

**National Coalition Annual Meeting
Outcomes from the *Beyond 2020 – Final Consultation***

10 March 2020, Melbourne.



What should be the key strategies needed to strengthen prevention and early support and how could these be implemented?

- There must be a clear and coherent linking of national policies and strategies supporting wellbeing, prevention and early support across portfolios.
 - Policy developers and implementers work together to deliver strengths-based outcomes for shared target groups.
- Packages of early support are available to assist families with multiple risk factors and complex needs, similar to care packages available on other areas.
 - Must have a long-term focus and include action to address housing instability.
- Early support starting in pregnancy that is tailored to the individual needs of the person and family - family-centred approaches.
 - For parents at risk of entering the child protection system, provide early peer support.
 - Sustained nurse home visiting. For example Right at Home.
 - Universal health screening and education for parents about healthy child development.
 - Address poverty, domestic violence, addiction, insecure housing and employment.
- Continue the *public health approach* that prioritises investment in, and the role of, universal services and targeted support to prevent entry into tertiary level child protection systems.
 - Co-locate a range of services and supports (universal and targeted) that can respond collectively and collaboratively to meet the needs of children, young people and families who present for universal services.
 - This will improve work across disciplines and sectors, provides opportunity for staff coaching and skill development, build trust through warm referrals and strong relationships, and contributes to transparency in service provider partnerships. Fear is a significant barrier to access for some families that must be overcome if they are to seek help.
- Continue to use the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* to help drive the focus on prevention and early support.
- Provide information and resources to young people about birth control, sexual health and wellbeing and help prevent teen pregnancy and break the cycle of disadvantage.
 - Promote conversations with children and young people about healthy relationships and gender equity.
- A specific focus on doing things better for children, young people and families who are not doing well and who currently fall through the cracks.
- Information and services need to be known, accessible and safe if they are going to achieve the goals of prevention and early support.
- A workforce strategy to build capacity and capability of the workforce, particularly those working with families with complex needs. Include:
 - shared principles and a shared language across different streams and portfolios for workers working with children, young people and families.

- remove the jargon and words that can be interpreted differently.
 - enhance understanding using evidence-informed models in child and family centred practice.
- Encourage a different frame for media reporting in relation to children, young people and families experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, vulnerability. For example, families relying on Newstart and those who are working poor.
- Introduce legislation that reflects valuing children in their own right similar to the Child Act in the UK.
 - Legislation is framed to create an authorising environment to drive action for children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability.
 - Funding, services and research are clearly and strongly connected and work together to deliver solutions that strengthen prevention and early support.
 - Policy to address poverty and alleviate financial hardship that are major contributors to neglect, marginalisation and social exclusion.
- Services are funded long-term for security and sustainability including attracting and retaining good staff.
 - More needs to be done to translate pilot programs into long-term sustainable support and maintain continuity for children, young people and families. For example, the Premier's Youth Initiative (NSW).
 - Map evaluated pilot programs across all jurisdictions including the Commonwealth and scale up those that demonstrate success.
- Encourage Prime Ministerial leadership around the wellbeing of children and young people.
- Strengthen early support for children and young people in alternative care that is consistent across jurisdictions.
 - A cohesive (currently fragmented) approach and a model that supports collaboration by service providers.
- Adopt a life course approach that enables a focus on early childhood development but also middle years, adolescence and transitioning to independent adulthood.
- Where services are required, families are actively encouraged to access support and assisted to navigate the system which is often complex and fragmented.
- Scale up place-based approaches in targeted areas that engage communities in the solutions.



What can we do to improve outcomes for children in alternative care and those transitioning to independent adulthood?

- Implement policies that ensure health care and wellbeing is prioritised for this group of children and young people.
 - Access to medical and mental health supports are guaranteed and available, these are developmentally appropriate and include immunisation and dental care.
- Parents are provided with a range of supports and services that contribute to their relationships with their children, including those in permanent care arrangements, if and when safe to do so:
 - Redesign 'restoration' plans and programs to be inclusive of immediate and extended family, similar to the processes used in New Zealand.
 - Focus on strong and supportive relationships that are vital to a sense of security and identity.
 - Redefine the way parents who have had their children removed are viewed in legal processes.
- Bring relevant policy areas such as child protection, domestic violence and drug and alcohol services into alignment to enhance collaborative effort and investment for better outcomes.
- Strengthen knowledge and capacity of all sectors to implement evidence informed trauma support for children, young people and families, carers and kinship carers.
- Ensure that young people contribute to plans for their futures, that they are mentored and supported to be an aspirational generation.

