

**SUBMISSION  
TO  
ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL PLAN  
FOR THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND  
YOUNG PEOPLE: 2020 TO 2030**

**22 MARCH 2019**

**FamiliesAustralia**

## Response ID ANON-T9XT-PHN8-Q

Submitted to **Establishing a National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People: 2020 to 2030**  
Submitted on **2019-03-22 15:23:41**

### SECTION A – DEMOGRAPHICS

#### 1 Please provide your name (optional)

**Name:**

Dr Brian Babington

#### 2 Where are you based?

ACT

**Other location:**

#### 3 Are you providing your response on behalf of an organisation?

Yes - please provide the name of the organisation below:

**Organisation:**

Families Australia

#### 4 What is your email address?

**Email:**

Brian.Babington@familiesaustralia.org.au

#### 5 What is your area of expertise?

**Area of expertise:**

The wellbeing of Australian children and families

#### 6 Are you providing your response as:

Other - please specify below:

**Other occupation:**

Peak body

#### 7 Do you identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person?

No

#### 8 Priority population group status

None of the above

#### 9 Does your organisation represent one of the priority population groups?

Yes - please specify below:

**Priority population group:**

Australian families, including children and young people

#### 10 In which country were you born?

Australia

**Country born:**

### SECTION B - THE STRUCTURE OF THE ACTION PLAN

#### 11 Overall structure of the Action Plan

No - please provide comments on your selection below (200 word limit):

**Overall structure - comments:**

The draft plan is easy to follow and the focus areas would be enhanced significantly by broadening the focus from just health services to include, for example, supporting parenting and family functioning. The draft plan would benefit from broader engagement with other national strategies relating to children and young people, especially the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020. In addition, some of the proposed actions seem to duplicate well established initiatives already in progress such as existing resources for parents and professional available through the Child Family Community Australia (CFCA) information exchange and the Australian Research Network for Children and Youth (ARACY) and data improvement work by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

**12 Adequate context and background for the Action Plan**

Yes

**Adequate context:****SECTION C - PRIORITY AREAS****13 Do you agree with the priority areas identified for the Action Plan?**

No - please provide comments on your selection below (200 word limit):

**Priority areas - agreement:**

We support the first priority area. We support the principles underpinning the other priority areas, but not all the specific actions listed.

**14 Priority area 1 – Enhance services for rural and remote areas**

Yes

**Disagreement to actions/activities under priority 1:**

We support these actions aimed at improving access to services and infrastructure. A recent survey of our members and stakeholders identified key features of service delivery in rural and remote areas as: strengthening community capacity and capability, the capacity to deliver outreach services, strengthening local community infrastructure and working closely with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders. Respondents also noted the importance of funding Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations to provide services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families wherever possible. Recruiting and retaining skilled staff was noted as a key problem for services in rural and remote communities.

**15 Priority area 2 - Expand support for families, especially families living with adversity**

No - please provide comments and explain your selection (200 word limit). Please ensure that your response is supported by evidence/references.

**Disagreement to actions/activities under priority 2 :**

We agree that it is important to expand services such as antenatal and post natal home visiting services for children and families, especially those experiencing adversity or vulnerability. However, it is important to consider a wide range of programs and services that might help in different contexts. For example, there are several ways parents can get access to parenting resources and support, of which the Raising Children Network is just one example. Others include Parentline, the Family Relationship Advice Line and CFCA Parents and families need access to a range of supports that best fit their circumstances and the complexity of the issues they face.

**16 Priority area 3 – Increase investment in research, policy and practice translation**

No - please provide comments and explain your selection (200 word limit). Please ensure that your response is supported by evidence/references.

**Disagreement to actions/activities under priority 3:**

We support further investment in research, particularly related to building the evidence base on what works to improve outcomes for children and families. However, the benefit of another 'hub' is questionable. We already have the Child Family Community Australia (CFCA) Information Exchange based within the Australian Institute of Family Studies, as well as a range of other organisations providing such services. We also support the evaluation of existing services and programs, particularly for chronic conditions. However, we are unsure what is meant by 'Australian Child and Family Centres'. There are no nationally funded child and family centres. Some jurisdictions have them, but they vary in terms of their funding sources and remit. For example, some are funded by state Health Departments and others by Education and their roles are quite different.

**17 Priority area 4 – Commit to nationally consistent data collection**

No - please provide comments and explain your selection (200 word limit). Please ensure that your response is supported by evidence/references.

**Disagreement to actions/activities under priority 4:**

We completely support improving processes to enable the registration of births, particularly in remote areas. We also support ongoing funding for the collection and reporting of robust, nationally consistent data on children's health and wellbeing. It is important that any such funding continues to support the established data collection and collation undertaken by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, including their work to support reporting against the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020. Any new or additional data collection projects should complement and build on the AIHW work rather than duplicating it. Harmonising data definitions in terms of age categories is also important and should be guided by the age categories used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in the Census and other relevant social surveys.

**SECTION D - OVERALL COMMENTS**

**18 Do you have any additional comments? (200 word limit)**

**Overall comments:**

As we consider the development of a national health strategy for children and young people, including in the context of the end of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020, there is an imperative to develop an overarching approach to national children's and families' policies and strategies. It is vital that any such strategy be developed and led by an ongoing coalition which includes all levels of government and the non government and research sectors. This could also enable emerging developments in research, practice and policy, and the strong nexus between them, to support embedding a continuous improvement approach in the strategy.

It is important that such a strategy builds on existing knowledge and experience across health, education, child protection and broader child and family support services. This requires adequately resourcing the most effective ways to support primary prevention and early intervention through collaborative service systems. To implement such major reform takes committed collaboration across jurisdictions and portfolios, major cultural change and a commitment to long-term investment.