

**BEYOND 2020:
TOWARDS A SUCCESSOR PLAN FOR THE
NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR
PROTECTING AUSTRALIA'S CHILDREN
2009-2020**

**FINAL REPORT ON NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS
BY FAMILIES AUSTRALIA**

MAY 2020

FamiliesAustralia

About Families Australia

Families Australia is a national, not-for-profit, peak organisation that strives to improve the wellbeing of Australian families, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised. We do this by providing policy advice to the Australian Government and Parliament on behalf of more than 800 member organisations around Australia.

Families Australia's member organisations provide services in urban, rural and remote locations across Australia. These organisations operate in a diverse range of fields such as family support, child protection, domestic violence, disability, education, grandparent/kinship care, foster care, mental health, and youth work.

Our work is organised around three important ideas, namely, that Australia will be a fairer and more equitable and compassionate nation if we better protect and value children, if all families irrespective of their form are strengthened, and if there are genuine and lasting improvements in the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We thank all participants in the consultations, including members of the National Coalition for Child Safety and Wellbeing, as well as Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and their officials, and EY and Deloitte.

We also wish to acknowledge the support of the Hon. Michelle Landry MP, Assistant Minister for Children and Families and Assistant Minister for Northern Australia, and her staff for their support and participation.

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Abbreviations

ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
ANZCCG	Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians
CA	Child Aware
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CP NMDS	Child Protection National Minimum Data Set
DEX	Department of Social Services Data Exchange
DSS	Australian Government Department of Social Services
FaC	Families and Children Activity
National Coalition	National Coalition for Protecting Australia's Children
National Forum	National Forum for Protecting Australia's Children
National Framework	National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020
National Plan	National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children
TIA	Transitioning to Independent Adulthood
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Preface: COVID-19, children and families

As this report reaches fruition Families Australia records its deep concern about the unprecedented social and economic upheaval being caused by COVID-19 on the lives of Australia's children, young people, parents, families and communities, especially those who are experiencing the greatest vulnerability and disadvantage.

Families Australia's hope is that the successor plan to the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children will align with and support efforts to drive recovery and build back even stronger and more resilient families and communities.

Canberra
28 May 2020

Beyond 2020: Towards a successor plan for the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020

Executive summary

The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) commissioned Families Australia, on behalf of the National Coalition for Child Safety and Wellbeing (National Coalition), to lead national consultations on the successor plan to the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 (National Framework).

The National Framework is the single, national level policy platform that has focused the efforts of all jurisdictions and the non-government and research sectors on delivering better safety and wellbeing outcomes for our most valuable national assets – children and young people and their families.

Commencing in March 2019, 21 consultations involving nearly 800 participants from government, non-government, research and community backgrounds, as well as young people, carers and families, were conducted in all States and Territories. The final consultation was held in Melbourne in March 2020. A discussion paper (**Attachment A**) was shared with all participants to inform the consultations. This report sets out the key themes and suggested high-level priorities for a successor national plan based on these consultations. These priorities reflect the key messages or 'principles' participants identified as critical and that must inform the specific actions to be taken forward in the successor plan.

The consultations revealed a strong consensus that the successor to the National Framework must drive real change by galvanising collective effort across governments, sectors and disciplines in actions that evidence tells us will **prevent** children, young people and families entering child protection systems, over time. It ought to be long-term, practical and achievable, strengthen the focus on wellbeing (including child safety and protection), intensify preventive approaches, prioritise the voices of children and young people in policy and program design and implementation, emphasise activities that support key cohorts, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, and strengthen data and evaluation. Findings and priorities are presented as an integrated set and are grouped under six headings as follows.

A long-term, measurable, aspirational and achievable plan for child wellbeing and safety

The successor plan should:

- be well-resourced, highly aspirational and long-term, with a minimum ten year timeframe. Broadening action beyond the remit of child protection departments and their ministers is needed to actively engage all relevant portfolios, particularly education, health, and early childhood, working in true collaboration around a common goal
- contain tangible desired outcomes and timeframes to mark progress that is underpinned by a robust theory of change
- focus on priority issues where a concerted national approach will deliver the greatest impact in the shortest possible time through the combined efforts of all governments, the non-government and research sectors and the community at large, and allow for flexibility in implementation, recognising contextual differences across jurisdictions, regions and in local communities
- be based on a coherent narrative that is positively framed around the language of child wellbeing, including safety and protection but emphasising prevention, and which defines the role of the successor plan within the broader national policy landscape

- leverage action occurring elsewhere across all jurisdictions, portfolios and service sectors in relation to wellbeing, including through cost-effective linkages with other allied and better-funded initiatives, and
- clearly articulate the relationships between the successor plan and other initiatives supporting the safety of children, young people, parents and families, including the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) and the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (National Plan).

Strengthen prevention and early support under a public health approach

The successor plan should:

- strengthen the public health approach begun under the National Framework, including through better leveraging and coordinating investments by all governments in universal and targeted supports
- strengthen progressive universalism as part of this approach by linking universal service delivery platforms with the delivery of supports to targeted populations through, for example, partnerships and co-location arrangements
- contain a shared outcomes framework for universal and targeted services supporting children, young people, parents and families that explicitly links their role and focus with outcomes under the successor plan and aligns funding with implementation cycles
- include a targeted and comprehensive ‘family support package’ for families with the greatest level of multiple and complex needs, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cohorts
- strengthen investment in infrastructure that supports placed-based approaches and adapt and tailor common principles to allow these approaches to be delivered at scale, and
- further develop the capability of the cross-sectoral workforce to strengthen protective factors and address adverse childhood experiences.

Prioritise the voices of children, young people and families; value children and childhood

The successor plan should:

- highlight the authorising environment created by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- elevate the voices of children and young people in all aspects of the successor plan, including governance arrangements
- establish a formal, young people’s advisory group within the National Coalition to activate the involvement of children and young people with a range of life experiences in processes for the successor plan. This would usefully build on work by Families Australia in bringing the voices of young people together under the banner of *Child Aware* to inform policy, service delivery and practice
- ensure strong linkages with other valuable work on youth participation, including work occurring through the National Youth Taskforce and state-based youth bodies and coalitions
- promote greater community awareness about the importance and value of children and childhood as fundamental to positive outcomes across the life course
- strengthen the *Child Aware* initiative as a continuing Commonwealth Government investment that promotes the successor plan, elevates the voices of children and young people in policy, practice and research, and supports ongoing engagement in implementation, and
- actively engage parents in design and implementation of the successor plan through appropriate and accessible collaborations and consultation mechanisms.

Intensify focus on priority cohorts

The successor plan should:

- continue to build the national focus on improving wellbeing as well as safety outcomes for all children, young people and parents with experience in child protection systems, across jurisdictions and actively engage them as participants in this work
- strengthen efforts to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities in child protection systems by implementing all five elements of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle in all jurisdictions, building the capacity of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO) and actively engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities by implementing Aboriginal-led solutions, and ensuring strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in all governance mechanisms
- strengthen and further develop efforts commenced under the National Framework's Second Action Plan to improve outcomes for young people transitioning from alternative care arrangements to independent adulthood, including those who become young parents, and
- better understand and respond to the needs of **all** carers, in particular, young people who are kinship carers, including sibling carers.

Data, evaluation and reporting improvement

The successor plan should:

- be based on a theory of change (or program logic) that sets a clear direction, articulates desired impacts and 'maps' action against achievable and measurable short-term, intermediate and long term outcomes
- contain a robust evaluation framework designed in the development phase in collaboration with relevant experts and key stakeholders
- build on data development work under the National Framework and continue efforts for more and better data sharing across governments and between government and non-government organisations; identify any data development priorities (including capturing population level data to strengthen reporting under a public health model); leverage relevant data development work occurring elsewhere; take advantage of data linkage capability to track progress against agreed indicators, using State and Territory and Commonwealth data across multiple domains including health, education and training, employment and economic participation, housing and homelessness
- continue to invest in further development of the DSS Data Exchange (DEX) and broaden its applicability to the successor plan. Further to advice from DSS of a 'broad, contextual review of the future of services funded under the Families and Children Activity (FaC) including the future of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*', there is an opportunity to better link investments in the FaC with the successor plan, use DEX to help tell the story of progress under the successor plan, and use DEX data to support continual improvement in the quality of services contributing to the goals of the successor plan
- include qualitative data and case studies and share information about outcomes arising from promising practice—this has been a consistent call in submissions over the life of the National Framework, and
- establish reporting arrangements that tell the story of the successor plan beyond the data, for example, through periodic online snapshots of progress against key outcomes supported by case studies and personal stories that engage a breadth of stakeholders, and dashboard reports that capture key information and indicators succinctly and support ongoing accountability.

Governance and oversight arrangements

The successor plan should:

- further strengthen ‘tripartite’ (that is, Commonwealth Government—State/Territory Government—National Coalition) governance arrangements that ensure accountability and fully engage non-government representatives in decision-making processes and advice to government
- broaden representation in tripartite arrangements to include all relevant portfolios and strengthen accountability in delivering system level change for children, young people, parents and families
- further strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in governance structures and in all aspects of the successor plan, and
- ensure strong representation of the National Coalition in governance arrangements, including the National Forum, and better leverage its key role in engaging the broader non-government and research sectors in all aspects of the successor plan. The National Coalition Steering Group has been a highly effective and dedicated group that has served the National Coalition well over the past 12 years. Going forward, we will need to ensure that representation continues to be aligned with priorities and progress under the successor plan. More broadly, it is important to consider new ways to deploy the expertise of members of the broader National Coalition in future implementation activities.

Families Australia notes the [communiqué](#) issued by Australia’s Community Services Ministers on 20 March 2020 that included discussion on next steps for the National Framework. It is encouraging to see considerable alignment between the principles and priorities agreed by Ministers and those identified through the consultations.

1. Background

1.1 Child abuse and neglect: the national picture

Child abuse and neglect remains one of Australia's greatest challenges.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), the number of children in alternative care arrangements has more than trebled in the past 20 years to reach over 45,000 in 2018-19. In the five years between 2014-15 and 2018-19, the overall number of children who received child protection services in Australia rose by 12%—from around 152,000 children (29 per 1,000) to around 170,000 children (30 per 1,000)¹.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to be over-represented in child protection systems. In 2018-19, 51,500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children received child protection services, a rate of 156 per 1,000 Indigenous children. This was almost eight times the rate for non-Indigenous children (21 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children)². Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are also six times as likely to be the subject of a substantiation as non-Indigenous children³.

The Productivity Commission (2020) calculated that total national recurrent expenditure on child protection, care services (alternative care arrangements and other supported placements), family support services and intensive family support services reached \$6.5 billion in 2018-19—a real increase of 9.5 per cent from 2017-18⁴. **Attachment B** contains an update on child protection in Australia drawn from the latest (2020) data.

1.2 National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children

The National Framework is Australia's first-ever national plan to be agreed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to improve child safety and wellbeing⁵. It is supported by the non-government and research sectors through the National Coalition, a grouping of over 200 leading organisations. Families Australia convenes the National Coalition⁶.

The main aim of the National Framework is to produce 'a sustained and substantial reduction in child abuse and neglect over time'. It is based on the concept of shifting investments toward prevention and early support for families and children under a public health model, and a belief that good outcomes will flow from bringing together governments, non-government organisations and researchers to work in close collaboration⁷. The National Framework is due to conclude in 2020.

The National Framework has recorded some significant achievements, including the establishment of the first-ever National Standards for Out-of-Home Care, the establishment of the office of the National Children's Commissioner, the development of the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set, enhanced professional development for non-government and government workers through the Child

¹ AIHW, *Child Protection Australia 2018-19*. Viewed at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/3a25c195-e30a-4f10-a052-adbfd56d6d45/aihw-cws-74.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Productivity Commission (2020). *Report on Government Services*. Viewed at <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2020/community-services/child-protection>

⁵ Commonwealth of Australia for the Council of Australian Governments (2009). *Protecting children is everyone's business. National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*. Viewed at https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/child_protection_framework.pdf

⁶ Families Australia (2020). 'National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing'. Viewed at <https://familiesaustralia.org.au/national-coalition/>

⁷ Babington, B. (2011). 'National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children. Perspectives on progress and challenges', *Family Matters*, 89, December 2011. Viewed at <https://aifs.gov.au/publications/family-matters/issue-89/national-framework-protecting-australias-children>

Aware conference series, and improved information sharing protocols across jurisdictions to better protect children and families who move across borders.

The National Framework is the single, national level mechanism that has focused the efforts of all jurisdictions and the non-government and research sectors on delivering better safety and wellbeing outcomes for our most valuable national assets – children and young people and their families. This collaborative approach has been one of the National Framework’s key strengths, though it is widely acknowledged that much more needs to be done⁸.

Against this background, there have been strong calls across the community services and research sectors for a national plan to succeed the National Framework after 2020 that builds on, and strengthens, the foundations it has laid—to achieve real and sustained improvements in child safety and wellbeing at the earliest possible time. Many stakeholders have called for a successor plan that contains a broader wellbeing focus and concrete, implementable actions to help ‘turn the curve’ away from tertiary level responses.

Finally, it should be noted that the National Framework is one of a wide number of policy and program responses to child safety issues being delivered through Commonwealth, State and Territory government, non-government and research efforts. Some of the key initiatives are listed in **Attachment C**.

2. Methodology

Families Australia was commissioned by DSS to lead national consultations on a successor plan (identified as ‘Beyond 2020’) to the National Framework, on behalf of the National Coalition. Families Australia worked closely with SNAICC—National Voice for our Children and the Family Matters Campaign, the Office of the Assistant Minister for Children and Families and Assistant Minister for Northern Australia, the Hon Michelle Landry MP, DSS and State and Territory government officials during these consultations.

Families Australia gratefully acknowledges the Hon. Michelle Landry MP who spoke at the Melbourne consultation (February 2020) and at the combined National Coalition Annual Meeting and CA2020 (March 2020). The Minister’s participation was warmly welcomed by attendees.

In all, Families Australia hosted 21 consultations across all States and Territories which commenced in Hobart in March 2019 and concluded in Melbourne in March 2020 at the combined Annual Meeting of the National Coalition and Child Aware 2020 (CA2020) event. Nearly 800 people participated in the gatherings, representing a broad range of sectors and disciplines from government, non-government, research and community backgrounds, as well as young people, carers and families.

Sector representation broadened over time as a result of work by Families Australia, National Coalition members and government officials to engage participants from other portfolios areas including health, education, justice and disability. This was particularly pleasing given attempts to engage stakeholders beyond the tertiary level, child protection systems has proved challenging over the life of the National Framework. It was also a priority, given the potential for the successor plan to broaden the focus to wellbeing and drive increased action on broad-based, cross-sectoral prevention and early (targeted) support initiatives for children, young people, families and communities.

The consultation program included public consultations and smaller leadership group discussions. Participants for the leadership group discussions were identified in consultation with Commonwealth,

⁸ Babington, B. (2019). Address to Child Aware Conference Brisbane. Viewed at <https://familiesaustralia.org.au/improving-wellbeing-and-safety-outcomes-for-families-and-children-beyond-2020/>

State and Territory governments and the National Coalition. Two targeted consultations were also included in the consultation program as outlined below.

- Hobart 16 March 2019 – public consultation
- Brisbane 17 May 2019 – Child Aware Conference successor plan policy workshop
- Adelaide 28 August 2019 – public consultation and leadership group discussion
- Brisbane 9 October 2019 - public consultation and leadership group discussion
- Townsville 10-11 October 2019 – one public consultation with strong representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and community representatives, one targeted consultation with parents from the Family Inclusion Network Townsville and representatives from Act for Kids Townsville, and one leadership group discussion
- Northern Rivers 15 October 2019 – one public consultation with good representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including Grandmothers Against Removals (GMAR), young people and community representatives
- Sydney 1 November 2019 – one public consultation and one leadership group discussion
- Perth 7 November 2019 – one public consultation including young people identified through the Valuing Children Initiative and one leadership group discussion
- Darwin 21-22 November 2019 – one public consultation, one targeted consultation with a group of young people who are members of the Northern Territory (NT) Youth Round Table all of whom lived in remote communities and one leadership group discussion
- Canberra 28 November 2019 – one public consultation and one leadership group discussion
- Melbourne 17 February 2020 – one public consultation including young people and parents with experience of child protection services
- Melbourne 10 March 2020 - Annual meeting of the National Coalition and CA2020 event.

Summary reports of all jurisdiction-based consultations and targeted consultations are at **Attachment D**. Targeted consultations ensured that young people and parents with lived experience of child protection systems were actively engaged and included in discussions about the successor plan. Elevating these voices in policy development spheres is a priority for Families Australia and consistent with the research and evidence about the importance and value of engaging people in decisions that impact upon them and enabling them to exercise their human rights.

In December 2019 Families Australia provided a preliminary report on consultations held to that time—see **Attachment E**. That report preceded the consultation in Melbourne in February 2020 and the final, high level consultation at the National Coalition Annual Meeting on 10 March 2020.

The final consultation on 10 March 2020 was conducted under the banner of the annual meeting of the National Coalition. A summary report of the consultation is available [here](#). It was designed to build upon outcomes from all previous consultations and to identify key national priorities and practical actions for possible inclusion in the successor plan. A number of young people, representing a diverse range of organisations, participated in CA2020 as keynote speakers and the final consultation on the successor plan, as follows:

- YMCA NSW (Youth Premier of the 2019 YMCA Youth Parliament and young person of Aboriginal descent)
- Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network
- Siblings Australia
- Canberra Police Citizens Youth Club
- Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University and young person with lived experience in alternative care
- A young person who is a speaker, philanthropist and advocate from the ACT.

The Australian and New Zealand Children’s Commissioners and Guardians (ANZCCG) formally wrote to Families Australia in September 2019, providing their input to the consultations (see **Attachment F**).

Families Australia responded to feedback during the consultations and in discussions with community members and young people on the punitive and stigmatising language often associated with tertiary child protection systems. In this report, 'early support' is used instead of 'early intervention'; 'parents' is used to include those with an experience of child protection and justice systems. We have also preferred the terms 'alternative care arrangements' over 'out-of-home care' and 'adverse childhood experiences' over 'child abuse and neglect', except where used in references.

3. Findings and priorities

The consultations received overwhelming support and drew a vast array of ideas, options and issues for inclusion in the successor plan. These have been captured in the reports on individual jurisdictional consultations (published separately online and at **Attachment C**) that also inform this final consultation report. Within this rich and comprehensive compilation, however, a number of high level priorities emerged. These priorities are presented as an integrated set with each holding equal importance and are grouped under six headings. Throughout this report key quotations from the consultations have been included (in dialogue boxes) to illustrate key points.

Participants were resounding in their calls for the successor plan to not only build upon the National Framework, but to be *transformative*. In this context, they were adamant in their views that the successor plan is a critical opportunity to elevate the focus on prevention. It must provide a national architecture that drives the design and implementation of policy, programs and practice that **will** change trajectories for children, young people, parents, families and communities experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage. 'More of the same' will not deliver the desired policy, program and practice changes that stakeholders believe children, young people, parents and families experiencing vulnerability need and deserve.

Participant perspective

'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.'

3.1 A long-term, measurable and aspirational plan for child wellbeing and safety

Key theme: Build a long-term aspirational successor plan that extends beyond child safety and child protection and uses the positively framed language of child and young person's wellbeing.

Overwhelmingly, participants called for an ambitious, appropriately resourced, long-term successor plan of ten plus years underpinned by a well-focused, implementation logic and achievable national actions with progress tracked against short-term, intermediate and long term outcomes. Longer implementation plans beyond three years and aligned to program funding cycles were also seen as essential to enable sustained effort to deliver on agreed outcomes within a realistic time frame.

Wellbeing emerged as one of the highest priority issues for participants across all consultations. The National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling at the University of Canberra notes that 'various interpretations and approaches to measuring wellbeing have been proposed in the literature: very broadly, the term usually refers to the extent to which a person has a high quality of life, can achieve desired outcomes in life, and can contribute to society. It is usually multidimensional, capturing all important aspects in life including mental health, physical health, economic and social wellbeing and liveability. Wellbeing can be measured objectively and subjectively'⁹. Using this definition, child safety can be seen as a dimension of wellbeing and, as emphasised by the ANZCCG, would sit firmly within the scope of the successor plan.

⁹ Miranti R., Tanton R., Vidyattama Y., Schirmer, J., Rowe P. (2017). *Wellbeing Indicators Across the Lifecycle*. Viewed at <https://www.saxinstitute.org.au/publications/wellbeing-indicators-across-the-life-cycle/>

The strength of a wellbeing frame was seen as its ability to embed a broader focus in the successor plan and drive a shift towards prevention and early support while continuing a necessary focus on children's and young people's safety. Many participants noted the emphasis of the National Framework on tertiary level responses and child protection systems reflected the context in which the National Framework was developed. However, this was seen as a detriment to its original intent—to place a greater emphasis on building a strong universal and targeted support system that can assist families early enough, and comprehensively enough, to prevent abuse and neglect occurring and avert the triggering of child protection services.

Consistent with an ecological view—also identified through the consultations as an important lens—threats to the health and wellbeing of children, young people and parents and families originate in all sectors and strategies to strengthen protective factors and improve health and wellbeing will not succeed unless they are truly multisectoral¹⁰. This includes addressing the drivers of child maltreatment including poverty, homelessness, alcohol and other drug misuse, mental health and domestic and family violence and utilising national level data to monitor outcomes.