- Ensure that young people with lived experience of child protection systems are invited to contribute to future national policy development and implementation related to wellbeing, family support and tertiary systems.
- Adopt a system wide approach to improve placement stability for children and young people in alternative care.
- Establish dedicated child advocates in all jurisdictions that are responsible for supporting children and young people in alternative care, similar to *Getting it Right for Every Child*.
 - Children and young people have their views heard in decisions that relate to them.
 - Children and young people have choice in the selection of their advocate.
- Raise the leaving care age to 21 across all jurisdictions - underpin through legislation
 - Provide a range of supports across the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments to age 25 as needed/required.
 - Greater support for young people leaving care who are, or want to remain, engaged in education eg. HECS waivers, fee-free vocational education courses.
 - All young people leave care with required documentation for successful transition to independent adulthood i.e. driving licence, birth certificate, health records, dental records.
 - Leaving care checklists are completed for every child and young person and demonstrate that developmentally appropriate needs have been met.
- Address impediments to professionalisation of carers providing alternative care.
 - Remove legislative barriers to professionalisation.
 - Provide a universally available framework and guidance for professional foster care.
 - Refresh the national information portal for foster and kinship carers and ensure that it is updated regularly and provides national and jurisdictional information.
 - Improve access to support from various Commonwealth agencies such as payments through Services Australia. For example, address application time limits for foster and kinship carers.
 - Increase financial support for foster carers – consider removal of means testing for Commonwealth payments and allowances.
 - Address impediments to retention of fosters carers such as work health and safety requirements and working with children checks.



What should be the major priorities and actions to improve the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities?

- Constitutional Recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Establish the office of an Aboriginal Children’s Commissioner.
- Strengthen the role of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations by increasing resourcing and enabling local decision making.
- Strengthen culturally safe principles and practices across all sectors including research.
 - Learn the practice of cultural humility.
 - Support community leadership and enable participation.
 - Recognise, respect and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices.
- Invest in interpreters and understand the importance of language preservation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Work with, and support the efforts of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peaks to help them achieve their goals and ambitions.



How can we strengthen and give due regard to the voices of children and young people in national policy and program design and implementation?

- Introduce a young people’s advisory group into the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing (National Coalition) so that children and young people with relevant lived experience are actively involved in meetings and consultations and are included in processes for the successor plan.

- Introduce approaches that will allow the Minister to engage with children and young people and hear directly from them about their wellbeing, their ideas and solutions.
 - Good examples of processes include the National Mental Health Strategy, the UNICEF Youth Summit 2019 and Heywire.
 - Establish a national youth advisory group or peak body with a direct line of communication to the Minister.
- Address ethical issues involved in consulting with children and young people and don't use these as a block.
 - Use art, photography and other creative ways to hear the stories that children and young people want to tell.
 - Share expertise/engage experts who know how to support safe, effective and authentic consultation with children and young people including those who are or have experienced vulnerability and trauma.
- Strengthen governance mechanisms to drive greater collaboration and leveraging of the work of Australia's Children's Commissioners and Guardians.
- Embed authentic and enduring consultative mechanisms at all levels (policy, programs and individually in practice) and make this standard/best practice.
 - Governance arrangements are tailored to be inclusive of children/young people and include strategies to enable children/young people to be accompanied by trusted support people when required.
 - The views of children and young people are incorporated into practice approaches both formally and informally. For example, one-to-one feedback, surveys, co-design approaches, case studies, sharing of ideas and actions across practice networks, communities of practice.
 - Use frontline services to find children and young people who want to contribute, as they can help build trust, help with communication and support safety.
- Use language and approaches that children and young people can relate to and feel comfortable with.
 - Avoid language that is intimidating and alienating.
- Introduce mechanisms to amplify the voices of children and young people who are not generally heard and avoid over-playing the 'privileged voices'.
 - Story-telling of experiences has so much to offer.
 - Seek out trusted conversations in unusual settings such as juvenile justice, on the streets, residential care.
 - Peer to peer conversations – by young people with young people.
 - Use platforms such as TikTok and YouTube and methods of communication that young people relate to. Get advice on effective communication methods and don't assume you know.
 - Go to the places where these children and young people are, including schools that are a critical platform.
- Ensure the voices of children and young people are safely included in Family Law and Children's Court processes and educate families and these sectors about ways in which this can be achieved.
- Establish mechanisms to demonstrate how input provided by children and young people is responded to including regular and appropriate feedback mechanisms that include the outcomes/action taken.
 - Make sure children and young people are invited to program/plan launches.
- Educate the community about the importance of children's rights and how upholding these rights can support better safety and wellbeing outcomes for everyone.
 - Children's rights are more prominent in policy, program and practice design.
- Address the negative representation and stereotyping of children and young people perpetuated in the media.
 - Promote their positive contributions.
- Consistent, long-term funding for youth programs that demonstrate effectiveness eg. diversionary education programs such as *Booyah* in Canberra.



