

## Consultation in Perth 7 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 40 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 ninth 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), Northern Rivers NSW (15 October 2019) and Sydney (1 November 2019). Delegates at the Child Aware Conference in May 2019 were also consulted on the successor plan.

Participants in Perth emphasised the importance of taking a systemic, rights-based approach to the wellbeing and safety of children and young people and recognising the important role families and communities play in children's lives. The need for action to drive broad cultural and attitudinal change about the importance of investing in, and valuing, children, young people and families was also a very strong theme. Participants called for a strategy that will link with, and give coherence to, the multiple other national strategies and frameworks impacting wellbeing and safety outcomes for children, young people and families. Participants also agreed while the successor plan should be a national strategy for children and young people and focus on national actions, it should allow State and Territory Governments to tailor actions in their jurisdictions to maximise efforts to deliver on the agreed objectives, goals and indicators. In this context, the role of place-based and community led approaches in priority locations to disrupt disadvantage and improve outcomes for priority cohorts were also proposed as important components. Authentically hearing the voices of children, young people and families, particularly those with 'quiet voices' who we do not usually hear from was also a recurring theme.

The successor plan should also:

- Include a brave and bold vision for Australia's children.
- Articulate clear roles and responsibilities between the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments and the non-government sector particularly with respect to policy, implementation and accountability.
- Take a long-term view that is true to the scale of the change that is needed.
- Bring together actions across multiple domains including health and mental health, education, housing and homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic and family violence.
- Have a clearly defined scope.
- Take a prevention based approach that includes safety, consistent with the recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
- Prioritise actions to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in child protection and justice systems including holding all State and Territory governments accountable for implementing all five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.
- Include practical, implementable actions that build on the current National Framework and continue to bring the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and the non-government and research sectors together to oversee implementation and share information and expertise.

- Include action to address on-line safety and other emerging issues that are adversely impacting on the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Fill data gaps that limit reporting on outcomes and better utilise datasets such as the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) and Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) to help track progress.

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. 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 Perth. 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"> <li>• is bipartisan and long-term;</li> <li>• is supported by all governments and the non-government sector and promotes ongoing collaboration to deliver positive outcomes for all children;</li> <li>• makes a clear, unapologetic commitment to all children to deliver on their rights, needs and aspirations;</li> <li>• includes a vision for all children and families underpinned by key pillars such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Safe and supported;</li> <li>○ Healthy and connected;</li> <li>○ Learning and participating.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• includes nationally agreed, consistent targets or benchmarks with incremental milestones to drive change over time;</li> <li>• has a strong focus on prevention and early support as part of the broader continuum of responses available to children and families across the life course;</li> <li>• is broad in scope to capture key drivers such as domestic and family violence, mental health, homelessness, poverty, drug and alcohol abuse;</li> <li>• recognises new and existing cross-sectoral efforts, national strategies and jurisdictional initiatives that are working to strengthen outcomes for children and their families and communities beyond the successor plan;</li> <li>• challenges untruths and key false assumptions that can perpetuate poor policy - get the starting point right;</li> <li>• leverages evidence-based mechanisms to help reduce social isolation and social exclusion as key drivers of poor outcomes for children and families;</li> <li>• acts as a foundation for a shared language and consensus around the focus of investments to improve the wellbeing and safety of children, young people and families;</li> <li>• is appropriately resourced through new as well as existing investments and opportunities to re-purpose or better coordinate funding;</li> <li>• is linked with relevant international agreements such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The successor plan endures beyond political cycles as a whole-of-government, generational approach.</li> <li>▪ Investment in supporting families directly and through service systems is prioritised and accountability mechanisms such as proportionate investment targets, outcomes based funding agreements and regular, national reporting are in place.</li> <li>▪ All children know about and can exercise their rights consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.</li> <li>▪ Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments are working together to deliver the continuum of services for children, young people and families in a coordinated, systematic and efficient way. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Better coordination and greater efficiency allows for an increased investment in prevention and early support services with fewer families requiring crisis responses.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Data is available and used more effectively: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the full potential of existing data sets is utilised.</li> <li>○ linked national data sets are used to track outcomes and identify priorities eg. NAPLAN, national surveys, health and mental health as well as child protection.</li> <li>○ data empowers community level, place-based responses in targeted locations, for example the AEDC, SEIFA, social inclusion measures.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Local government is acknowledged as a key stakeholder in the successor plan and plays an active role as expert in their local communities.</li> <li>▪ There is collaborative decision-making across jurisdictions in relation to funding and investment priorities.</li> <li>▪ Funding approaches are cross-sectoral and foster active collaboration and accountability - health, education, early childhood, social and community services.</li> <li>▪ There is broad acceptance in policy and service provision that poverty is not ‘neglect’.</li> <li>▪ Improvements against agreed indicators including the life domains in measures of social exclusion, particularly in targeted communities.</li> <li>▪ Child protection issues don’t overwhelm the successor plan.</li> </ul>