A wellbeing frame has the potential to galvanise cross-sectoral engagement and alignment around shared, high level principles and goals, and drive system level reform that shifts investment to the universal and targeted levels of the public health pyramid'. It also has the potential to build a shared, positively framed language across different streams and portfolios for those working with children, young people and families. This was seen to be currently lacking. Many participants called for the successor plan to act as a platform for a cogent, unifying, 'wellbeing narrative' that:

- drives a prevention and early support agenda for children, young people, parents and families and communities, beyond tertiary level responses, with a focus on strengthening protective factors
- recognises and leverages, but does not duplicate or confuse, relevant national policies and strategies, including implementation of Commonwealth Government responses to the Royal Commission, and the National Plan (this is particularly pertinent given the recent announcement of consultations for the development of a successor National Plan)
- recognises and leverages, but does not duplicate or confuse, State and Territory government efforts including those developed in response to the Royal Commission
- actively engages cross-sectoral effort and collaboration, and
- clarifies the various roles of the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and the non-government sector for all actions under the successor plan.

Participant perspective

'Safety shouldn't be the end goal. The end goal should be safety and wellbeing. Wellbeing indicators and approaches are already being adopted by numerous State and Territory Governments and are already included in health and education sectors. We should include wellbeing outcomes in the successor plan.'

The perspectives of children and young people in framing this wellbeing narrative requires important consideration. Children's and young people's understandings of wellbeing differ from current discourses and there is potential to reframe policy guidelines, service frameworks and outcome measures to include them¹¹. This could be explored further as part of the development process for the successor plan, for example, in consultation with the National Children's Commissioner and ANZCCG, organisations that provide direct support to young people and, most importantly, young people themselves.

Wellbeing frames are already used in policy and program at both national and State and Territory levels and align well with an emphasis on prevention and early support, while not excluding safety.

¹⁰ 'A future for the world's children? A WHO-UNICEF-Lancet Commission'. Viewed at [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)32540-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)32540-1/fulltext)

¹¹ Fattore, T. *A child's sense of wellbeing: developing wellbeing indicators from a child's standpoint*. Department of Sociology Macquarie University. Viewed at https://www.theirfuturesmatter.nsw.gov.au/resources/publications?result_536530_result_page=2

Programs funded under DSS' *Families and Children Activity* deliver a range of early intervention and prevention services to improve child, youth, adult and family wellbeing, increase economic engagement and support more cohesive communities. Wellbeing is also central in [national health and education program and policy](#). The social and emotional wellbeing of children and indicators of family functioning are reported on by AIHW in its 2019 report, [Australia's Children](#).

At the State and Territory level, the [Tasmanian](#), [Queensland](#), [South Australian](#), [Northern Territory](#) and [ACT](#) Governments have adopted wellbeing in policy and programs across different portfolios. A number of jurisdictions have expressed a keen interest in Tasmania's reforms and early, anecdotal evidence suggests these reforms are having a positive impact for children, young people and families by diverting them away from the child protection system. The Children's Commissioner in Western Australia has also recently developed the [Wellbeing Monitoring Framework](#) to monitor and report on the wellbeing of Western Australian children and young people.

Linked to calls for a more aspirational national policy were suggestions for generating greater public awareness and support for efforts to tackle child abuse and neglect. Some participants remarked that the National Framework had not been a success in terms of stimulating balanced community understanding about child abuse and neglect and that far more needs to be done in this area, including through concerted social media campaigns and cost-effective linkages with other allied and better-funded initiatives such as the National Plan.

Priorities

The successor plan should:

- be well-resourced, highly aspirational and long-term, with a minimum ten year timeframe. Broadening action beyond the remit of child protection departments and their ministers is needed to actively engage all relevant portfolios, particularly education, health, and early childhood, working in true collaboration around a common goal
- contain tangible desired outcomes and timeframes to mark progress that is underpinned by a robust theory of change
- focus on priority issues where a concerted national approach will deliver the greatest impact in the shortest possible time through the combined efforts of all governments, the non-government and research sectors and the community at large, and allow for flexibility in implementation, recognising contextual differences across jurisdictions, regions and in local communities
- be based on a coherent narrative that is positively framed around the language of child wellbeing, including safety and protection but emphasising prevention, and which defines the role of the successor plan within the broader national policy landscape
- leverage action occurring elsewhere across all jurisdictions, portfolios and service sectors in relation to wellbeing, including through cost-effective linkages with other allied and better-funded initiatives, and
- clearly articulate the relationships between the successor plan and other initiatives supporting the wellbeing and safety of children, young people, parents and families, including the recommendations of the Royal Commission and the National Plan.

3.2 Strengthen prevention and early support under a public health approach

Key theme: Drive action to implement the public health approach to safety and wellbeing by strengthening and better coordinating investments in, and the role of, the universal and targeted service systems.

There was very strong support for the public health approach introduced under the National Framework to be continued in the successor plan. Participants frequently called for an 'inverting of the pyramid' to 'shift the curve' of escalating demand for, and the social and economic costs of, child protection interventions by diverting children, young people and families into universal and targeted

supports. Consistent with the literature, strengthening protective factors (for example, effective parenting) and ameliorating modifiable risk factors for child abuse and neglect using a public health approach was seen as a central component in making this shift¹². Many participants noted work that commenced under the Third Action Plan of the National Framework to focus on the early years, particularly the *First Thousand Days* but called for much more to be done. Significant ongoing effort is required to help build a more effective system of early childhood development and parental support, given the overwhelming evidence pointing to the importance of this period to outcomes across the life course.

While it was acknowledged that a continued national focus on improving outcomes for all children, young people and families in tertiary services must rightly continue as part of the successor plan, participants called for a key focus to be on strengthening the roles of both universal and targeted services. This focus was seen to be two-fold – a focus on what services are provided and the evidence base supporting them as well as the way in which services operate collectively as a ‘prevention and early support system’ (progressive universalism). The need to strengthen the intersections between these types of services was also raised to increase their reach and responsiveness to all children, young people, parents and families.

Consistent with this approach, linking universal service delivery platforms with the delivery of supports to targeted populations through partnerships and co-location arrangements was identified as an important strategy^{13 14}. There is strong evidence that tertiary child protection systems and out-of-home (alternative) care arrangements are failing to improve long-term outcomes for children and arrest devastating cycles of intergenerational abuse and neglect¹⁵. This is particularly the case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.

Participant perspective

‘National child and family wellbeing policy needs to be underpinned by commitment to a more equitable society where all people have access to safe, affordable housing, quality health services, education, transport, employment, technology and other wellbeing supports.’

Many participants strongly supported a focus of the successor plan on building the capacity and capability of both the universal and targeted services sector to change trajectories so that statutory intervention is a case of last resort. While this is an aspiration of the National Framework, statistics consistently demonstrate it has not been achieved and therefore, a renewed focus on investment strategies that will deliver this change was deemed by participants as essential. This includes building workforce capacity and capability to respond effectively and provide early support as required under a public health approach. In 2018-19, of the approximately 451,200 notifications made to child protection authorities, about 171,300 (38%) were assessed as requiring further investigation and the rest (279,900 or 62%) were dealt with by other means, such as by referral to a support service¹⁶.

Participant perspective

‘Investment continues to be dragged into the wrong end of the system while numbers of children, young people and families in child protection systems continue to increase. An appropriately resourced, coordinated prevention and early support strategy is needed to shift the balance.’

¹² Higgins, D. (2018) *Essentials for Childhood: Where Prevention of Child Abuse is an Essential Element*. Viewed at <https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/essentials-for-childhood-where-prevention-of-child-abuse-is-an-essential-element/>

¹³ NSW Government Schools as Community Centres. Viewed at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/student-wellbeing/whole-school-approach/wellbeing-support/schools-as-community-centres>

¹⁴ Government of South Australia Department of Education. Schools as community hubs. Viewed at <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites-and-facilities/community-use-facilities/schools-as-community-hubs>

¹⁵ Tune, D. 2015 *Independent Review of Out of Home Care in NSW, Final Report*. Viewed at <https://www.acwa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/TUNE-REPORT-indepth-review-out-of-home-care-in-nsw.pdf>

¹⁶ AIHW, *Child Protection Australia 2018-19*. Viewed at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/3a25c195-e30a-4f10-a052-adbfd56d6d45/aihw-cws-74.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

A research paper released by the Australian Institute of Criminology presents selected findings of a detailed case file audit of 300 'crossover' children appearing before the Victorian Children's Court in 2016–17. Neglect (67%, n=202) and physical abuse (60%, n=81) were widespread among crossover children. Almost all children had previous child protection notifications (91%, n=252), and 24 percent (n=66) had 10 or more prior notifications. 68% of children had experienced five or more adverse childhood events such as physical, emotional and or sexual abuse; neglect; exposure to family violence; household substance abuse and/or mental health issue. The study indicates that child protection services received notifications about most crossover children before age 10, emphasising both the potential for and importance of improving efforts to prevent cumulative harm to this group¹⁷.

In 2018-19, of the approximately 451,200 notifications made to child protection authorities, about 171,300 (38%) were assessed as requiring further investigation and the rest (279,900 or 62%) were dealt with by other means, such as by referral to a support service¹⁸. Strengthening the broader service system is therefore key to support any plan that aims to achieve a substantial and sustained reduction in adverse childhood experiences over time and deliver better outcomes. Including prevention and early support as a priority under the successor plan would be welcomed as an active step towards implementing the public health approach. Recognising policy expertise is not confined to government departments, the significant levels of expertise within local communities must be leveraged to encourage and support expert and experienced stakeholders in designing, shaping and delivering the policy solutions to address the needs of their own areas¹⁹. These solutions should be informed by available research and evidence reviews, including those undertaken to help inform relevant government service reform agendas. Evidence gaps could be addressed as part of a research agenda.

There is compelling research that a significant driver of current and projected future expenditure derives from a relatively small number of families who have multiple and complex needs often linked to alcohol and substance misuse, mental ill-health, and/or family and domestic violence. This includes work by the [Australian Centre for Child Protection at the University of South Australia \(2019\)](#) and the Tune Review in New South Wales in 2015. In all consultations, participants called for urgent and concerted action by all governments to assist families with multiple and complex needs to access help early and have those needs met in a holistic, coordinated and timely manner. This must be provided without a child protection notification triggering this type of response. The concept of a package of cross-sectoral 'child and family services' for families with multiple and complex needs was suggested as one option. It is noted that a similar concept was recommended by David Tune in his final report of the *2015 Independent Review of Out-of-Home Care in NSW*. The Tune Review recommended the development of personalised support packages for vulnerable children and their families using an investment approach to inform the prioritisation of cohorts with the greatest need and resource allocation for the greatest benefit²⁰.

Participants were also unanimous in their calls for nothing less than collective action across sectors to drive a prevention and early support agenda. This commenced under the National Framework with funding for [Protecting and Nurturing Australia's Children: Building Capacity Building Bridges](#) and more recently in place-based approaches.

¹⁷ Baidawi, S. & Sheehan, R. (2019). 'Crossover kids': Offending by child protection-involved youth. *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice* no. 582. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. Viewed at <https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi582>

¹⁸ AIHW, *Child Protection Australia 2018-19*. Viewed at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/3a25c195-e30a-4f10-a052-adbfd56d6d45/aihw-cws-74.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

¹⁹ Kennedy, F. (2020) Beyond "prevention is better than cure": understanding prevention and early intervention as an approach to public policy, Policy Design and Practice, DOI: 10.1080/25741292.2020.1736766 Viewed at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25741292.2020.1736766>

²⁰ Tune, D. (2015) *Independent Review of Out of Home Care in NSW, Final Report*. Viewed at <https://www.acwa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/TUNE-REPORT-indepth-review-out-of-home-care-in-nsw.pdf>

The *Child Aware* concept was developed out of the ‘Building Capacity Building Bridges’ project and is specific to the National Framework. It seeks to embed a prevention and early support focus across organisations, communities, business and governments to strengthen protective factors and ameliorate risk factors for adverse childhood experiences. [The Principles of Child Aware Approaches](#) and [Child Aware Conferences](#) generated under the National Framework support practice change and link policy, research and practice.

Participant perspective

‘Risk factors for child maltreatment often travel together yet responses are diffused across separate systems. These systems need to work seamlessly with families to deliver a holistic response.’

The importance of building on the momentum generated through *Child Aware* and its resonance with the sector emerged throughout the consultations. It was also echoed in the 2020 Families Australia Member Satisfaction Survey. Participants recommended *Child Aware* continue as a ‘signature’ feature of the successor plan to bring government, non-government organisations, researchers and practitioners together, promote the successor plan in policy and practice and share cross-sectoral approaches improving outcomes for children, young people, families and communities.

Participants also emphasised the importance of improving linkages between existing investments targeted towards children, young people and families and the successor plan. For example, several participants argued that the Commonwealth Government’s Families and Children Activity funding could be better linked to enhance prevention and early support, given the options canvassed in the *Stronger Outcomes for Families* discussion paper and consultation process held in 2018. It was noted that the principles outlined in the discussion paper aligned well with discussions occurring as part of the Beyond 2020 consultations. The role of the Communities for Children Facilitating Partner Activity in contributing directly to the goals of the National Framework and to the successor plan was also recognised, noting one of its important design features is its relationship to the statutory child protection system and the opportunities it provides to help alleviate the pressure on that system from growing demand for statutory child protection services²¹. Some participants proposed that any reforms arising from *Stronger Outcomes for Families* could be embedded as an early action in the successor plan as a positive signal to stakeholders of the Commonwealth’s ongoing commitment.

Other participants called for greater effort to link up the wide range of existing Commonwealth, State and Territory and non-government social welfare programs. In this regard, Families Australia also notes the findings of the [Productivity Commission Report into Expenditure on Children in the Northern Territory](#) that calls for governments to work together to address the fragmentation, service gaps, duplication and inefficiencies in services for families and children. This report was specific to the unique contextual relationship that exists between the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments in relation to service funding. However, a perceived lack of coordination between Commonwealth and State and Territory government funding was also raised as an issue during the Beyond 2020 consultations. Exploring options for all governments to work more closely around service provision so as to maximise the impact of limited resources could be considered under the successor plan. One cost-effective way to proceed is for COAG to assign a commonly-worded child safety and wellbeing priority activity to all relevant national plans such as in the areas of education, health and housing and homelessness with the Community Services Ministers being responsible for driving high level outcomes.

Participant perspective

‘A key goal of whatever we do must be to partner – across governments, with the non-government sector, with communities and with families.’

While emerging evidence suggests that earlier intervention and prevention approaches work, too often they are not implemented at scale, that is, they remain short-term or as geographically limited

²¹ ANAO Audit Report No.18 2012–13 Administration of Communities for Children under the Family Support Program. Viewed at <https://www.anao.gov.au/sites/default/files/201213%20Audit%20Report%20No%2018.pdf>

trials, or not implemented early enough to prevent risks escalating²². This was identified as a serious issue by a large number of participants who were concerned about the impact of rolling out new, short-term programs that do not continue, eroding the trust of the communities and clients they seek to serve and delivering little long-term change or the sustainable outcomes they were intended to. They called for long-term funding for, and scaling up of, prevention and early support approaches that are informed by evidence.

Broader roll out of place-based approaches developed in partnership with local communities, led by community organisations and supported by long-term funding arrangements was raised at all consultations. The work of Professor Ross Homel on collective impact frameworks for place-based initiatives and 'CREATE-ing pathways to prevention and child wellbeing' was cited as an exemplar where long-term investment in communities is helping build the necessary infrastructure and expertise to support true cross-sectoral collaborations between research, government, and non-government organisations^{23,24}.

DSS' *Stronger Places, Stronger People* was cited as another example where all levels of government and communities are partnering around a locally-led, shared agenda for change. The importance of Aboriginal led decision-making and the role of ACCOs in the design, implementation and monitoring of *Stronger Places, Stronger People* was recognised, noting one of the minimum requirements for implementation of *Stronger Places, Stronger People* is that

*'...traditional owners and cultural leaders to be included and engaged in culturally safe ways throughout local planning, implementation, governance and decision-making. This includes treating Elders past, present and emerging with respect and seeking to learn from the strengths and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture'*²⁵.

Such collaborations are of significant interest to participants who emphasised the importance of sharing broadly with all stakeholders the progress being made, the learnings being drawn and the outcomes that are achieved. These collaborations are seen as essential for achieving measurable, ongoing improvements in wellbeing (and safety) across the life course.

Priorities

The successor plan should:

- strengthen the public health approach begun under the National Framework, including through better leveraging and coordinating investments by all governments in universal and targeted supports
- strengthen progressive universalism as part of this approach by linking universal service delivery platforms with the delivery of supports to targeted populations through, for example, partnerships and co-location arrangements
- contain a shared outcomes framework for universal and targeted services supporting children, young people, parents and families that explicitly links their role and focus with outcomes under the successor plan and aligns funding with implementation cycles
- include a targeted and comprehensive 'family support package' for families with the greatest level of multiple and complex needs, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cohorts

²² Scott D., Lonne B., Higgins D., Herrenkohl T. (2019). *Revisioning Public Health Approaches for Protecting Children*. Viewed at

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333521097_Revisioning_Public_Health_Approaches_for_Protecting_Children

²³ Homel, R. (2018). Keith Hancock Lecture. Viewed at <https://socialsciences.org.au/events/keith-hancock-lecture-2018-creating-pathways-to-child-well-being-in-disadvantaged-communities/>

²⁴ Homel, R. & Freiberg, K. & Branch, S. (2015). CREATE-ing capacity to take developmental crime prevention to scale: A community-based approach within a national framework. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*. 48. 367-385. Viewed at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282484497_CREATE-ing_capacity_to_take_developmental_crime_prevention_to_scale_A_community-based_approach_within_a_national_framework

²⁵ DSS (2019). *Stronger Places, Stronger People* model. Viewed at <https://platformc.org/sites/default/files/spsp/spsp-model.pdf>

- strengthen investment in infrastructure that supports placed-based approaches and adapt and tailor common principles to allow these approaches to be delivered at scale, and
- further develop the capability of the cross-sectoral workforce to strengthen protective factors and address adverse childhood experiences.

3.3 Prioritise the voices of children, young people and families; valuing childhood

Key theme: Strengthen mechanisms to amplify the voices of children, young people and families with a diversity and breadth of experience in all aspects of the successor plan including national policy, program design and implementation.

The appointment of Australia's inaugural National Children's Commissioner as an action under the Second Action Plan of the National Framework has delivered a much stronger focus on the UNCRC to which Australia is a signatory. The National Framework features prominently in Australia's periodic reporting to the UN on progress in fulfilling its obligations. Article 12 of the CRC stipulates the right of all children and young people capable of forming their own views to express those views freely in all matters affecting them, with these views being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. This right extends to children and young people being given the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting them, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

The right to be heard in judicial and administrative proceedings has particular relevance to the [Joint Select Committee on Australia's Family Law System](#) that has received over 800 submissions, conducted three hearings, and is due to report in October 2020. Former National Children's Commissioner, Megan Mitchell, appeared before the Committee and advocated for safe and age-appropriate processes to enable the views of children and young people to be considered in Family Law proceedings. Families Australia strongly endorses this approach and the rights of children and young people, consistent with the UNCRC.

All consultations identified, as a priority, continuing the rights-based approach underpinning the National Framework in the successor plan. Participants emphasised the strong link between upholding children's rights and delivering better safety and wellbeing outcomes. They identified the linking of a rights-based approach with much stronger 'voice', representative of children and young people beyond child protection systems, as a key feature of the successor plan.

Participants also identified the opportunity for the successor plan to give voice to the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) to which Australia is also a signatory. Goal 16 pertains to 'Peace, justice and strong institutions that seek to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'; it requires Australia to report on the proportion of children aged 1-17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month and the proportion of the population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group. Including these linkages in the successor plan were seen as positive steps towards Australia meeting its obligations to the UN, including reporting obligations.

There is increasing research and evidence supporting the benefits of authentically engaging children and young people in decision-making in all settings. These include effective policy-making, improved services design, autonomy and opportunities for action on the part of children and young people²⁶. Children and young people know the most about what is important to them and often have insights and perspectives which shed new light and can help to resolve issues in innovative ways. Families Australia took active steps to ensure the voices of children and young people with a breadth of

²⁶ Scottish Government (2020). *Decision-making: children and young people's participation*. Viewed at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/decision-making-children-and-young-peoples-participation/pages/participation/>

experience and from diverse backgrounds featured prominently in the consultations. This began by driving a strong agenda for the participation of children and young people using the *Child Aware Initiatives* platform established under the Second Action Plan.

Families Australia established a *Young People's Reference Group* and a highly successful *Young People's Panel*, developed and led by young people, for the [Child Aware Conference](#) in 2019, facilitated a targeted consultation in the Northern Territory in November 2019, established a *Young People's Panel* at CA2020, and took active steps to ensure the participation of young people in the successor plan consultation at the annual meeting of the National Coalition.

This included a consultation question specific to engaging the voices of children and young people in all aspects of the successor plan. Families Australia also encouraged National Coalition members to bring children and young people to the consultations.

Three participant perspectives

'The positive contributions of children and young people should be promoted in mainstream media instead of the negative stereotypes.'

'Children and young people [should] have access to the services and support they need to grow up happy and healthy no matter where they live.'