What levers can be activated to improve young children's wellbeing?

- Enable and involve young people and parents/families to participate in, ground truth, and test the proposed strategies.
 - This must occur prior to, and during, development and implementation phases.
 - Provide feedback loops to young people and parent groups involved in this process.
- Work with existing structures to give effect to parent voice, such as the *Parent Advisory Committee* introduced by the Minister for Child Safety Youth and Women in QLD.
 - Where these structures don't exist there is a call for development across all jurisdictions.
 - These structures must comprise parents who have experienced child protection systems and obtain their insights in to the successor plan.
- Ensure that men and dads are included in consultation processes.
- Change current policy and strategy language – current language adds to stigma and discourages people from seeking help.
 - We need to use public health language such as 'support'.
- Economic levers must be used constructively and proactively in changing the investment ratio to prevention and early support over time – the cost of the current tertiary system is hindering efforts to improve the wellbeing of children and their families.
 - Improve pay and conditions for working poor and women.
 - Improve access to training and education for those with insecure employment.
 - Plan strategically for a qualified workforce (domestic and family violence/child development etc.)
 - Act on the evidence that expenditure on tertiary systems (domestic and family violence, child protection, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse have broad detrimental economic impacts and contribute to loss of productivity across the whole economy and across a lifetime for children and young people.
- Create a Cabinet Minister for Children with budget authority.
 - Annual reporting requirements to the Council of Australian Governments, similar to those for the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children.
 - Consider child rights legislation to better protect the wellbeing and safety of children and young people. This would benefit a Cabinet Minister and enhance Australia's periodic reporting to United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.
 - Child impact statements could underpin child legislation and policies.
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families and communities receive the attention they need
- Start planning now for climate change and its potential impact on children, young people, families and communities experiencing or at risk of vulnerability.
- Focus on education as a broad system that is used proactively for support and recreation.
 - Hubs, community partnerships, mental health, playgroups etc.



How can we strengthen multi-sectoral collaboration and the effectiveness of the NGO and research sectors through the National Coalition?

- Increase support for the National Coalition secretariat to ensure the broadest possible consultation, information sharing and community education processes, inclusive of cross-sectoral and cross-portfolio interests. The National Coalition is resourced to:
 - bring together service providers, policy makers, researchers and people with lived experience to contribute to policy, program and implementation strategies. For example, continue to build on the success of Child Aware conferences and events.
 - coordinate and disseminate information to and from all members and interested stakeholders regarding the successor plan.

- assist in the consolidation of resources and information specifically related to the National Framework and successor plan. This will help in the development of common principles, language and practice frameworks that are supported by evidence or are showing promise.
- The National Coalition is recognised for bringing together experts from a broad range of sectors.
- Governance structures build capacity for cross sectoral and cross portfolio contributions to development, implementation and monitoring of the successor plan.
- Draw on cultural wisdom of First Nations Peoples and people of diverse backgrounds.
 - co-create new governance models that are inclusive.
 - incorporate the wisdom of other cultures in co-design and implementation.
- Continue to drive the tripartite approach to governance and decision making and strengthen capabilities for working this way.
 - Refresh action to encourage philanthropy and business to be active partners in this important work (as identified in the early stages of the National Framework First three year action plan).



AFTER THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK:

Building the National Child and Family Wellbeing Plan Beyond 2020