

OCCG: 1245

FILE NOTE

Agency: Hunter Aboriginal Children's Services
Nature of contact: Update Meeting
Date: 18 August 2011

Notes: AP attended HACS progress report meeting attended by Adrian Elliot (A/CEO), Helen Keavers (BenSoc), Karen Elphick (Board), Andrew ? (Board) and Amanda Bridges (GLMACS), Marcia Stone CFRU. Janet Vickers CS was invited but did not attend and no apologies were received.

Previous CEO update:

Adrian reported on the current status of SL. Next date for court has been set down for 19 Sept. SL is currently still employed and Ombo has confirmed the agency should allow police to continue investigations and not move too early to stand down SL. Same advice has been received by legal support. Investigation is still ongoing and Adrian is meeting with both the police and Ombo on a regular basis.

Transfer of PR:

Marcia Stone, CFRU reported that she is hoping to get a court date for s90 to transfer PR for 6 children / young people back to Community Services next week. All children are aged over 10 so will have their own legal representatives. All the placements are settled and MS envisaged that the proceedings would not be drawn out. The only complication could be birth parents who either wish to alter current contact arrangements as part of the proceedings and / or do not support the move, however because all the children are over 10 and will have own legal reps, their wishes will weigh in heavily. Magistrate has been briefed and met with Janet Vickers. Anticipating finalising orders next Thurs. Affidavits for all children have been completed. Court may also request new Care Plans be drawn up but CS anticipate that the process should not take more than a few months. Case Management for 5 of the children will remain with HACS however one will revert back to CS. Two of the children are also on older orders with PR until only 16. This will be changed to 18.

A/CEO Report:

Adrian reports that he attended an OOHC interagency meeting with service providers in the region recently and provided feedback to all representatives on progress of the agency.

Since the last update meeting, Adrian has been appointed as A/CEO and role of PO has also been transferred from Karen Elphick to him. He is receiving significant support from Helen Keavers who has been a strong business mentor for him. He has also been utilising the contracted services the agency already have such as accounting services and feels well supported. The Board has also approved the agency finding someone to fill in Adrian's substantive position in HR however they are finding it difficult to recruit someone in this temporary role for an unspecified period.

Accreditation update:

Adrian provided some information about what the agency has been doing as a response to the feedback received from the March assessment. AP provided feedback around the most recent August assessment and acknowledges that there has been minimal progress in terms of what we came in to assess however understands that significant planning has

Alii Prior
Senior Project Officer - Accreditation

taken place and many of the critical governance issues have been addressed. The agency is not in a position to be complacent and needs to really focus on those goals that are most important. The development of clear and relevant P&P is one. AP also provided feedback that the Action Plan developed is a good one, however it needs to be timeframed so the agency is able to prioritise goals and this would be better done once the November feedback is completed. Clear feedback will be provided from the August assessment about what the agency needs to achieve in the interim.

Other Issues:

Helen Keavers suggests taking the current message off the website and changing it to be more reflective of current circumstances. A 1800 number has been provided for all those wishing to get information and clarification around events and Helen was taking these calls as someone external to the agency. Helen would like to hand the phone back over to HACS as the calls have ceased. Helen suggested that it might be useful to reactivate it closer to the next court date.

Amanda Bridges stated that the Board is weak in numbers and seeks feedback around what has been put in place to address this issue as she feels it is a critical one for the agency as they need strong governance. Some Board members have left during the police investigations and Amanda suggested letting them go and getting new members to build a strong board. The AGM in October could be used to formalise this process. Amanda provided some very useful advice around strategising the recruitment process and thinking carefully about who best to seek out and what areas of the community would best suit the agency such as representatives from Health, Education, carer representation (from outside the agency), a young person etc. She also reminded the agency to document all steps of the process as evidence for accreditation.

All present thought that it would be useful to meet after the next Program assessment due to occur in November unless any pressing issues arise in the interim. Tentative dates were set for Tues 6 or 13 Dec.

Action: Follow up with WL for discussion.