'Children and young people [should be] consulted in all decisions that affect them and have their views equally weighted with those of adults.'

Engaging authentically with children and young people in all aspects of the successor plan, including governance mechanisms, is a key theme emerging from the consultations and was strongly emphasised by ANZCCG. This includes a strong voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, as well as those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The first engagement of young people under the National Framework occurred in the Third Action Plan. DSS jointly engaged the CREATE Foundation and (then) National Children's Commissioner Megan Mitchell to undertake a series of consultations that focused on young people with an experience of mandated alternative care²⁷. Participants called for formal mechanisms to strengthen authentic engagement with children and young people in all aspects of the successor plan.

There was strong support for the establishment of a young people's advisory group or similar formal structure to help inform the development of the successor plan and participate in its implementation. This group would also be available to the Assistant Minister for Children and Families, and could link with other relevant youth initiatives to strengthen the cross-fertilisation

of ideas and enrich consultation processes relevant to the successor plan, across portfolios, between jurisdictions and in non-government spheres. This would include any work progressing through the National Youth Taskforce relevant to the successor plan.

It must be noted that authentic engagement will require an acceptance that existing organisational systems can present challenges to actively listening to what young people have to say, acting on their views and ideas and demonstrating to young people how their contributions have influenced policy and programming. It will require time and dedicated financial and human resources. It will also require an organisation with the capacity and capability to take on this responsibility, including recruitment and retention of members, the development and implementation of appropriate policies and procedures, insurance, administrative support and facilitation of any mentoring, as required.

This will require further consultation and consideration. There is an opportunity to bring members of the Young People's Panel formed for CA2020 into this role, given their breadth of experience and the

²⁷ Roy, A. for the Create Foundation (2017). *Talking with young people about the National Framework*. Viewed at <https://www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children/publications-articles/talking-with-young-people-about-the-national-framework>

diversity of backgrounds they represent. Members of the National Coalition who attended CA2020 and the proceeding Annual Meeting expressed support for this option.

The (yet to be appointed) National Children's Commissioner and the ANZCCG could be consulted on processes to ensure the voices of **children** are elevated in all aspects of the successor plan. ANZCCG already have the expertise, mechanisms and policies and procedures for engaging children, so as to fulfil their role in ensuring the best interests of children are considered in public policy and program development. Partnerships with appropriate research organisations, as part of this process, could also be explored.

Perhaps more broadly, a strong and persistent theme through the consultations related to valuing children and young people in the community at large. Many participants called for actions that promote greater community awareness about the importance and value of children and childhood in its own right.

The [Valuing Children Initiative](#) is a prime example of advocacy for greater community understanding, support and care for children: 'to inspire Australians to value all children, understand that a child's wellbeing is the shared responsibility of the entire community and ensure children are at the forefront of our considerations'.

Participant perspective

'Systems change is integral to changing trajectories for children, young people, families and communities experiencing, or at risk of experiencing vulnerability. Actions under the successor plan must help build a child inclusive system – across policy, programs, organisations, practice, and at the community level.'

Priorities

The successor plan should:

- highlight the authorising environment created by the UNCRC
- elevate the voices of children and young people in all aspects of the successor plan, including governance arrangements
- establish a formal, young people's advisory group within the National Coalition to activate the involvement of children and young people with lived experience in processes for the successor plan. This would usefully build on work by Families Australia in bringing the voices of young people together under the banner of *Child Aware* to inform policy, service delivery and practice
- ensure strong linkages with other valuable work on youth participation, including work occurring through the National Youth Taskforce and state-based youth bodies and coalitions
- promote greater community awareness about the importance and value of children and childhood
- strengthen the *Child Aware* initiative as a continuing Commonwealth Government investment that promotes the successor plan, elevates the voices of children and young people in policy, practice and research, and supports ongoing engagement in implementation, and
- actively engage parents in design and implementation of the successor plan through appropriate and accessible collaborations and consultation mechanisms.

3.4 Intensify focus on priority cohorts

Key theme: Continue action to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in child protection systems; facilitate better outcomes for young people transitioning to independent adulthood from mandated alternative care and include a focus on better support for kinship carers, in particular, young people who are caring for their siblings.

All consultations identified the need to continue a national focus on improving outcomes for all children in alternative care arrangements including work to improve placement stability, given the

overwhelming evidence about its importance in supporting positive outcomes. Some key priority groups were also identified, including those under the Fourth Action Plan of the National Framework.

3.4.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families

Overwhelmingly, participants called for sustained effort to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in child protection systems and reduce the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being removed from kin, culture and community. There is much research and evidence that points to the complexities driving this over-representation and the need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions^{28 29 30}.

The [Family Matters Report \(2019\)](#) prepared through a collaborative effort of SNAICC—National Voice for our Children, the Family Matters campaign, Griffith University, University of Melbourne and Monash University, cites the impacts of colonisation, past and present discriminatory policies and practices, and persistent social inequity, coupled with under-investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led and controlled solutions, as having created a legacy of disproportionate child protection intervention in communities across Australia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice

‘Our voices get changed and watered down and the words aren’t our words and they don’t look familiar to us.’

Consistent with the suggested priorities in this report, full implementation of all five elements of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle in all jurisdictions was identified throughout the consultations as a key step. Participants noted that, despite ongoing calls through the National Framework for this to be implemented as a national priority, to date it has not been achieved.

Continuing to strengthen the role and capacity of ACCOs across sectors and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations was also identified as a priority under the successor plan, and aligning approaches with the principles outlined in the [COAG Statement on Closing the Gap Refresh](#) in December 2018.

There were calls for the appointment of a national commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people (more [here](#)) and for all States and Territories to establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Commissioners (to date, they have been established in Victoria and Queensland). Leveraging effort occurring in other areas such as health and education, through the National Office of Indigenous Australians (including the recently announced National Indigenous Early Childhood Strategy), at State and Territory government levels and in the non-government sector (for example, SNAICC’s Family Matters Campaign) was also seen as vital.

Participant perspective

‘A strong cultural lens and a genuine partnership to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in child protection and justice systems.’

Participants noted the early ‘green shoots’ emerging from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led initiatives such as the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services](#) established by the Queensland Government Department of Child Safety Youth and Women. Participants emphasised the importance of continuing to share information about promising initiatives across jurisdictions and prioritising investment to scale up, over time, those that are

²⁸ Productivity Commission, March 2020. *Expenditure on Children in the Northern Territory*. Viewed at <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/nt-children/report>

²⁹ AIHW, *Child Protection Australia 2018-19*. Viewed at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2018-19/contents/table-of-contents>

³⁰ Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry. *Taking Responsibility: A Roadmap for Queensland Child Protection*, June 2013. Viewed at http://www.childprotectioninquiry.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/202625/qcpci-final-report-web-version.pdf

demonstrating positive change. [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family-Led Decision-Making](#) was cited as another example showing promising results.

Strengthening the capacity of mainstream services to provide culturally safe and culturally respectful services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families was also seen as a priority for the successor plan. This includes building workforce capacity and capability, particularly in relation to the impacts of trauma.

3.4.2 Young people transitioning from alternative care arrangements

Improving outcomes for young people transitioning to independent adulthood from alternative care emerged as another priority, progressing work under the Fourth Action Plan of the National Framework to improve outcomes. A continued national focus was considered essential, given the evidence that, despite government commitments to work together in this area of shared responsibility, and changes to policies and programs, young people transitioning to independent adulthood continue to experience poorer outcomes compared with their peers in terms of educational attainment, mental health and wellbeing, employment, access to suitable and secure accommodation, life satisfaction and relational stability³¹. Studies also show young people leaving care are over-represented in statistics on teenage pregnancy³².

The challenges and outcomes associated with young parents is well documented by the Australian Human Rights Commission in a summary of key findings from the 2017 Children's Rights Report³³. The [South Australian Early Intervention Research Directorate \(EIRD\) Case File Review Research](#) found that, in an analysis of unborn child concern reports to the Department for Child Protection in 2014, first time parents who had their own histories of abuse or neglect as children (including being under the Guardianship of the Minister, reported to Child Protection and/or disclosed to the notifier) made up 21% of the sample.

A study conducted by the Telethon Kids Institute (2018) used linked data from government agencies, including the Western Australian Departments of Health, Education, Justice, and Communities, to investigate physical and mental health, academic and justice outcomes for almost 15,000 children born in Western Australia between January 1990 and June 1995. Their findings were consistent with existing literature - young people who had experienced adversity in childhood and been in mandated alternative care arrangements were more likely to have adverse outcomes over the life course in the areas of physical health, mental health, education and justice. This was true when compared to a matched group of young people with no child protection contact, and was also the case for most outcomes compared to young people who had experienced adverse childhood experiences but did not enter alternative care arrangements. Aboriginal children with child protection involvement were even more likely to have poorer outcomes in this study³⁴.

As governments and the non-government sector share responsibilities for this group of young people, continuing a national approach under the successor plan was seen as highly appropriate. Learnings from the Transitioning to Independent Adulthood (TIA) trial being conducted in Western Australia were seen as important to help inform next steps by contributing to the evidence base around what works to help break intergenerational cycles of disadvantage.

³¹ AIHW, *Australia's Welfare 2017*. Viewed at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/e84b6721-7ea0-4688-8eac-59353cfb4452/aihw-australias-welfare-2017-chapter2-5.pdf.aspx>

³² Create Foundation (2017). Written submission to National Children's Commissioner. *Early Intervention Needs for Young Mothers and Teenage Motherhood*. Viewed at <https://create.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CREATE-NCC-Young-parents-submission-response-31-May-2017.pdf>

³³ AHRC (2017). *The Rights and Needs of Young Parents and their Children*. Viewed at https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/AHRC_CRR_2017_Summary.pdf

³⁴ Lima, F., Maclean, M., & O'Donnell, M. (2018). *Exploring outcomes for children who have experienced out-of-home care*. Perth: Telethon Kids Institute. Viewed at <https://www.telethonkids.org.au/projects/developmental-pathways-project/research-output/>

Continued effort by State and Territory governments to improve the quality and permanency of alternative care arrangements and to keep children connected to kin, culture and community were also seen as major contributions to improving outcomes for this important group. Other actions such as ongoing efforts to extend support for young people leaving care nationally to at least age 21, as being called for through the [Home Stretch](#) campaign, and strengthening mechanisms to embed the voices of young people leaving alternative care, or who have left care, were identified as priorities.

3.4.3 Kinship and foster carers

Formal and informal kinship care emerged from the consultations as another area of priority focus for the successor plan. AIHW reports that, at 30 June 2019, there were about 9,100 foster carer households with children placed (in their care) and about 14,500 formal relative/kinship carer households with relative children and/or young people placed in their care³⁵.

Ongoing work to improve support for **all** carers of children who are unable to live with their parents was emphasised with participants considering far greater support was required. This includes grandparent, foster and kinship carers. Participants called for all carers to have access to information, adequate levels of financial support and ongoing professional development and training so as to develop the skills necessary to provide the best possible ongoing care for children who have been deemed at risk and removed from their families of origin.

Participants at the final consultation highlighted an area that requires greater prioritisation is young people providing kinship care, including sibling carers. Research conducted by Dr Meredith Kiraly at the University of Melbourne, estimates that the number of informal kinship care households is far in excess of the number of households providing foster care. She suggests that the majority of children in kinship care fall outside of the remit of child protection, yet most have similar needs³⁶. This research identified a significant group of young carers who are systematically excluded from support available to others in caring roles, including parents caring for children. She has proposed a number of options to improve support for young people providing kinship care, including sibling carers, for consideration in the development of the successor plan³⁷.

Many participants called for the successor plan to include action to help address gaps in policy and program development for kinship carers, in particular, young carers. They recommended further research be undertaken to identify the quantum and characteristics of young people providing informal kinship care, better understand their needs and the needs of the child or young person they are caring for, elevate their voices, and track outcomes for both carers and care recipients. Anticipated changes for the 2021 census may, for the first time, allow precise data about the prevalence and living circumstances of these children to be extracted and to inform the development of national policy³⁸.

Priorities

The successor plan should:

- continue to build the national focus on improving wellbeing as well as safety outcomes for all children, young people and parents with experience in child protection systems, across jurisdictions and actively engage them as participants in this work
- strengthen efforts to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities in child protection systems by

³⁵ AIHW, *Child Protection Australia 2018-19*. Viewed at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2018-19/contents/table-of-contents>

³⁶ Kiraly, M. *We're just kids as well': towards recognition and support for young kinship carers*. Melbourne: University of Melbourne. Viewed at <https://healthsciences.unimelb.edu.au/research-groups/social-work-research/partnership-for-innovation-in-out-of-home-care/young-kinship>

³⁷ Kiraly, M. (2020). *Supporting the wellbeing of vulnerable children in informal kinship care within the Australian community and preventing entry into Out of Home Care*. (Unpublished)

³⁸ Kiraly, M. (2020). *We're just kids as well': towards recognition and support for young kinship carers*. Melbourne: University of Melbourne. Viewed at <https://healthsciences.unimelb.edu.au/research-groups/social-work-research/partnership-for-innovation-in-out-of-home-care/young-kinship>

implementing all five elements of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle in all jurisdictions, building the capacity of ACCOs and actively engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities by implementing Aboriginal-led solutions, and ensuring strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in all governance mechanisms

- strengthen and further develop efforts commenced under the National Framework's Second Action Plan to improve outcomes for young people transitioning from alternative care arrangements to independent adulthood, including those who become young parents, and
- better understand and respond to the needs of **all** carers, in particular, young people who are kinship carers, including sibling carers.

3.5 Data, evaluation and reporting improvements

Key theme: Develop a robust theory of change and evaluation framework as part of the successor plan, with progress measured and reported on against achievable and measurable short-term, intermediate and long-term outcomes, using quantitative and qualitative data that extends beyond child protection.

As a key priority, participants called for the development of a robust theory of change (or program logic) for the successor plan that sets a clear direction, articulates desired impacts and 'maps' action against achievable and measurable short-term, intermediate and long term outcomes. This should, in turn, inform the development of a robust evaluation framework designed up front in collaboration with relevant experts and that aligns with data availability and data development work agreed as part of the successor plan or occurring elsewhere.

As outlined in the literature, the program logic should be reviewed and revised as needed to guide data collection, analysis and reporting. It should also identify the synergies with other initiatives or existing resources that can be leveraged or strengthened³⁹. Learnings from the evaluation of the National Framework undertaken by [ACIL Allen Consulting](#) in 2015 and PwC in late 2019 (yet to be released) were recognised as a critical element for consideration in this process.

Another prominent theme related to the need for more and better data sharing across governments and between government and non-government organisations to better understand the impact of the successor plan in helping drive change over time. Better data could contribute to the national narrative of the National Framework and the successor plan in ways similar to the use of data in the [Longitudinal Study of Australia's Children](#) (LSAC) and the [Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children](#) (LSIC).

Data development and reporting has been a key investment under the National Framework. Participants noted the significance of the development of the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set (CP NMDS) and work to develop indicators to track progress under each of the existing supporting outcomes, noting that gaps in data still remain. They also noted the reporting framework for the National Standards for Out-of-Home Care as another significant step in building the evidence about outcomes for children and young people in the child protection system.

Data to track outcomes for young people transitioning from alternative care arrangements to independent adulthood also requires strengthening. Many participants called for additional data and information that tells a broader story beyond the CP NMDS and alternative care arrangements, noting the lack of data on services and outcomes available at the community level⁴⁰.

³⁹ Rogers, P. (2014). *Theory of Change, Methodological Briefs: Impact Evaluation 2*, UNICEF Office of Research, Florence. Viewed at https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/brief_2_theoryofchange_eng.pdf

⁴⁰ Productivity Commission, March 2020. *Expenditure on Children in the Northern Territory*. Viewed at <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/nt-children/report>

There is an opportunity to leverage existing data development work relevant to children, young people and families occurring across government to help develop this story. As outlined previously, AIHW provides a comprehensive overview of the wellbeing of children living in Australia in its 2019 report, [Australia's Children](#). The importance of the ante-natal period is acknowledged and included. The AIHW reports separately on youth with data currently included in the data portal [National Youth Information Framework](#) and the report, [Young Australians: their health and wellbeing](#).

Data gaps in relation to children and young people are discussed extensively by AIHW in these reports, noting that the last report on youth was published in 2011. AIHW has formed an advisory group to produce an updated Australia's Youth Report, due for release in late 2020. In relation to children (defined in the report as 0-12 years), the Institute highlights the increasing demand for locally-relevant data which spans multiple aspects of their experience. It identifies the potential to build on the types of data used in the report and produce a layered national data and reporting platform across multiple domains and according to place or location⁴¹. This would inform a wide range of information needs on children and young people's wellbeing in Australia.

The development of a National Youth Strategy provides an opportunity to consider addressing data gaps for this cohort and linking this work with the successor plan. Families Australia also notes the work of the Australian Government Youth Taskforce and the announcement by the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians, Minister for Youth and Sport, Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck, of the establishment of the Australian Youth Development Index 2020 that will consolidate information relevant to young Australians in health, education and employment. Families Australia's view is that there may be benefit in linking up these two areas of policy.

There is a need to continue to explore and better leverage data linkage capability to track progress under the successor plan against agreed indicators, using State and Territory and Commonwealth data across multiple domains including health, education and training, employment and economic participation, housing and homelessness. AIHW and the Australian Institute of Family Studies, two key stakeholders under the National Framework, are accredited Data Linkage Authorities and well placed to provide expertise in this area at a national level. The Australian Bureau of Statistics is also leading a Multi-Agency Data Integration Project with five other Commonwealth agencies to look at patterns and trends in the Australian population, and provide new insights into the development and evaluation of government policies, programs, and services (such as healthcare).

The National Coalition membership includes a number of research-based organisations who are also well-placed to provide input specific to data priorities and opportunities for the successor plan. This cohort of members has expanded significantly over the course of the National Framework to now include a number of organisations with recognised relevant research and data expertise. This includes the Institute for Child Protection Studies at the Australian Catholic University, the Australian Centre for Child Protection at the University of South Australia, Griffith University, Monash University, University of Melbourne, Murdoch Children's Research Institute and the Centre for Community Child Health at the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, Southern Cross University, Queensland University of Technology and the University of Southern Queensland.

There is an opportunity for the successor plan to leverage the expertise of researchers within these institutions, including Professor Daryl Higgins and his role in [the Australian Child Maltreatment Study](#) and co-authored published work on public health approaches; Professors Fiona Arney and Leah Bromfield including their work on chronic maltreatment and cumulative harm in South Australian child protection services; and the work of Professor Ross Homel on collective impact approaches that includes the development of a valid and reliable outcome measure of child wellbeing, [Rumble's Quest](#), primarily for use in education settings but also applicable more broadly at the community level with potential to enhance the capability and capacity of staff in the community sector.

⁴¹ AIHW (2020). *Australia's Children*. Viewed at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/australias-children/contents/health/the-health-of-australias-children>

As well as administrative data, participants identified better use of DSS' Data Exchange (DEX) to help to 'tell the story of change' under the successor plan. The use of case studies and sharing information about outcomes arising from promising practice were also considered to be of high importance, to help drive change at the local level. Collecting dynamic data at all levels was considered particularly important, including regional and local data, as a baseline, and from place-based initiatives including the Communities for Children program and its evaluations, *Stronger Places, Stronger People* and those being led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and ACCOs.

Reporting processes under the National Framework have proven onerous and challenging in terms of timeliness and relevance to stakeholders, including those in the broader community. Participants called for reporting arrangements that go beyond the data, developed through cross-portfolio leadership and collaboration and produced, for example, as online snapshots of progress against key outcomes. These could be supported by case studies and personal stories that engage a breadth of stakeholders. Duplicating data that is published elsewhere was not seen as a good use of resources. The National Coalition would play a key role here in contributing to, and promoting, the reports across sectors.

Participant perspective

'There are significant programs of reform occurring in most jurisdictions and a number of these have been influenced by the increased focus established under the National Framework. The National Framework has also fostered collaboration across jurisdictions in areas of shared responsibility. This momentum shouldn't be lost.'

Priorities

The successor plan should:

- be based on a theory of change (or program logic) that sets a clear direction, articulates desired impacts and 'maps' action against achievable and measureable short-term, intermediate and long term outcomes
- contain a robust evaluation framework designed in the development phase in collaboration with relevant experts and key stakeholders
- build on data development work under the National Framework and continue efforts for more and better data sharing across governments and between government and non-government organisations; identifies any data development priorities (including capturing population level data to strengthen reporting under a public health model) and leverages relevant data development work occurring elsewhere; leverages data linkage capability to track progress against agreed indicators, using State and Territory and Commonwealth data across multiple domains including health, education and training, employment and economic participation, housing and homelessness
- continue to invest in further development of the DSS Data Exchange (DEX) and broaden its applicability to the successor plan. Further to advice from DSS of a 'broad, contextual review of the future of services funded under the Families and Children Activity (FaC) including the future of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*', there is an opportunity to better link investments in the FaC with the successor plan, use DEX to help tell the story of progress under the successor plan, and use DEX data to support continual improvement in the quality of services contributing to the goals of the successor plan
- include qualitative data and case studies and share information about outcomes arising from promising practice—this has been a consistent call in submissions over the life of the National Framework, and
- establish reporting arrangements that tell the story of the successor plan beyond the data, for example, through periodic online snapshots of progress against key outcomes supported by case studies and personal stories that engage a breadth of stakeholders, and dashboard reports that capture key information and indicators succinctly and support ongoing accountability.

