

Changesmith

Summary of Review of the Intercountry Adoption Family Support (ICAFS) Service

Review conducted by **Changesmith** consulting

Highlights

The objective of the Intercountry Adoption Family Support Service is to provide counselling, case management, relationship education and support that will assist with family functioning, relationship strengthening, attachment support, parenting skills, individual and child well-being

LifeWorks the lead agency – subcontract to ISS-A to provide case-management services

Model includes:

- Central intake and case coordination
- Counselling provided by specially trained and expert family and relationships counsellors
- Case work provided face to face in major centres
- Education and community development activities

3 year contract – extended by 12mths (to 2020) – subcontract to expire June 2019

Review

Changesmith engaged to undertake review independently Nov 2018 to Jan 2019.

The aim was to gain appreciation of the expectations of the program by different key stakeholders, perceptions of where the program is working well and where changes might be required

Brief included a review of:-

- Attributes of people accessing the program (data on intake and referrals, including between ISS and LifeWorks);
- People who appear to be under-represented in accessing the program;
- Views of different stakeholders on the model and what should change - including key State / Territory government departmental contacts and other stakeholders; Associates, adult adoptees and relevant (adoptee and adoptee family) support groups.
- Effectiveness of the counselling and case management activity itself, including targets and utilisation of staff / Associates working in the program.

Methodology

Review of documents

- Program documents - service development, model , contract arrangement and partnership
- Policy context and history of Intercountry Adoption in Australia

Examine service data including referrals and demand over 3 from various sources

Desktop review

Stakeholder interviews – 12-15 including partners, practitioners, state and commonwealth government reps, consumers, and advocates

Key Findings – future success factors

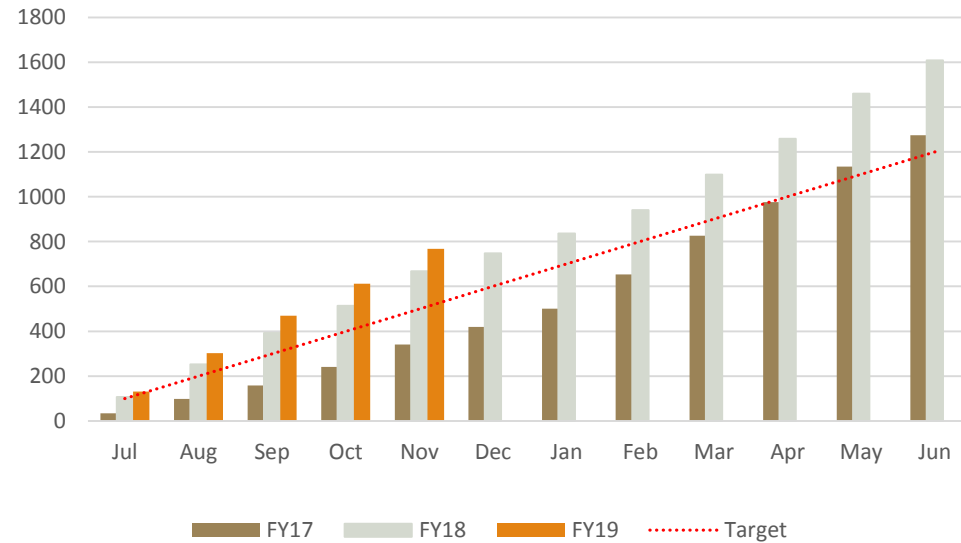
“Our family was going through a challenging time that seemed to reach into every part of our lives, including making a reliable income. To have had the support of LifeWorks to get the help we needed, especially for our children, was instrumental in getting specialised help when we needed it” (Adoptive family).

