

MACSWD

Proposed new structure (October 2014)

MAC: SWD first put forward a proposal for a new structure to Minister Portolesi in 2012 and shortly after to Minister Rankine. This version updates the 2012/3 proposals into the current context of the Premier's review of boards and committees. The proposal shapes the Committee structure differently so that the membership is consultative rather than representative. It reduces the Committee from two groups to one to oversee all aspects of its role and purpose. The proposal articulates the practical effectiveness of this new structure; reflects on the Committee's past achievements by way of community engagement and considers new opportunities for the future.

Rationale

The current Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities (MAC: SWD) structure consisting of a Standing Committee and its associated Funding Approval Group was established over twenty years ago and has remained similar with representation from stakeholder groups (see Attachment 1). Members of the Committee value the networking opportunities the current structure provides. Previously, the committee reported directly to the Office of the Minister for Education and Child Development (OMECD) with administrative support for the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD). This changed in 2011.

The Office of Non-Government Schools and Services, of which MAC: SWD is now part, has an integration and administrative function with five of the Minister for Education and Child Development's committees. The ONGSS Business Manager attends the MAC: SWD Funding Approval Group meetings.

The Minister receives advice from the Committee about a number of issues relating to the care and education of children and young people with disabilities. The main stakeholders for the work of the Committee are the disability service providers and the sectors they service, from the early years through schooling. This work has been inclusive of a wide range of views obtained through various methods of engagement. This can be enhanced through the proposed new structure, for example, by formalising the relationship between the present student nomination on the Committee and the Julia Farr Association: Purple Orange young people's group, an initiative of a past member of MAC: SWD. This could operate as one of the working groups of the Committee, as described later in this paper.

A major focus of the Committee's work is the administration of disability services funding. The funding element of the Committee's work involves review of the funding processes, verification of services provided by disability services and recommending allocations for the Minister's consideration. It has also involved establishing new governance arrangements for small non-government providers. For example, the services provided by the early years intervention program formerly located at Poonindie is now provided through the DECD Children's Centre in Port Lincoln. This new arrangement means that the few children who attended Poonindie now participate in a broader community program with appropriate levels of professional supervision. Other organisations which were transitioned into new governance arrangements were the Goodwood Early Years Service and the Early

Links Developmental program in Mount Gambier. In addition the non-government sector special schools funding was transitioned from the Committee to the Non-Government schools funding process. This means that the services funded through this budget for the schooling sectors are now all ones which are accessed by the schools in each of the education sectors. Other refinements are the reinvigoration of the Children in Out of Home Care Tutoring Program, which is now targeted to children with disability under the Guardianship of the Minister.

The Committee also undertakes policy and research tasks, as approved by the Minister. Research tasks are identified through the Committee and then discussed with and approved by the Minister. The Committee members bring forward issues that they consider are significant, contemporary and relevant to all sectors. One of the tasks of the members is to provide representative views, for example, from parents, students, non-government providers, special educators, academia and the sectors. Over time the Committee has moved away from a predominantly traditional research focus to examining issues that can be resolved through a cross sector approach, once sufficient information is gathered to inform any resolution. One very successful example was negotiation with the early years providers and education sectors to develop agreed transition processes, and publicise them to parents of children with disability. This agreed process replaced the differing approaches taken by sectors. Feedback indicates that this has been helpful to parents and to the sectors.

A current example of the policy brokerage role of the Committee is the provision of a single pool for equipment to replace the multiple approaches used by the separate education sectors. The process for development has included consultation with sector representatives and senior officers from the Department for Community and Social Inclusion's (DCSI) Domiciliary Equipment Service. We expect, following the approval of both Ministers, this will mean that all equipment provisions will be managed through the Domiciliary Equipment Services process, where procurement, allocation, maintenance and management of stock is well established. All sectors will access equipment using standard procedures and be able to draw upon the expertise of DCSI to integrate this process into provisions for children and students with disability. Another example of integrated and timely work was the development of the parent resource, A guide to protecting children and young people with disability and preventing sexual abuse, with particular attention to children and young people with disability, long identified as a very vulnerable group in the community. This work was undertaken at the request of the Minister and involved sensitively engaging with parents whose children with disability had been victims of abuse to ensure the content of the resource would be effective for families in preventing abuse.

Most recently the Committee has been engaged in work relating to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The Committee identified this as an emerging issue in 2012 and was focussed on it over the last few years. In the early stages it involved the use of data collected by the Committee about the numbers of children and young people receiving services from non-government service providers, and working with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to identify and describe services that were in or out of scope for the NDIS reform. This was done in concert with the state and federal drivers of the NDIS and across agencies and sectors in SA involved in service delivery. This work continues, as the age range of

children increases and the implementation broadens. Two programs currently under discussion are the Access Assistant Program, administered through the Women and Children's Health Network and the Miriam High Special Needs program in Port Augusta, both funded in part through MAC:SWD.