3.6 Governance and oversight arrangements

Key theme: A strong focus on implementation and accountability to deliver agreed outcomes through a robust, tripartite governance arrangement and shared decision-making.

Effective implementation will require robust governance mechanisms that recognise and leverage the roles and responsibilities of all key stakeholders and hold them to account. A strong message emerging from the consultations was the need to strengthen the role of the non-government sector in a tripartite governance arrangement, building on the current National Forum model but with broader representation and mix of expertise, beyond child protection and appropriate to the scope of the successor plan. There was varying feedback provided on the effectiveness of the National Forum in ensuring shared decision-making between government and non-government representatives and in driving community level change.

According to Higgins et al. (2019) implementation of a public health approach requires a far stronger role and involvement for citizens in ground-up, community-based initiatives that mobilise informal helping networks and resources as well as integrated service systems and collaborative organisational approaches⁴². They argue the continued rise in notifications to statutory services and their lack of capacity to respond effectively is because

*'...the reform agenda has largely been placed in the hands of those running the statutory service, rather than finding effective mechanisms to share responsibility for those running primary care and universal services that have the capacity to engage all families and truly embed child abuse prevention efforts across a range of portfolio areas'*⁴³.

Participant perspective

'Who is responsible for children at the Commonwealth level? There is no COAG committee, no national structure providing oversight. This needs to change if we are to make children the national policy priority they should be.'

There was a strong appetite amongst participants for a tripartite governance arrangement for the successor plan comprised of members with an appropriate level of seniority and decision-making authority, and that fully engages the non-government sector, at corresponding levels, including those working in prevention and early support. This body would have authority to refer formal advice for consideration by governments and was seen as critical in order to drive a true, multi-sectoral approach to design and implementation.

The National Coalition is uniquely placed to continue its key role in governance arrangements for the successor plan. Strengths of the National Coalition were seen as its extensive corporate knowledge, and its effectiveness in bringing a diversity of perspectives and inputs from across sectors. The National Coalition was also recognised for actively encouraging contributions from sectors, portfolios and jurisdictions to help inform the design, development and implementation of the successor plan.

The National Coalition Steering Group is seen as a highly effective and dedicated group that has served the National Coalition well over the past 12 years. Going forward, it will be important to ensure that

⁴² Higgins, et al. (2019). *Revisioning Public Health Approaches for Protecting Children*, viewed at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333521097_Revisioning_Public_Health_Approaches_for_Protecting_Children

⁴³ Ibid.

Participant perspective

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

representation continues to be aligned with priorities and progress under the successor plan. Participants noted the significant reform agendas to child protection and family support systems being driven by State and Territory governments outside the parameters of the National Framework but expressed support for governance arrangements that continued to support the sharing of information across jurisdictions and more broadly with the non-government sector, particularly emerging evidence about what is working. More broadly, it is important to consider new ways to deploy the expertise of members of the broader National Coalition in future implementation activities.

Priorities

The successor plan should:

- further strengthen 'tripartite' (that is, Commonwealth Government—State/Territory Government—National Coalition) governance arrangements that ensure accountability and fully engage non-government representatives in decision-making processes and advice to government
- broaden representation in tripartite arrangements to include all relevant portfolios and strengthen accountability in delivering system level change for children, young people, parents and families
- further strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in governance structures and in all aspects of the successor plan, and
- ensure strong representation of the National Coalition in governance arrangements, including the National Forum, and better leverage its key role in engaging the broader non-government and research sectors in all aspects of the successor plan. The National Coalition Steering Group has been a highly effective and dedicated group that has served the National Coalition well over the past 12 years. Going forward, we will need to ensure that representation continues to be aligned with priorities and progress under the successor plan. More broadly, it is important to consider new ways to deploy the expertise of members of the broader National Coalition in future implementation activities.



BEYOND THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROTECTING AUSTRALIA'S CHILDREN 2009-2020: POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS FOR NATIONAL CHILD AND FAMILY POLICY A DISCUSSION PAPER

Introduction

This paper is provided to delegates attending consultations hosted by Families Australia on possible future directions for child and family wellbeing and safety policy for Australia.

Background

In 2009, the Commonwealth Government, State and Territory Governments endorsed the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020* (National Framework), Australia's first-ever national plan to improve child safety and wellbeing.

The National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing, a grouping of over 200 leading not-for-profit and research sector organisations, played a leading role in supporting the development and implementation of the National Framework. Families Australia, a peak, national, not-for-profit organisation, convenes the National Coalition.

The National Framework's principle aim is to produce 'a sustained and substantial reduction in child abuse over time'. The National Framework is predicated on the importance of shifting investments more toward early intervention and prevention under a public health model, and a belief that good outcomes will result from bringing together governments, NGOs and researchers in a tripartite collaboration and dialogue. The National Framework states:

Australia needs to move from seeing 'protecting children' merely as a response to abuse and neglect to one of promoting the safety and wellbeing of children. Leading researchers and practitioners – both in Australia and overseas – have suggested that applying a public health model to care and protection will deliver better outcomes for our children and young people and their families. Under a public health model, priority is placed on having universal supports available for all families (for example, health and education). More intensive (secondary) prevention interventions are provided to those families that need additional assistance with a focus on early intervention. Tertiary child protection services are a last resort, and the least desirable option for families and governments⁴⁴.

Progress to date

Some encouraging work has been done under the National Framework to date. This includes the adoption of Australia's first-ever National Standards for Out-of-Home Care, establishing the office of the National Children's Commissioner, creating the National Child Protection Minimum Dataset, increasing cross-jurisdictional data sharing, holding five Child Aware Approaches Conferences, and acting as the setting for work to devise National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

The National Framework's Fourth Action Plan 2018-2020 was launched in January 2019. It is intended to:

- deliver place-based initiatives nationally to ensure there is a more collaborative and integrated approach to early intervention and prevention
- support children in out-of-home care by improving permanency outcomes
- support the implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and
- continue to deliver key activities from the Third Action Plan.

⁴⁴ Council of Australian Governments 2009. *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business. National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, 2009, p. 7.

There will be a strong focus on improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families throughout the implementation of all Fourth Action Plan initiatives⁴⁵.

Challenges

While the National Framework represents an important development, it is clear that far more needs to be done to tackle child abuse and neglect. Latest figures from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's *Child Protection Australia* (2018) and the Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services* (2019) highlight key aspects of the problem and some important national trends (more information is attached)⁴⁶.

- The number of children in out-of-home care has more than trebled in the past 20 years, from 14,470 in 1997-98 to 45,756 in 2017-18.
- At 30 June 2017, 17,664 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were in out-of-home care—a rate of 58.7 per 1,000 children, which was 10 times the rate for non-Indigenous children.
- The number of children receiving child protection services rose by about 11% over five years, from 143,000 children in 2013–14 to 157,000 children in 2017–18.
- The total national annual spend on child protection and related family support efforts reached \$5.8 billion nationally in 2017-18 (a real increase of 10.3 per cent from 2016-17), of which out-of-home care services accounted for the majority (58.5 per cent, or \$3.4 billion).

Your views are important

As we begin to implement the National Framework's fourth and final Action Plan, we welcome your thoughts on how to maintain a national focus on the safety and wellbeing of children and families beyond 2020.

To assist discussions, previous consultations conducted by Families Australia on behalf of the National Coalition revealed a significant appetite across government, NGO and academic sectors for a more comprehensive strategy to improve the wellbeing of children and families, while still focusing on keeping children safe and improving child protection responses and systems beyond 2020.

Previous approaches have, at times, been criticised for not focusing enough on the role of families and the importance of supporting them, especially at key transition points. A strengths-based approach to improving the resources available for family wellbeing would support both broad-based prevention and early intervention approaches and more effectively coordinated child protection responses.

Many members of the National Coalition have expressed a wish to build on the National Framework, to develop a broader agenda to improve outcomes for children and families, including an increased focus on economic, social and physical child wellbeing. Some government jurisdictions have been developing approaches that focus on improving outcomes for children and families through a lens of family wellbeing, which often focuses on the functions of families and the resources they need to undertake those functions.

Given levels of collaboration between jurisdictions and portfolios required to improve outcomes for children and families, a concerted whole-of-government strategy would appear to be required. Such a strategy would need to align with existing national strategies and plans such as those relating to safety, education and health and the range of payments and services provided or funded by different levels of government. It could also be supported by shared outcomes measurement and data collection framework.

Delegates may also wish to consider the extent to which a whole-of-government strategy beyond 2020 would need to align with existing national strategies and plans such as those relating to safety, education and health and the range of payments and services provided or funded by different levels of government (a listing attached).

Below is a set of focus questions which will form the basis for the consultation about future policy directions beyond 2020.

⁴⁵ Department of Social Services 2018. *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children – Fourth Three Year Action Plan 2018-2020*. p. 5

⁴⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019. *Child protection Australia: 2017–18*. Child welfare series no. 70. Cat. no. CWS 65. Canberra: AIHW; Productivity Commission 2019. *Report on Government Services*.

Focus questions

- What should be the key elements of a national policy approach for child and family wellbeing and safety after 2020 when the National Framework comes to an end?
- Which of these key elements are likely to produce the best outcomes for children and families?
- How will we know if the approach is successful? What are the key short, medium and long-term indicators of success?
- How would we balance child and family wellbeing with the need to protect children?
- How could a new national approach beyond 2020 harmonise with and build on existing Commonwealth and jurisdictional policies, strategies and frameworks? Attached is a list of current national policies and strategies
- What can we draw from this list to inform the beyond 2020 approach?

Further information

Please contact Families Australia at admin@familiesaustralia.org.au, phone 02 6273 4885, or visit www.familiesaustralia.org.au

Authorised by Dr Brian Babington, Chief Executive Officer, Families Australia, Canberra
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Attachment: Latest data on child abuse and neglect in Australia

The latest figures from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's *Child Protection Australia* (2018)⁴⁷ highlight key aspects of the problem and some national trends⁴⁷. In 2017-18:

- There were 159,000 children (1 in 35 children) receiving child protection services. Around 105,000 were the subject of an investigation, 67,200 were on a care and protection order and 55,300 were in out-of-home care.
- There were 33,031 children in substantiated abuse or neglect cases.
- Children aged under 1 were most likely to be the subject of a substantiation (17.2 per 1,000 children) and those aged 15-17 were least likely (4.1 per 1000 children).
- 36 per cent of children who were the subject of a substantiation were from the areas of the lowest socioeconomic status, compared with five per cent in the highest.
- Emotional abuse was the most common cause substantiated abuse type (59 per cent), followed by neglect (17 per cent), physical abuse (15 per cent) and sexual abuse (9 per cent).
- Sexual abuse was the most common for girls; other types of abuse were slightly more common among boys.
- Nationally, 56,400 children were in out-of-home care at 30 June 2018. On 30 June 2018, 39 per cent of those in out-of-home care were in foster care, 51 per cent were living with relatives/kin, one per cent were in third-party parental care and one per cent in other types of home-based care.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were eight times as likely as non-Indigenous children to be receiving child protection services, almost seven times as likely to be the subject of substantiated abuse or neglect and over 9 times as likely to be on a care and protection order in out of home care.
- The number of children receiving child protection services rose by about 11% over 5 years, from 143,000 children in 2013-14 to 157,000 children in 2017-18.

Attachment: Examples of national policies and strategies relating to children and families

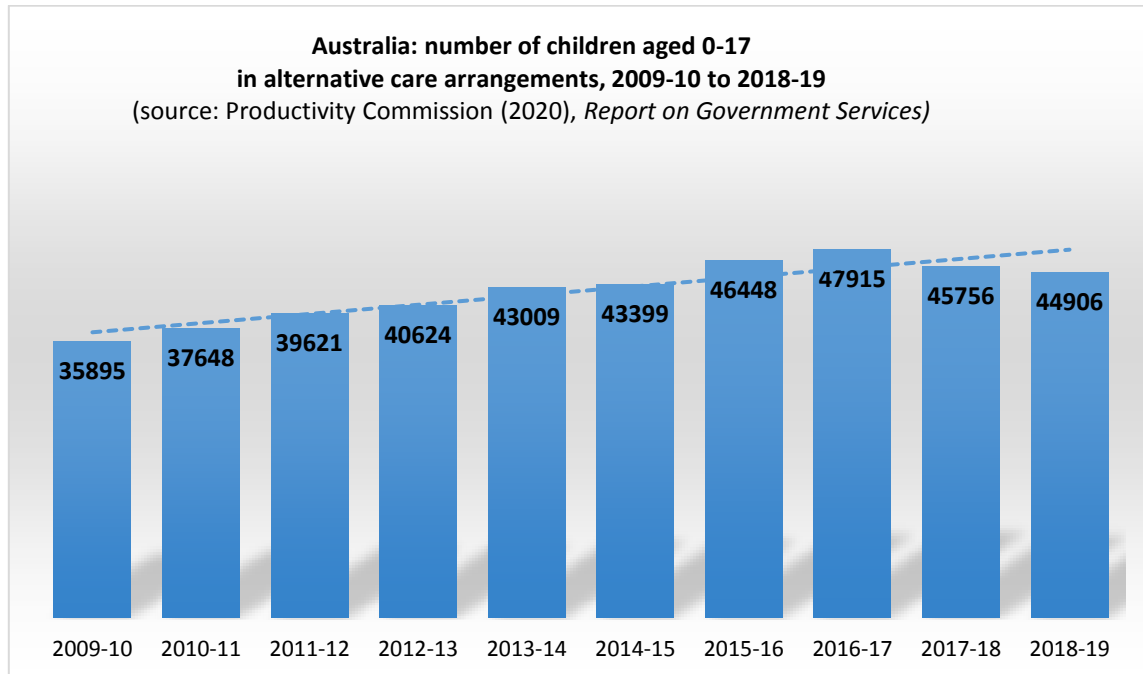
- National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020
- National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 – 2022
- Paid Parental Leave (2010)
- National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care – 2009 (incorporating the National Quality Standard)
- Closing the Gap (CtG) campaign (2008) and National Partnership Agreements: CtG on Indigenous Health Outcomes; CtG on Remote Indigenous Housing; CtG on Indigenous Early Childhood Development
- Closing the Gap Refresh 2018
- National Apology to the Stolen Generations 2008
- National Apology to the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants 2009
- National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse 2018
- Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2018
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013 - 2023
- The Fifth *National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan 2017*

⁴⁷ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019. *Child protection Australia: 2017-18*. Child welfare series no. 70. Cat. no. CWS 65. Canberra: AIHW.

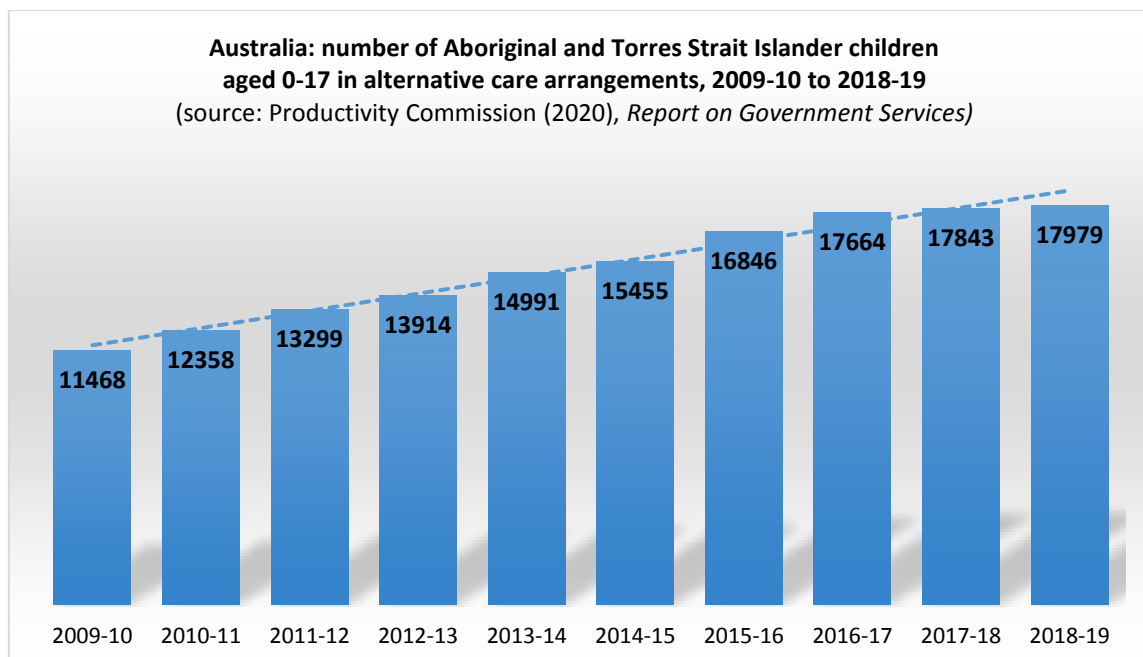
Attachment B: Child protection in Australia: major trends (update January 2020)

Prepared by Families Australia

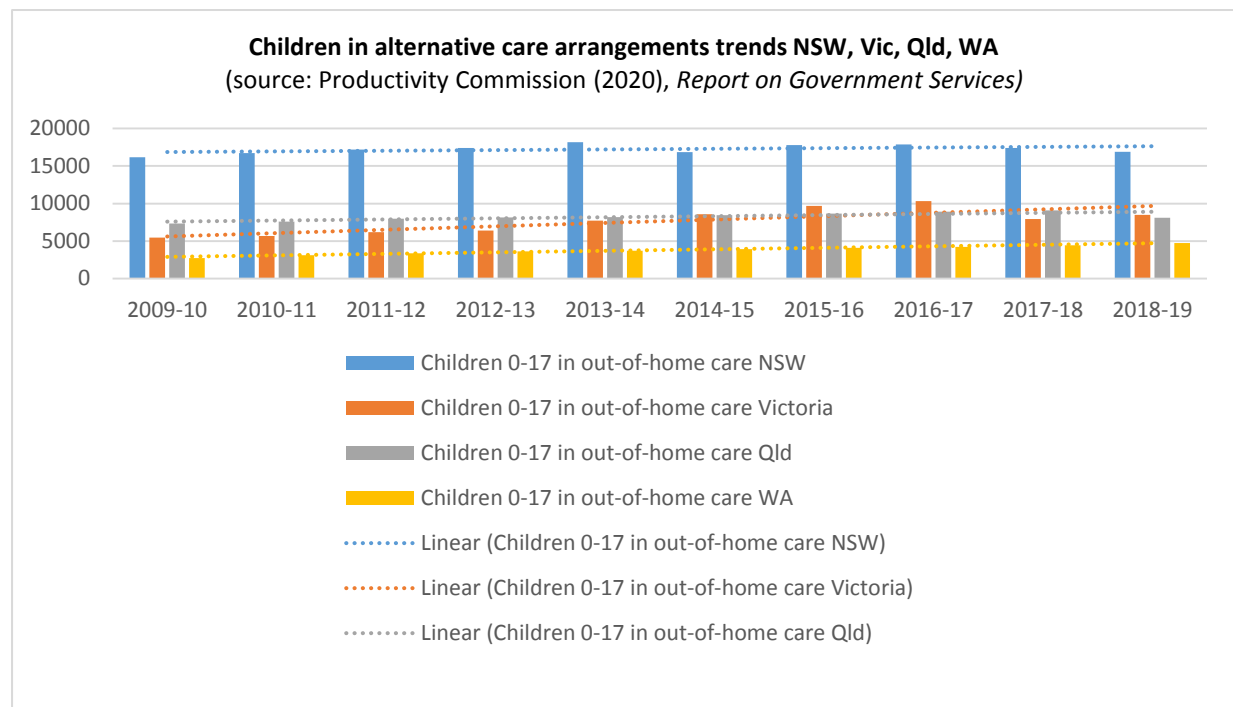
Alternative care arrangements: all children



