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2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2020

## Telepractice Collaborative Venture

### Supporting Children and Families Across Australia

Now more than ever children and families need support. Through COVID-19 there has been an increase in families experiencing a range of significant hardships, greatly reduced face-to-face supports and a spike in deteriorating mental health and domestic violence. Virtual services break down barriers and ensure families across Australia receive critical support.

This is why the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) has established the Non-Government Organisation (NGO) COVID-19 Venture. Karitane and the Parenting Research Centre (PRC) have been funded by the NSW Department of Communities & Justice and a group of leading NGO agencies to lead a collaboration that will advance Telepractice service delivery to provide effective support to families.

This collaboration will embed a structured approach to the adoption, adaptation, design and development of Telepractice solutions for children and families. Together, we will build capacity to deliver quality, consistent Telepractice services to children and families and create a virtual continuum of care and support for the sector.

Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services The Hon. Gareth James Ward explains the critical importance of virtual services to support families and says the Venture is an outstanding example of collaboration across agencies.

"The development of the Telepractice Framework will help vulnerable and isolated families across NSW receive the parenting support they require to manage the challenges of COVID-19. The work is an excellent example of collaboration between Government and the non-government sector, to design and develop Telepractice solutions for families unable to access face to face services."

"What is incredible, is the fact that a number of programs now have state-wide reach with the use of virtual platforms. Services that were once only localised, are now able to reach people in different locations. This is a great example where the sector has come together rapidly to support each other to adapt to changing circumstances – all while continuing to provide high quality services to families most in need. We want to look at how we embed that flexibility and opportunity across a range of programs, and support the sector with good practice guides." Department of Communities and Justice, Deputy Secretary Simone Walker.

Leaders from the Telepractice Venture group share why they have committed to this project.

"ACWA is very pleased to be working with other agencies on this important collaborative initiative that will bring enormous benefits to the community." Steve Kinmond, ACWA CEO.

"Karitane is excited to be leading this collaboration of quality organisations where each partner is investing to ensure consistent, scalable virtual services are available to families. Karitane has been delivering digital services for the past three years and responding to the pandemic with a leading digital transformation. We are able to share our experience, training resources, collateral and blueprint materials to support the sector." Grainne O'Loughlin, Karitane CEO.

"There is great potential in the move to more digital methods of parenting support, but it's important this is done in a way that fosters quality and continuous improvement in the way practitioners deliver different supports." Annette Michaux, Director Policy and Practice Parenting Research Centre.





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“As part of our COVID-19 support strategy we have been implementing new and innovative ways to regularly check-in with children and families and to minimise the feeling of isolation during these difficult times. Now more than ever tele-services are essential to keep our network of families, carers and partners connected which is why we are excited about this new partnership,” Jamie Hodgson, Executive Director Key Assets Australia.

“The Covid-19 pandemic has really underscored the need for quality online therapeutic services for families at risk, so that they can be supported to work through any difficulties they are having and keep children safe before the situation escalates and child protection services become involved. We are pleased to work with so many of our colleagues in the sector to develop and design online support programs to support children and families.” Jane French, Executive Director Children, Youth & Families, Life Without Barriers.

“Covid19 has shown that that we need to find new ways of working to ensure that we can keep up vital support for our communities. This is particularly important for our rural and regional communities where services are often thin on the ground. We have seen some great innovation so far in our sector, and Social Futures is delighted to be working on ways to develop and share best practice nationally.” Tony Davies, CEO Social Futures.

“The way we engage with our families has changed since the pandemic arrived. Participating in this project provides a great opportunity to work with a group of committed professional organisations to give our team members the tools they need to ensure their practice continues to be evidence based and family focused.” Wendy Field, The Smith Family, Head of Policy and Programs.

“Uniting is delighted to join this collaborative and its shared commitment to engaging with families and children through evidence-based Telepractice. Client needs and circumstances are at the heart of what Uniting does; changing our approach to adjust to the current environment and more is part of that. We look forward to building shared capability through knowledge, experiences, and innovative approaches to community services with other quality providers,” Sue Shilbury, Uniting Director of Children, Youth and Families.

