



# Creating a Gap

## 1. Introduction

The implementation of the Early Intervention and Placement Prevention Program (EIPP) will have detrimental consequences for many families and communities in NSW. The purpose of this document is to comprehensively articulate these consequences for Child & Family Services and their target groups. The consequences for other target groups are a matter for other Peaks to address.

We have indicated our support for many aspects of the reform of the Community Services Grants Program (CSGP) that led to the introduction of the EIPP in the context of the Keep Them Safe (KTS) strategy.

We acknowledge the expressed commitment of Community Services to work with the Peaks to introduce change flexibly to avoid unintended negative consequences for children, families and communities. We hope the information in this document makes clear the need for some changes in aspects of the reform. Flexible implementation of what is planned may not be enough. In other documents we will outline the changes we believe will provide a more solid basis for reform, consistent with KTS. These changes will reduce the dependence on highly flexible implementation to address current problems with the EIPP Program.

The chief concern of FamS and our members is that the new service specifications for services that received CSGP funding will create a gap in services for families needing a secondary level of service intervention. Children in these families are at risk of becoming stuck in intergenerational disadvantage and experiencing less positive outcomes in terms of their health, happiness and safety.

This gap is likely to sow the seeds for child protection issues in the future. The gap cannot be filled by the Brighter Futures Program as it is currently designed, nor would remodelling this program fill the gap, unless hundreds of millions of dollars in additional funding was available.

The reforms also raise significant ethical and equity issues. They discriminate against communities with significant levels of disadvantage with most families in those communities, now by definition, ineligible for support from a Family Support Service. Services that currently work with the most disadvantaged families are being directed towards work with families with far less serious and complex problems.

## 2. Creating a gap

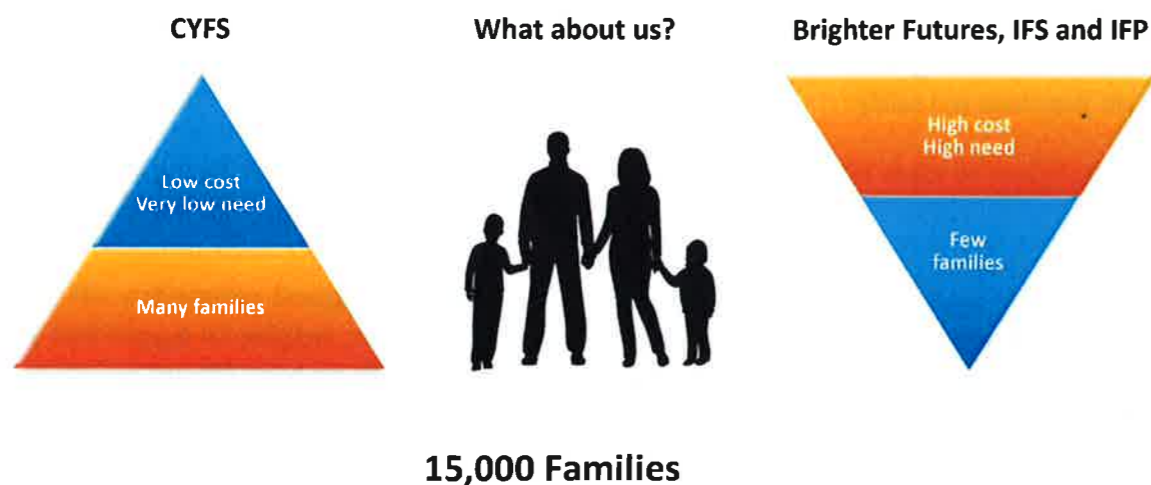
Our members currently provide services to families and children requiring universal, primary, secondary and tertiary level interventions (30,000 families a year). As the service system and services are being strengthened to support children and families needing intensive and well resourced secondary (e.g. Brighter Futures) and tertiary interventions, it is important that existing services are still able to work across the whole spectrum of need.

