

# STRATEGIC BILATERAL MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND THE DRUG & ALCOHOL OFFICE

JUNE 2011

## 1. PREAMBLE

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) represents the Department for Child Protection and the Drug and Alcohol Office's approach to:

- protecting and supporting children who have been harmed, or are at risk of harm, as a result of their parents' or caregivers' alcohol or other drug use;
- facilitating access and participation in appropriate treatment and support options for those who require assistance; and
- promoting better outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and their families through strengthened collaboration.

The protection of children is a shared priority across sectors and government. The Department for Child Protection and the Drug and Alcohol Office are committed to working collaboratively to promote the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people, including unborn and newborn children. Child protection and alcohol and other drug services work together to improve service responses to vulnerable families and support parents and carers to parent safely while addressing alcohol and other drug issues.

This MOU sets out key principles and areas of collaboration to support the *Drug and Alcohol Interagency Strategic Framework for Western Australia 2011-2015* and associated agency action plans. The MOU also supports local level MOU between Department for Child Protection District Offices and Community Drug Services and Teams and the *Department for Child Protection and Alcohol and Other Drug Services Working Together Resource Kit*.

*The Signs of Safety Child Protection Practice Framework* is the Department for Child Protection's key framework and guides collaboration with services that work alongside the Department in supporting at risk children, young people and their families.

## 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this MOU is to:

- provide an overarching framework for local level MOUs between the Department for Child Protection and alcohol and other drug services; and
- support improved communication and working together to achieve better outcomes for children, young people and their families.

## 3. PRINCIPLES

This MOU is underpinned by the following principles:

### ***Safety and wellbeing of children and young people***

The safety and wellbeing of children and young people (including unborn children) is of paramount importance. Child protection and alcohol and other drug services play a key role in promoting the safety and wellbeing of at-risk children in the care of adult clients, or those presenting as clients in their own right. Children in the care of the Department for

Child Protection's Chief Executive Officer have unique vulnerabilities that need to be prioritised in the provision of services in line with the *Rapid Response* framework.

#### ***Family inclusive practice***

Family based interventions are offered which address many aspects of clients' lives including enhancing parental social supports and improving the functioning of parents. Both alcohol and other drug and child protection services are responsive to the needs of families to ensure their ongoing engagement and the safety and wellbeing of family members.

#### ***Access and equity***

Access and equity issues are considered priorities in the development of policy, strategy, programs and in the delivery of services.

#### ***A balanced approach***

Approaches to address parental alcohol and other drug use should include programs and services spanning the areas of education, prevention and early intervention, through to treatment and support.

#### ***Leadership, commitment and partnerships***

The Department for Child Protection and the Drug and Alcohol Office demonstrate leadership, engage in joint planning and implement strategies that improve the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and families affected by alcohol and other drug use. This leadership and commitment is demonstrated at all levels.

#### ***Shared understanding and collaboration***

Collaboration between child protection and alcohol and other drug services occurs within an understanding of the need to ensure the safety of children whilst maintaining mutual respect for the expertise of practitioners in each sector.

#### ***Regular review***

Regular reviews of policies, strategies and programs need to be undertaken to ensure their ongoing appropriateness.

### **4. WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT LINKAGES**

There are a number of high level groups aiming to ensure coordinated interagency services and responses for vulnerable children, young people and their families. These include the Child Safety Director's Group, the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee and the Western Australian Drug and Alcohol Strategic Senior Officer's Group. The Department for Child Protection and Drug and Alcohol Office maintain a commitment to participation in these groups as appropriate.

### **5. EXECUTIVE MEETINGS**

Senior executive officers from the Department for Child Protection and the Drug and Alcohol Office meet on a regular basis to monitor the implementation of the Strategic Bilateral MOU and other strategies.

### **6. KEY AREAS OF COLLABORATION**

The following areas require the collaboration of the Department for Child Protection and the Drug and Alcohol Office:

### **Integration and coordination**

By working together, services can take practical steps to protect and improve the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children and ensure the most appropriate services are delivered to parents and/or caregivers. Integration and coordination is demonstrated through:

- Participation of senior representatives from the Department for Child Protection on the WA Drug and Alcohol Strategic Senior Officers Group and the development of an annual agency action plan to support *The Drug and Alcohol Interagency Strategic Framework 2011-2015*;
- Senior representation from the Drug and Alcohol Office on the Child Safety Directors' Group;
- Continued development, review and enhancement of child protection policies by alcohol and other drug agencies;
- Collaborative case management practice as agreed in the *Interagency Early Intervention (Pre-birth) Memorandum of Understanding 2009*;
- Participation in the *Strong Families* program as agreed in the *Strong Families Partnership Agreement 2010*;
- Local collaboration as identified in the *Department for Child Protection and Alcohol and other Drug Services Working Together Resource Kit 2009*; and
- Maintenance of strong formal partnerships established between Department for Child Protection District Offices and Community Drug Services and Teams through development of local MOUs.

### **Information and research**

The collection of data by agencies is required to assist in developing services. Non-identifying data will be shared between the Department for Child Protection and the Drug and Alcohol Office for analysis and identification of needs as appropriate. Research in the area will align with the respective policies of each agency governing research and results will be disseminated to key stakeholders as appropriate.

### **Workforce development**

Reciprocal workforce development for the alcohol and other drug and child protection sectors assists workers to respond more effectively to the needs of vulnerable children and families. The Department for Child Protection and the Drug and Alcohol Office share responsibility and work together in the development and implementation of joint training approaches to workforce development. Workforce development activities aim to improve the competency of:

- child protection staff in recognising alcohol and other drug related issues and referring clients appropriately;
- alcohol and other drug service staff in assessing children at risk and referring to the Department for Child Protection; and
- staff from both sectors in using collaborative approaches with at risk children, young people and their families such as the *Signs of Safety Child Protection Practice Framework*.

## **7. COSTS**

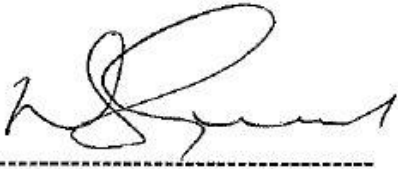
The parties agree to bear their own costs (if any) arising out of this MOU.

**8. STATUS OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

The parties agree that this MOU is not intended to, and does not create any legally binding obligations between the parties.

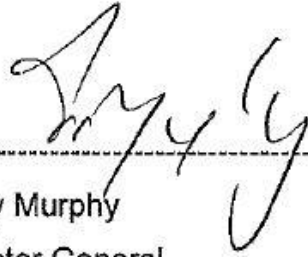
**9. TIMEFRAME AND REVIEW**

The Strategic Bilateral MOU between the Department for Child Protection and the Drug and Alcohol Office will operate for the five year period 2011-2016 and will be reviewed on an annual basis.



Neil Guard  
Executive Director  
Drug and Alcohol Office

Date: 11/7/11



Terry Murphy  
Director General  
Department for Child Protection

Date: 4/3/11