

Consultation in Sydney 1 November 2019

On behalf of the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing, Families Australia led this consultation on the successor plan for the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 (National Framework). Families Australia is working closely with SNAICC – National Voice for our Children and the Family Matters Campaign, the Commonwealth Department of Social Services and respective State and Territory governments on the successor plan to the National Framework. The session was attended by around 50 participants including Senior Officials from State and Federal governments, executives and representatives from the non-government sector and research and academic representatives.

This was the seventh jurisdictional consultation on the successor plan. Previous consultations have been held in Hobart (March 2019), Adelaide (August 2019), Brisbane (9 October 2019) Townsville (10 and 11 October 2019) and Northern Rivers (15 October 2019). Delegates at the Child Aware Conference in May 2019 were also consulted on the successor plan.

Participants in Sydney emphasised the need for a systems approach to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a key element of the successor plan that actively engages all jurisdictions, the non-government and research sectors in collaborating and working together towards a common goal. This was discussed in the context of the current, broader policy landscape at both national and State and Territory levels that includes reforms to child protection systems and the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Of particular note was Recommendation 6.15 of the Royal Commission with participants agreeing a priority was how the successor plan will intersect with a National Framework for Child Safety. There was strong support for continuing investment to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in child protection and justice systems and aligning this with the aspirations contained within the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* as well as the Family Matters Campaign. There was support for continuing the public health approach established under the National Framework, with acknowledgment this approach needs to be more clearly articulated and better communicated across all sectors using an agreed, shared and inclusive language.

The successor plan should also:

- Be ambitious about the need for radical change, be appropriately resourced, embed a strong accountability framework and drive generational change;
- Be underpinned by a vision written by children and young people;
- Leverage other formal Commonwealth State Agreements such as health, housing and education and collaborate around shared investments to deliver the greatest impacts for children, young people and families;
- Engage the broader community in mechanisms to drive cultural change and build community demands for better outcomes for children, young people and families through an education strategy;
- Strengthen investment in prevention and early support including through more efficient and effective use of existing resources. This should include consideration of a different funding model to provide certainty for service providers, encourage service sector collaboration instead of competition and support more realistic timeframes to achieve sustained outcomes;
- Include local, place-based approaches in suitable, targeted locations to meet the needs of children, young people and families. This is consistent with the recommendations of the Productivity Commission in its report into Human Services;
- Address the systemic and other drivers of adverse child outcomes including poverty, domestic and family violence, housing instability and homelessness, mental illness and drug and alcohol

abuse and structure the system around more integrated approaches to place children, young people and families at the centre of the response;

- Use predictive analytics and indicators of positive outcomes to help direct investment to areas of greatest need. New indicators beyond child protection will need to be considered.

The attached table synthesises the outcomes against all discussion questions. It identifies the key elements participants put forward as most likely to produce the best outcomes and that balanced child and family wellbeing with the need to protect children and young people. Key elements have been grouped by Families Australia under some possible, broad areas of policy focus.

