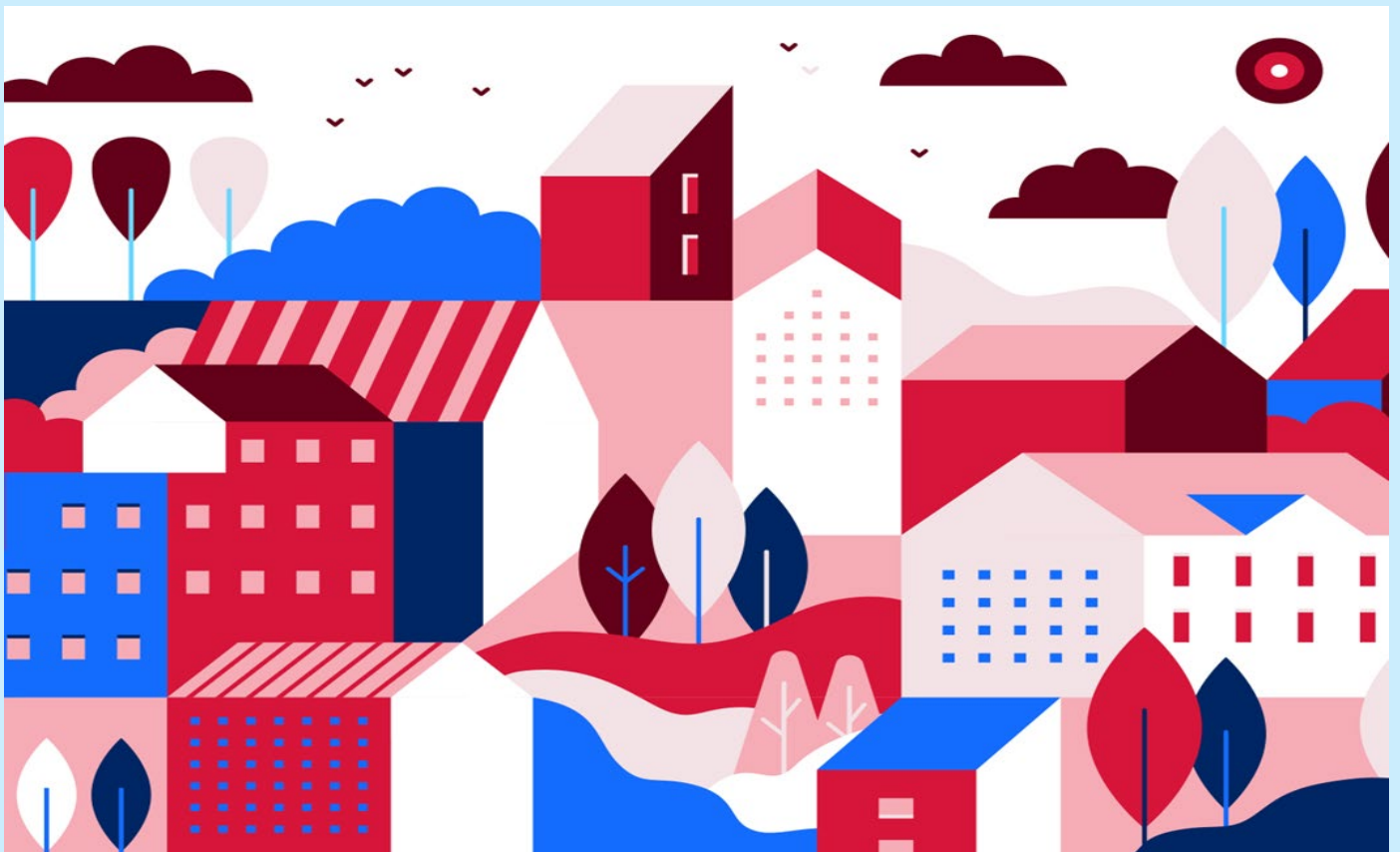


Mid-year report: OCG business plan 2024-25

December 2024



Introduction

In the first half of 2024, the OCG undertook a consultative process with its senior executives and staff to develop a 3-year OCG Corporate Strategy 2024-2027.

