

MEDIA RELEASE**17 April 2024****Management of key contracts under A Step Up for Our Kids**

ACT Auditor-General, Mr Michael Harris, today presented a report on **Management of key contracts under A Step Up for Our Kids** to the Speaker for tabling in the ACT Legislative Assembly.

A Step Up for Our Kids Out of Home Care Strategy 2015-2020 set out the ACT Government's approach to out-of-home care in the ACT. A feature of the strategy was a commitment to 'performance-based contracting' with a view to achieving 'strengthened accountability, value and outcomes from purchased services'. The audit considered the effectiveness of the Community Services Directorate's oversight and administration of key contracts.

Performance-based contracting was intended to be achieved, in part, through an Outcomes Framework and a Performance Management Framework. These frameworks were intended to be developed and agreed after the contracts were executed. Neither framework was developed and agreed, because agreement could not be reached after the contracts were executed.

Mr Harris says 'by not developing and agreeing an Outcomes Framework and a Performance Management at the outset, the Community Services Directorate's attempts to implement outcomes-based performance management processes have not been effective'.

The audit made a series of findings about governance and administrative arrangements for the management of the contracts and the Directorate's efforts to promote culturally appropriate care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people through the contracts.

The Directorate is now progressing the *Next Steps Strategy 2022-2030*. The report makes four recommendations for actions to be taken in the implementation of *Next Steps*. The recommendations are about implementing improvements to the performance management of service providers; strengthening governance and administrative arrangements; and better defining and monitoring services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families.

Management of key contracts under A Step Up for Our Kids is available to download from the ACT Audit Office's website www.audit.act.gov.au. If you need assistance accessing the report please phone 6207 0833.