; or
2. **Transition Phase Two** by 30 June 2026.

As the end of the contract period approaches, DCJ and service providers will work together to identify families who require continued support. These families may transition in one of two ways:

1. **Transition with current service provider** (limited circumstances): families may continue receiving support with the same service provider, where that service provider has secured a new contract for a service that is suitable for the family.
2. **Transition to a new service provider** (exceptional circumstances): families who are currently supported by a service provider that is exiting the system, and who require continued support beyond 30 June 2026, may transition to a new service provider that has secured a new contract for a service that is suitable for the family.

The families who may fall into the limited or exceptional categories are likely to be those experiencing high levels of complexity. This may include families with children at the highest level of risk, where it is possible that the child may need to be removed to keep them safe, families with limited access to alternative supports, and/or those who have historically been supported through models with longer service duration and/or higher intensity. These cases will require thoughtful consideration to ensure continuity of care and appropriate support during and beyond the transition period.

Given the significant growth in investment in ACCOs, there will be more dedicated places for Aboriginal families in the system. Therefore, it is likely that more Aboriginal families will transition to future services than non-Aboriginal families. Service providers should work closely with Aboriginal families to understand their preference for continued service provision.

While we appreciate that not all service providers will be happy with the outcome of the procurement process, we expect all service providers to communicate respectfully between each other and with DCJ. We appreciate that all staff working in this sector have the best interests of families at heart – this is the basis for which we will support families through this transition.



---

## 3.4 Planning with families to transition

Service providers will need to make sure families will be supported through a structured and phased transition process that includes:

- **Individualised transition planning:** Service providers will need to provide families with clear communication about changes to programs and what this means for them, new service contacts, and details of any supports or referrals being made on their behalf. Service providers will work directly with families to ensure they understand their options, feel prepared for the transition and know where to go for help.
- **Privacy and consent:** Service providers will need to make sure personal information is handled securely, with consent obtained before any data is shared.
- **Planned transitions:** In the exceptional circumstances where families move between services, current and future service providers will be expected to coordinate early and ensure continuity of care is maintained.
- **Referral to other supports:** Where appropriate, service providers may offer families referrals to other services to ensure they remain connected to support that meets their needs.

---

# 4

Supporting the workforce

## 4.1 Valuing and retaining staff in the sector

Dedicated staff in the Family Preservation sector have long supported families and advocated for improvements to the system which are now being implemented. The redesign of the Family Preservation system was informed by the experience, expertise, and talent of the staff who work every day to support families – we are clear that for redesign to be a success, we must continue to value and retain these staff.

While many staff are hopeful for the opportunities and benefits of the new Family Preservation system, we appreciate that staff working in current service providers are also feeling anxious and uncertain about procurement and transition and what this means for their clients and themselves. Current service providers are facing a range of potential outcomes – growth, contraction or exit. DCJ appreciates that this means staff will face varying degrees of opportunity and challenge as a result.

DCJ expects service providers – whether current or future – take all steps possible to retain staff within the sector. On conclusion of procurement, DCJ will provide information about future service providers and their service geographies which can be used to support workforce planning.

While we appreciate that sometimes procurement processes and their outcomes can put tension between service providers, focusing on retaining staff in the sector is not only right for staff, but right for service providers and families:

- Current service providers will have obligations to support staff through the transition – whether that involves retaining them within their own organisation or supporting them on a new pathway. Current service providers will be able to support staff best when they are engaged and collaborating with DCJ and other service providers in the sector.
- Future service providers will be required to be operational and delivering services to families as soon as possible from 1 July 2026. Recruiting and retaining experienced and skilled staff through the transition period will be critical to ensure there is continuity in the service system – including where this involves supporting the voluntary transfer of staff from one service provider to another, or by preferential recruitment pathways.
- Families receiving new Family Preservation services require high-quality support – by definition, they will have at least one child who is at risk of serious harm. Retaining staff with the depth and breadth of skills and experience in the sector is critical to meeting these needs.