These areas demonstrate the focus on increased integration in the operations of the Committee and its outcomes.

Other research activities have focussed on emerging issues, for example, comprehensive advice to the Minister about current best practice options for Autism Education or the extent to which the Children's Centres engage with families of children with disabilities and enhance their education. The research reports are all available on the MAC:SWD website.

There has been long term attention to Aboriginal children with disabilities. The Committee also participates in SACE deliberations, and has been engaged in advocacy on particular issues, for example the place of students with disability in the Australian Curriculum, the engagement of young people with disability and the Disability Justice plan. As the result of a MAC:SWD initiative, merit award winners for modified subjects will now receive their certificates as part of the general award ceremony at Government House, rather than in their local school, from 2015.

Several factors have prompted a re-examination of the way the Committee undertakes its three functions:

- Increased attention paid to the point of view of children with disability and their families as service consumers.
- The vigorous approach to service integration required by current government policy.
- A growing view that over time the existing Standing Committee and its associated Funding Approval Group have led to a degree of overlap in membership: the amount of staff time taken to service the two groups is not as efficient a use of resources as could be achieved with a more streamlined Committee structure. By definition the two groups include core members giving a significant time commitment: not only do these members attend both the Standing Committee and Funding Approval Group, they also participate in many of the working groups and are responsible to manage verification of services delivery to children in their sectors. The functions of the current two committees are distinct. In the proposed new structure, the developmental work would operate through working groups, while the Standing Committee would have oversight and approval of their work, as well as a focus on the funding processes and administration.
- The commitment of the Committee to maintain operating costs at the lowest level consistent with operations and no more than 4% of the total MAC:SWD budget.
- The Committee has had limited capacity within its current structure to undertake formal and regular consultation with key stakeholders, including disability service providers and the care, education and health sectors relevant to the work of the Committee. The Committee has held its meetings in the offices of service providers, and held specific consultation with the non-

government providers to keep them briefed on changes to the funding formula, changes to the budget and the interface of NDIS funding with MAC: SWD funding, as these issues arise. While the Committee members bring a very wide range of perspectives to the table, there is an increased expectation for closer forms of engagement with the communities connected to the work of the Committee. More time allocated to this, along with more flexible approaches which can be developed by the Committee, can provide the Minister with current information at regular intervals through the year.

- The Committee operates a series of working groups for each of its policy development/research tasks, in addition to the two groups that operate as standing groups to the Committee. This leads to quite heavy time commitments from essential contributors, for example the sector representatives on the Committee groups. The proposed structure could allow a more consultative approach rather than a representative one, where that is appropriate.
- The ongoing need to avoid conflict of interest with recipients of funding in the Committee structure.
- Increased responsibilities for the secretariat staff, as members of the ONGSS, and the Committee's staffing adjustments which have occurred as a consequence of the Office's establishment.

The current membership of the two groups operating under MAC: SWD is stated in Attachment 1.

Proposal

The functions of the Committee would stay the same; that is, provide advice to the Minister, based on either formal research projects (in areas determined by the Minister as is the current practice) or in relation to emerging issues (for example, the national partnerships for funding disability services — National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS]) or as requested by the Minister; and maintain oversight of the funding process to service providers.

The streamlined structure to deliver on these functions would be for a Committee called the Ministerial Advisory Committee: Children and Students with Disability (MAC: CSWD). Its proposed membership is:

Education and Child Development Sectors

Nomination with expertise in disability and care, health and education each from:

- Department for Education and Child Development B – 12 (2 – early years and schooling sectors)
- Catholic Education SA
- Association of Independent Schools of SA

The Minister's nominees

The Minister has six nominations to the Committee. They are:

- a parent
- a student
- a person who is Aboriginal
- a person who has a professional involvement in disability services, care and education,
- the vice chairperson and
- chairperson

No change is proposed for these nominations.

The new structure would mean that the business of the Funding Approval Group could be managed through the Standing Committee, as there is no conflict of interest in the proposed membership (i.e. no proposed member is also representative of an organisation that receives funding through MAC: SWD). This would reduce the administrative burden on the staff (e.g. the preparation of minutes for both Committees) and free time for the secretariat staff to pursue the development agendas for the Committee.

The service consumer perspective is currently, and can increasingly be, reflected in these nominations. Given the proposed change to the size of the Committee, the consumer voice will be strengthened. Aboriginal representation continues to be important as the Committee is intent on making sure that this perspective is visibly included, particularly because of the over representation of Aboriginal people with disabilities in the population and under servicing of the cohort of Aboriginal children and students with disabilities.