The new risk of significant harm threshold increases the number of families assessed as not requiring a statutory child protection intervention. In the sector it was assumed, that under KTS, this population of families requiring secondary level intervention to promote the wellbeing of children would continue to represent the bulk of the work of Family Support Services. However the CSGP reform produces fewer comprehensive services for families requiring secondary level intervention (with medium need). The Brighter Futures Program that does meet some of the demand for secondary level intervention currently works with around 3,600 families and new funding of over \$8 million will only add 200 families to that program.

There is no model to pick up the families that Family Support Services have traditionally worked with; a gap in the continuum of service is being created.

The families that will receive services from our members are the families where family circumstances are unlikely to have major detrimental impacts on children and who are least likely to have their children taken into care. Our members will be dealing predominately with families with one off, non-complex issues. The children in these families are at low risk. They are families who in most situations are likely to have adequate resources to be able to resolve their issues.

**Illustration 1: Families with secondary level need will be left without services**



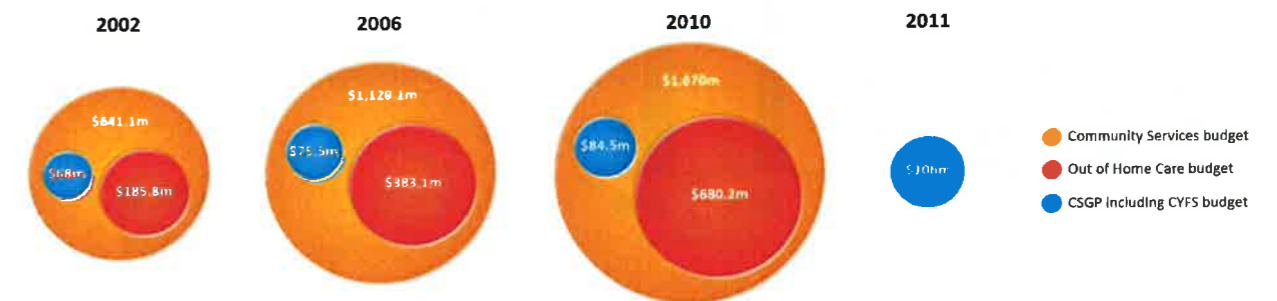
## 3. Funding over time

The Community Services budget has seen huge increases year on year, and the amount spent on Out of Home Care has followed a similar pattern.

The proportion of the Community Services budget invested in early intervention services through CSGP services gets smaller each year. CSGP has funded community development activities, neighbourhood centres, specialist counselling services and youth services as well as Child and Family Services. Approximately 50% of CSGP is allocated to Child, Youth and Family Services.

Although the budget for Child, Youth and Family Services is larger than it was under CSGP, it remains a very small part of the Community Services budget.

**Illustration 2: Budget Allocations**



The reform of CSGP has seen funding divided into two Programs: Community Builders and Early Intervention & Placement Prevention (EIPP).

\$21.2 million extra is to be invested: \$10 million for Community Builders and \$11.2 million for EIPP.

EIPP new funding is split three ways:

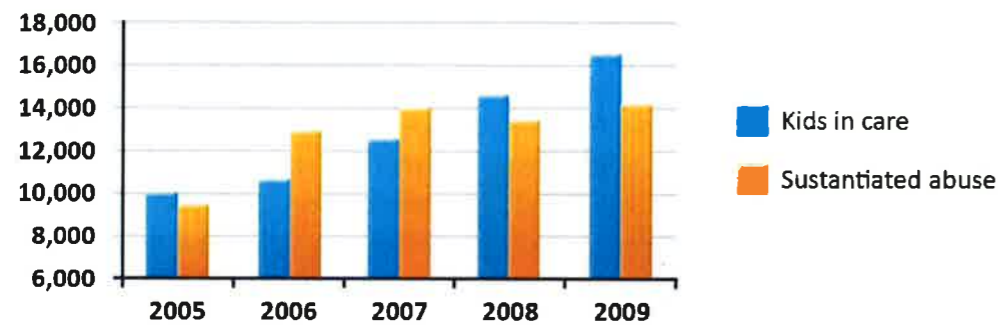
- \$4.3 million for Child, Youth & Family Support (CYFS)
- \$6.9 million for Intensive Family Support (IFS) and Family Preservation (IFP)

## 4. Placements and harm continue to increase

Despite the huge investment in Community Services and OOHC, all indicators of harm are increasing. There is still a need for secondary level intervention work with families who are most at risk of having their child/children removed.