“We're pleased to be taking part and supporting this initiative. With over 12,000 carer households in New South Wales (foster, kinship, guardian and adoptive), there are many families caring for vulnerable children and young people. Supporting these carer families, ensuring they access the right information, training, services and supports in locations or through technologies that are convenient to them, can make a difference to their lives and the lives of the children and young people in their care to thrive and reach their optimum.” Renee Carter, CEO, Adopt Change (My Forever Family NSW Program).

## TELEPRACTICE VENTURE INVESTOR GROUP

### ABOUT NSW DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES AND JUSTICE (DCJ)

The NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) has brought together Family and Community Services and Justice. The establishment of DCJ will enable us to better work together to support everyone’s right to access justice and other help for families and to deliver services with a more unified and collaborative approach, with benefits for the whole community. Our purpose is to help create a safe, just, resilient and inclusive NSW in which everyone has the opportunity to realise their potential. We are accountable for seven of the NSW State Outcomes: safer communities; efficient and effective legal system; reduce reoffending; prepared for disasters and emergencies; active and inclusive communities; children and families thrive; and people have a safe and affordable place to live.

### ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN’S WELFARE AGENCIES (ACWA)

ACWA is the peak body for the NSW child and family services sector. We work closely with our members, government and non-government agencies, and other peak bodies, to bring about effective systems reform that will achieve better outcomes for families, children and young people, particularly those who are most





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vulnerable.

### **ABOUT KARITANE**

Karitane is a not-for-profit organisation that supports families, builds parenting capacity, and enhances parent-child relationships through evidence-based services and programs. Karitane are leaders in parenting services with a multidisciplinary team of health professionals supporting parents particularly in the first 2,000 days with sleep and settling, feeding and nutrition, establishing routines, toddler behaviour, conduct disorders/emotional dysregulation and pre and post-natal anxiety and depression.

### **ABOUT PARENTING RESEARCH CENTRE**

The Parenting Research Centre helps children thrive by driving new and better ways to support families in their parenting. We help governments and community organisations in the fields of health, education and welfare put the best evidence on parenting support into action through research and evaluation, knowledge translation and exchange, practice design and implementation projects.

### **ABOUT KEY ASSETS**

Key Assets is a non-government, not-for-profit children, family and community services agency which works in partnership with Martin James Foundation which is a global charitable group delivering services & support across Europe, Asia Pacific and Canada. Key Assets was founded in Australia in 2007 and has grown to provide a wide range of services to children, families and communities in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia, Victoria and Norfolk Island. We strive to continue our work in developing an innovative range of services for children and young people, while partnering with statutory bodies and foster carers to understand and meet their unique needs, helping them to succeed.

### **ABOUT LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS**

Life Without Barriers is a charitable organisation supporting close to 23,000 people living in over 400 communities across the nation. We provide people with the services and assistance they need so they can achieve their goals and maximise their opportunities to participate as fully in society as they wish. Our services include disability support; children, youth & families; and aged care.

### **ABOUT SOCIAL FUTURES**

Social Futures is a regionally based not-for-profit expert in tailoring programs to fit our diverse local communities. Our service footprint reaches across more than 50 per cent of NSW. For more than 40 years we have been creating positive social change in regional Australia. We work directly with individuals, families, communities, organisations and governments across our focus areas of homelessness and housing, youth and family, community inclusivity and programs that promote genuine participation for people with disability. We are a regional leader and work alongside our partner organisations to strengthen and build capacity within the community sector by providing training, development and advocacy.

### **ABOUT THE SMITH FAMILY**

The Smith Family is a children's education charity that helps disadvantaged young Australians to succeed at school, so they can create better futures for themselves.

### **ABOUT UNITING CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES**

Uniting has a long and proud history of investing in programs that support and empower children, young people, First Australians, and socially and economically excluded communities, to improve their engagement with society, their opportunities and outcomes. Uniting has more than 36,000 clients and 900 committed team members across more than 100 locally targeted programs in NSW and the ACT, encompassing early learning, family restoration and parenting skills, youth housing and employment, out-of-home care and counselling and mediation.





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## SUPPORTER AGENCY

### ABOUT MY FOREVER FAMILY NSW

My Forever Family NSW recruits, supports, trains and advocates for foster and kinship carers, guardians, and adoptive parents from out-of-home care across the state. Funded by the NSW Government and operated by Adopt Change, My Forever Family cares for those who care for kids.

