



## **The First Three Months of 2019**

The first three months of 2019 have been the first for a number of years when Centrecare hasn't been involved in either preparing complex tenders, implementing new services or both. This has been a welcome change as it has allowed us to catch our breath and begin to consolidate and refine our work.

The most significant issue that Centrecare is currently dealing with is the proposed 'reform' to the out of home care system in WA. The planned changes will be a radical shift to how out of home care is provided. The proposed system will focus on delivering care primarily, if not exclusively, through foster placements. Its funding model will be very different with the amount of money allocated depending on the assessed needs of individual children. The Department for Communities will determine where children are placed with no or little involvement of service providers. Decisions on who is employed as a carer will be ultimately made by the Department while service providers retain the legal responsibility for them and their behaviour.

For a number of years, service providers have expressed concerns at the direction that the Department is pursuing. However, the sector's views have been largely ignored as they are considered to be self-interested and self-serving. Such a view is particularly disappointing and devaluing of organisations that have provided out of home care to WA children for decades. It also means that the Department's position is largely untested against the realities of service provision.

Centrecare's concerns are twofold. The first relates to the individualised model of funding that is the basis of the new system. Such a model has been shown to be wanting on many occasions with the most recent example being the NDIS. Ultimately, the model is not a model of care, but a funding model. The other concern is the proposed level of funding. Current service providers believe that the funding is clearly inadequate. It will make the delivery of good care impossible and services unsustainable. These concerns have been relayed to Government decision makers and discussions are continuing through a number of avenues. To date, there is little evidence that the Department will change its stance. However, we remain hopeful that the views of service providers will be heard and that, through a co-design process, WA creates the best out of home care system possible for its most vulnerable children.

On a more positive note, in February Centrecare's Association Members appointed former Chief Judge of the Family Court, Stephen Thackray, to the Centrecare Board. Stephen has had a remarkable career as a lawyer and a highly respected Judge both locally and nationally. He has always had an interest in social matters. He was highly instrumental in making Family Court of WA processes far more sensitive and responsive to issues such as family and domestic violence and child protection. He is also very interested in matters that impact on Aboriginal people. I had the pleasure of serving on the Board of Family Relationships Service Australia with Stephen for a number of years and am very aware of his deep humanity and keen interest in social justice. We are delighted to have him on our Board.

**Tony Pietropiccolo AM**  
**Director**

March 2019