Our hope for the future

Children, and people with disability, are safe.

Our purpose

We work with others to keep children, and people with disability, safe in NSW.

Our role

- We regulate and oversee child-related organisations and certain employers of children to keep children safe.
- We administer worker screening checks to identify those who should be prevented from working with children and people with disability.
- We ensure out-of-home care agencies meet essential standards in relation to the care they provide.
- We have the responsibility to be a leading authority on child safety, shaping NSW and Australian policy and practice.

Our expectations

- We continue to mobilise key stakeholders to maximise our impact.
- We may need to evolve our ways of working to deliver on changing stakeholder expectations.

Our values

We are guided by our values of integrity, trust, service, accountability, respect and empathy.

Our priority areas

- Being a model administrator and oversight body.
- Increasing awareness of, and building capability in, Child Safe practice.
- Shaping policy and practice.
- Improving First Nations outcomes.
- Enhancing internal collaborative practice.
- Supporting our people.

Purpose of the OCG Business Plan

Whilst the OCG is experiencing an increased demand on our services, we are taking an active role to ensure that our resources are maximised and that we are focusing our efforts on where we can have the most impact.

The purpose of the OCG Business Plan process is to support these efforts, by helping us to:

- stay on track, reflect on what is and isn't working, and adapt as needed to changing circumstances
- reduce risk and help us to make critical decisions
- make our activities and KPIs more intentional and consequential
- align what we are doing and why, and
- keep accountable to the long-term vision and strategy.

The OCG Business Plan is regularly reviewed throughout the one-year cycle, with mid and full year reports on progress provided to all staff.

Key achievements

This mid-year report highlights the key achievements to date across the OCG, which directly contribute to progress made towards our strategic outcomes. These activities and outcomes are summarised below under each of our 5 priority areas.

Only 6 months into the year, the OCG is on track with (or has already completed) 73% of activities. Where there are challenges with some activities, staff are working to adapt to changing circumstances and find alternative ways to deliver on outcomes.

73% of activities are on track or completed

Being a model administrator and oversight body



Expected outcomes

- Transparency and consistency in our decision-making
- External stakeholders understand our regulatory roles
- Internal clarity on how we invest our resources to achieve outcomes
- Strong internal and external data management practices
- OCG policies are up-to-date and compliant
- Quality and efficient delivery of services, within resources available

Key achievements to date

The OCG Annual Report 2023-24 was tabled in parliament and published, highlighting the OCG's operations, key achievements and challenges.

General Counsel have undertaken significant legislative reform work including amending the regulations to enable the WWCC and NDISWC fee increase, the Children's Guardian Amendment (Code of Practice) Regulation 2024 and a review of the WWC Act. This has been in the context of high workloads and non-discretionary timelines.

Class or kind exemptions will commence in the first quarter of 2025, and a new operating model introduced, to aid prioritisation, improve consistency of decision-making and increase closure rates.

OOHC have rolled out a new monitoring to renewal framework to increase productivity and reduce burden on agencies, by introducing a hybrid assessing approach including self-assessments for certain identified agencies.

WWCC ran three workshops to support consistent and efficient use of The Assessment Framework (TAF) guidelines, which aim to help consolidate complex information and establish evidentiary thresholds. The WWCC induction program also includes a half day workshop on the TAF and ongoing learning via case discussions. The WWCC is also implementing a Quality Assurance continuous improvement program, designed to promote and support best practice for enhanced service delivery.

Child Safe have developed and are trialling a new comprehensive quality assurance framework and KPIs to strengthen audits and investigations. The new KPIs are in the implementation phase with some already tracking well as they are embedded into team processes.