DCJ recognises that ACCO service providers will have specific expectations and needs of their workforce to ensure services delivered to Aboriginal families are culturally responsive. As part of their establishment plan, future ACCO service providers should consider the composition of their workforce, including identified positions, and the recruitment approach that will secure the right skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality services.

## 4.2 Leading and managing change effectively

DCJ recognises it is the responsibility of service providers to lead and manage their staff through transition. Under the law, service providers are required to treat staff fairly and provide a safe working environment – including safety from psychosocial hazards. It is in the interests of DCJ, service providers, staff and families that staff are respected and supported through this process.

Service providers will have their own policies and processes by which they choose to discharge their fair and safe work responsibilities. As a minimum, DCJ expects all service providers to communicate early and regularly with staff on the potential impacts for them and always act in accordance with the relevant law.

Recognising that not all managers and leaders have experience at leading through uncertainty and change like this, DCJ has been working with the peaks and the ASU to understand what best practice leadership and management looks like for the Family Preservation transition.

Best practice would see management:

- Think early about the range of scenarios for their organisation and workforce, developing plans for how they will support staff depending on the outcome of procurement.
- Establish clear communication approaches early, making sure these are ready as more information becomes available and impacts are better understood – this should include collective and individual communications channels.
- Understand legal obligations for fair and safe work, as well as organisational policies and processes and how they may apply to staff.
- Engage ASU early and throughout the transition process.
- Provide staff with information and respect their agency about the choices available to them and not make assumptions about what their preferences may be.
- Support staff by providing access to support services such as employee assistance programs – where these are not in place (e.g. for small service providers), the service provider can reach out to DCJ who can help secure support.

---

## 4.3 Providing clear pathways for staff

DCJ recognises the staff most impacted by transition will be those in service providers who do not secure a future contract through the procurement or secure a contract of lower value than their current contract.

We are clear that we want to retain these staff in the sector.

The rights of affected staff will depend on their particular circumstances, and service providers will need to ensure they respect each worker's rights accordingly.

DCJ, the peaks, and the ASU endorse the position that service provider should support adversely affected staff through one of the following pathways:

- **Redeployment** to other roles within their organisation.
- **Redundancy** if no other roles are available, and the member of staff is entitled.
- **Staff transfer or priority employment** for an incoming or expanding service provider, where that service provider is supportive of that approach.

While DCJ recognises that future service providers have their own autonomy over their recruitment policies and processes, these service providers are strongly encouraged to engage with downsizing or exiting service providers to see if staff can be supported for transfer or priority employment at the new service provider. Service providers should consider this in their scenario planning, and should the scenario eventuate, engage the future service providers early in Phase 2, before staff leave the sector. This engagement may occur bilaterally between service providers, and/or through the Local Transition Groups.

The ASU is committed to supporting its members and the wider sector through this transition so workers' rights can be protected, and families can continue to receive high-quality services. Service providers and staff are encouraged to engage the ASU early in the process to help identify risks, solve problems and avoid dispute. Service providers are expected to engage with the ASU and endeavour to find mutually beneficial outcomes for staff and service providers and avoid the distress and disruption of dispute. While dispute should be viewed as a last resort, DCJ recognises staff, and the ASU may take this action where alternative outcomes cannot be reached.

---

# 5

Phasing transition and  
maintaining service

## 5.1 Transitioning in three phases

DCJ is yet to confirm future service providers, with procurement processes not complete. We acknowledge that this level of uncertainty makes planning more complex for service providers and families and appreciate the challenges this may present.