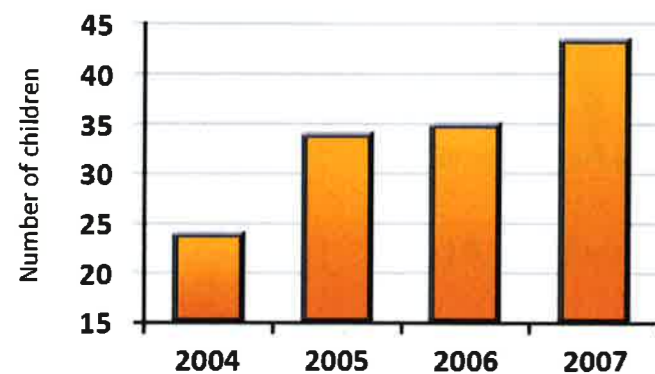
### Illustration 3: Indicators of Harm

Each year more children are taken into care and there is more evidence of abuse.



### Illustration 4: Child Deaths:

In recent years in NSW the number of child deaths from abuse, neglect or in suspicious circumstances has been increasing.



## 5. How many families will be seen with the new funding?

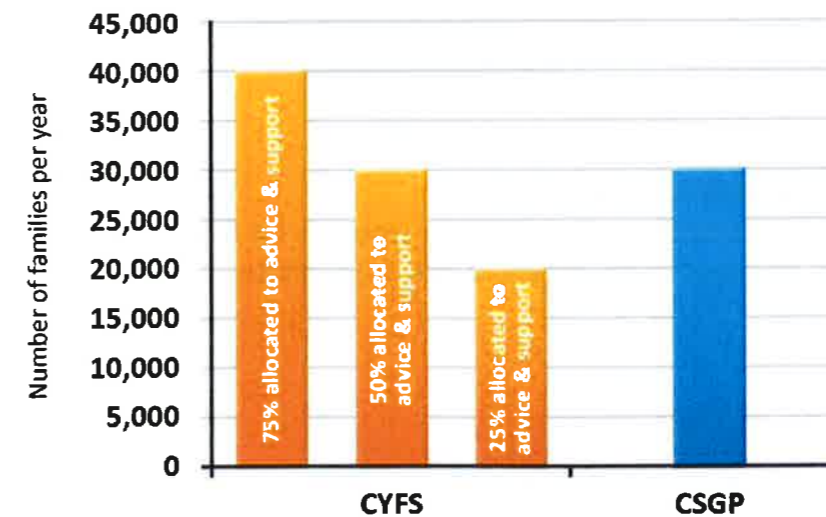
Thirty thousand families are currently supported annually through the CSGP funded Child and Family Services.

The total CYFS funding amount for 2011/2012 will be up to \$55.3 million; Child and Family Services will be allocated approximately \$27 million.

All subsequent projections about CYFS service provision and comparisons with current service provision are based on information on the new models provided by Community Services. We acknowledge that Community Services emphasises that the models and assumed service levels for different program activities are not prescriptive. Just as Community Services has used assumed averages for services operating under CFYS we have used the available data to represent the average Child and Family Service under CSGP.

Child and Family Services will be made up of two types of services: *advice & support* and *parenting programs*. Depending on the proportion of money providers decide to allocate to each service type, between 20,000 and 40,000 families can receive services.

