



Honourable Yvette D'Ath MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice
Leader of the House

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31 July 2020

Ms Leanne Linard MP
Chair
Education, Employment and Small Business Committee
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Dear Ms Linard

As you will recall, the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee (the Committee), in its report No. 13 Working with Children Legislation (Indigenous Communities) Amendment Bill 2018, recommended that I provide the Committee with a progress report about the implementation of the Queensland Family and Child Commission's recommendation about how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants for blue cards are supported.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) has been focussing on developing the technical improvements and enhancements to the Blue Card system to enable the Government's No Card, No Start blue card policy to commence as soon as possible. I recently announced that No Card, No Start would commence on 31 August 2020.

I am pleased to advise that DJAG has also been working on and made significant progress in, implementing the QFCC's recommendation 73 notwithstanding the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, however, the pandemic has delayed completion of this work.

To progress this work and ensure it has an appropriate focus, DJAG has been developing a strategy to address this recommendation. A reference group of government senior representatives and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies was also established to undertake a co-design process.

The intention of this process is to ultimately produce a strategy and action plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations accessing the blue card system. The co-design process has been used to ensure a comprehensive approach to the intent, design, and that the outcomes included in the strategy and action plan are suitable and appropriate and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are placed at the centre of the strategy. I anticipate that the strategy and action plan will be finalised and released before the end of this calendar year.

Extensive community consultation in remote, rural and urban Queensland to validate the strategies and actions identified has occurred. The majority of participants in this consultation identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

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The co-design process identified five key focus areas:

1. cultural capability;
2. local input into service design and delivery;
3. process;
4. engaging the service system; and
5. governance of the strategy and action plan.

It is proposed that the strategy and action plan will be centred around these five focus areas. It is anticipated that the strategy, once implemented, will facilitate improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people engaging with the blue card system; increase the number of available kinship carers to safely care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children; and increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples securing employment and participation in child-related services.

Given the Palaszczuk Government's necessary focus on the *Unite and Recover* economic recovery strategy, Blue Card Services will need to carefully consider the implementation approach for the strategy and action plan, prioritising key actions which can be implemented within the current fiscal environment and identifying those strategies which may require additional funding, at a future point, to fully give effect to the intent of the strategy and action plan.

Blue Card Services has already commenced working on a range of actions that will be included in the strategy and action plan. This includes building cultural capability of Blue Card Services staff by providing cultural awareness and capability training to them; establishing and filling a number of identified positions within Blue Card Services; educating community organisations to provide correct information to community members; and commencing specific actions to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders through the implementation of the No Card, No Start policy commencing on 31 August 2020.

As indicated above, I anticipate a finalised strategy and action plan will be available by the end of 2020. I appreciate the Committee's interest in this initiative. The safety and wellbeing of children is the primary consideration in every aspect of the blue card system. This can only be improved if the services provided by Blue Card Services are culturally appropriate services that are responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



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Attorney-General and Minister for Justice
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