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	Address inconsistencies and gaps in legal systems across jurisdictions including Children’s Court, Family Court, Criminal Court.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Children are provided with support to have agency in court proceedings.</li> <li>▪ Decisions are made in the best interest of the child.</li> <li>▪ Decisions respect and uphold children’s rights balanced with safety, including mothers escaping domestic and family violence.</li> <li>▪ Nationally consistent approaches around legal frameworks across jurisdictions.</li> </ul>
	Invert the pyramid spend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Universal services are used by children, young people and families and initiate referrals to early support services routinely as required.</li> <li>▪ Fewer children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability are <b>not</b> engaging with support systems.</li> <li>▪ Children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability are proactively engaged by services and early support changes trajectories.</li> <li>▪ Fewer children, young people and families require intensive or crisis responses and experience long-term adverse outcomes.</li> </ul>
	Recognise the important role parents and families play in children’s lives, including keeping them safe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strong investment in support for families to optimise their capacity to raise happy, safe children.</li> <li>▪ More families are seeking help early and are diverted away from tertiary responses.</li> <li>▪ Families whose children are removed are actively supported to help address critical issues to help promote reunification where it is safe to do so.</li> </ul>
	A shift away from the deficit lens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Positive framing and language around children and young people, parenting and families.</li> <li>▪ Indicators of change are positively framed around predictors of good outcomes.</li> <li>▪ Multi-pronged approach across life domains and across the life course.</li> <li>▪ Focus on the positive change we are aspiring too, not the deficits we are trying to fix.</li> <li>▪ Less stigma for children, young people and families.</li> </ul>
	A systems approach around high risk families with children aged 0-5 years who are often invisible in community until they start school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Children aged 0-5 in high risk families remain visible to the system that supports ongoing developmental and safety outcomes in this critical period in the child’s life.</li> </ul>

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	Actions to keep children and young people safe online.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strong leadership and action through the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner.</li> <li>▪ Parents are empowered to help keep their children safe on line.</li> <li>▪ Schools are actively educating students about online safety.</li> <li>▪ Social media platforms prioritise the safety of children and young people in their operations.</li> </ul>
	Engage schools as active partners in the successor plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Schools are included in local community efforts to improve the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.</li> <li>▪ Schools have access to appropriate resources so that they can help facilitate access to support to promote school engagement, educational attainment and student wellbeing.</li> <li>▪ Issues such as domestic and family violence, substance abuse and mental health needs of children and young people are identified early and appropriate levels of support are provided.</li> <li>▪ Reduce stigma within the school community for children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability.</li> </ul>
	Local communities are critical partners in decision-making and accountability mechanisms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Programs and services are tailored to the needs of the local community.</li> <li>▪ Decision-making is made at the community level by relevant community representatives who are stakeholders in the lives of children, young people and families and are actively involved in driving change.</li> </ul>
	An integrated service system that is built around the needs of children, young people and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Less complex system for families to navigate.</li> <li>▪ The right services for the right clients at the right time.</li> <li>▪ No wrong door.</li> <li>▪ Greater engagement by children, young people and families in support services.</li> </ul>
2. Cultural responsiveness – cross cutting theme	Prioritise actions to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in child protection and justice systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase in the number and capability of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) responding to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.</li> <li>▪ ACCOs are working directly with governments to implement culturally appropriate and safe solutions for their own peoples.</li> <li>▪ Data demonstrates ACCOs are effective in diverting children, young people and families away from child protection systems.</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in child protection and justice systems.</li> </ul>
	Safeguard the commitment of all State and Territory Governments to implement all five elements of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All five elements of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle (ACCP) are implemented by all jurisdictions.</li> <li>▪ The ACCP guides policy, legislation and practice.</li> <li>▪ Priority indicators are retained and reported against and show a positive shift over time.</li> <li>▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people retain a strong identity and connection to kin, country and culture.</li> </ul>
	Prioritise actions to address intergenerational trauma.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Historical trauma and its intergenerational impacts will be understood more broadly across services and the community and policy responses will be developed to help to break the cycle for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.</li> <li>▪ Reduction over time in the number of families with complex needs requiring tertiary level services across multiple sectors.</li> </ul>
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led responses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families receive culturally safe services and culturally appropriate support.</li> <li>▪ A greater investment in ACCOs.</li> <li>▪ Wrap around support is available to and accessed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.</li> <li>▪ An evidence-base about effective approaches for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.</li> <li>▪ Fewer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in child protection and justice systems.</li> </ul>
	Address pervasive racism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stronger education about, and action to support diversity.</li> <li>▪ Diversity seen as a positive aspect of Australian society.</li> <li>▪ Children, young people and families have access to services are culturally appropriate, sensitive and safe.</li> <li>▪ Reduction in social exclusion and social isolation for children, young people and families from diverse backgrounds.</li> </ul>
3. Participation	Active engagement of the broader community as part of the successor plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The broader community understands the importance of investing in children, young people, families and communities.</li> <li>▪ The broader community is actively engaged in ongoing conversation.</li> </ul>