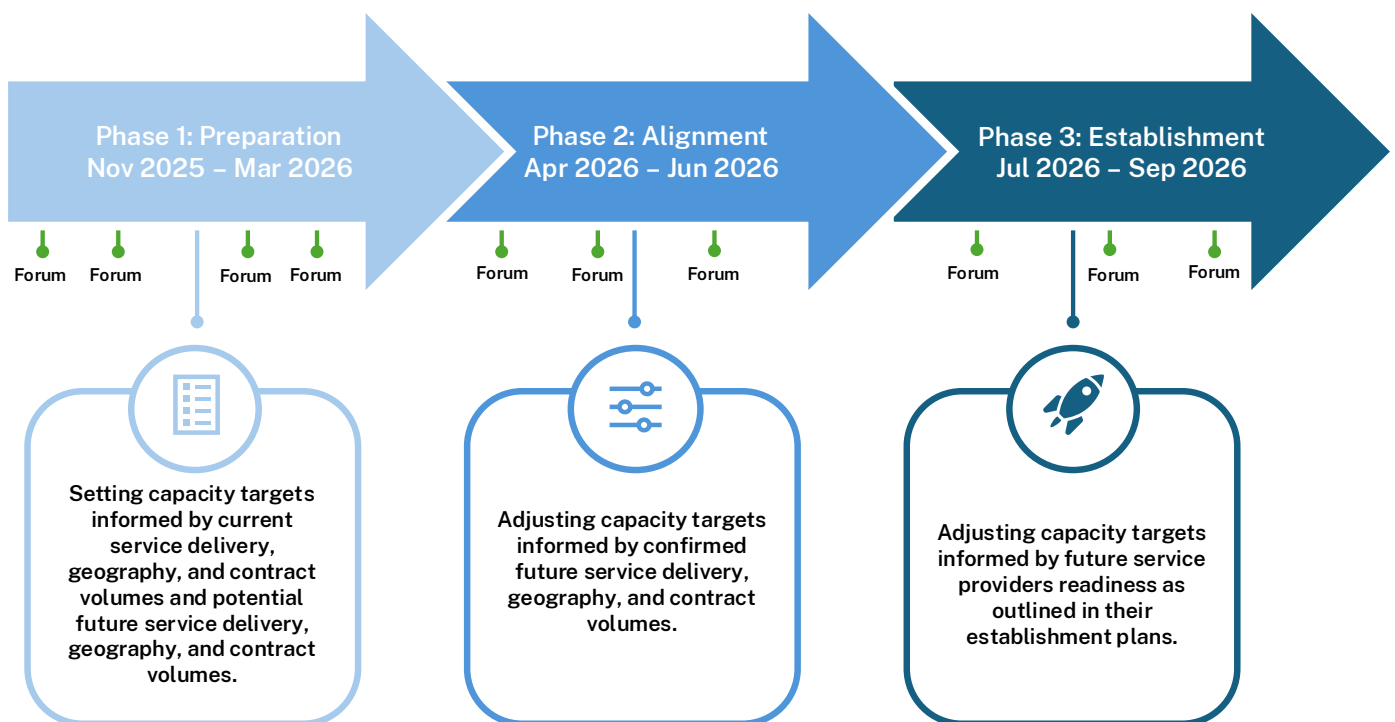
What is clear is that all areas of the state will experience significant change. Decommissioned models will be phased out and the new frameworks - *Aboriginal Family Preservation* and *Families Together* - will be introduced statewide. Retained models such as MST-CAN, FFT-CW – High Track, and Nabu will also continue.

In addition to changes in service design, funding has been reallocated across the state based on assessed need. This means that contract volumes and service geography will shift, and as a result, the number of families a service provider can support at any given time - or service capacity - will also change.

To manage this period effectively, DCJ will take an adaptive approach to transition over three distinct phases (Transition Phase One, Two, and Three). Service capacity will not remain static – it will be adjusted incrementally over these phases. Capacity targets will be adjusted using the following logic:

- **Reduced scope:** If a service provider has indicated a reduced scope for future service delivery, the initial target will reflect that reduced scope.
- **Increased scope:** If a service provider has indicated an increased scope, the initial target will be maintained at current contract volumes to ensure continuity and avoid overextension during early transition phases.

This approach will guide how many families can be supported in each phase and ensure demand is managed consistently across the system.



These changes will primarily affect service providers delivering the soon-to-be decommissioned models (Brighter Futures (including SafeCare), Youth Hope, Resilient Families, IFP, IFBS, and PSP-

FP)<sup>1</sup>. Some of these service providers will have submitted tenders to deliver future services and may or may not be successful. Others may have chosen not to participate in the tender process and will be exiting the Family Preservation system altogether.

