

HIPPY

First Nations Providers – Meeting #1

1 April 2026



Brotherhood of St Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty

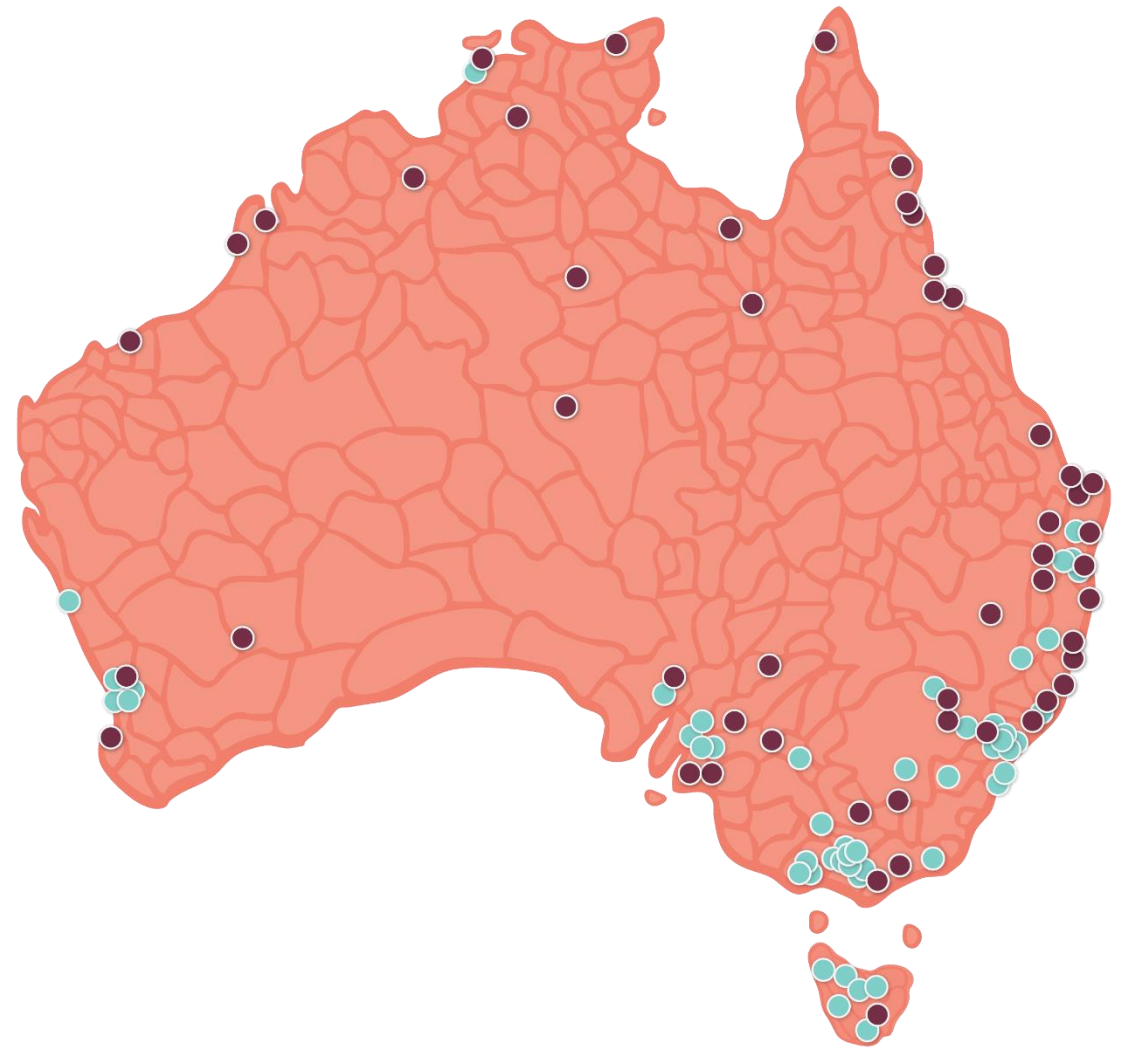
**Let's make
change
that lasts**

Acknowledgment of Country

With deep respect we take this opportunity to acknowledge the specific Traditional Owner groups on whose countries we have visited and where HIPPY operates.