### Illustration 5: Families Receiving Services pre and post EIPP



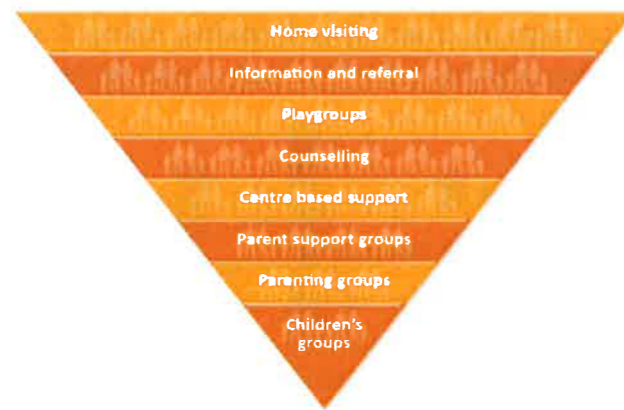
A similar number of families will receive support from Child and Family Services through CYFS funding as they have done through CSGP funding. However, the demographic will be different and gives rise to serious concerns. **The following sections show that the families that will be supported are at reduced risk and that these families will receive less intensive services.**

## 6. Services available with CSGP and CYFS funding

### Illustration 6: Child and Family Services available under CSGP

Using CSGP funding, Child and Family Services offer a wide range of services. Most families receive the services at the top of the triangle below; fewer receive the services at the bottom of the triangle.

Generally "Home Visiting" is being defined as structured in home parenting training in Community Services models. Family Support Services have traditionally used the term home visiting for any service provided in the family home. It includes parenting support, but also has a focus on case management, case plan review, and ongoing information, advice and practical support.



### Illustration 7: Child and Family Services available under CYFS

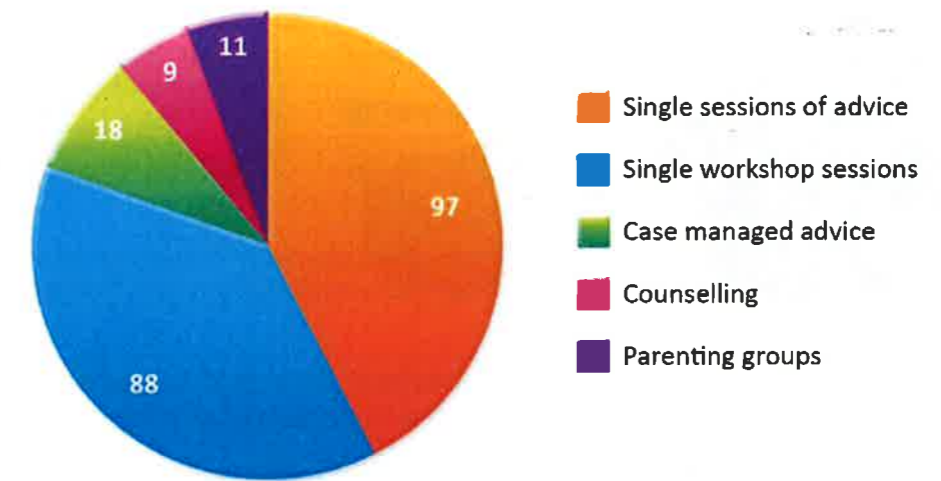
Under the CYFS model for Child and Family Services, families will receive services in the following proportions (we assume 75% of the funding is allocated to advice and support and 25% to parenting programs):



## 7. What will the average Child and Family Service provide with CYFS funding?

On a CYFS grant of \$100,000 for advice and support and \$50,000 for parenting groups, a Child and Family Service will work with 222 families each year. (Under CSGP average funding per service is \$150,000).

### Illustration 8: Number of families receiving each service type through CYFS funded Child and Family Service



## 8. Where are services delivered?

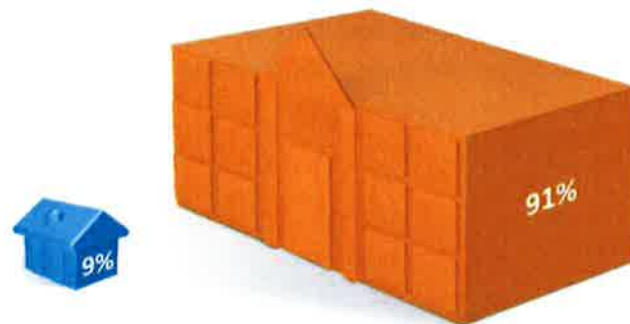
The Brighter Futures evaluation report identified "Home Visiting" as the best regarded service. Home Visiting is the most common CSGP funded Child and Family Service. Engaging with a family in their own home is vital to building relationships.