Increasing awareness of, and building capability in, Child Safe practice



Expected outcomes

- Increased awareness by relevant organisations /individuals of the Child Safe Standards, the WWCC requirements and the Children’s Employment provisions
- Enhanced capability of organisations to effectively embed Child Safe Standards

Key achievements to date

The Child Safe Prescribed Agency Steering Committee has been established, bringing together senior representatives from the prescribed agencies on a quarterly basis to facilitate cross sector engagement and support implementation, monitoring and progress reporting in relation to Child Safe Action Plans. Two meetings have been held to date and all agencies have now submitted their first report on implementation of their Child Safe Action Plans to OCG.

Child Safe has progressed the development and implementation of a 'Getting Started' outreach campaign to build awareness of the Child Safe Standards in smaller organisations that still need to put the foundations in place to meet the requirements of the NSW Child Safe Scheme. The 'Getting Started' webpage is live, providing step-by-step guidance and additional introductory resources will be published in Quarter 1, 2025.

As of November 2024, Child Safe had conducted 67 training and 729 engagement activities. Child Safe also led a joint project with the NSW Department of Education to deliver eLearning modules for early childhood educators, which were published on 9 October. Further modules will be launched in the next few months. [Child Safe e-learning courses for early childhood educators, developed with the NSW Department of Education](#)

Following significant consultation over the last few years, a new Code of Practice, bringing the OOH sector under the 10 Child Safe Standards, was approved by Government in September 2024, and published on the NSW Legislation website [Children’s Guardian Amendment \(Code of Practice\) Regulation 2024](#). OOH have designed a user-friendly version of the code which will be shared with the sector in early 2025.

Shaping policy and practice



Expected outcomes

- Organisations and stakeholders are well informed of current standards and research related to the OCG
- The OCG has strong relationships with key external stakeholders
- The OCG is a key influencer in translating policy into tangible practice through effective stakeholder engagement

Key achievements to date

The Executive Office, Child Safe and Reportable Conduct worked together to deliver an Interjurisdictional Forum on the Child Safe and Reportable Conduct Schemes, to discuss current state, challenges and opportunities for future collaboration.

OOHC tabled a report to NSW Parliament on 29 August 2024 on the use of Alternative Care Arrangements (ACAs) Strengthening out-of-home care and the broader child protection system. OOHC also facilitated a Carer Supervision and Support Working Group with sector representatives throughout 2024, producing sector resources to build capacity to support carers. OOHC continue to advise on several important governance groups including the expert advisory group overseeing the transition of Aboriginal children to ACCOs, Joint Protocol Statewide steering committee and Pathways of Care Longitudinal study.

Reportable Conduct have progressed an Historical Claims Working Group comprised of numerous representative stakeholders. Guidance to stakeholders on *Managing Historical Allegations and Reportable Conduct Investigations and the NSW Police Force* is due to be finalised by March 2025.

WWCC have been involved in several discussions with the Commonwealth and Screening Agency partners, including NSW Police, to negotiate and shape a future state of the National Continuous Checking Capability (NCCC) project. This initiative aims to ensure free flowing information sharing across jurisdictions to reduce risks to children. WWCC were able to provide advice and learnings to other States, having a more mature system in place.

WWCC worked with General Counsel to make amendments to section 36C of the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* which will require applicants for, and holders of, WWCCs to self-disclose international offences for which they were convicted or found guilty. Further, WWCC has advocated at the state and national level to improve and coordinate info sharing between Border Force, NSW police and state and territory WWCCs.

Improving First Nations outcomes



Expected outcomes

- Clear, foundational First Nations strategy
- First Nations staff feel culturally safe and well supported working with OCG
- Enhanced cultural understanding and competency among non-First Nations staff
- First Nations voices genuinely inform OCG approaches
- First Nations applicants & organisations receive culturally safe services

Key achievements to date

The OCG has engaged Yamurrah to provide cultural supervision and support for First Nations staff. Two On Country Cultural Awareness Days were held in September and attended by staff from across the OCG.