There will be less impact for service providers delivering MST-CAN, FFT-CW – High Track, and Nabu.

Transition planning will consider how best to support service providers in all scenarios, whether preparing to transition to the new system or exiting.

## Transition Phase One: Preparation (November 2025 – March 2026)

The objectives during this phase are to prepare for the full transition to the new service system by initiating the winddown of decommissioned models, setting initial capacity targets, and ensuring families currently receiving support can complete their services within the current contract period.

### Key actions:

- Community referrals temporarily paused
- DCJ (Program) sets capacity targets<sup>2</sup> for each service provider based on current service delivery, geography, and contract volumes and future service delivery, geography, and contract volumes (methodology and scenarios detailed in [Appendix A](#)).
- DCJ communicates future *MST-CAN*, *FFT-CW*, *Nabu* service providers (December 2025)
- DCJ communicates future *Aboriginal Family Preservation* and *Families Together* service providers (March 2026).
- Service providers assess all families currently in service to determine whether they should complete their service within Transition Phase One (by 31 March 2026) or Transition Phase Two (by 30 June 2026), based on each family's needs and in line with capacity targets.
- Service providers prepare identified families to complete service by 31 March 2026.
- DCJ (C&P) monitors capacity targets and identifies, tracks, and reports vacancies.
- DCJ (CPP) assesses and prioritises families most in need for referrals, in line with capacity targets and vacancies.
- DCJ (C&P) and service providers begin planning for contract closure, including data management, record keeping, and supporting families to exit.

### Key ways to support families during this phase

Service providers are to notify families currently receiving support about upcoming changes to the Family Preservation program, except where it is unnecessary or inappropriate to do so. Families are to be informed about the end dates of current service provider contracts and what to expect during the transition. Where appropriate, service providers are to provide exiting families with information about alternative services that may be relevant for their needs.

---

<sup>1</sup> DCJ will not be setting capacity targets for service providers currently delivering FFT-CW – Low Track. These service providers will be expected to complete service delivery and exit families by 31 March 2026. This will be managed between each service provider and contract manager locally.

<sup>2</sup> MST-CAN, FFT-CW – High Track, and Nabu will have their capacity targets set and adjusted in Phase One only.

## Transition Phase Two: Adjustment (April 2026 – June 2026)

The objectives during this phase are to adjust capacity targets based on confirmed future service delivery, geography and contract volumes of the future service providers, and to cease referrals to decommissioned models in preparation for the new service system.

As current contracts near their end, the window for referring new families into decommissioned models will narrow. To ensure families have enough time to receive meaningful support, or service duration, referrals to these models will generally cease from 1 May 2026.

Referrals may continue where a current service provider delivering one of the decommissioned models has secured a new contract and has capacity to accept referrals during this phase in line with their capacity target.

In these cases, referrals may continue only where the family is suitable and wants to transition to the new service system (e.g. moving from PSP-FP to *Aboriginal Family Preservation* from 1 July 2026). These referrals will be managed through contract managers and must be explicitly agreed with the Program team, based on identified local transition needs.

### Key actions:

- DCJ narrows and ceases referrals for decommissioned models.
- DCJ (Program) adjusts capacity targets for each *Aboriginal Family Preservation* and *Families Together* service provider based on confirmed future service delivery, geography, and contract volumes.
- New contracts commence for MST-CAN, FFT-CW – High Track, and Nabu service providers (April 2026).
- DCJ (Program) DCJ (C&P) continue monitoring capacity targets and identifying, tracking, and reporting vacancies.
- DCJ (CPP) continues assessing and prioritising families most in need of referrals, in line with capacity targets and vacancies.
- Service providers prepare families currently in service to:
  - Complete service and exit by 30 June 2026.
  - Transition to new system with current service provider where a suitable new contract is in place.
  - Transition to the new system with a new service provider where continued support is needed and the current service provider is exiting the system.
- DCJ (C&P) and service providers coordinate handovers and staffing plans with incoming service providers.