- Demand for counselling exceeds funding v’s demand for case management has never met targets and demand is declining. Most information and support service delivery is not face to face.
- Need to recalibrate expectations post tracing
- A highly valued service - high quality services that meet a clear need / fill an identified gap
- Consumer engagement essential – families and adult adoptees
- Keep building and deepening the practice of the professional staff – community of practice (within ICAFS) + beyond program (mental health practitioners) + Sector standards
- Sector relationships are complex and require continued attention/resourcing
- Respond to client demand and analysis of client educational and support needs
- Market and promote refreshed model
- Develop education and online resources

Service use v's performance targets

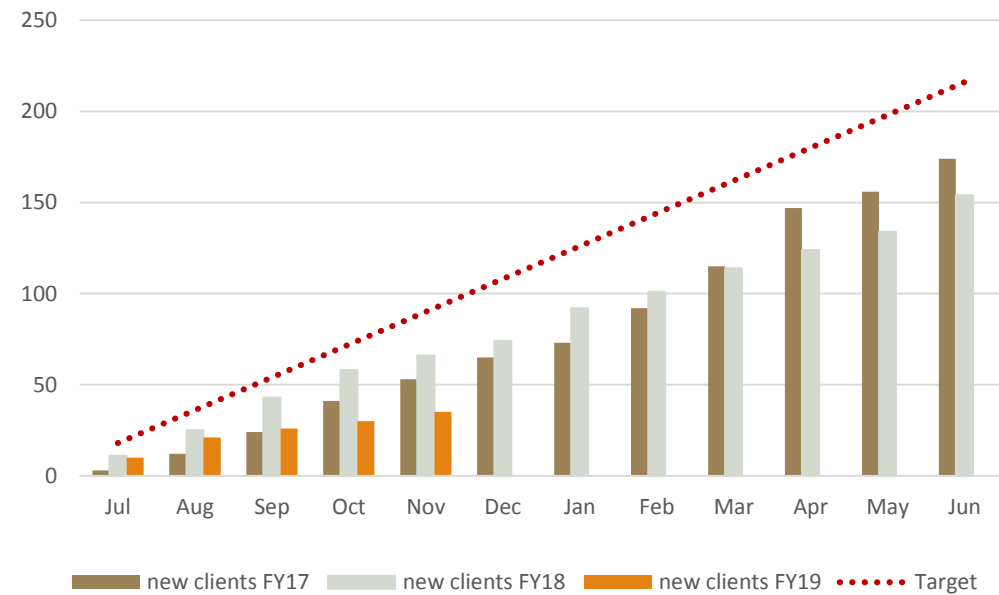
COUNSELLING

ICAFS Counselling hours against target



INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

ICAFS Casework client numbers against target



Recommendations

Objective: Transition ICAFS into a centrally managed counselling, case management and support program that is cost effective and delivers a high quality, accountable program.

\$ currently invested with ISS to be re-invested as follows:-

- Dial up: More resources for Counsellors / Associates.
- Dial up: Travel, and networking and promotions budget for the national Coordinator.
- Dial up: Resources for admin / comms support at HQ.
- Dial up: Create a national case management role to back up the National Coordinator to offer phone-and email-based support and case management. Not critical for this role to be in Melbourne, but will work closely with overall Coordinator and be client / external facing to the field, to build and maintain knowledge of local referral networks and require high level intercountry adoption competency.
- Re-calibrate: Option to contract out production of educational material; development of state-by-state local referral guides to accompany generic online resources; delivery of educational and engagement programs by 'national' staff.
- Re-calibrate: Data collection and analysis to deepen understanding of issues associated with intercountry adoption; enable contribution to policy debates; deliver KPIs for community development, sector / professional development of the national community of practice. Data and overhead supports.
- Drop: Funding of a part-time devolved staff cohort in 5 capital cities with a 'state' focus. Manage transition of clients from ISS to other sources of support, including the new ICAFS national case management model.
- Dial up: Community of Practice – annual Thought Leadership and Practice Forum with invitations to Associates (free registration), private practitioners in the field (paid registration) local adoption services, family and adoptee support networks, mentors and young / emerging practitioners, and international researchers.