We acknowledge the clan groups, Countries and their rich cultural authorities and governance that guides this work. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We endeavour to walk humbly alongside community, listening deeply to the direction and decisions of Elders and community members.



HIPPY across Australia

Purpose of this meeting

- Provide an opportunity for First Nations providers to meet each other and share perspectives about the community partner role for HIPPY First Nations sites.
- Provide information about HIPPY and how it works to enable a shared understanding of how the national program operates
- Provide an opportunity for discussion and questions about the BSL proposal for a HIPPY First Nations Governance Network
- Provide enough information for individual providers to decide if they want to be involved in Phase 2 Transition of the HIPPY community partner to First Nations leadership.

What you can expect:

1. Introductions
2. Information
3. Discussion and response

Time	Session	
14:00 (EST)	Welcome, Acknowledgement & Orientation	Annie & Clare
14:10	Introduction of facilitation role and participants	Mark
14:30	Context and information	Clare & Annie
15:00	Time for discussion, reactions and comments. Identifying the key issues for consideration in transition and the creation of a Network.	All
15:20	Wrapping up and next steps	Mark

BSL Commitment



BSL is committed to walking alongside First Nations Providers in the creation of a First Nations Governance Network (FNGN) grounded in sovereignty, self-determination, and community-led leadership. Our purpose is to enable this work, not direct it.

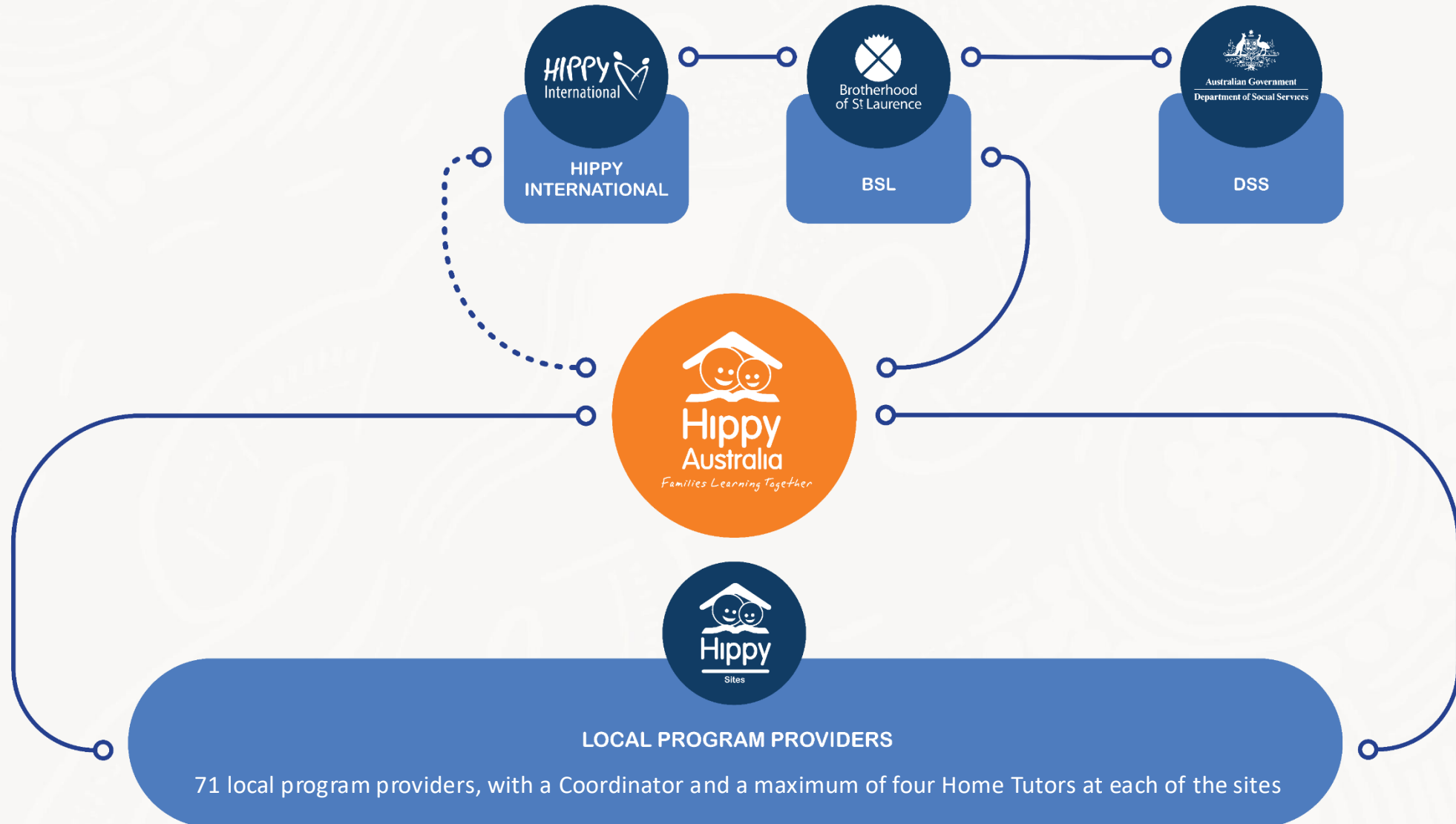
We offer secretariat support, infrastructure, and resourcing only to strengthen provider leadership. We will not seek voting rights, authority, ownership, or influence over the network governance. We will be available into the future and will transition at the speed required by a FNGN.