The vast majority of CYFS services will be delivered in the organisation's premises. Only case managed advice and a small proportion of parenting programs will be delivered in the clients' homes.

**Illustration 9: 75% of clients of CSGP funded Child and Family Service received home visits in 2008**



**Illustration 10: Only 9% of CYFS funded Child and Family Service clients will receive home visits.**

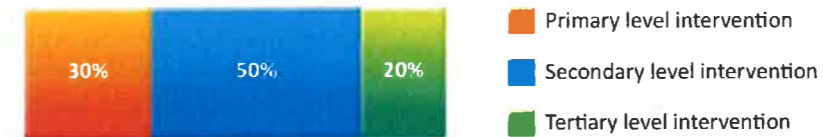


## 9. Services are redefined

### ***CYFS funding redefines the work of Child and Family Services.***

Under CSGP funding, our members work across the spectrum of need with a client centred approach. Our member census for 2006/2007 revealed that for the families being supported: 30% required a primary level intervention, 50% required a secondary level intervention and 20% required a tertiary level intervention (were involved in the statutory child protection system).

**Illustration 11: Intensity of work delivered under CSGP**



Many member services have deliberately located themselves in vulnerable communities and the majority of our members are working with the most marginalised in their communities, regardless of whether a community as a whole is vulnerable.

Services working with Aboriginal families and communities have commented that the CYFS models (that exclude working with families with entrenched and chronic problems) would be virtually unworkable in some parts of the state.

Most CYFS funding will be allocated to low risk families for one off sessions. This does not allow for the relationship building aspects of CSGP funded work that is fundamental to supporting families and promoting change.

For families receiving services though CYFS funded Child and Family Services the model assumes only 12% will require a secondary level interventions. 88% of families will only be able to access primary level interventions. We wonder whether there is the need for this type of service.

This is a very significant change in the services available.

**Illustration 12: Intensity of work delivered under CYFS**



## 10. Families and children will be excluded

Families with chronic conditions are not eligible for services funded from CYFS. Chronic conditions include domestic violence, mental health issues, neglect, drug and alcohol abuse, intellectual disability and poverty.

Much of CSGP funding has been used by child and family services to support families with high to medium needs and chronic conditions. Homelessness or poor and inadequate housing is a prevalent concern for many of these families that exacerbates their other problems. Many of these families will be excluded from CYFS funded services.

**Illustration 13: Children and families currently supported, who experience chronic conditions will be excluded from CYFS funded Child and Family Services**



## 11. Conclusion

Under the CYFS funding scheme, it is anticipated that Family Support Services:

- » will see around the same numbers of families, but they
- » will see less families with high need
- » will visit less clients in their home
- » will build relationships with fewer families
- » will deliver fewer impactful services
- » will be less effective in preventing children entering out of home care.
- » will provide a service model that in many instances will be poorly matched to the predominate needs of children and families in their community.

***A gap in services is being created.***

We agree that there is a need for greater investment in prevention and early intervention at the universal and primary level.

However a strategy of bolstering this end of the continuum at the expense of families and children further along the continuum is not justifiable.

It will lead to a further deterioration in the overall wellbeing of children in this state.

A reform that is being driven by the principle, that we need flexible local solutions to improve outcomes for children should:

- Responds to the needs of all children living in any community;
- Appropriately address the needs of children most at risk and;
- Strengthen the continuum of services and not create a gap into which disadvantaged communities and whole populations could disappear.

In view of current discussions with Community Services we are optimistic that changes can be managed in ways that work for communities, benefit children and families and do not create damaging gaps in the service continuum. We look forward to continuing to work with Community Services to facilitate the best outcomes for these children and their families.

(We wish to thank **Matrix** on Board and in particular Nick Corrigan for assistance with the graphics and formatting of this document in support of the analysis and message developed by FamS).