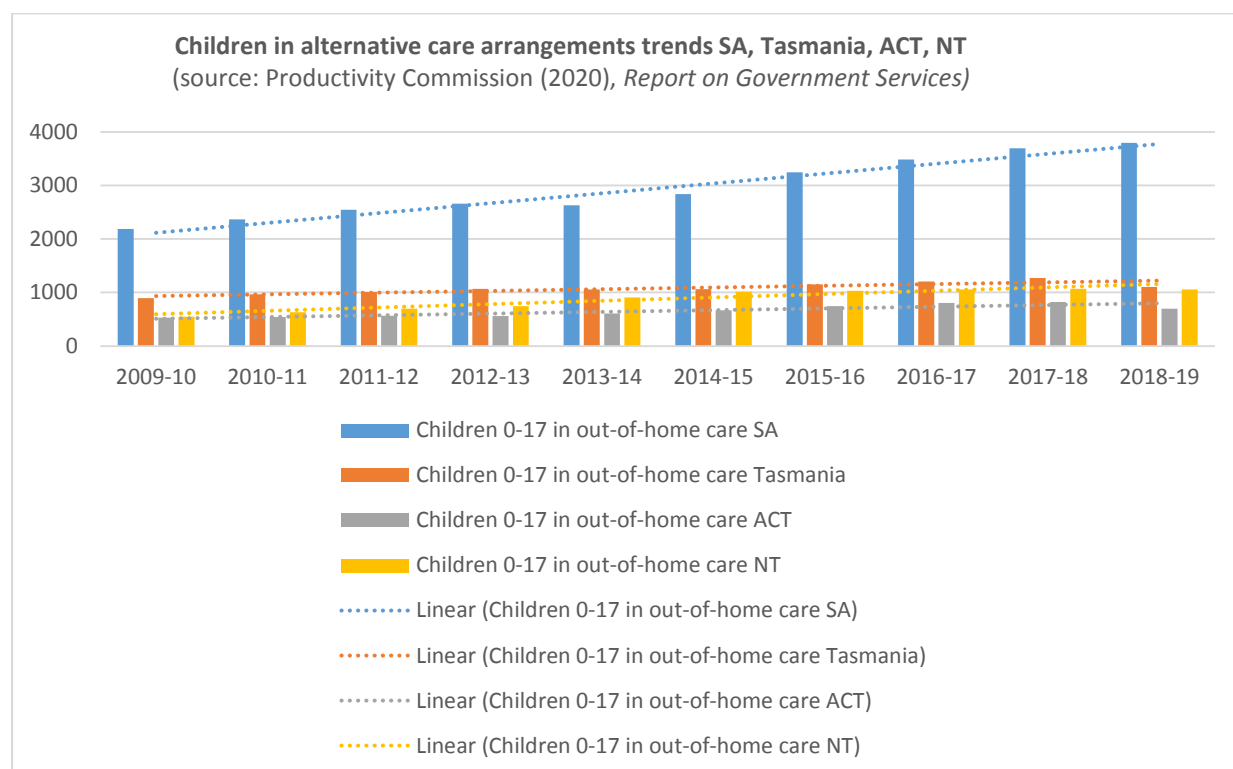
Alternative care arrangements: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children



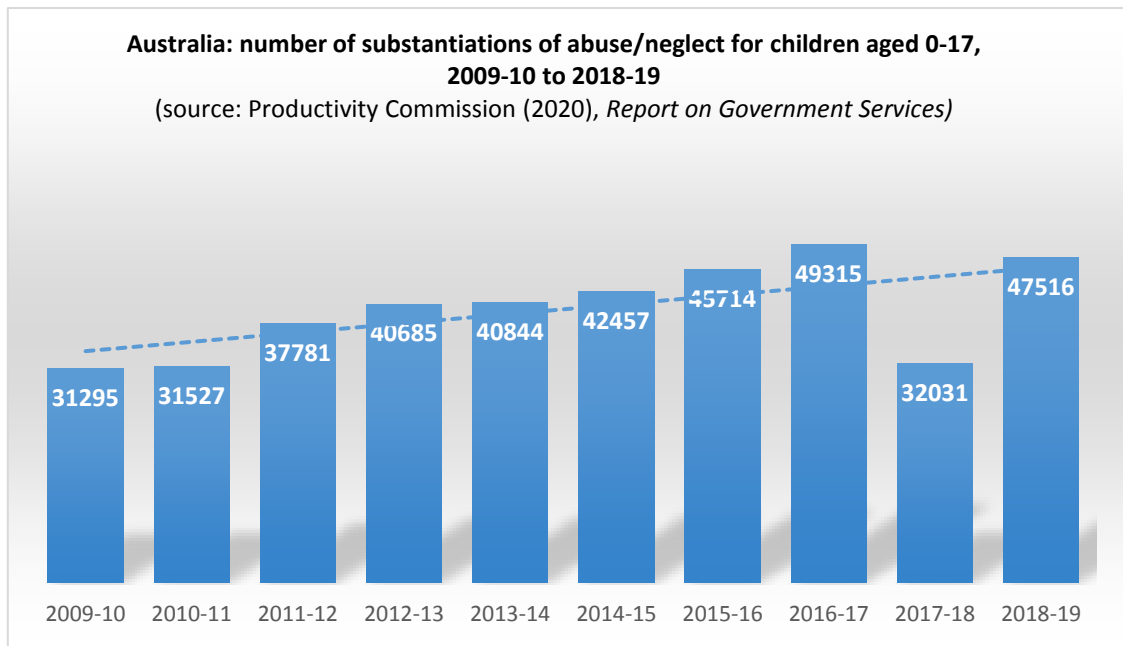
Alternative care arrangements NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA



Alternative care arrangements trends SA, Tasmania, ACT, NT

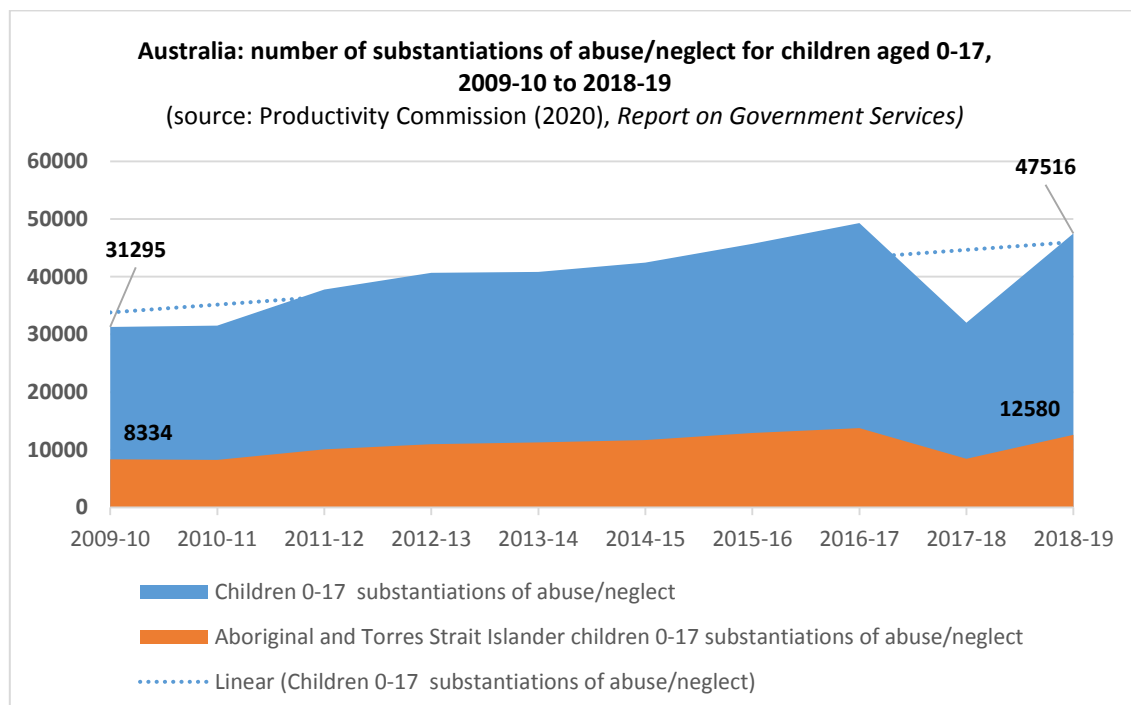


Substantiations of child abuse or neglect: all children

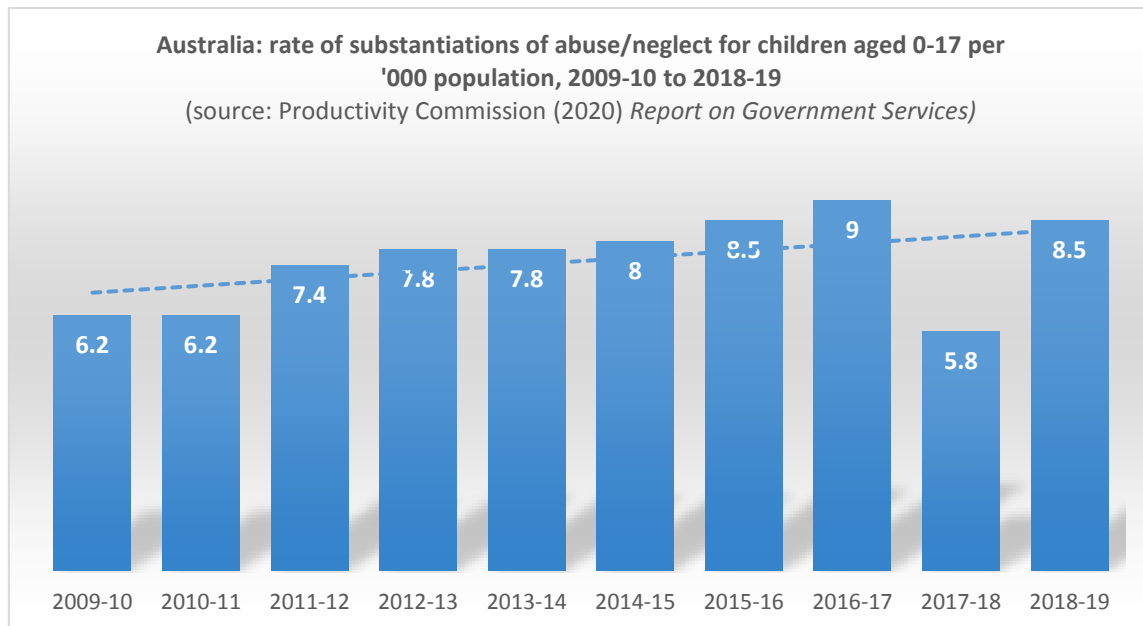


Headline:
50% increase in the number of abuse/neglect substantiations over the past decade

Substantiations of abuse or neglect: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

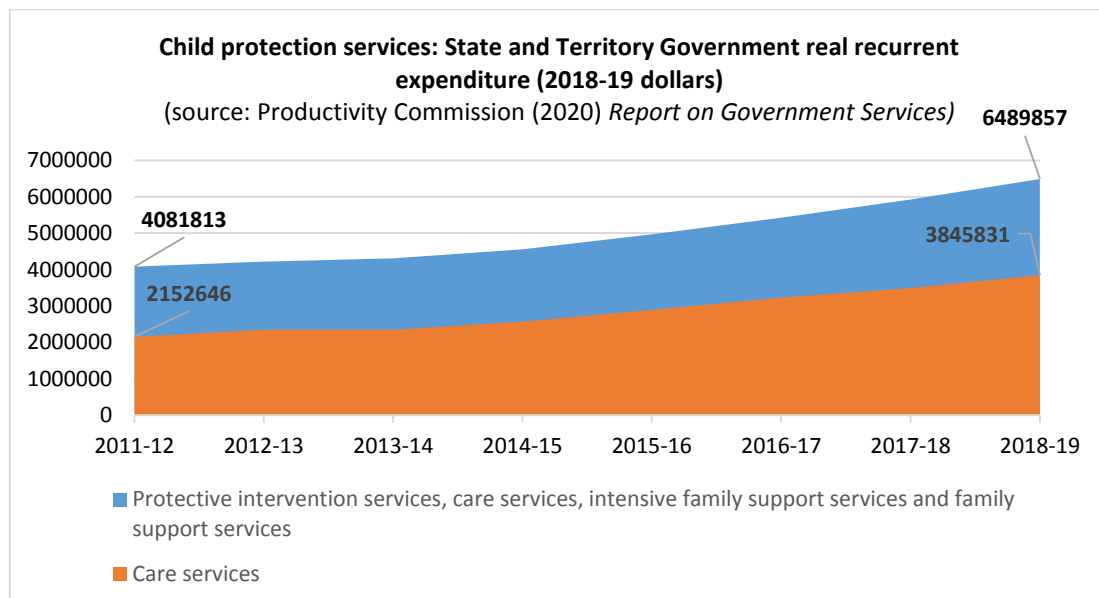


Rate of substantiation of child abuse or neglect per 000 of population



Headline:
37% increase in the rate of substantiation of abuse/neglect per 000 children over the past decade

Expenditures on child protection



Headline:
60% increase in national child protection expenditures over the past seven years

Attachment C: Snapshot of reforms and initiatives supporting outcomes for children and families

NATIONAL

Royal Commissions and Inquiries

➤ [Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse 2012](#) (Royal Commission)

A number of the recommendations from the Royal Commission align with the priorities of the [Fourth Action Plan 2018-2020](#) of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, such as improving prevention and early intervention, improving organisations' ability to keep children safe, and the promotion of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. They also recognise the necessity to link with other related national strategies and initiatives that are relevant to the development of the successor plan.

Recommendation 6.1

The Australian Government should establish a mechanism to oversee the development and implementation of a national strategy to prevent child sexual abuse. This work should be undertaken by the proposed National Office for Child Safety (see Recommendations 6.16 and 6.17) and be included in the National Framework for Child Safety (see Recommendation 6.15).

Recommendation 6.3

The design and implementation of (specific initiatives outlined in Recommendation 6.2) should consider:

- a. aligning with and linking to national strategies for preventing violence against adults and children, and strategies for addressing other forms of child maltreatment;
- b. tailoring and targeting initiatives to reach, engage and provide access to all communities, including children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disability, and regional and remote communities;
- c. involving children and young people in the strategic development, design, implementation and evaluation of initiatives;
- d. using research and evaluation to:
 - i. build the evidence base for using best practices to prevent child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviours in children;
 - ii. guide the development and refinement of interventions, including the piloting and testing of initiatives before they are implemented.

Recommendation 6.15

The Australian Government should develop a new National Framework for Child Safety in collaboration with state and territory governments. The Framework should:

- a. commit governments to improving the safety of all children by implementing long-term child safety initiatives, with appropriate resources, and holding them to account;
- b. be endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments and overseen by a joint ministerial body;
- c. commence after the expiration of the current National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, no later than 2020;
- d. cover broader child safety issues, as well as specific initiatives to better prevent and respond to institutional child sexual abuse including initiatives recommended by the Royal Commission;
- e. include links to other related policy frameworks.

Recommendation 6.16

The Australian Government should establish a National Office for Child Safety in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, to provide a response to the implementation of the Child Safe Standards nationally, and to develop and lead the proposed National Framework for Child Safety. The Australian Government should transition the National Office for Child Safety into an Australian Government statutory body within 18 months of this Royal Commission's Final Report being tabled in the Australian Parliament.

➤ Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory 2017.

The essential element of recommendations made by this Royal Commission in relation to the Child Protection system is the adoption of a public health approach, with the right mix of universal, early intervention and statutory interventions to reduce the risk of harm to children. It recognised the principles underlying this approach is a shift in focus away from statutory intervention and towards early support for families. The importance of tackling the risk factors for neglect from an early age, within the family, is seen as critical to both reducing the risk of harm to children and seeing fewer children taken into care.

This Royal Commission looked to the broader context beyond the child protection and youth justice systems including the underlying drivers of socioeconomic inequality including racism, remoteness, poverty, housing issues, poor physical and mental health and disabilities. These latter drivers included cognitive impairments such as fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, as well as trauma and intergenerational trauma. It also noted that:

- Policies and programs achieve better outcomes when the intended beneficiaries are directly involved in their design, implementation and monitoring.
- At least in policy statements, governments have long recognised that the 'partnerships' or engagement needed for more effective policy and programs go beyond consultation or advice.
- Aboriginal communities must be enabled to engage from a position of empowerment and self-determination.

It proposes a series of steps, including:

- Establish a Tripartite Forum to advise on and monitor reforms, which includes the Northern Territory Government, Commonwealth Government and Northern Territory community representatives, including representatives of Aboriginal organisations.
- Establish a joint Commonwealth-Territory Co-ordinated Funding Framework, focused on early support and enabling a co-ordinated, flexible and sustainable approach to funding of services and policy initiatives.
- Establish formal mechanisms for consulting with the community sector and Aboriginal communities, which:
 - a. enables local community knowledge about risks, cohorts in greatest need with service gaps to be factored into policy and funding decisions on a place by place basis, and
 - b. integrates the outcomes of this consultation into the planning, design and delivery of services.

Specific recommendations include commitment to a public health approach to child protection and harm prevention, the development of a 10-year Generational Strategy for Children and Families overseen by the proposed Tripartite Forum, a strategic framework to govern services for families and children based on local service delivery and a joint Commonwealth-Territory Co-ordinated Funding Framework.

➤ [Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, 2019. \(Interim Report due 30 Oct 2020, Final Report due 29 April 2022\)](#)

The Disability Royal Commission was established in April 2019 in response to increasing concerns from parents, carers, people with disability, politicians and the sector about violence against, and the neglect, abuse and exploitation of, people with disability. The Royal Commission will investigate:

- preventing and better protecting people with disability from experiencing violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation;
- achieving best practice in reporting, investigating and responding to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability;
- promoting a more inclusive society that supports people with disability to be independent and live free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The Terms of Reference for the Royal Commission extend its inquiry into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability in all settings and contexts.

➤ [The Joint Select Committee on Australia's Family Law System](#)

The Joint Select Committee on Australia's Family Law System was appointed by resolution of the Senate on 18 September 2019 and resolution of the House of Representatives on 19 September 2019. Its Terms of Reference include matters that impact the safety and wellbeing of children and families including:

- ongoing issues and further improvements relating to the interaction and information sharing between the family law system and state and territory child protection systems, and family and domestic violence jurisdictions, including:
 - the process, and evidential and legal standards and onuses of proof, in relation to the granting of domestic violence orders and apprehended violence orders, and
 - the visibility of, and consideration given to, domestic violence orders and apprehended violence orders in family law proceedings;
- the impacts of family law proceedings on the health, safety and wellbeing of children and families involved in those proceedings;
- any issues arising for grandparent carers in family law matters and family law court proceedings;
- any related matters.

Productivity Commission Reports

➤ [Productivity Commission Report into Human Services \(March 2018\)](#)

The Commission's final inquiry report on reforms to human services found that services for families and communities are not delivering the best possible outcomes for the people who use them, their families, or for governments that fund them. It cited poor coordination between and within governments resulting in a patchwork of funding priorities, gaps in service provision in some places, duplication in others, and barriers to accessing services that are made even higher due to the difficulties of navigating *a complex system of service delivery*.

The Productivity Commission recommended that particular priority be given to developing an outcomes framework focusing on assessing user wellbeing that can be used across programs (and potentially across departments and levels of government). It noted the progress made in some jurisdictions, such as by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

The Productivity Commission made a number of recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the system including:

- that governments develop cross-program outcomes frameworks that articulate outcomes at all levels — service user, service provider and program — and that can be used to track changes in wellbeing at an individual level consistently across services.
- that governments move to a **seven-year default contract term** to provide greater stability for service providers and, when combined with a stronger focus on user outcomes, would provide the basis for more effective service provision.

➤ [Productivity Commission Inquiry into Government Expenditure on Children in the Northern Territory \(April 2020\)](#)

This inquiry originated from the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. The focus of the inquiry was on funding arrangements for services and programs relevant to the prevention of harm to children and ways to improve funding arrangements to support better outcomes for children, families and the community. The report noted the contextual issues relevant to the funding role played by the Commonwealth in the Northern Territory compared to that in other jurisdictions, due in part, to its role in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy. It noted the significant funds committed by the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments to children and family services – around \$538 million in 2018-19, exclusive of the significant expenditure directed to primary services, such as health care and education, which also influence child and family wellbeing. Both the Royal Commission and the Productivity Commission’s inquiry’s report emphasise the need for:

- a greater focus on a public health approach, with a focus on preventing harm to children,
- a place-based approach, with community-led decision making, and
- much improved collaboration and coordination between and within governments.

The Productivity Commission Report recommended a whole new approach to funding family and children services to address fragmentation, service gaps, duplication and inefficiencies. There are four priority areas to the recommended reforms:

- Cooperative approach to funding, underpinned by community-level data and community plans
- Longer term collaborative approach to contracting service providers
- Better data at community level
- Stronger supporting institutions - stronger institutions will be needed to support the above reform areas, including strengthening the role of the Children and Families Tripartite Forum.

➤ [Productivity Commission inquiry into the role of improving mental health to support economic participation and enhancing productivity and economic growth \(draft report Oct 2019; final report to government due May 2020\)](#)

The [Draft Report](#) identified five key areas for reform including prevention and early intervention for mental illness and suicide attempts; closing critical gaps in healthcare services and investment in services beyond health. It stresses the importance of interventions in early childhood and school education to detect and address risk factors and symptoms of mental ill health. It makes draft recommendations to:

- improve perinatal mental health services, through increased screening and better parenting support;
- enhance the social and emotional aspects of early childhood checks, with a specific emphasis on checks prior to starting preschool;

- strengthen the ability of Early Childhood Education and Care centres and schools to deliver a meaningful social and emotional wellbeing curriculum by improving educator and teacher training and professional development, and by accrediting all wellbeing programs offered by external providers;
- improve outreach and support services to students with mental illness;
- clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all involved in student wellbeing, including school psychologists and counsellors, and assist schools in building highly functioning student wellbeing teams;
- collect nationally consistent data on student wellbeing, and use this to inform policy planning and improve schools' implementation of a social and emotional wellbeing curriculum.