At a practice level we commit to sharing all curriculum materials, resources, systems and our program knowledge and expertise. This practice arrangement will be guided by a FNGN.

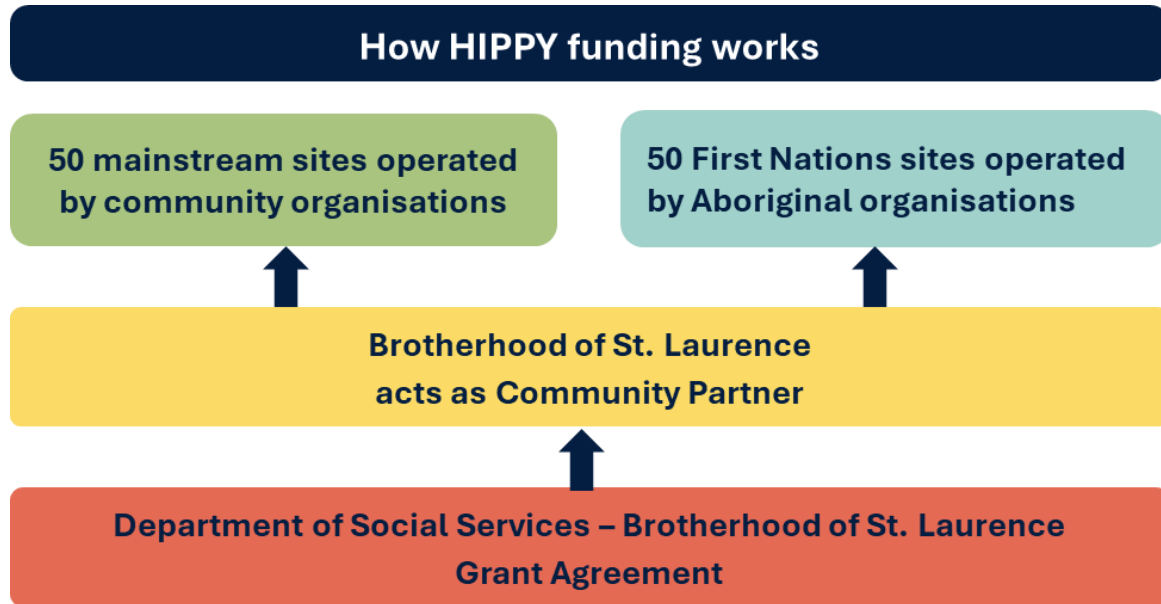
When a FNGN determines that BSL should step back, we will do so with respect. Our role is temporary, transitional, and always secondary to First Nations governance. We will follow guidance from a FNGN and there will be no competition- only support, integrity, and partnership.