Many insightful and powerful contributions were made by participants in Sydney. A number of these have been collated by Families Australia and are also attached.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
1. Systems	<p>A new national child and family wellbeing plan that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes an overarching, shared vision and commitment by governments and non-government organisations and all key stakeholders to child development and wellbeing; • Takes a long term view to help drive real generational change; • Recognises the crucial role of universal systems in driving better outcomes for all children, including those experiencing vulnerability; • Uses a different, culturally appropriate language shared across all sectors and builds broader community understanding about the importance of child development and wellbeing as a social concern; • Takes a holistic view and includes actions to address underlying factors impacting child and family wellbeing such as poverty, unstable housing, domestic and family violence, mental health issues and drug and alcohol abuse; • Has a strong focus on prevention and early support; • Harnesses effort across the full spectrum of services supporting children, young people and families and provides a strong mechanism to drive action; • Is appropriately resourced - explore opportunities to better leverage existing investments by jurisdictions and non-government service providers in supporting children, young people and families; • Has a strong, cross-sectoral accountability framework that includes all levels of government, service providers, workers and communities; • Addresses the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families and aligns with the aspirations contained within the <i>Uluru Statement from the Heart</i>; • Supports flexible arrangements that are responsive to need and emerging evidence; • Is linked with the UN Sustainable Development Goals that seek to achieve a better and sustainable future for all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The successor plan is bipartisan and supported by all jurisdictions and the non-government and research sectors. It is seen as a critical element in the broader policy landscape to support the wellbeing and safety of children and young people. ▪ The successor plan adopts a whole of government approach to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. ▪ Strong accountability mechanisms and implementation plans are in place for all jurisdictions and non-government services. ▪ There is an increased investment in prevention and early support services with fewer families entering tertiary systems over time. ▪ There is cross-sectoral collaboration that privileges the child and family at the centre of the service response - health, education, early childhood, social and community services. ▪ A shift in societal views about the importance of child wellbeing and safety to outcomes in later life and buy-in to the goals of the successor plan. ▪ A more efficient and effective, long-term funding model that reduces the complexity of the service systems for families and service providers and delivers positive, long term outcomes for children, young people, families and communities. ▪ Funding agreements enable resources to be allocated to areas of need and respond to emerging issues. ▪ Contract management actively encourages innovation and flexible responses to local needs. ▪ Reduction in the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection and justice systems. ▪ Positive shift in indicators of child, family and community wellbeing and safety including increased school engagement and attendance rates; AEDC measures; child protection statistics. ▪ Communities are playing a greater role in supporting families. ▪ Lower downstream costs over time. ▪ Language is positively framed and there are clear definitions and a common understanding.

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	Leveraging the role of universal services across portfolios.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Universal services act as soft, safe entry points for children and families. ▪ Universal services take a holistic view and respond to the needs of children, young people and families. ▪ A shift toward proportionate universalism that provides a scale and intensity of service provision proportionate to the level of disadvantage.
	Incentives to encourage and normalise help-seeking by parents and carers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More families are seeking help early and are diverted away from tertiary responses.
	Community led solutions as part of the service delivery landscape that can sit alongside more standard service offers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programs and services are tailored to the needs of the local community. ▪ A mix of services is available that are responsive to need. ▪ More intensive support is provided to children, young people and families with greatest need and is long-term to ensure sustained outcomes.
	An integrated service system that is person-centred.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less complex system for families to navigate. ▪ Services are responsive to all needs in a timely and accessible way. ▪ Better outcomes for children, young people and families as different parts of the system collaborate around them and consider needs across all domains – health and mental health, education, housing, parenting, domestic and family violence, financial wellbeing. ▪ Less complex system for service providers to have to navigate and operate within.
	A focus on key transition points across the family life course including peri-natal and parenthood, early childhood education and care and school readiness, pre-teen and middle years and transitioning to high school, adolescence and transitioning to independent adulthood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents, children and young people have access to effective, evidence-based support at key transition points across the family life course. ▪ Change is measured using predictive, positive lifecourse indicators. ▪ Learning and school engagement. ▪ Social resilience and positive relationships. ▪ More effective parenting. ▪ A reduction in the rates of children and young people presenting with mental health disorders.

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2. Cultural responsiveness – cross cutting theme	Agreed, shared understanding about trauma and intergenerational trauma and its impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use of a different language such as ‘adverse childhood experiences’ is adopted that points to the impacts of trauma on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and guides actions. ▪ Broad understanding about the significance of adverse childhood experiences and impacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across service systems. ▪ Mainstream services and systems are able to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.
	A priority focus on the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A reduction in the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection and justice systems. ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children growing up safe and cared for in families and culture. ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are removed to the care of a non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander carer remain connected with culture and community. ▪ The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in child protection and justice systems reduce over time. ▪ Implementation of all five elements of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle across jurisdictions.
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led responses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families receive culturally safe services and culturally appropriate support. ▪ A greater investment in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. ▪ Wrap around support is available to and accessed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. ▪ An evidence-base about effective approaches for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families is available. ▪ Fewer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in child protection and justice systems.