Australian Government Policy Initiatives

➤ **Stronger Outcomes for Families Consultation 2018**

The Department of Social Services (DSS) sought feedback from the sector, academia, state and territory governments, and families and children on the future of family and children's services funded under the Families and Children Activity. A discussion paper informed a consultation period that commenced in June 2018 and closed in mid-August 2018. The discussion paper highlighted that many Australian families face significant challenges despite governments investing heavily in services aimed at making a positive shift in outcomes. DSS proposed five principles to underpin the future design of programs for families and children across Australia. These are:

- Outcomes focussed
- Targeted service delivery
- Data and evidence driven
- Early intervention and prevention
- Collaborative

The discussion paper includes a number of statements relevant to the development of the successor plan:

- Place-based approaches are worth exploring based on early indicators from a number of place-based initiatives around Australia, combined with the desire of communities to have more control over the services they receive.
- DSS is committed to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to improve outcomes for their families and children.
- DSS is proposing to mandate the Partnership Approach under DEX. Service providers collect additional data items under a Partnership Approach relating to a client's needs, circumstances and outcomes.
- DSS is considering new access strategy requirements that provide priority to at-risk families and children.
- DSS is committed to funding early intervention and prevention services.
- The principle of collaboration relates not only to how services are designed (requiring collaboration between government, service providers, communities and families), but also to how services are delivered (requiring ongoing collaboration between service providers).

➤ **National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020-2030 (National Action Plan)**

The National Action Plan, led by the Australian Government Department of Health, was released on 8 May 2019 and seeks to improve the health of children and young people by focusing on healthy upbringing, prevention, addressing risky behaviours and childhood mental health.

It identifies broader social factors as key risk factors in health outcomes for children and young people: family instability, socioeconomic disadvantage, poor housing, isolation and poor social support.

It also identifies key protective factors: prevention and intervention in first 2000 days, parenting support and skills development, and programs supporting positive social and emotional wellbeing.

The National Action Plan recognises the need for national investment in both ‘universal’ and ‘targeted’ prevention and early intervention. It also recognises that children and young people do not exist in isolation, they exist within families who are the most powerful influence on a child’s life and development.

➤ **Commonwealth Government Youth Taskforce**

The Australian Government has set up a Youth Taskforce in the Department of Health to report to the Minister for Youth and Sport, Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck, on options to improve:

- whole of government coordination and collaboration on youth issues; and
- youth participation in policy development, in key priority areas impacting youth education, employment and health outcomes.

The Youth Taskforce is leading work to establish a [Youth Health Forum](#) that aims to provide a platform for young health consumers to advocate effectively and work with governments, health services, the community sector, and researchers to design health policy, programs and services that address the needs of young people.

➤ **National Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-2030 (under development)**

On 14 August 2019, the Minister for Health the Hon Greg Hunt MP, announced the development of a National Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (the strategy) as part of the Government’s Long Term National Health Plan. The National Mental Health Commission is responsible for leading the strategy, informed by a steering committee and expert advisory group.

The strategy will guide and inform the Government’s investment and provide a framework for preventing mental illness and reducing its impact on children, families and the community. A draft strategy is due to be delivered to the Australian Government by June 2020.

➤ **Commonwealth Child Safe Framework, 2019**

The *Commonwealth Child Safe Framework* is part of the Australian government’s response to Recommendation 6.15 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse:

...that the Australian Government *develop a new National Framework for Child Safety in collaboration with state and territory governments*. Its aim is to protect children and young people from the risk of harm or abuse.

The *Commonwealth Child Safe Framework* comprises three requirements for institutions to meet minimum standards to protect children: undertake annual risk assessments, establish a system of staff training and compliance, and adopt and implement the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations established under the National Framework Third Action Plan.

➤ **National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022**

The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022 is a 12-year strategy which brings together Commonwealth, state/territory governments and the non-government sector to achieve a significant and sustained reduction in domestic and family violence. The National Plan recognises the strong links between domestic and family violence and the risks of emotional and physical abuse against children.

At a meeting of the Council of Australian Governments on 13 March 2020, leaders agreed that Women's Safety Ministers will start work on the development of the next National Plan, with national consultations to begin in Alice Springs in 2020.

➤ **Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage, Closing the Gap Refresh 2018**

In December 2007, COAG pledged to close key gaps in outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians. Ahead of the 10th anniversary of the original agreement, COAG agreed to refresh the Closing the Gap agenda and recognised the need:

- for a cohesive national agenda focussed on important priorities for enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children and communities to thrive;
- to focus on the long term and on future generations, to strengthen prevention and early intervention initiatives that help build strong families and communities, and to prioritise the most important events over the course of a person's life and the surrounding environment;
- to deliver a community-led, strengths-based strategy that enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to move beyond surviving to thriving.

In March 2019, the Council of Australian Governments and the National Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations signed the Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap. The Partnership Agreement is guiding the development of the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which will set out priorities over the next ten years.

➤ **National Indigenous Early Childhood Strategy (under development)**

Coinciding with the tabling of the 12th Closing the Gap Report on 12 February 2020, the Prime Minister Scott Morrison [announced](#) the Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Ken Wyatt MP, would lead the development of an Indigenous early childhood strategy. This strategy is to be developed in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, experts, families, frontline service providers and communities, and drive a more coordinated effort across the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments.

➤ **National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 and Australian Government Action Plan**

The Australian Government Action Plan directs the implementation of the National Disability Strategy within Australian Government portfolios. The six main areas of action under the Action Plan are: inclusive and accessible communities; rights protection, justice and legislation; economic security; personal and community support; learning and skills; health and wellbeing.

Consultations on a new National Disability Strategy for beyond 2020 have commenced and are being overseen by the National Disability Strategy Reform Steering Group, which includes a number of key disability and carer sector stakeholders.

➤ **National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, and National Quality Standard, 2018**

The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care is a legislative framework which creates a standard approach to the regulation and quality assessment of education and child care services. The National Quality Standard sets a national benchmark for quality of education and care services, and promotes the safety, health and wellbeing of children. The National Quality Standard has seven areas on which services are assessed. These include:

Quality Area 2 – Children’s health and safety: Children have the right to experience quality education and care in an environment that safeguards and promotes their health, safety and wellbeing.

Quality Area 6 – Collaborative partnerships with families and communities: Collaborative relationships with families are fundamental to achieving quality outcomes for children, and community partnerships based on active communication, consultation and collaboration.

➤ **e-Safety Commissioner and eSafety Strategy 2019-2022**

The eSafety Commissioner is Australia’s national independent regulator for online safety. Activities are governed by the *Enhancing Online Safety Act 2015*. eSafety leads and coordinates online safety efforts across Commonwealth departments, authorities and agencies, and engage with key online safety stakeholders internationally. Areas of focus include cyberbullying; image-based abuse; illegal and harmful content, including child sexual abuse material; online safety information and guidance; educational resources and training on online safety and developing special initiatives and programs in response to identified needs.

➤ **Stronger Places, Stronger People**

This initiative is being implemented by the Australian Government Department of Social Services in partnership with State and Territory Governments and aims to disrupt the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage and uses a place-based collective impact approach in ten demonstration communities across Australia. *Stronger Places, Stronger People* is currently operating in seven communities.

Collaboration with the whole community is the fundamental principle of the program which delivers locally-designed plans of action for the community to create stronger futures for children and their families.

➤ **The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework (2018)**

The Framework is described as a foundation document to provide schools “with a vision and set of guiding principles to support school communities to build positive learning environments, and to consider reviewing their current safety and wellbeing policies and support requirements.” It covers years 1-12, and has five key elements: Leadership, Inclusion, Student voice, Partnerships, and Support.

Student Voice Principle - Students are active participants in their own learning and wellbeing, feel connected and use their social and emotional skills to be respectful, resilient and safe.

Partnerships Principle – Families and communities collaborate as partners with the school to support student learning, safety and wellbeing.

The Framework recognises the importance of wellbeing in supporting learning and development outcomes for children and young people.

➤ **National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing**

This Framework provides a dedicated focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing and mental health. It aims to drive integrated approaches to support, recognising the necessity to address the social determinants of health.

As social and emotional wellbeing problems, mental health problems, substance abuse disorders, suicide and the impacts of suicide in families and communities interact and influence each other, the greater integration of services for these areas is a reform goal of the Australian Government, and is a critical part of this Framework.

➤ **National Alcohol Strategy 2019-2028**

This Strategy outlines Australia's approach to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm. Although it does not use the term public health approach, the Strategy has many attributes of a public health approach with its focus on prevention, community education and identification of at-risk groups. It acknowledges that greater attention needs to be paid to the relationship between alcohol misuse and family violence:

...strengthen partnerships and communication between services to support early identification of problems and ensure treatment and ongoing care, including between alcohol treatment, child protection and family violence services; and detoxification and rehabilitation and aftercare services.

Among the priority population groups identified in the strategy are children whose parents experience alcohol dependence. Another priority group is teenagers and young adults.

➤ **National Drug Strategy 2017-2026**

This Strategy is a framework to build safe and healthy communities by reducing and preventing drug-related harm. The underpinning approach in the Strategy is harm minimisation. It recognises that the harms from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs affect all individuals, families and communities, and that there are associated social determinants of such problems. Among the identified social harms are child protection issues and child and family wellbeing. It calls for strong partnerships with researchers, families and communities, peer educators, drug user organisations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and other priority populations.

➤ **National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, 2018**

This agreement provides funding to states and territories, through the Australian Government Department of Social Services, to improve Australians' access to secure and affordable housing across the housing spectrum. It prioritises certain cohorts also included in the National Framework and National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children (2010-2022):

- Women and children affected by family and domestic violence
- Children and young people
- Indigenous Australians
- People experiencing repeat homelessness
- People exiting from care or institutions into homelessness
- Older people.

Other National NGO-Led Initiatives

➤ [SNAICC Family Matters Campaign, *The Family Matters Report 2019*](#)

The Family Matters Roadmap was released in 2015, and articulates a framework for what needs to be done to correct the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in statutory child protection systems and out-of-home care.

It identifies the main causes of this over-representation as:

- Poverty
- Early childhood vulnerability
- Intergenerational trauma

It identifies the solutions as:

- Access to universal and targeted services
- Participation and control in decision-making
- Culturally safe and responsive policies and practices
- Government and services are accountable.

The Family Matters Campaign calls for structural and system reform and *a truly universal service system to support family functioning and child wellbeing* (p.8). It re-introduces the language of self-determination and issues a call for First Nations peoples to be able to determine the key changes that are needed in their communities to address the causes and consequences of poverty and the ways in which those changes will be brought about. It also calls on COAG to work in partnership with SNAICC and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders to develop a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's strategy.

➤ [Uluru Statement from the Heart](#)

The Uluru Statement from the Heart (Uluru Statement) was developed at the First Nations Constitutional Convention in May 2017, held on the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum. The Uluru Statement calls for reform. The first reform is the constitutional enshrinement of a Voice to Parliament (Voice) that seeks to empower First Nations politically act as a permanent institution for expressing First Nations' views to the parliament and government on important issues affecting First Nations. The second reform is the Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations (Treaty), and truth-telling (Truth). Voice, Treaty and Truth are identified as a clear and practical path forward for First Nations' self-determination in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Uluru Statement invites all Australians to walk with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in finding a way to give them a voice in the laws and policies that are made about them. It provides an opportunity to implement new approaches to drive genuine cultural and policy reform to address the needs of Australia's First Nations peoples.

➤ [Great to Eight child research project](#)

The Ian Potter Foundation has commissioned the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) to lead the first stage of this national project which is seeking to develop a comprehensive and collaborative set of research priorities in the area of wellbeing in children 0-8 year old.

The Great to Eight project will look at all areas of child wellbeing and will be structured around ARACY's wellbeing framework *The Nest* which outlines the six necessary components for children to thrive:

to be loved and safe, have their material basics met, be healthy, be learning, be participating in their families, schools and communities, and to have a positive sense of their culture and identity.

STATE/TERRITORY INITIATIVES

Australian Capital Territory

➤ [ACT Wellbeing Framework](#)

The ACT Government announced the Wellbeing Framework on 12 March 2020. The Framework is made up of 12 domains pertaining to quality of life. Domains include the environment and climate, health, education and life-long learning, and social connection and safety.

Performance across the 12 domains will be measured by a range of indicators. The Wellbeing Framework will inform Government priorities, policies and investment decisions – including through future annual Budget processes. The Government will use reporting from the Framework to help inform Budget priority areas.

New South Wales

➤ [Their Futures Matter](#)

Their Futures Matter is a cross-government reform strategy to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families. Their Futures Matter reform is being driven through an investment approach and has been developed in response to the Tune Review 2015. The key priorities of the reform are:

- **An investment approach** that aligns and directs effort and funding towards where it can make the biggest difference, as early as possible.
- **Strategic commissioning** to design and evaluate holistic solutions that achieve long-term outcomes.
- **System Transformation** in pursuit of a vision that all children, young people and families can access and connect with timely supports to improve outcomes across all areas of safety, health and wellbeing.

The reforms are being delivered by a cross-government unit, [NSW Stronger Communities Investment Unit](#). It is intended that this approach will help shift funding from crisis services to prevention and early intervention.

Northern Territory

There are a number of interrelated key reforms happening in the Northern Territory, being managed by the Reform Management Office (RMO).

➤ [Safe, Thriving and Connected: Generational Change for Children and Families 2018-2023](#)

Safe, Thriving and Connected is the Northern Territory Government's response to the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. It is a whole-of-government approach to supporting vulnerable children, families and communities. It endorses and adopts a public health approach, recognising the need to address the social determinants of health and wellbeing. A core aim is to improve family wellbeing, and acknowledges the need to address all wellbeing domains in a child's life.

The reforms are based on the following principles:

- Putting the safety and wellbeing of children, families and communities first;
- Ensuring children have a voice and respecting the needs and wishes of children and families;
- Ensuring the connection of children and young people to their cultures and communities;
- Recognising and building on the strengths of families and communities;
- Enabling community-led decision making and embedding Aboriginal service delivery;
- Challenging systemic inequality and addressing barriers to empowerment;
- Providing trauma-aware and healing-informed support.

➤ **Starting Early for a Better Future 2018-2028 the Northern Territory Government's Early Childhood Development Plan**

This plan is the part of the Northern Territory's reform agenda dealing with the Early Childhood Development Service System. It is aimed at achieving better early childhood outcomes and breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage. A core aspect of the plan is to *support parents earlier and better*.

Among the Principles of the Plan are:

- Committing to early action in order to increase future benefits to individuals and society.
- Using an integrated approach to universal services and program delivery, with targeted intervention for those who need it.
- Valuing the diversity of Northern Territory families' backgrounds, culture and make-up.

The [Implementation Plan 2018-2022](#) sets out the actions to be taken in the first four years of the 10 year plan. The actions are based around four themes:

- Ready to Learn: to ensure Northern Territory children are born ready to learn, and continue to learn in nurturing and stimulating relationships and successfully transition to school.
- Strong Families: to ensure Northern Territory children are safe, cared for and living in a healthy environment.
- Getting it Right for Life: to ensure Northern Territory children are born healthy, remain healthy and thrive.
- Quality Early Childhood Development System: to position the Northern Territory at the forefront of Australia in integrated and community-driven early childhood development.

➤ **The Best Opportunities in Life - Northern Territory Child and Adolescent Health and Wellbeing Strategic Plan 2018 - 2028**

The Plan aims to implement a community-led, collaborative, long term strategy for health and wellbeing of children and young people in the Northern Territory. It takes into account the social determinants of health and wellbeing, and is based on prevention, promotion, treatment and rehabilitation.

The key focus areas for the plan are:

- Health development of children and young adults to ensure they are raised and live in an environment that supports, promotes, protects their physical, emotional, cultural and social development.
- Improved health and wellbeing of young people 0-24 years old, by providing a framework to guide health, housing, education, youth justice, child protection and police services in addressing challenges that currently exist in the Territory.
- Focused and evidence-informed support to ensure children are safe and protected from harm.

➤ **Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018-2028**

This plan outlines the Northern Territory government's 10 year strategy to reduce domestic, family and sexual violence. It focuses on prevention and early intervention. The Theme of the First Action Plan 2018-21 is *Changing Attitudes, Intervening Earlier and Responding Better*.

Queensland

➤ **Supporting Families Changing Futures 2019-2023**

Supporting Families Changing Futures 2019-2023 is the Queensland Government's plan for reforms to the state's child protection and family systems, and is the second half of a 10 year whole-of-government strategy. Its development stems from the 2012 Queensland government Child Protection Commission of Inquiry. At the core of the strategy are wellbeing outcomes, and it takes a broad view of wellbeing to include factors such as housing, physical and mental health, and engagement with education, training and employment.

Key focus areas over the next 5 years include:

- promoting a whole-of-government approach towards meeting the needs of children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability and enhancing the shared responsibility objective of the reform program;
- increasing the reach and effectiveness of family support services to help more families earlier and reduce the number of families escalating into the child protection system;
- enhancing and strengthening cross-agency responses to address the wide-ranging needs of families, children and young people experiencing vulnerability;
- continuing to reduce the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children and young people in the child protection system;
 - This includes a number of specific initiatives including the establishment of 33 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Centres to consolidate the functions of existing family support services into community-run Family Wellbeing Centres. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations lead the design and delivery of these services.
- increasing and enhancing types of care to not only meet projected demand but to meet the needs of children and young people in care more effectively;
- strengthening support for carers and kin.

Strategies to build the capability of the workforce are also included.

➤ **Working Together Changing the Story: Youth Justice Strategy 2019-2023 and Youth Justice Strategy Action Plan 2019-2021**

The youth justice strategy is the Queensland government's response to the 2018 report of the Inquiry into Youth Justice conducted by Mr Bob Atkinson AO APM. It sets out Queensland's framework for preventing and responding to youth crime. It has four key pillars: early intervention, keeping children out of court, keeping children out of custody, and reducing re-offending.

The Action Plan is a comprehensive description of Queensland's approach to implementing reform of its youth justice system. The Plan emphasises the need to identify and respond early to children, young people and their families at risk of becoming involved in the youth justice system. Many actions focus on strengthening children and young people's ties with their families and communities. The Plan considers ways to address all aspects of children/young people's wellbeing, such as health, education, physical and mental health.

➤ Safe and Well: Supporting Families, Protecting Children

Safe and Well: Supporting Families, Protecting Children is South Australia's whole-of- government reform plan to better support vulnerable families and children. It has been developed in response to recommendations from South Australia's 2014 [*Child Protection Systems Royal Commission*](#), [*the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*](#), and other related inquiries. The aim is to shift towards a contemporary view of child protection as a whole-of-government system with collective responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Areas of focus are:

- Providing earlier, intensive, targeted support to families with multiple and complex needs;
- Protecting children from harm, including when they come into care, using a trauma-responsive, development-focused services;
- Investing in children in care and in their transition from care.

➤ An Intensive Support System for South Australia's Children and Families

Part of broad reform of the state's Child Protection System, this initiative was launched in March 2019. It is a three year plan to establish a new Child and Family Intensive Support System. The work is being led by a cross-government task force, and is supported by the [Early Intervention Research Directorate](#).

The Child and Family Intensive Support System will bring together government and non-government delivered services to create a connected, evidence-informed service system. Key features include:

- a core aim of reducing the number of children experiencing child abuse and neglect;
- situating service provision within the broader family context;
- focusing new services to meet the needs of distinct priority populations;
- partnering with non-government and government providers in evidence-based service design and delivery;
- commissioning services with accountability for outcomes and continuous evaluation;
- contextualised to meet local requirements in remote and regional areas;
- culturally responsive services and prioritising Aboriginal families with multiple service needs;
- trauma-informed practice that underlies all service delivery including health where appropriate;
- fast, effective referral pathways -client engagement; minimise gaps and service duplication;
- alternative pathways - families receive services while a notification is being processed;
- use of data – monitoring, evaluation, performance, continual improvement and planning;
- strong links to Commonwealth funded services;
- a confident, agile and skilled workforce.

➤ South Australia's Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People

This Outcomes Framework supports the development and wellbeing of South Australians from birth to 18 years. It adopts a long-term focus to track and improve the outcomes of all children and young people. The Framework:

- sets out in a charter, the conditions for all children and young people to live a good life in accordance with their statutory, common law and international human rights;
- identifies the key dimensions of 'a good life' and the agreed outcomes for all children and young people in South Australia;

- provides a systematic mechanism to track, monitor and report on agreed outcomes with indicators;
- provides evidence of inequalities for specific communities of children and young people to identify where improvements are needed;
- identifies emerging trends, and current and potential challenges;
- provides evidence for decision-making for policy and other interventions to improve the lives of all children and young people;
- requires cooperation and collaboration of state and local government authorities.

Tasmania

➤ [Strong Families Safe Kids](#)

Strong Families Safe Kids, initiated in 2015, is the Tasmanian's government's reform program to improve the state's child protection system. Its final report, [Redesign of Child Protection Services Tasmania: Strong Families, Safe Kids](#), was released in March 2016 and identified prevention as a priority. It also emphasised the importance of focusing on child and youth wellbeing.

As part of the strategy's [Implementation Plan](#), the redesign project developed a [Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework](#). Using an ecological model of human development, the Framework places the child at the centre and recognises the importance of the child's relationships with family and the wider community. It is based on ARACY's *The Nest* and uses six domains of child and youth wellbeing.

➤ [2018-2021 Department of Education Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy: Safe, Well and Positive Learners](#)

This strategy has been developed to deliver on the Wellbeing Goal and builds on the Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework. It includes a common narrative around what is meant by wellbeing and targeted action, to align effort to deliver improved wellbeing for children and young people. It supports the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework* and also uses ARACY's *The Nest*. A *Child and Student Mental Wellbeing Framework* has also been developed.

