



**MEDIA RELEASE EMBARGOED
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promoting the interests of families

At long last, a national plan for protecting children

Leading national child and family advocacy group, Families Australia, today strongly endorsed COAG's announcement of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children. The Framework is Australia's first roadmap for tackling child abuse and neglect through a series of action plans to 2020.

Families Australia CEO, Brian Babington, said, "The Framework is a first for Australia and is long overdue in tackling Australia's alarming rates of child abuse and neglect."

According to official figures, in 2007-08, there were 55,210 substantiated child abuse and neglect cases. The number of children on care and protection orders grew by over 100% from 16,449 in June 1998 to 34,279 in June 2008.

Mr Babington said, "The Framework is ground-breaking: it is the first time that Federal, State and Territory Governments have agreed to priority actions for children's wellbeing and safety.

"Seventy-five actions are planned under the first three-year action plan to 2011, encompassing a broad range of areas and going beyond a narrow child protection focus to tackle the causes of child abuse. Health, education and substance abuse are critical factors. More support will be provided to grandparents and kinship carers; more housing will be available for families at risk; trials will be conducted on new 'integrated' family support programs; national standards will be put in place for the 30,000 children and young people in care as a result of child abuse and neglect; and new community awareness programs will be established.

"Given that the initial impetus for the Framework came from the non-government community sector, it is appropriate that the sector be involved in high level planning and monitoring of Framework performance. This continues the innovative NGO-Government partnership which developed the Framework in the past year."

Mr Babington said, "Families Australia, and the 64-member national NGO Coalition which Families Australia has been coordinating, had hoped for a substantially larger amount of initial funding for the Framework. More resources must be applied to drastically reduce Australia's appalling rates of child abuse and neglect. Nonetheless, it is a good start. It is now vital that community and political attention stays on this important task and that commitments are followed through, for the sake of Australia's children."

Families Australia is a national not-for-profit peak body representing 400 NGOs. It has been a leading player in advocating for and developing the National Framework. More information at www.familiesaustralia.org.au. Contact Brian Babington on 0417 550 149 or 02 6273 4885.