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	Children, young people and families from a diverse range of backgrounds are consulted in the development and implementation of the successor plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The new plan includes the voices of children, young people and families from culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, children and young people with disability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This includes children, young people and families that we do not usually hear from – ‘the quiet voices’.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Children, young people and families from diverse backgrounds are included in monitoring and reporting under the successor plan.</li> <li>▪ Capturing the views of children is part of the reporting framework for the successor plan.</li> </ul>
	Engage the local and national media to help drive change and leverage media interest in critical issues impacting children, young people and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local media is playing a role in community education around local issues and progress towards change.</li> <li>▪ Australian community understands the issues, supports the need for investment and is demanding change.</li> </ul>
	The impact of the online world on children, young people and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Children, young people and families are consulted about actions to improve safety online.</li> <li>▪ Parents are educated on options to help keep their children safe online.</li> <li>▪ Resources are developed to assist teachers to promote online safety with students, including how to address the increasing exposure of children and young people to online pornography.</li> </ul>
4. Practice/ Workforce	Workforce development, training and practice standards across adult-focussed services to consider the needs of children and the broader family in their service delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All services have a child focus.</li> <li>▪ Adult-focussed services, including legal services, are responsive to the needs of children.</li> <li>▪ Appropriate and timely referrals are part of standard practice.</li> </ul>
	Investment in practice approaches that are proactive, tailored and holistic to meet individual needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coordinated, long term case management approaches are provided to children, young people and families with complex needs.</li> <li>▪ Families are supported to navigate the service system to have their needs met.</li> <li>▪ Families are actively engaged with services.</li> <li>▪ Workers are proactive in ensuring this engagement is sustained.</li> <li>▪ Fewer closed cases because of children, young people and families failing to follow through on referrals.</li> </ul>
	Active efforts to translate policy to practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Practice aligns with policy.</li> <li>▪ Policy is implemented on the ground in a clear and coherent way.</li> </ul>

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	Service design and delivery prioritises accessibility as well as effectiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Service design actively enables access for children, young people and families, including those in regional and remote areas.</li> <li>▪ Services are accessible outside standard business hours.</li> <li>▪ Technology is utilised to enable access.</li> </ul>
	Practitioner level data is available to help track the effectiveness of support and inform real-time change to improve outcomes against agreed indicators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Practitioners routinely use relevant data to inform practice.</li> <li>▪ Practice is responsive to real-time indicators of change.</li> <li>▪ Data is used as evidence to support effective practice.</li> </ul>
5. Child/ young people focus	An ecological approach across the life course that puts children and young people at the centre of policy, evidence gathering and practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Child wellbeing is clearly defined and children are at the centre of policy decisions.</li> <li>▪ A child/young people focus is central in program design and delivery.</li> </ul>
	Successor plan is underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Children are empowered to exercise their rights and be heard.</li> <li>▪ Children’s rights are considered in all decisions that affect them.</li> </ul>

*'Remove the inefficiencies in funding arrangements - duplication of effort; multiple, repeated contracts; different outcomes frameworks; funding that is too narrow and prescriptive or cohort specific.'*

*'Providing appropriate, effective and timely support for families and working with communities to identify what they need for the wellbeing and safety of their children, young people and families is a prevention approach that will reduce downstream social and economic costs.'*

*'Child safety is part of wellbeing however child protection issues must not overwhelm the successor plan.'*

*'The Valuing Child Initiative in WA is a grassroots, multi-pronged approach to build awareness and leverage action to change the way governments, NGOs, community groups, individuals and the private sector develop policies and provide programs for children and their families and carers. Something like this should be included in the successor plan.'*

*'We need an amalgamated system that works as one for children, young people and families.'*

*'Success will be reached when there is the ability to draw a line from the policy intent, the programs and initiatives included in the successor plan directly to outcomes as experienced by our children. The current intent is barely recognisable to us and not evidenced in the experiences of our children.'*

*'The successor plan should still enable collaboration across all jurisdictions in areas of shared responsibility. Commonwealth leadership has worked well to bring everyone to the table including the research and NGO sectors and has helped to drive accountability and change.'*

*'We aren't curious enough about what is going on in children's lives and why we are seeing what we are seeing. At the societal level, we are often quick to criticise and judge but we are not so good at thinking about what might help. This is part of the culture we need to change.'*

*'Breathe life into, and provide leadership on, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We need to think about how we, as a nation, deliver children's rights and this includes how we support families.'*

*'Families are the backbone of society and we need to educate the Australian community about the need to invest in families if we are to enjoy a productive and prosperous society.'*

*'Learn from Scotland and build services around the clients – don't make clients have to fit the services. Target groups and eligibility criteria shouldn't be a barrier – "no wrong door".'*

*'We built some scaffolding for change through the National Framework. The successor plan must go beyond the scaffolding and systematically overlay a new structure to deliver strong, tangible improvements in the wellbeing and safety of children, young people and families - across governments and sectors, with non-government organisations, with communities and with children, young people and families themselves.'*