### Key ways to support families during this phase

Families who are transitioning to new services will receive details about their new service provider, the timing of the change and any adjustments to their support. Families who are exiting the program will also be contacted and supported with information about other services they can access if required.



## Transition Phase Three: Establishment (July 2026 – September 2026)

The objectives of this phase are to commence full service delivery under the new Family Preservation system and adjust capacity targets based on service providers' readiness as indicated in their establishment plans, ensuring continuity of support for families transitioning into the new system.

### Key actions:

- New contracts commence for *Aboriginal Family Preservation* and *Families Together*.
- DCJ (Program) adjusts capacity targets for each *Aboriginal Family Preservation* and *Families Together* service provider based on readiness informed by establishment plans.
- DCJ (C&P) continue monitoring capacity targets and identifying, tracking, and reporting vacancies.
- DCJ (CPP) continues assessing and prioritising families most in need of referrals, in line with capacity targets and vacancies.

### Key ways to support families during this phase

Families engaging with new services commencing service delivery on 1 July 2026 will be welcomed by their new service provider. They will receive onboarding information and be supported to build relationships and settle into the new service environment.

---

## 5.2 Managing referrals, service capacity, and vacancies

Effectively managing referrals, service capacity, and vacancies during the transition period is critical to maintaining service quality and ensuring families receive timely and appropriate support. This work will require strong collaboration between DCJ teams (CPP, C&P, Program), service providers, and District Capacity Management Groups.

Each stakeholder has a distinct role, and working together will be essential to ensure families continue to receive the right support at the right time. This fast-paced work demands clear communication, shared accountability, and coordinated action to maintain service quality and system integrity.

Our immediate priority is to ensure families currently receiving support continue to receive high-quality services through to the end of existing contracts. To support a smooth transition and manage capacity into the new service system, DCJ and service providers will work towards exiting families within the current contract period, recognising this as the general approach.

While most families will complete their service by 30 June 2026, a small number may transition into the new system under specific conditions and will be managed carefully.

Further detail on these specific conditions can be found in the [Supporting families](#) section of this paper.

To prioritise families most in need of support from Family Preservation, DCJ referrals will take precedence, and community referrals will be temporarily paused. This will allow service providers to focus on current caseloads, reduce pressure on services, and prepare for the shift to the new service system from July 2026.

### Reporting capacity accurately and frequently

Current service providers are contractually required to provide all reasonable assistance to transition to the new Family Preservation system, including meeting data reporting requirements as notified by DCJ.

While reporting through InfoShare remains business-as-usual, DCJ will request service providers to increase reporting frequency during transition. This is intended to support a smooth transition and ensure high-quality, reliable data.

DCJ will provide further detail on how service providers are to report this information. At a minimum, the following data fields will be required:

- Names of families currently in service.
- Model of support being delivered.
- Service location.
- Expected end date of support.

It is essential that the data submitted is accurate, complete, and timely to support effective planning and smooth transition.

Vacancies must be considered in the context of transition phases and upcoming capacity adjustments. A vacancy may appear available but may need to be held to meet future targets. Not all exits will result in a referral opportunity. Referral decisions should be made in line with phase-specific targets and local transition planning.

Further detail on roles and responsibilities can be found in the *Establishing roles and responsibilities* section of this paper.

---

## 5.3 Assessing and prioritising families most in need for referrals

During the transition to the new Family Preservation service system, it is essential that families most in need are prioritised for support. As outlined above, DCJ referrals will take precedence, and community referrals will be temporarily paused.

DCJ referrals should be prioritised based on the following suggested considerations:

- **Alternative supports:** where no appropriate alternative services exist to meet a family's needs.
- **Risk and urgency:** where the child or children are at risk of significant harm and are most in need of a timely Family Preservation service.
- **Length of service duration available:** referral should align with the support that can be provided before the service provider's contract ends, or that there is clarity and agreement that the family will transition to a service provider.
- **Geographic access and service provider readiness:** families should be matched to service providers based on location, capacity and readiness to deliver services.

