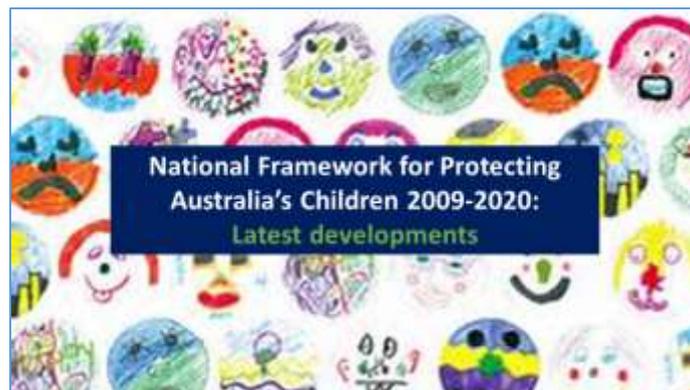


NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROTECTING AUSTRALIA'S CHILDREN 2009-2020: LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

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Address to Families Australia Building Stronger Australian Families Policy Forum
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I wish to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and those around Australia. I'd like to pay my respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders both past and present, and to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with us today.

Today, I would like to give you an overview of the latest developments on the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 (the 'National Framework').

As you may know, the National Framework is Australia's first-ever national plan of action to reduce child abuse and neglect to be endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

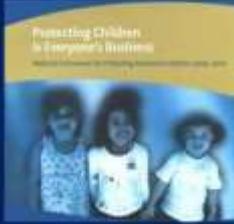
I want to go beyond the National Framework as a policy initiative to invite you to consider a fundamental question: What must we do differently to become a nation where all children and young people grow up safe and well?



Let me start with the National Framework. This policy initiative grew out of calls for greater national leadership that go back at least to the 1990s. Faced with increases in rates of abuse and neglect, the past two decades witnessed increasing advocacy by the NGO and research sectors for greater combined national effort to turn around rates of child maltreatment.

National Framework in a nutshell

- Origins: high abuse rates, calls for national leadership, COAG 2007
- Focus on early intervention, paradigm shift – all children safe and well
- Four 3 year plans, tripartite design/implementation, National Forum
- NGO/research Coalition, 170 members
- Key achievements: OOHC standards, NCC, Child Aware, BCBB



In 2007, the incoming Rudd Federal Government committed itself to devising and implementing a national strategy on child protection. In 2009, COAG adopted the National Framework. At its heart, it called for a paradigm shift in the way that Australian society cared for and protected children.

It also called for a strengthening of early intervention and prevention efforts in order to address issues for adults, such as substance misuse, that *can* lead to child abuse.

The National Framework is being implemented in a series of three year plans. It is being overseen by the National Forum for Protecting Australia's Children, which comprises representatives of Federal, State and Territory Governments, and the NGO and research sectors.

To date, some of the achievements of the National Framework have included the appointment of Australia's first National Children's Commissioner, the delivery of a suite of Child Aware initiatives, the implementation of the Building Capacity/Building Bridges project, and the introduction of Australia's first-ever National Standards for Out-of-Home Care.

Third action plan 2015-18

- Dec 2015, NGO Coalition negotiated
- Three new National Strategies:
 - #1: Early intervention with focus on the early years, especially first thousand days for a child
 - #2: Helping young people in OOHC to thrive in adulthood
 - #3: Organisations responding better to children to keep them safe
- Cross-cutting focus areas: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, & research



In December 2015, the Federal Minister for Social Services, the Hon. Christian Porter MP, announced the Third Action Plan (2015-18) under the National Framework. At its heart, there are three new National Strategies, each with a set of actions that are to be implemented over the next three years.

These National Strategies relate to: early intervention with a focus on the early years, especially a child's first thousand days of life; helping young people to exit the out-of-home care system and thrive in adulthood; and, helping organisations to respond better to children to keep them safe.



The Third Action Plan contains 17 specific action areas. These include the full implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle across all its five domains.

Also, work will be undertaken to identify locations of high incidence of family violence with a view to improving service coordination. There will be a trial of ways to improve support for young people leaving the out-of-home care system, and the National Standards for Out-of-Home Care are to be fully implemented.

The Third Action Plan will be actioned by three Strategy Working Groups, each of which will be advised by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group and a Research Advisory Group. In coming months, Families Australia will be convening meetings across the country to talk more about the Third Action Plan.



I wanted, finally, to open up discussion about ways that we can go beyond instruments such as the National Framework. As I asked at the beginning: What more can, and should, we do to make child safety and wellbeing a reality for all children in Australia? I leave you with a slide with three suggestions about ways forward.

Can and should we, for example, be thinking about an overarching national plan of action for children and young people similar to Scotland's impressive 'Getting it right for every child' initiative? Should we be developing a long-range, multi-sectoral investment strategy to fund such a model? As a first step in driving down the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the out-of-home care system, should we be seeking a COAG target that can catalyse and drive our combined efforts?

I leave to you to consider these ideas. Please discuss, revise, and change them. It seems to me that unless we **continue to be discontent about our progress**—even with the advances made through the National Framework—we will not turn the problem of child abuse around at the rate we all want.