

THREE PLEDGES FOR FAMILIES IN THE 2016 FEDERAL ELECTION

All too many Australian families experience deep and persistent disadvantage and marginalisation. In human and economic terms, the cost is enormous. In the 2016 Federal election, Families Australia urges the country's political leaders to place priority on three specific measures that will help some of the most disadvantaged families to find pathways toward greater wellbeing and economic and social participation.

Families Australia is a national peak, not-for-profit organisation that represents over 800 member organisations that deliver services to families and communities around Australia. We ask politicians to pledge three things:

- **First, raise levels of financial support for child safety and wellbeing.** On average, each day 117 children in Australia have a substantiation of abuse or neglect. That figure represents a 64% increase in just 17 years. The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children and the National Plan of Action to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children are vitally important initiatives. Especially in the case of the National Framework, we call for a major increase in funding for early intervention and prevention measures to drive changes in community attitudes toward child safety and wellbeing and to shift adult behaviours, especially around substance misuse. We call for greater resourcing of targeted programs that assist families and individuals to address problematic behaviours and to build resilience. We also call for greater support for grandparent, foster and other carers of children who cannot remain with their parents.
- **Second, increase efforts to close the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians with particular regard to child protection.** In 2014-15, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were seven times more likely to receive child protection services than non-Indigenous children receiving these services. It is a matter of urgency that this massive over-representation be reduced, at least to the levels of non-Indigenous children, as soon as possible. In conjunction with the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, we call for the development and resourcing—in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—of a comprehensive strategy to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. A key priority of that strategy should be to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, including through the introduction of new targets by the Council of Australian Governments.
- **Third, better support for adult survivors of child sexual and other abuse in institutions.** Up to 500,000 children were placed in institutions in Australia during the 20th century. As adults, many of these people now face significant difficulty in matters such as obtaining access to adequate aged and health care. Together with the Alliance for Forgotten Australians, Families Australia has long campaigned for a national redress scheme and for the introduction of a scheme that would enable priority access to services, such as health care, for adult survivors of institutions. With your support, such measures would acknowledge the suffering caused by past practices and enable survivors to have greater access to the services they need.

While many other concerns face Australian families, we draw these issues to the attention of the country's political leaders for urgent consideration in the 2016 Federal election campaign.