

2013 Federal election proposals

Assisting families and individuals who experience vulnerability to participate as fully as possible in building Australian economic productivity and family and community life is the central aim of Families Australia's 2013 policy proposals.

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children would be strengthened further by measures such as:

- Expanded emphasis on programs that support early intervention and prevention to tackle the underlying causes of child abuse and neglect and to respond to early warning signs.
- Improved integration of child, family and other social services leading to better outcomes for vulnerable families, increased program efficiency and greater value for public investment.
- Additional funding for Family Support Program initiatives to enhance assistance to children and families and to tackle alcohol and substance misuse, mental illness and domestic violence.
- Long-term funding for protective behaviours programs to address sexualised behaviour in children and provide children and young people with capabilities to safely speak up when they are at risk.

Access to early childhood care and education for many low-income and at-risk families could be improved by:

- Increased priority access to early childhood care and education for children who are at risk and/or who come from disadvantage backgrounds.
- Greater financial support for carers of children in out-of-home care to meet the cost of child care; specifically, the Special Child Care Benefit to be automatically granted to all children in out-of-home care to improve placement stability and support for early learning.

Major reform of the national mental health system is welcome. Additionally, families and special needs groups would benefit through:

- Additional targeted help for children of parents with mental health and substance abuse issues.
- Improve understanding and awareness of the mental health needs of young carers who carry major responsibility for parents with a mental illness or substance misuse.
- Further strengthening of family and carer peer support networks that contribute to capacity building within the mental health sector.
- Provision of Family Mental Health Support Services to grandparent/kinship and foster carers as a special needs group, to assist their care of children in out-of-home care.

Adult survivors of Australia's children's institutions in the 20th century require practical and targeted services, especially as they age. They would be assisted by:

- An access card for Forgotten Australians to provide low cost, priority access to health and allied services, helping Forgotten Australians to remain independent for as long as possible.

In the context of the 'ageing population', the growing number of older people taking on carer roles would be assisted by greater consideration across economic, health, housing and social policy portfolios of the needs of ageing carers who provide long-term care for family members, such as adult children with disability including mental illness and those providing kinship care.