

ENVISIONING THE WAY FORWARD FOR NATIONAL CHILD SAFETY AND FAMILY WELLBEING POLICY

**Address by Dr Brian Babington
Chief Executive Officer, Families Australia
Convenor, National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing
at the launch of the Fourth Action Plan (2018-2020) of the National Framework for Protecting
Australia's Children 2009-2020, in Darwin on 30 January 2019**

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the Country on which we gather and by paying respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, as well as to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people with us today.

I thank the Assistant Minister for Children and Families, the Hon. Michelle Landry MP, for officially launching the Fourth Action Plan (2018-2020) of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 (the 'National Framework').

Having been, with others, on the journey to devise and implement the National Framework for more than a decade, I wanted to reflect on what the National Framework means.

First, it represents ground-breaking leadership. It is the first time in our nation's history that all Commonwealth, State and Territory political leaders, through the Council of Australian Governments, have adopted a national plan to address the problem of child abuse and neglect as well as to improve children's wellbeing.

Second, it brings together all governments and the non-government and research sectors in an innovative collaboration to devise, implement and oversee actions to advance child safety and wellbeing.

Third, it represents a deepening of the priority that all parties to the National Framework attach to prevention and early intervention approaches that address the deeper causes of abuse and neglect.

Fourth, it has gained support from across the political spectrum over the past decade as an important multi-year and multi-decade endeavour.

Fifth, it has been the ground for achievements that include the establishment of the office of the National Children's Commissioner, the first-ever National Standards for Out-of-Home Care, National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and greater information sharing across jurisdictional boundaries on child protection matters.

Above all, I believe it represents critically important moral leadership on a difficult issue in an imperfect world.

Last week the Productivity Commission issued its latest report on the state of child protection in Australia. It reported, for example, a record investment of \$5.8 billion in FY18 alone on child protection, intensive family support and out-of-home care services – an increase of over 10% in real terms in one year alone. The report underlined, once again, the magnitude of the challenge the nation faces.

None of us here would doubt the need to act urgently. The National Framework is helping to lay important foundations for improvement. Yet, it is but one contribution and cannot do it alone.

The National Framework is due to conclude in 2020 and should logically be followed by a bolder national policy agenda for child safety and family wellbeing.

Families Australia and the entire National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing remain deeply committed to the aim of building, with our partners in government and the community at large, a country in which all children grow up safe and well.