

New South Wales Aboriginal Children's Services

1975 –

Other Names: • ACS
• Aboriginal Children's Services

Details

New South Wales Aboriginal Children's Services (ACS) provides a range of child welfare and family support services. The ACS was originally funded by Australian Catholic Relief. It was then funded by the New South Wales Government, although funding was stopped in 2008. The ACS agencies try to place Aboriginal children in culturally and socially appropriate care.

The objectives of the ACS are to: use the natural family and extended family as the alternative to institutionalisation; provide a service that is identifiable to the Aboriginal community and used as such; help re-link or re-trace family members separated by welfare practices and policies of the past; and provide assistance wherever applicable to ensure that all Aboriginal children and families who come to the attention of the authorities are adequately represented.

Aboriginal Children's Services were involved in foster care and adoptions. Some have survived without government funding, and new Aboriginal Children's Services, not affiliated to the former organisation, have been created.

Since the mid 1970s, Aboriginal groups around Australia have been involved in establishing their own agencies to deal with the welfare of Aboriginal children. The roles of these community controlled agencies have extended well beyond substitute care to encompass the whole spectrum of child welfare and family support.

The first Aboriginal Children's Service (ACS) was established in Sydney in 1975. It is a community-based, Aboriginal controlled, Aboriginal staffed, child care agency. It operates on a State-wide basis. The aims of the agency are to cease the practice of fostering and adoption of Aboriginal children to non-Aboriginal families; and to offer an alternative option to the courts for the institutionalisation of Aboriginal children.

The ACS was originally funded by Australian Catholic Relief. It was then funded by a mixture of Commonwealth and New South Wales Government funding, until 2008, when, according to *The Australian*, government funding ceased.

The ACS services have survived and run, among other services, a foster placement service for children in need of short-term alternative care. The ACS is also a member of the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC). There are now nine Aboriginal organizations providing services for Aboriginal children throughout New South Wales. These include: Cowra ACS; Wagga Wagga ACS; St Marys ACS; Hunter ACS; Koolyangarra Fostering Agency (Nowra); Nunya Aboriginal Fostering Agency (Dareton); and Great Lakes/Manning ACS.

Records

Under the provisions of the Children (Care and Protection) Regulation 1996, centres are required to maintain two forms of information on children in the centre. The first is referred to as the *record* which is the child's file. The second is the *register* of children at the centre which may be in book or card form. The information may also be maintained on computer provided it can be readily accessed as required.

The following information should be kept on the child's file (record): name, sex, date of birth and religion of child; ethnicity and language spoken; name, addresses and telephone numbers of the parents; name of the person requesting the admission of the child; a record of each acceptance and placement, including name, address and telephone numbers of each foster parent; medical report summaries; the date and summaries of each interview with the child, and with the foster parents; the date or dates a child ceased to be under the care of the centre; the name, address and telephone number of the child's doctor; particulars of any injuries or illnesses suffered by the child whilst in care; particulars of any consents in relation to medical and dental treatment; particulars of any court orders affecting the custody or guardianship of the child; and particulars of any previous occasions on which the child has been placed in foster care or been resident at any centre.

The *register* which is to be maintained should include particulars of the child, court orders affecting custody, and details in relation to admission to and discharge of the child from care. In addition, agencies are required to maintain a register of foster parents, in which the following information should be recorded: name and address of the foster parent; the name of each child placed with the foster parent; and the dates upon which the placement commenced and ceased.

Agencies are required to keep the *records* and *registers* for not less than seven years after they are made. *Records* and *registers* are able to be inspected by a parent of the child to whom the information relates. In the event that a centre or agency ceases to operate, its records and registers must be forwarded to the Director General of the Department of Community Services.

Gallery



The Lost Children of Sydney [Aboriginal Children's Services]

Description: This is a photograph taken from an *Australian Women's Weekly* article.

More info

Related Entries

Ran

- [Koolyangarra Fostering Agency \(Nowra\) \(1980? - 2008\)](#)
- [Nunya Aboriginal Foster Care Support \(1988 - current\)](#)
- [Redfern Aboriginal Children's Service \(1975 - c.2022\)](#)

Related Glossary Terms

- [Aboriginal Child Placement Principle \(1983 - current\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Cowra ACS \(1975 - 2008?\)](#)

- Wagga Wagga ACS (1975 - current)
- St Marys ACS (1975 - current)
- Hunter ACS (1984 - c. 2013)
- Great Lakes/Manning ACS (1975 - current)

Resources

- Legislative Assembly of NSW, *Legislative Assembly, Tuesday 21 November 1978*, Hansard: NSW Legislative Assembly by date, 1978. *Relevance:* p.550
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