Victoria

➤ [Roadmap for Reform: Strong Families, Safe Children](#)

Victoria's reform initiative *Roadmap for Reform: Strong Families, Safe Children* is closely linked with the aims and of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*. The focus of *Strong Families, Safe Children* is to transform child and family support services in Victoria from a crisis response system to one of prevention and early intervention. It aims to reform the child and family support system in Victoria by:

- Strengthening communities to better prevent neglect and abuse
- Delivering early support to children and families at risk
- Keeping more families together through crisis
- Securing a better future for children who cannot live at home.

It focuses on a new model of pathways to support:

- Early help -children and families with emerging needs and vulnerability who require particular assistance from universal services with extra support from the child and family system and community resources to achieve child and family wellbeing and capability.

- Targeted and specialist support - children and families experiencing a range of needs with increasing vulnerabilities or risks. Some children in this pathway may have experienced or are likely to experience significant harm and, in some circumstances, may need to reside away from their families for a period of time.
- Continuing care - Children in enduring care arrangements who have experienced significant harm and will not be returning to their birth family.

Western Australia

➤ **A Bright Future**

A Bright Future is one arm of *Our Priorities: Sharing Prosperity*, the Western Australian Government's targets for achievement in selected areas of the work of the WA government, announced February 2019.

A Bright Future outlines a whole-of-community approach to improving the health, wellbeing and education of our children. The three target areas of *A Bright Future* are:

- Improve the health and wellbeing of children in the early years.
- Increase student reading and numeracy.
- Increase participation in STEM.

➤ **Wellbeing Monitoring Framework**

The Western Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People has developed a [Wellbeing Monitoring Framework](#). The new Framework builds on previous work and is structured around the life course of children aged 0-18 years. It is organised over three domains:

- Learning and participating.
- Healthy and connected.
- Safe and supported.

Attachment D: Jurisdictional consultation summaries

- Hobart 16 March 2019 – public consultation
- Adelaide 28 August 2019 – public consultation and leadership group discussion
- Brisbane 9 October 2019 - public consultation and leadership group discussion
- Townsville 10-11 October 2019 – one public consultation with strong representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and community representatives, one targeted consultation with parents from the Family Inclusion Network Townsville and representatives from Act for Kids Townsville, and one leadership group discussion
- Northern Rivers 15 October 2019 – one public consultation with good representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including Grandmothers Against Removals (GMAR), young people and community representatives
- Sydney 1 November 2019 – one public consultation and one leadership group discussion
- Perth 7 November 2019 – one public consultation including young people identified through the Valuing Children Initiative and one leadership group discussion
- Darwin 21-22 November 2019 – one public consultation, one targeted consultation with a group of young people who are members of the Northern Territory (NT) Youth Round Table all of whom lived in remote communities and one leadership group discussion
- Canberra 28 November 2019 – one public consultation and one leadership group discussion
- Melbourne 17 February 2020 – one public consultation including young people and parents with experience of child protection services
- Melbourne 10 March 2020 - Annual meeting of the National Coalition and CA2020 event.

Consultation in Hobart, 25 March 2019

What more *must* we do in national policy terms to make Australia a nation where all children grow up safe and well?

- Structural issues include:
 - many children and families living in poverty
 - the effects of policies and 'rules' on the wellbeing of children and families
 - the need for equitable and flexible policy and payment provisions such as:
 - consistent kinship care policies, especially around access to payments and services to remove inequities such as those between formal vs informal care arrangements and children with different visa conditions
 - adequate recognition and resourcing of informal care arrangements
 - the need for national consistency in laws and definitions across jurisdictions.
- We need to improve relationships between vulnerable families and communities and systems so that:
 - families are able to trust systems
 - there is better information sharing between systems and services
 - services and communities are enabled to maximise wellbeing.
- Child safety is a sub-set of child and family wellbeing, so we need to acknowledge that:
 - there is not a dichotomy between child protection and wellbeing
 - wellbeing is complex, but includes a range of features that can be enhanced with adequate and appropriate supports
 - we must balance a public health approach to improve outcomes for all children with the need to improve outcomes for those at serious risk
 - we need better (primary and secondary) care for families at pre-tertiary stage
 - we should aim for success as parents as part of the assessment for support process
 - supporting families can improve safety of children.
- Because we believe the child is at the centre, we must:
 - enable the voices of children and young people to inform policies and programs
 - develop shared language with children and young people
 - better inform everyone about trauma and its ongoing impact on children and parents.

Discussion questions

What should be the key elements of a national policy approach for child and family wellbeing and safety after 2020 when the National Framework comes to an end?

- Structures and policies across jurisdictions and systems need to support safety by:
 - meeting families' basic needs such as housing, food, health and security
 - providing programs and services with longevity and certainty of funding, with a particular focus on:
 - services known to be effective
 - the importance of information sharing and effective collaboration between services and systems
 - the longevity of services and providers being essential to building trust
 - governments and portfolios working collaboratively and funding services around families' needs, not on the basis of siloed policy areas
 - focusing on what supports families to create a safe environment for their children rather than just focusing on the child
 - having national conversations about what we mean by 'safety' and 'wellbeing', acknowledging that we cannot keep all children and young people safe.
- Programs need to be designed and implemented in consultation with children, young people, parents and carers, meaning that:
 - funding supports these consultative processes
 - it is easy to navigate between systems
 - lived experience is incorporated in the development of policies and programs.
- Implementing all levels of a public health model requires:
 - better understanding of how communities can support children and families through different parts of a public health model
 - consideration of whether we are ready (nationally) to move from the current focus (We have not yet successfully implemented prevention and early intervention as widely as planned and the vast majority of funding still goes to tertiary services).
 - services that are accessible, for example, provided in/through schools or other 'soft entry points'
 - prevention and early intervention approaches which include:
 - support from early pregnancy, especially for young people who have been in out-of-home care (OOHC)
 - encouraging help-seeking (which will depend on families having trust in the system)
 - a more strengths-based focus
 - a greater focus on secondary services, including:
 - a focus on the family, including wrap-around services to support reunification and whole-of-family, long-term recovery

- consistent, continuous services to keep families out of tertiary services or support them to move out of and recover from crises.
- Strengthen services and supports within the OOHC system so that:
 - all those in OOHC have access to therapeutic, trauma-informed services (which does not depend on the advocacy of individual parents or carers)
 - services around OOHC provide for the wellbeing of those in OOHC, their families and carers and include:
 - healing (children and young people)
 - support for carers
 - services for parents to address concerns and heal.

Which of these key elements are likely to produce the best outcomes for children and families?

- A National Framework has a focus on the **family** and supports families to be safe and thrive, including:
 - recognising all the domains that feed into wellbeing, such as health, safety, readiness to learn, adequate financial resources and adequate, stable housing.
- We have a better understanding of diversity and what that means for children and families and the particular supports they need, including:
 - a major focus on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families
 - genuine consultations with communities about what works in their communities.
- We listen to children and young people about their feelings of safety.
- Programs are place-based and co-designed.
- Within child protection and related services, workers seek agreement with families on what ‘the problem’ is and whether the proposed solutions are doable or appropriate.
- Much more effort (and funding) go into secondary services before things are so bad that tertiary services are warranted.
- Better targeting of tertiary services to families with abuse or at high risk requires that
 - services and systems are co-designed with families (including children and young people) to fit their needs
 - Ministerial portfolios hold shared responsibility for child and family wellbeing.

How will we know if the approach is successful?

- Outcomes measures are:
 - clearly linked to overarching strategies
 - built into service delivery
 - reported on nationally, but also include local outcomes
 - show positive progress
 - flexible enough to reflect/allow for local imperatives and needs.

- Nationally developed and aligned indicators of child and family wellbeing show positive progress (Tasmania is using in its wellbeing strategy the 6 domains developed by ARACY).
- Policy and program design reflect genuine representation and participation of children and young people, parents and carers.
- Children and young people report positive outcomes, such as that they are safe, better off or happier.
- Perpetrators are supported to change their behaviours.
- More consultative and collaborative processes are used in removal and reunification.
- Fewer children are in OOHC and there is more early intervention and supported reunification.
- There is regular, ongoing collaboration between, and monitoring by, stakeholders across governments and the service provision and research sectors.

How would we balance child and family wellbeing with the need to protect children?

- Any conceptual basis for 'family wellbeing' needs to put the child at the centre and the definition of 'family' must be broad enough to include all kinds of different arrangements, such as birth family, foster care, informal kinship or other care arrangements.
- We need to understand and acknowledge that we can't protect all children – some will be harmed. THEN we can focus on wellbeing.
- Safety is part of wellbeing. Supporting families can improve safety.

Consultation in Adelaide 28 August 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). The session was attended by around 50 participants including Senior Officials from State and Federal governments as well as executives and representatives from the non-government sector. This was the second consultation on the successor plan. The first was held in Hobart in March 2019.

Some key, high level outcomes from the Adelaide consultation include a strong preference for:

- A long-term plan with clear objectives for child, family and community wellbeing whilst maintaining a focus on priority groups that need more targeted or intensive investment or protection. It must:
 - Build on the current National Framework and keep those aspects still very relevant to child, family and community wellbeing.
 - Re-frame with a stronger focus on wellbeing, prevention and early intervention.
 - Continue to leverage investments that are achieving or show promise for positive outcomes, for example First 1000 days, transition to independent adulthood; and
 - Include a clear, agreed definition of wellbeing.
 - Be underpinned by clear governance structures supporting a tripartite approach.
 - Have a single and sustained focus on a small number of key priorities where we can achieve the greatest impact on outcomes across portfolios and wellbeing domains.
 - Link with and complement, other plans and strategies that also have a focus on the wellbeing of children and families such as the National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020-2030; the National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy currently under development; the work of the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner; the National Mental Health Plan; National Centre for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse; National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children; Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative.
 - Have an architecture that allows for adaptation and fine tuning along the way.
- Have a strong and sustained focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families that works in tandem with other strategies such as the Family Matters Campaign and Closing the Gap.
- Greater clarity about the roles and funding priorities of Commonwealth and State and Territory governments linked to the successor plan to improve coherence and integration.
- Use of a narrative that an investment in children, families and communities is seen as an investment Australia's economic and social prosperity, now and into the future.
- Incorporate co-design with children, young people and families as experts in their own lives as a vital element.

The attached table synthesises the outcomes against all discussions 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.

Adelaide consultation on the successor plan for the National Framework – Synthesis of key outcomes

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 cross-sectoral wellbeing agenda to frame policies and programs that span the continuum of care (from universal to tertiary) and that enables collaboration nationally. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Clear, achievable, measurable objectives/outcomes • Underlying principles • Clear roles/responsibilities • Small number of actions to achieve maximum impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A successor national plan will be developed that reflects an ecological model and aligns and builds on existing investments, priorities, plans and strategies across sectors including the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. ▪ More effective collaboration and coordination both between and within governments and across sectors – health, housing, education, community services.
	<p>Single and sustained focus on a small number (8-10) key priorities agreed to and upheld by all jurisdictions including the Commonwealth 10+ years most likely to have the greatest impact on driving real change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sign up by all jurisdictions with monitoring and reporting through appropriate governance mechanisms such as Ministerial Councils. ▪ No reduction in investment /commitment /governance to the plan with changes in government across the life of the plan. ▪ Agreed outcome measures / clear measurable objectives.
	<p>Prevention and early intervention approach that addresses risk factors to wellbeing for children, young people, families and communities while also protecting children. Including poverty and disadvantage, drug and alcohol dependence/misuse, mental health, domestic and family violence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agreed system specific definitions with a program logic mapping to overall wellbeing. ▪ Prevention and early intervention approaches are embedded in policy, program and practice – recognise evidence, are place-based, evaluation is supported, scale up what works. ▪ More ‘connected’ responses for families and children with complex needs and a move away from ‘silo’ responses. ▪ Collect dynamic data at all levels including regional and local to help evaluate progress. ▪ Improvement in child development outcomes for priority groups/those experiencing vulnerability.
	<p>The system embeds a public health approach. Invert the pyramid as a series of safety nets to prevent children and families falling through to the tertiary child protection system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The approach is clearly described and understood across sectors. ▪ Action and investments map to the public health approach. ▪ Increased supply and more timely uptake of universal, targeted and intensive services with fewer entries into tertiary services. ▪ Decrease in all indicators of child maltreatment including out-of-home care.
	<p>Facilitate a broader public narrative about the importance of child and family wellbeing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Australian community values families and children as fundamental to the wellbeing and prosperity of society. ▪ Supporting children and families moves away from a problem-oriented approach to an ‘investment’ approach.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
	Collaborative commissioning across governments/ sectors to support sustained/long-term, integrated, place-based approaches to service delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants and tender processes leverage the agreed vision, goals and principles. More coherence around funding decisions between Commonwealth and state governments to provide greater clarity for NGOs. Programs/commissioning actively promote integrated, place-based approaches. More service 'hubs' with different sectors co-located and working together around the child/family (eg. National Community Hubs Program).
	Embed principle of 'subsidiarity' across systems to support localised decision-making in communities, particularly those with greatest need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service system design is community led, and funding supports tailored and flexible approaches that can adjust to changing needs/priorities. Local organisations work collaboratively and holistically – provide a service 'package' to meet the needs of the child/young person/family (wrap-around support). Priority groups are identified and supported. Greater levels of social cohesion.
2. Cultural responsiveness – cross cutting theme	Prioritise efforts to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in systems including child protection, justice, family violence, disengaged youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive shift in indicators at state and national levels. Implementation of all five elements of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle by all jurisdictions. Closing the Gap (Refresh) targets.
	Culturally safe policies, programs and practice that are responsive and address impacts of intergenerational and complex trauma and promote healing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, communities, organisations and leaders are partners in co-design. Increased number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families accessing NACCHO/ACCO services when they need them. Evaluation and scaling up of what works.
	A stronger role for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role of ACCOs is enhanced. Expertise is recognised and utilised.
	Establish a strong evidence base and a common language in relation to trauma, its impacts on children, young people, families and communities, and identify solutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy, program, practice are informed by evidence relevant to the Australian context. Evaluation is embedded in system/ service design and outcomes are shared. We have a common language around complex trauma.
3. Practice/ workforce	Promotion and implementation of strengths-based approaches that value and prioritise: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> moving away from risk averse practices creating safe service access and family-led approaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communities of practice are established to support practitioners. Scaling up of approaches that are evidence based/ informed. Practitioners are empowered and supported to be brave in decision making about what does and doesn't work.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
	Support for professional development, practice leadership, supervision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers have the required skills and supervision to shift organisational cultures and practices to meet the national vision. Professional development is supported through the successor plan eg. Child Aware Conferences under the National Framework.
4. Participation	Embed co-design as a principle in policy, program and service delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children, young people, families and communities are at the centre of policy and program design. Children, young people, families and communities are consulted in the development of the successor plan and as part of its ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Participation reflects diversity.
5. Child/young people focus	Bring children and families to the front of public policy making. Leeds exemplar where investing in children is seen as an investment strategy, not just pathologised in to the child abuse and neglect space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement in child development outcomes for those in priority groups and experiencing vulnerability.
	Greater focus on the needs and development of children in all services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies, programs and practice have children at the centre. Data shows that the health, education, and social outcomes have improved.
	Build on learnings from the National Framework and continue effort in areas of ongoing concern/ priority/ promise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger investment in the early years including First 1000 days. Support for young people transitioning to adulthood. Stronger investment in strategies supporting family reunification for children in out-of-home care. Clear linkages with the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children to strengthen the focus on the needs of children. Priority focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.



Consultation in Brisbane 9 October 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, academics and parents.

This was the third jurisdictional consultation on the successor plan. Previous consultations have been held in Hobart (March 2019) and Adelaide (August 2019). A consultation was also held with delegates at the Child Aware Conference in May 2019.

Participants in Brisbane placed a very strong emphasis on the successor national plan driving systems change across all levels of government, service sectors, practice and in communities. There was a very clear message about the need for a different approach to that adopted in 2007 and relevant to the context of today. There was a strong preference for a long-term, bipartisan child and family wellbeing plan endorsed by COAG that builds on the current National Framework and is appropriately resourced. The successor plan should also:

- Shift the focus of investment towards prevention and early intervention to divert children, young people and families away from tertiary level responses.
- Leverage, but not duplicate effort that is occurring elsewhere at national, state and territory or community levels. This includes the investment occurring as a result of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
- Consider the use of short, medium and long-term targets against key indicators to track progress incrementally over the life of the successor plan, developed in consultation with the sector, regularly reviewed and reported against.
- Have an architecture that allows for adaptation and adjustments over the life of the plan to accommodate for emerging issues.
- Include a robust governance structure including Community Services Ministers, a formalised Children and Families Secretaries Group and a formal, tripartite working group to oversee implementation.
 - The tripartite approach to governance under the National Framework is recognised as a key strength that must be sustained.
- Have a strong and sustained focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families that complements other strategies such as the Family Matters Campaign, the *Our Way Strategy* and Changing Tracks Actions Plan, and Closing the Gap.
- Embed new commissioning and long term funding arrangements that:
 - allow funds to be used flexibly to meet local needs while achieving agreed outcomes;
 - enable integrated, cross sectoral responses for children, young people and families, particularly those with complex needs, to keep them out of child protection systems.
- Embed the concept of a recovery phase for children, young people and parents exposed to trauma in service delivery. Ensure services continue to allow clients a period of consolidation once goals have been achieved.

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 balance 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 Brisbane. 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"> • Is endorsed by COAG and has bi-partisan support; • Takes a long term view with regular review points and a robust, collaborative evaluation plan; • Includes a clear vision of success; • Builds on past achievements under the National Framework but takes a new approach to increase focus on economic, social and physical wellbeing; • Has a strong focus on cross-sectoral prevention and early intervention; • Is inclusive of all children and families but prioritises those with highest needs; • Is underpinned by a clear program logic, includes short and long-term wellbeing indicators and targets (co-designed) and an accountability framework for all partners; • Includes communities as a key partner through devolved decision-making, accountability and the implementation of solutions; • Leverages existing resources, policy frameworks, action plans and initiatives both nationally and at state and local levels - including the recommendations of the Royal Commission - to maximise impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All partners are working collaboratively towards an agreed, shared vision (definition of success), achievable and measurable targets and key outcomes that will deliver the greatest impact. ▪ Robust governance arrangements are in place at all levels with clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities across governments, non-government and corporate sectors with communities playing a key role. ▪ The new plan complements but does not duplicate effort already occurring across jurisdictions. ▪ There is an increase in investments to prevention and early support services with downstream savings over time in the statutory child protection system. ▪ All service sectors are included and are working collaboratively - health, housing, education, early childhood, social services. ▪ Language is positively framed - move away from a paternalistic approach ('intervention', 'protection' and 'assessment') and a deficit model to a wellbeing, strengths-based, developmental approach. ▪ Communities are playing a greater role in supporting children, young people and families.
	<p>Better coordination across governments, service sectors and community organisations and less restrictive funding frameworks for services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ True place-based, community led approaches and service delivery. ▪ Collaborative instead of competitive commissioning. ▪ Flexible, longer term funding models that are outcomes based. ▪ A reduction in siloed approaches to service delivery and funding. ▪ Positive shift in indicators towards child and family wellbeing over the longer term.
	<p>Proportionate responses including cross-sectoral 'pools of funding' for those with the most complex needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would require streamlined funding agreements across portfolios and a common program logic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children, young people and families access services that are timely, holistic and meet their needs across all life domains. ▪ More equitable outcomes for children and families across all demographics.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A reduction in the current annual rate of increase in numbers of children going into alternative care.
	A strong focus on building the capacity and skills of parents, including those whose children have been removed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents know about and access programs, services and resources. ▪ Parents have capacity to face adversity and thrive. ▪ There is an evidence base in relation to parent-focused interventions including programs that contribute the most to parental effectiveness and can be replicated when scaled up. ▪ Normalisation of help seeking by parents - reduced stigma and adversarial responses. ▪ Re-frames the way we talk about children and parents/parenting.
	Refocus investment into foundational support for families – universal services such as health, education, stable housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Universal services are readily available in all locations, are accessed by children, young people and families and responsive to individual needs. ▪ Universal services are inclusive and take a holistic approach. ▪ Universal services act as effective soft entry points to further support with clear, effective referral pathways as required.
	Address the structural drivers impacting on child development and family wellbeing such as poverty, domestic and family violence, unemployment, unstable housing/homelessness, addiction and substance abuse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improvements in measures of child development eg. AEDC ▪ Improvements in child health measures. ▪ Improvements in school attendance and educational attainment eg. NAPLAN ▪ Reduction in rates of child neglect and emotional abuse. ▪ Positive performance against indicators/ measures of child and family wellbeing. ▪ Increased social cohesion.
	Build the capacity of the system to focus cross – sectoral support at key transition points across the life course starting at the First 1000 days and beyond including ECEC, school readiness, middle years and transition to high school, transition to higher education and employment, parenting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Smoother transitions for children and families/carers across the life course. ▪ Smoother, more effective transitions from alternative care for young people that extend beyond the age of 18 years. ▪ Improved measures of wellbeing across all domains.
	Integrated service delivery settings eg. school settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More equitable, easier access to services for families.
	A focus on emerging issues impacting the wellbeing of children, young people and families such as cyber safety, climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An agile successor plan that can accommodate new issues that emerge over time.
	A broad-based awareness raising/education component targeted at the Australian community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clearly articulated role for the broader community in supporting families and children in all their diversity.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased community 'buy-in' to the plan - high level of community engagement. Communication strategy that includes primary health care, child care centres, workplaces.
2. Cultural responsiveness – cross cutting theme	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"> Co-design with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, service providers and communities. National application of all five elements of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principles in policy, research and practice.
	Recognise and address inherent racism in mainstream services, that is services that are not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisations adopt an agreed set of principles to support cultural safety. Principles are developed by appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives. Mainstream services are culturally safe and responsive. Training in culturally appropriate practices and principles for all organisations involved in mainstream services
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led responses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led services. A reduction in the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in alternative care. Fewer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being removed from family, kin and country.
	Address the intergenerational transfer of trauma and adversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long term support including a period of 'recovery' is provided to children, young people and families to help overcome the impacts of intergenerational trauma and break the cycle of disadvantage/vulnerability.
	Embed an understanding of cultural needs/perspectives across all parts of the system, from policy through to practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All parts of the system are culturally safe and responsive.
	Facilitate cultural change so that society more broadly values children, parents and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Protecting children is everyone's business' is evident in the community. Empathic and compassionate responses. Broader community engagement in supporting children and families.
	Address the intergenerational transfer of trauma and adversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long term support that includes a period of 'recovery' is provided to children, young people and families to help overcome the impacts of intergenerational trauma and break the cycle of disadvantage/vulnerability.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
3. Participation	Enable children, young people, parents and communities to participate fully in the formulation and evaluation of the new plan and the roll-out in communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The new plan gives voice to children, young people, parents and communities. ▪ The new plan is responsive to the needs of children, young people, parents and communities.
	Include communities in accountability mechanisms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communities are engaged and playing an active role in implementing and evaluating the plan.
	Provide opportunities for success to be shared across systems, services, workforce and communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Systems, services, workforce and communities actively promote broader capacity building by sharing success. ▪ Communities of practice.
4. Practice/ Workforce	Support workers to move away from punitive, risk averse approaches and help normalise help seeking for parents, carers and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Risk mentality no longer a key driver in decision-making/practice. ▪ Innovation is encouraged and success is shared. ▪ There is an increase in the number of referrals to targeted and intensive support services and a reduction in the number of referrals to child protection services.
	Trauma-informed, accredited training rolled out across all sectors working with families and children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Services are accredited as trauma-informed. ▪ Children, young people and families can access support services.
	Broaden the pool of foster/kinship carers by providing greater support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More working adults foster children. ▪ Foster carers report feeling supported and valued in their role. ▪ There is a coordinated support system for kinship carers that includes clear lines of responsibility. ▪ Children in kinship care are kept out of the formal alternative care system.
	Practice/workforce is part of the accountability framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Actions under the new plan are fully implemented at practice level. ▪ Practitioners are actively engaged in implementation and achieving outcomes. Practice is evidence-based and innovative outcomes are supported.
	A focus on workforce recruitment and retention and capacity building for resilience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in attraction and retention rates. ▪ A resilient workforce that is valued for its contributions.
5. Child/ young people focus	Include the voices of children and young people in policy, program and service delivery design, performance monitoring and evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Real consultation with children and young people. ▪ Children and young people are involved in decisions that affect them ▪ Improved outcomes that reflect the participation of children and young people. ▪ A child focused plan that aligns with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
	Child rights are embedded in the new plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All children are educated about their rights. ▪ Children's rights are upheld in policy, programs and practice. ▪ Broad awareness of child rights, including by employers
	Organisations are supported to embed <i>National Principles for Child Safe Organisations</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Principles are effectively embedded in all organisations. ▪ Organisations are safe for children. ▪ Reduction in child maltreatment in organisations.
	Nationally consistent application of the <i>National Standards for Out-of-Home Care</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children and young people in alternative care receive high quality care no matter where they live.