It is further proposed that the Committee have an auxiliary group, working and reporting to it twice a year. This group, made up of a small number of members of the Committee, will undertake formal consultation with disability service providers and care and education professionals, as well as any other identified stakeholders. It will provide formal information to the Committee on the impacts of funding and emerging trends, as well as provide direction in the three Committee functions. The Committee will do all of its work with the inclusion of relevant stakeholders or contributors. This can be expanded into more formal process under the auspice of a smaller leaner Committee.

In addition, the Committee would continue to commission reference groups for any research projects or policy explorations that require attention beyond the secretariat. Again, members of the Committee would play a leadership role, with the secretariat providing appropriate support. The State Government's principles of engagement as they are articulated in the Better Together document will form the foundation for this work. (See Attachment 2 for a synopsis of these principles as they relate to the work of the Committee at present.)

Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities—Membership (current incumbents)

STANDING COMMITTEE - 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2015
Ms Margaret Wallace Chairperson
Ms Gabby Aschberger Association of Independent Schools of SA
Ms Jacqueline Ah Kit Minister's nominee (Aboriginal Representative)
Dr Mary Bambacas Deputy Chairperson Minister's Nominee (Parent)
Ms Sue Bailey Independent Education Union (SA)
Dr Kerry Bissaker Minister's Nominee (Professional)
Ms Vivian Cagliuso Minister's Nominee (Parent)
Ms Elizabeth Cohen National Disability Services Sub Committee – Children, Young People and their Families (SA Branch)
Ms Deborah George Department for Education and Child Development (Early Years)
Ms Stephanie Grant Catholic Education SA
Ms Nicole Kyrkou Department for Education and Child Development (School Years)
Ms Deidre Le Maistre Australian Education Union (SA Branch)
Ms Aimee Harwood Minister's Nominee (Student)
Ms Rennie Strawbridge Department for Communities and Social Inclusion
Ms Linda Turpin Early Childhood Australia (SA Branch)
Ms Jillian Denys Australian Association of Special Education (SA Chapter)

FUNDING APPROVAL GROUP
Ms Margaret Wallace Chairperson
Dr Mary Bambacas Deputy Chairperson Minister's Nominee (Parent)
Dr Kerry Bissaker Minister's Nominee (Professional)
Ms Stephanie Grant Catholic Education SA
Ms Nicole Kyrkou Department for Education and Child Development (School Years)
Ms Gabby Aschberger Association of Independent Schools of SA

Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities— Community Engagement

MAC: SWD has a history of engaging communities and stakeholders in the work of the Committee and bringing their voices into the Committee's research, projects, resource developments and advice to the Minister. MAC: SWD utilises the six principles of engagement as outlined in *Better Together* document available on the yourSAy website (<http://yoursay.sa.gov.au/>). MAC: SWD will continue this practice and will endeavour to seek innovative ways to engage with community and stakeholders in the future, to increase the involvement of people and organisations and strengthen their voice in Government decisions.

PRINCIPLE 1: We know why we are engaging and we communicate this clearly.

It is one of the three roles of MAC: SWD, on behalf of the Minister, to undertake projects and provide advice on matters concerning the care and education of children and students with disability. Project work is determined by the committee or the Minister and occurs with the Minister's approval (e.g. resource development, research and policy review).

The committee members provide representative views that inform the Minister of which issues to investigate. The views are those of parents, students, non-government disability service providers, special educators, academia and the education sectors. Committee members gather information from the communities they represent to inform this work, for example, the Aboriginal representative brings perspectives and knowledge from Aboriginal communities, the Early Childhood Australia representative brings information and viewpoints from early childhood communities. The diverse profile of the Committee contributes to the richness of perspectives represented and greater depth of engagement.

PRINCIPLE 2: We know who to engage.

In addition to its members, MAC: SWD seeks additional representatives to guide its work—to determine inquiry methods and how best to report of outcomes, and to guide resource developments. This involves identifying key people in the community. Committee members are integral to this process. Both the additional representatives (project group members) and Standing Committee members assist by engaging with communities and stakeholders.

MAC: SWD has used the following methods:

- Seminars
- Forums
- Surveys (on-line and postal)
- Face to Face interviews
- Telephone interviews
- Focus Groups
- Workshops
- Displays
- Dissemination of information and resources

It is general practice for the committee to go into communities to engage with people and stakeholders. This involves visiting schools, early childhood education and care settings, early intervention programs, disability service providers, the homes of parents and their children with disability, universities and attending conferences and seminars.