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	Address systemic racism in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All services are culturally safe and culturally sensitive. ▪ ACCOs are engaged to build this capacity across the service system and improve access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. ▪ Broader community understands the impacts of historical acts on the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.
3. Participation	Children, young people and families from a diverse range of backgrounds, including those with lived experience, are directly consulted in all stages of the development of the successor plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The new plan gives real voice to children, young people, families and communities including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. ▪ The new plan is responsive to the needs of children, young people, families and communities. ▪ Children, young people and families are active participants in monitoring, evaluation and feedback processes.
	The broader community is actively engaged in the conversation about the importance of wellbeing and safety for children, young people and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The broader community understands the importance of investing in children, young people, families and communities. ▪ The broader community is actively engaged in the conversation.
	People in remote communities are consulted on the successor plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Actions to address the safety and wellbeing of people in remote communities is included in the successor plan.
4. Practice/ Workforce	Investment in building the capacity and capability of the workforce - translating evidence into practice and sharing practice approaches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children, young people and families have access to practice and programs that are evidence-based and evidence-informed. ▪ Communities of practice are formed to foster and support effective practice. ▪ A more skilled workforce and greater retention rates.
	Investment in developing the research and evidence that is then applied in practice, including through testing of new and emerging evidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong partnerships between academia, research, innovation and practice. ▪ Workers can access support and resources to apply evidence to practice. ▪ Practice agility.
	Practitioners have authority to work collaboratively and holistically across sectors to place children, young people and families at the centre of service delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less fragmentation in service delivery and greater continuity for children, young people and families. ▪ Less complexity in accessing services for children, young people and families. ▪ Needs are met in a more timely and child/family centred way.

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5. Child/ young people focus	Introduce child wellbeing statements as part of decision-making across portfolios.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child wellbeing is at the centre of policy decisions across all jurisdictions.
	Successor plan is underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children and young people are empowered to exercise their rights and be heard. ▪ The rights of children and young people are considered in all decisions that affect them.
	Continued focus and investment on young people transitioning to adulthood from out-of-home care given the high representation of care leavers in justice, homelessness, mental health and drug and alcohol services and disengaged from employment, education and training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Young people leaving care are supported to participate positively in their communities and engage in education, training and/or employment. ▪ Support is available for those entering early parenthood.
	Focus on the full spectrum of childhood years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policy and program responses that meet the needs of all children and young people across the age spectrum. ▪ The online world is visible in the framework including actions to address bullying and cyberbullying and improve e-safety. ▪ Parents understand the importance of transition points to child development and long-term outcomes and are better equipped to support their children to make positive transitions.

'We should look to the Getting it Right for Every Child approach in Scotland as an example that frames and gives a different language to everyone's responsibility.'

'We need to be much better at explaining to the broader public why investing in child development and safety is so important for our future prosperity.'

'There must be opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote areas to have input into the successor plan.'

'The work of Co-Lab and the Frameworks Institute provides a new language and new frame that could help us shift policy, practice and public attitudes towards families and children.'

'Commonwealth, State and Territory roles that are shared must be integrated and everyone must work differently so that collaboration has a clear purpose - to deliver a shared outcome of 'child wellbeing.'

'Mental health is a key issue and we can capitalize on the work going on this space to help bring systems and sectors together around a common high level goal.'

'We still need a shared commitment to child wellbeing and safety as a national priority that includes all levels of government, non-government organisations, service providers and practitioners, and the broader community. There is so much unfinished under the current National Framework.'

'Continuing to pay lip service to prevention and early support services and not following through with appropriate resourcing will continue to let children, young people and families down.'

'Commonwealth leadership has been critical to the successes under the National Framework – it must continue but be broadened beyond child protection.'

'The National Framework has been an important first step but we now need a strategy that will bring all relevant frameworks together for the health and wellbeing of Australia's children, young people and families and deliver generational change.'

'There must be a commitment to a long-term, appropriately resourced, cross-portfolio strategy with a strong focus on implementing what we have learned through the term of the current National Framework.'

'Early, persistent and consistent support must be fundamental to any system supporting child and family wellbeing and safety, otherwise people will continue to fall through the cracks.'

'There has to be buy-in from State and Territory governments many of whom are consumed by the nature of the service delivery and their own stakeholders. We have national strategies for disability and carers. Could we have a National Children's Strategy? This could help clarify roles and responsibilities as well.'

'As professionals, we know it's not easy to implement responses that meet the needs families impacted by a complexity of issues. We must think about all the drivers if we are going to design a systems approach that works.'