OOHC have demonstrated significant progress in this area:

- Engaged Curijo to run 2 sessions per year for OOHC staff (the first took place in September 2024).
- Developed guidance material for non-First Nations staff in the core assessment team to support their work with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).
- Working with AbSec on the transition of Aboriginal children to ACCOs, including attending and presenting at AbSec forums.

NDISWC have been holding regular case discussions and Assessment Operations Meetings to ensure that First Nations applicants are contextually considered in risk assessment decision-making, and to minimise burden on applicants.

Reportable Conduct made an onsite visit to ACCO, Burrun Dalai, to provide updated guidance and support to staff in the management of reportable conduct matters. Following the visit, staff provided positive feedback, expressing greater understanding of the requirements of managing a reportable conduct investigative process.

WWCC continue to use the First Nations Policy and Your Story tool to inform WWCC assessment and ensure culturally sensitive practice. Your Story tool was developed and implemented in consultation with Yammurah.

Our First Nations Cadets presented a paper on Cultural Safety to the Children's Guardian and senior executives. Their recommendations were endorsed, which will inform the review of the First Nations Cadets program.

Enhancing collaborative practice



Expected outcomes

- Staff understand our organisation’s roles
- Strong collaborative practice to support business operations
- Duplication of work is reduced
- Information exchange across the agency is efficient and effective

Key achievements to date

Directorates continue to collaborate on case discussions and operations improvement to support consistent decision-making, practice and information exchange:

- Reportable Conduct and Child Safe regularly meet on individual matters and are refining Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for information referral on reports of concern.
- Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) and Reportable Conduct are working together to inform assessment and monitoring with OOHC providers and jointly attend site visits, as well as regular collaboration on entity compliance with the Residential Care Workers Register.
- A review of internal information sharing processes has been underway to reduce duplication and increase efficiency and quality in our service delivery. New processes and protocols are in development and will be rolled out in 2025 across the relevant directorates.
- Child Safe and NDIS worker check (NDISWC) have attended each other’s team meetings and collaborated on joint initiatives, including delivering a presentation to the Ageing and Disability Commission on the Official Community Visitor Scheme.

Work has been progressing to promote, align and enforce OCG’s IT Governance and Security frameworks to reduce duplication and increase efficiencies, including preparing for the deployment of the capture of International Records for Working with Children Check (WWCC) and building a tailored Resolve platform for Child Safe. OCG’s Security policy and GovConnect Cyber policy suite have also been updated and training modules ready for deployment in 2025.

Corporate Services have strengthened business partnering to increase transparency and promote joint decision-making and resource prioritisation.

Supporting our people



Expected outcomes

- Enhanced employee wellbeing
- Career growth and progression
- Inclusive and supported workplace
- Strong engagement with our employees
- Embedded People & Culture frameworks

Key achievements to date

In June 2024, the new People and Culture Strategy was rolled out to all staff and socialised through information sessions.

The inaugural OCG Showcase was held in August with presentations on the Reportable Conduct Scheme, Out-of-home care code of practice and regulatory framework, WWCC Compliance investigations, People and Culture recognition program, and the OCG Strategic Plan. Staff feedback was very positive, presenting an opportunity to learn from colleagues and engage in interactive activities.

The OCG recognition program (ACE Awards) also commenced in August and is being delivered monthly, in addition to End of Year Awards.

myPerformance in myCareer was launched and, together with a series of HR essentials workshops including meaningful conversations and PDPs.

People & Culture have also delivered a range of initiatives including vicarious trauma training, monthly wellbeing, professional supervision, flu shots, fruit boxes, RU OK campaign, IT equipment cleaning. Skin checks and health checks. Additional programs will be scheduled over the next 6 months.

Directorates have been providing supervision and holding team meetings with staff to discuss learning and development goals, wellbeing and PMES results, with action plans being developed.

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