---

# 6

## Appendices

## 6.1 Appendix A: Capacity target scenarios<sup>3</sup>

### Scenario 1: Existing service provider is scaling down

Current service provider has tendered to deliver future services<sup>4</sup>. The service provider was successful in securing a new contract; however the volume of the new contract is lower than the volume of their current contract.

| Transition Phase | Timing              | Current contract volumes | Potential contract volumes | Conf. contract volumes | Est. plans (readiness rating) | Capacity target | No. of exiting families |
|------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| One              | Nov 2025 – Mar 2026 | 105                      | 70                         | N/A                    | N/A                           | 70              | 35                      |
| Two              | Apr – Jun 2026      | 105                      | N/A                        | 35                     | N/A                           | 35              | 70 <sup>5</sup>         |
| Three            | Jul – Sep 2026      | N/A                      | N/A                        | 35                     | Fully                         | 35              | N/A                     |

### Scenario 2: Existing service provider is scaling up

Current service provider has tendered to deliver future services. The service provider was successful in securing a new contract, and the volume of the new contract is greater than the volume of their current contract.

| Transition Phase | Timing              | Current contract volumes | Potential contract volumes | Conf. contract volumes | Est. plans (readiness rating) | Capacity target                   | No. of exiting families |
|------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| One              | Nov 2025 – Mar 2026 | 30                       | 70                         | N/A                    | N/A                           | 30                                | N/A                     |
| Two              | Apr – Jun 2026      | 30                       | N/A                        | 70                     | N/A                           | 30                                | N/A                     |
| Three            | Jul – Sep 2026      | N/A                      | N/A                        | 70                     | Partially                     | Minimum 30 (+negotiated increase) | N/A                     |

<sup>3</sup> MST-CAN, FFT-CW – High Track, and Nabu will have their capacity targets set and adjusted in Phase One only. These scenarios cover current and new service providers that have tendered for *Aboriginal Family Preservation* or *Families Together*.

<sup>4</sup> Future service providers may be delivering services in several geographies. In these cases, the service providers will have a capacity target set for each of those geographies.

<sup>5</sup> While these scenarios assume all families currently in service will be exiting by the end of the current contract period, DCJ expects in limited circumstances, some families will transition to the new system with the same service provider, and in exceptional circumstances, some families will transition to the new system with a new service provider.

### Scenario 3: Existing service provider is exiting

Current service provider either did not submit a tender to deliver future service or submitted a tender but was unsuccessful in securing a new contract.

| Transition Phase | Timing              | Current contract volumes | Potential contract volumes | Conf. contract volumes | Est. plans (readiness rating) | Capacity target | No. of exiting families |
|------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| One              | Nov 2025 – Mar 2026 | 65                       | 84                         | N/A                    | N/A                           | 65              | 0                       |
| Two              | Apr – Jun 2026      | 65                       | N/A                        | 0                      | N/A                           | 0               | 65                      |
| Three            | Jul – Sep 2026      | N/A                      | N/A                        | N/A                    | N/A                           | N/A             | N/A                     |

### Scenario 4: New service provider is commencing

New service provider tendered to deliver future services and was successful in securing a new contract.

| Transition Phase | Timing              | Current contract volumes | Potential contract volumes | Conf. contract volumes | Est. plans (readiness rating) | Capacity target | No. of exiting families |
|------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| One              | Nov 2025 – Mar 2026 | N/A                      | N/A                        | N/A                    | N/A                           | N/A             | N/A                     |
| Two              | Apr – Jun 2026      | N/A                      | N/A                        | N/A                    | N/A                           | N/A             | N/A                     |
| Three            | Jul – Sep 2026      | N/A                      | N/A                        | 35                     | Limited                       | Negotiated      | N/A                     |

## Communities and Justice

---

Department of Communities and Justice  
Locked Bag 5000 Parramatta NSW 2124  
T: (02) 9377 6000  
E: [familypreservation@dcj.nsw.gov.au](mailto:familypreservation@dcj.nsw.gov.au)  
W: [dcj.nsw.gov.au](http://dcj.nsw.gov.au)

---