As a FNGN establishes and leads on their own terms, BSL will step back, adjust the necessary internal arrangements to formalise the commitment and eventually step out, consistent with our values and our respect for First Nations leadership.

HIPPY AUSTRALIA



DSS HIPPY Grant Agreement



- BSL is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services
- BSL has been supporting the operation of HIPPY for 27 years. The number of sites has grown from one in 1998 to 100 sites in 2015.
- HIPPY annually supports approximately 4500 families.
- In the context of HIPPY, the community partner is the organisation that holds the grant agreement with DSS and the license with HIPPY International.
- There is a current 5-year Grant Agreement that concludes in June 2027.
- BSL would remain the community partner for 50 sites delivering to CALD and disadvantaged communities.



HIPPY licensing arrangements

- BSL commenced its license in 1998 with one program in Fitzroy. In 2019 a HIPPY International (HI) company was formed to manage the increasing number of licenses.
- The annual license fee is based on the number of families enrolled in the program. BSL currently pays approximately \$140,000 per annum for the Australian license based on the number of children enrolled in the program.
- The program is flexible and can be implemented in a range of community environments using local languages and cultural input to adapt practices to meet the needs of families.
- There are license requirements around model fidelity, curriculum and delivery elements that have been researched and tested, and if implemented, result in educational and developmental outcomes for children.
- HIPPY International has been kept up to date with the HIPPY transition to ACCO project and have indicated their willingness to engage in further conversations about licensing differently in Australia to respond to changing policy, legal and community requirements.

Transition to ACCOs Project - Phase 1

- During 2024 and 2025 BSL transitioned HIPPY management from mainstream providers to First Nations organisations.
- As of December 2025, all First Nations focused sites are delivered by an Aboriginal organisation or through partnerships with First Nations organisations or community members.
- There is strong support with communities in which HIPPY operates for continuation of the program.
- Recent community consultation in First Nations communities have confirmed that HIPPY is regarded as a valuable component of their early years' service landscape.
- As a result of this phase, sixteen ACCOs are currently establishing HIPPY in their Communities; most are represented here today.
- While partnership groups are not represented here today, if transitions occur and First Nations organisations are sub-licensed they could be included in the FNGN. At the earliest this would be January 2027.

Transition Phase 2: Community partner role

- Following the transition of HIPPY site level program, BSL is now keen to focus on its role as *community partner*.
- To achieve this BSL is supportive of stepping aside from its role as community partner for the First Nations providers and a deeper and more genuine governance change.
- This approach will establish self-determination and embed First Nations leadership at the heart of HIPPY's future.
- BSL is anticipating that a First Nations Governance Network will provide opportunities for key leaders at the 36 providers to explore the ways in which First Nations HIPPY sites could be managed and a new entity, could be established to act as the community partner and the additional licence holder.
- BSL is committed to walking alongside First Nations providers through this journey and assisting wherever possible with this phase of the transition.

Current funding and grant agreement advocacy

- BSL is advocating to DSS to cover funding shortfalls for the final 6 months of the contract (Jan-July 2027) and for a future 5-year contract.
- Due to HIPPY being run on a calendar year timeframe the funding agreements with all providers run until 31 December 2026.
- At the request of DSS BSL has submitted a proposal outlining future plans, innovation opportunities and costings.
- This proposal clearly outlines BSL's intention to transition from the role of community partner for the First Nations sites.
- While BSL currently leads this advocacy its intention is to support the transfer of future funding to a First Nations group.

Questions, answers & discussion



Meeting plans for 2026

- BSL proposes 4 or 5 meetings of a FNGN over 2026 to allow senior representatives to explore opportunities and make decisions.
- The second meeting is planned for the 15th of May in Brisbane.
- The next two meetings will be discussed and planned following the meeting in Brisbane. Potentially July and October 2026.

Role of BSL in meetings

- BSL will handle all secretariat work behind the scenes- papers, minutes, briefs, and coordination.
- BSL will expertise related to program delivery, sub-license requirements, systems, policies and procedures for as long as required to enable the successful transfer and sustainability of the program and impact for families.



Growth of the HIPPY Network