For example, the *Disability Services and Children's Centres for Early Childhood Development and Parenting* project collected information from multiple sources and participants included Children's Centres Directors, parents of children with disability and disability service providers. A survey was designed for Directors who were given the option of online completion, telephone interview or face to face interview. They were encouraged to comment on a multitude of issues and to raise awareness of the inclusion of families with children with disability and additional needs at their centre. Information was also gathered from parents of children with disability via focus groups, telephone or face to face interviews and electronic survey. Multiple options were provided for parent's convenience to maximise engagement.

PRINCIPLE 3: We know the background history

The Committee and additional project group members contribute a depth of knowledge about previous research, policy and engagement endeavours across all levels of government and all years of child development. Knowing the history informs the engagement strategy. The Committee also considers previous engagements and does not duplicate the work of other agencies or bodies but seeks opportunities to form partnerships and collaborate to build on information. For example, the Committee has collaborated with the KidsMatter Evaluation Teams to evaluate the effectiveness of the KidsMatter initiatives (both Primary and Early Childhood) for children and students with disability and their families.

PRINCIPLE 4: We begin early

The Committee engages with their communities and stakeholders early to shape their work. Contribution to the development of resources, methods of inquiry, enhancement of systems and ultimately recommendations made to the Minister are sought from community and stakeholder groups. For example, early in the production of the child protection resource titled *A guide to protecting children and young people with disability and preventing sexual abuse*, parents were selected to join a project group to ensure this resource would meet the needs of the target group. The parents contributed to the content of the resource and its design. Other stakeholders (e.g. Families SA staff and South Australian Police) were consulted also. Over 35 000 copies have been distributed across the State and Australia. The following article was published at the Child Family Community Australia website to disseminate this information more broadly. <https://www3.aifs.gov.au/cfca/2014/05/07/protecting-children-and-young-people-with-disability-and-preventing-sexual-abuse-a-collaborative-approach-to-resource-production>).

PRINCIPLE 5: We are genuine

The Committee works in partnership with community and this is reflected in the co-design of its project outcomes. Appropriate language and style are considered alongside the principles of authenticity, accessibility and an acknowledgment of the benefits for participants.

PRINCIPLE 6: We are creative, relevant and engaging

The Committee embraces the opportunity to explore new ways of engaging with community and stakeholders. MAC: SWD shares the Government's commitment to hearing first hand from people in the community who are affected by the actions of Government and non-government services. Below is a summary of some of the innovations that are currently practised.

Forums

- MAC: SWD provides forums to capture community voice for the Minister. MAC: SWD is currently planning to hold a forum as a part of the *Documenting Effective Building Practices for Children and Students with Disability* project. This will be promoted by JFA Purple Orange and is targeted at the JFA Purple Oranges Youth Mentoring group, as well as staff and parents of disability service organisations.

Meetings

- MAC: SWD holds its committee meetings off-site in the community among stakeholders and community members. MAC: SWD currently meets at the CAN: DO4Kids site, which shares a location with Down Syndrome SA. MAC: SWD administers funding to both of these disability service providers. MAC: SWD will investigate the possibility of holding meetings at education and care settings in 2015 and inviting the host site to present challenges, issues, gaps and successes in their work with and for children and students with disability and their families.

Public Lectures

- MAC: SWD will investigate the possibility of public lectures that address issues affecting children and students with disability and their families in the area of education, care and disability service provision. If the committee determines that there is a need for this service, via its engagement with community, it will consider ways to generate this service. In recent years, the work of MAC: SWD has been presented at seminars and conferences. The Committee also hosted a seminar on best practices in education for children and students with Asperger disorder in 2006. This was attended by parents, education service staff and disability service practitioners. The Committee could again take the opportunity to host discussions on topical issues at community request.

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Sharing Information

- MAC: SWD shares and circulates amongst its networks numerous articles, web links, policy discussion papers, reviews, flyers for expos and conferences seminars etc on topical, significant and relevant issues relating to the education and care of children with disability. Currently, the Committee discusses as standing items key issues such as mental health, curriculum, the transition to school (Same First Day), funding systems (National Disability Insurance Scheme) and Equipment Provision across care and education sectors at its meetings. This allows members the opportunity to bring information and issues from their communities to the committee.

Published Work

- MAC: SWD has used different mediums to promote the work of the committee and engage community and stakeholders. MAC: SWD has contributed articles to Healthy Development Adelaide and Child Family Community Australia (a part of Australian Institute of Family Studies), links to the MAC: SWD website have been added to key stakeholders websites (e.g. Department for Communities and Social Inclusion). MAC: SWD will investigate different mediums and innovative ways to promote the work of the Committee and engage with community and stakeholders. This may include using, for example, Media Liaison Officers for DECD, Catholic Education and the Association of Independent Schools, childcare and education sector newsletters, online forums and websites.