'National policy and program is only one strand to strengthen families and improve outcomes for children. Local communities and community level actions also have a significant role to play.'

'The causes of disadvantage that feed into child neglect need to be addressed without parents feeling like they are being attacked. Working with, not powering over.'

'The importance of recovery as part of the process following trauma needs to be recognised. Support services for children, young people and families need to continue through this period.'

'Improve access to services for children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability. Children and young people are often ignored in universal services and don't get services until they age into the adult system.'

'A key goal of whatever we do must be to partner – across governments, with the non-government sector, with communities and with families.'

'I would like to see the successor plan include a national vision, some high level principles, some key themes and a small number of signature items that bind these themes together. For example, the First 1000 days.'

'Elevate the voices of young people as well as children into the successor plan.'

'A strong cultural lens and a genuine partnership to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in child protection and justice systems.'

'The successor plan must be adequately resourced. There is scope to look at how existing resources and initiatives supporting children, young people and families could be better leveraged and coordinated.'

'The Family Court and the Children's Court are very adversarial systems that need to be joined up and work together in the best interest of the child.'

Consultation in Townsville 10 October 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 parent and carer representatives.

This was the fourth jurisdictional consultation on the successor plan. Previous consultations have been held in Hobart (March 2019) and Adelaide (August 2019). A consultation was held in Brisbane on 9 October 2019. Delegates at the Child Aware Conference in May 2019 were also consulted on the successor plan.

Participants in Townsville emphasised the successor national plan must prioritise investments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children to reduce their over-representation in child protection and justice systems and called for a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Strategy and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner. They also highlighted the particular needs and challenges for children, families and communities in rural and remote locations and the barriers to culturally safe and accessible services. Addressing some of the inequities associated with Centrelink benefits for women escaping domestic violence and parents whose children are removed were also seen as a priority.

The successor plan should also:

- Be underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Include a vision developed in consultation with, and from contributions of, children and young people.
- Focus on prevention and early support to keep children happy and thriving in their families and communities and connected to culture.
- Recognise the importance of local, place-based approaches to meet the needs of children and families in communities.
- Allow for localised decision-making and longer and more flexible funding cycles so that services and workers can get traction with less staff turnover.
- Address the intersections between domestic and family violence, child protection and family law to support outcomes that are in the best interest of the child. Greater alignment is required between the Commonwealth payments system, state systems such as housing, Commonwealth and state funded support services, Family Law System, state domestic and family violence and child safety systems.
- Embed accountability for implementation and outcomes at all levels including service providers, workers and communities.
- Recognise and respond to the need for healing to address intergenerational trauma and break the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage.

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 Townsville. 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"> • 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 cross-sectoral prevention and early support; • Puts families and children at the centre of funding and decision-making; • Is appropriately resourced and has a strong, cross-sectoral accountability framework that includes all levels of government, service providers, workers and communities; • Includes a dedicated strategy to address the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, noting the significant impacts of intergenerational trauma; • Is developed in partnership with families, children, young people and workers; • Is underpinned by a community development approach and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The successor plan connects to national plans, initiatives and strategies such as the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, National Children’s Mental Health Plan, Family Law Reform, National Disability Insurance Scheme, First 1000 Days, Family Matters Campaign and Closing the Gap. ▪ All governments, non-government organisations, service providers and workers are held accountable for implementation and outcomes with communities playing a key role. All parties ‘stay true’ to the ‘promises’ written into the successor plan. ▪ There is a shift to prevention and early support services. ▪ All service sectors are included and are working collaboratively - health, education, early childhood, community services. ▪ Fewer children entering alternative care. ▪ Reduction in the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection and justice systems. ▪ Children are in alternative care for shorter periods and are not separated from their siblings. ▪ Children who have been removed are reunified in safe environments. ▪ Increase in school engagement and attendance rates. ▪ Decrease in rates of offending/incarceration. ▪ Language is positively framed around supporting and empowering parents and families and the rights of the child. ▪ Communities are playing a greater role in supporting families.
	<p>More flexible, longer term funding arrangements and shared program logic models.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborative commissioning – less competition for funds occurring at local levels. ▪ Programs and services can focus on the family as a whole and supports are ‘packaged’ to meet needs. ▪ A reduction in siloed approaches to service delivery and funding. ▪ Families are able to navigate the system more easily with more families receiving effective support. ▪ A more stable workforce. ▪ The ability to shift priorities, try new approaches or change what isn’t working.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
	Universal services that are culturally safe and available to everyone regardless of location.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Families seek help early. ▪ Families are less fearful when seeking help – not discouraged because of shame or guilt.
2. Cultural responsiveness – cross cutting theme	A national strategy to strengthen parenting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents know how to access education and support at multiple points in time such as through the First 1000 Days, at key developmental milestones and other age-related transition points. ▪ Early education of children to support their effectiveness as parents later in life starts at school. ▪ Resources and support are available in different forms to maximize access, including face-to-face, telephone and online. ▪ Parents are prepared for parenting and supported to develop the skills to raise happy, healthy children. ▪ A change in the way society more broadly talks about parenting – normalise challenges and difficulties and reinforce seeking help as a positive thing to do. ▪ Empower parents and reduce social stigma.
	Local data and research are used to inform local policy, investments and best practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Services are responsive to local needs and there is evidence that they are achieving outcomes. ▪ A more effective use of resources as investment is directed into approaches that work and diverted away from those that don't. ▪ Services can be adapted in response to emerging data and evidence. ▪ A more agile service system meeting local needs.
	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 dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's strategy that is true to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities. ▪ An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner. ▪ 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 led responses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families receive culturally safe services and culturally appropriate support. ▪ Healing happens and the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage is broken.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies have been implemented to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in child protection systems are showing promise. An increase in the numbers of children and young people reporting satisfaction with levels of cultural connection in survey data. Greater stability in families.
	Embed an understanding of cultural needs/perspectives across all parts of the system, from policy through to practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data and service standards show all parts of the system are culturally safe and responsive.
3. Participation	Enable children, young people, parents and communities to participate fully in the formulation and evaluation of the new plan and the roll-out in communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new plan gives voice to children, young people, parents and communities. The new plan is responsive to the needs of children, young people, parents and communities.
	Include communities in accountability mechanisms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communities are engaged and playing an active role in implementing and evaluating the plan.
	Provide opportunities for success to be shared across systems, services, workforce and communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systems, services, workforce and communities actively promote broader capacity building by sharing success. Communities of practice.
4. Practice/ Workforce	Case workers are able to take a holistic view when working with families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families are empowered to define what wellbeing means for them and services are structured to support that. Fewer referrals to other services. Less fragmentation across service providers. Improved access and greater flexibility for families. Extended families are engaged including grandparents.
	Workforce education and training and new practice frameworks that are evidence based to improve child and family centred practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A more skilled workforce. Workers are able to effectively work with children and families despite the increasing complexity of issues.
	Practice/workforce is accountable under the successor plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers are actively engaged in implementation and achieving outcomes.
	A focus on workforce recruitment and retention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in attraction and retention rates. Ongoing support for workers when required when dealing with increasing complex issues affecting children and families. More stability for children and families and stronger relationships that build trust. Better outcomes for families and children.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
5. Child/ young people focus	The voices of children and young people are heard and inform policy, program and service delivery design.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policy, programs and services meet the needs of children and young people. ▪ Better outcomes for children and young people who are safe and well with family and more engaged in education and training. ▪ Children and young people are involved in decisions that affect them. ▪ Centrelink decisions are made in the best interest of the child – there is support for women escaping violence so that they can keep their children, and parents whose children are removed have adequate financial support to enable their children to be safely returned to their care.

'We are selling hope to families. Practitioners can elicit change for families but we must get national agreement around the fundamentals.'

'Our voices get changed and watered down and the words aren't our words and they don't look familiar to us.'

'There are so many road blocks that impact the wellbeing and safety of older children in alternative care arrangements and they are losing hope. We have to keep this group a priority in the successor plan. They are our next generation.'

'Involve the sector more heavily in the implementation of the successor plan and include actions that can be led locally by the sector.'

'Policy is there for people – the human end is paramount and policy must reflect values and humanity.'

'The sector is under-resourced with more families entering and presenting with more complex needs. Yet so much of our time is spent battling systems and dealing with red tape. If we could redirect that effort towards supporting our children, young people and families that would be a very significant achievement.'

'Grants processes are competitive so no one wants to talk to one another and share information. They advantage larger players, disadvantage small, local services and increase the complexity of the service system for children and families.'

'The lack of stable accommodation for young people transitioning to independent adulthood from alternative care is impacting outcomes and there are increasing numbers of pregnant women in this cohort.'

'The Centrelink payments system works against some families. Parents whose children are removed get transferred onto Newstart, leading to further disadvantage and making it harder for parents to work with us to get their children returned. Particularly people in rural and remote communities who have to travel to see us and their children. We are driving these people further into poverty at a time when we are supposed to be supporting them.'

'Our language is often negative and can be culturally offensive. We must change this narrative if we want everyone to see themselves as part of the successor plan.'

'Mental health services are overwhelmed and almost non-existent for children under 12 who need counselling. We need to support children in the middle years.'

'Income management has some merits in some communities and could be considered to help reduce drug and alcohol abuse and child removal.'



Consultation with the Family Inclusion Network (FIN) Townsville and ACT for Kids Townsville

11 October 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 actively encouraged participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in all consultations. The session was attended by around 15 participants including officials from the Queensland Government and members and representatives of FIN Townsville and Act for Kids Townsville.

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

Participants from FIN and Act for Kids emphasised the importance of local services operating in the best interests of the child and working together to address the multiple drivers of child abuse and neglect, child removal and poor outcomes for children, young people and families. Experiences with the child protection system and Family Court were also discussed extensively and ideas about how experiences could be improved were offered by participants.

Key elements identified as part of the successor plan included:

- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Localised decision-making that includes the voices of children, young people and parents/families.
- More flexible and longer funding cycles so that services are not disrupted and new programs or initiatives that are showing promise can continue for families.
- An integrated service system that addresses underlying issues as well as the presenting issues for children, young people and families.
- A strategy to improve access to services for children, young people and families across all services including health and mental health, drug and alcohol, counselling and parenting support. Families should not have to work hard to access the services they need, when they need them.
- More support for parents to keep children well and safe at home or to address issues so that children who have been removed can be returned safely and permanently.
- Joining up domestic and family violence policy with policy for children's wellbeing and safety as the two are so strongly connected.
- Children are actively involved in developing the vision.

Many insightful and powerful contributions were made by participants in response to the consultation questions. These have been collated and are summarised under each question in the attachment.

1. What should be our vision for Australia's children?

All children in Australia have a happy, healthy, supportive childhood.

Children have a voice and are believed, listened to and respected.

Children have the best education possible and education is free including tertiary education.

Communities are structured to support families - transport, affordable and safe housing, responding to poverty, better income support arrangements.

Freedom – to be safe, creative and valued by the community.

Children are included in decisions that affect them.

An ecologically sound future.

Children have access to all the services they need when they need them and for as long as they need them.

A child friendly, integrated service system with child friendly language and information.

All children are allowed to be who they want to be and supported at home, at school and by the community.

A focus on prevention including universal education programs for children such as respectful relationships, information about domestic and family violence and personal safety, starting in the early years and continuing to high school.

2. What are the main barriers to making Australia a nation where all children grow up safe and well?

'Accessibility of services particularly in rural and remote areas – availability, waiting lists, lack of transport and time and financial costs for parents who have to travel.'

'We need more services for children, young people and parents impacted by substance abuse that also address underlying mental health issues.'

'Parents need advocates to help them navigate child protection and justice systems.'

'Services are fragmented and operate as silos with parents having to go to multiple services to have their needs met.'

'10 session Medicare funded mental health services are not sufficient and they are not integrated with broader supports.'

'Children, parents and families don't always know about what is out there to help them. It needs to be promoted and shared more.'

'We need more resources for children and young people about domestic and family violence including where to seek help. Information needs to be available in schools.'

'Services are not available for children and young people on probation to help them address the issues that led them to offend and they often end up homeless and keep offending.'

'There needs to be greater transparency in decision making that impacts birth parents and children in child protection systems.'

'Unstable housing, poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic and family violence, unresolved trauma.'

'Inadequate and culturally inappropriate support from child protection services for refugee families.'

'Gender bias – women are feeling judged. Checklists used by child protection workers for access or reunification are sexist.'

'Some Family Court processes where statements can be made without the support of evidence leading to detrimental outcomes for some women.'

'Children are still not being believed when disclosing sexual assault.'

'Lack of trust in systems including child protection and Family Court that discourages help seeking.'

'Funding cycles that don't give certainty to services, workers and clients and pilot programs that show promise but don't get re-funded. Families are being let down.'

Aerosol sniffing is an emerging issue that is destroying our children and young people and there aren't enough services out there to address it.

3. What initiatives are showing promise in overcoming these barriers?

'ACT for Kids trial program for children disclosing sexual assault – child focused approach, needs based, cross portfolio including health, education and police.'

'Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service Lighthouse Program that is providing safe houses for children and young people including those who are disengaged from education and disconnected from culture.'

Maternal and child health nurses who take a holistic view, are supportive and work with other services to make referrals.

Giving children, young people and parents a voice in policy, program and service delivery.

Respectful relationships education in schools and programs such as Love Bites and e-safety training.

Children's safe houses including respite, services for children living on the streets.

Child Advocacy Centres® like the one in Western Australia should be everywhere.

Services working collaboratively and locally to address local issues.

The E-Safety Commissioner and e-safety training.

4. What should be the key elements of national policy for child and family wellbeing and safety beyond 2020?

'A child rights approach with consequences for not upholding these rights.'

'Services must work together more collectively and pool resources in smaller areas. The work of David Tobis in the US is a good model.'

'National service standards to ensure accessibility for people in rural and remote areas, including online services where appropriate.'

'More support for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence so they feel safe to report, are protected and not re-traumatised by Family Court and Children's Court processes.'

'Changing the way child protection services work with parents so that they are more supportive, build trust and help parents to engage more fully.'

'Children and young people are consulted in all decisions that affect them and their views are equally weighted with those of adults.'

'Culturally appropriate and sensitive services that are not judgemental or punitive in their approach – including for refugee families.'

'A focus on mothers with newborn babies including young mothers to help with parenting, mental health and adjustment and other issues such as unstable housing, DV, drug and alcohol issues.'

'More support for birth parents to have their children returned – include support for all the reasons that children were removed in the first place including unintentional neglect.'

'An integrated service model that puts children and families at the centre and that deals holistically with all issues.'

'Trauma informed approaches that recognise and help to address the impacts of trauma on relationships, parenting, workforce participation.'

'Domestic violence training for child protection workers so that the advice given to women does not adversely impact them in legal or family court processes.'

'Support for grandparent carers who are keeping children out of the child protection system.'

'Specialist, longer term domestic violence counselling that is difficult to access in regional and remote areas.'

'Accountability for implementation and outcomes at all levels, including service providers.'

'Services for perpetrators of violence against women and children.'

'Funding arrangements for services that give them certainty and gives children, young people and families continuity.'

'Long term support for children who have experienced trauma, abuse or neglect to break the cycle.'

Report: Northern Rivers NSW consultation on the future of national child and family wellbeing policy



Families Australia, Ballina Surf Club, 15 October 2019

Families Australia had been contracted by the Australian Government Department of Social Services to lead consultation on the future of national child and family wellbeing policy on behalf of the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing. The results of this consultation will inform policy to replace the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020, which is due to end next year.

The Better Chances Forum (BCF) invited Families Australia to hold a consultation in the Northern Rivers. The consultation was held at Ballina Surf Club on 15 October 2019. Forty-three people from 20 different community and government services and community groups in our region attended and contributed to the information included in this draft report.

Purpose of this report

This report has been prepared by Social Futures, as the BCF convenor. It has been circulated to people who registered and/or attended the Northern Rivers consultation session for review and comment, and for further input from BCF members and stakeholders. The report is being presented to Families Australia to inform their report to the Australian Government. It will also inform work BCF is exploring regarding a conversation in our region about involving community in responding to child protection concerns.

About the Better Chances Forum

The BCF supports better chances for children and young people (C&YP) and their families by bringing together skills and expertise from across the Northern Rivers to:

- explore service system challenges, gaps and opportunities
- identify and share information about what's working well and what's not in our services and communities
- consider how BCF members can work better alongside communities.

The BCF is working to reduce the number of C&YP in out of home care in our region.

Earlier in 2019 the BCF prepared a submission to the NSW Government *Their Futures Matter Access System Review*, which includes further information relevant the future of national child and family wellbeing policy. The submission is available at www.socialfutures.org.au/?download=44312

You can find more information about BCF at www.socialfutures.org.au/development/better-chances-forum/

Northern Rivers consultation results:

Participants at the October 2019 consultation session worked in groups to explore and respond to the following four questions.

1. What needs to be in our national policy to support children and families' wellbeing and safety?
2. Which of these are the 2 most important things – likely to produce the best outcomes for children and families?
3. How will we know if we have been successful?
4. How can we balance child and family wellbeing with the need to protect children?

Detailed responses to these questions are documented at Appendix 1, along with key issues and elements emerging from the table discussions identified at the end of the session.

Summary of consultation results – what needs to be in our national policy to support children and families' wellbeing and safety?

Equitable society to support wellbeing

National child and family wellbeing policy needs to be underpinned by commitment to a more equitable society where all people have access to safe, affordable housing, quality health services, education, transport, employment, technology and other wellbeing supports.

Collaboration, integration and flexibility

Holistic and multidisciplinary approaches to support are needed, with greater collaboration and less competition between agencies and communities, including:

- respecting and collaborating with families and community groups including Grandmothers Against Removal (GMARs)
- multidisciplinary responses to support families experiencing domestic and family violence
- multidisciplinary approaches to early intervention supports, such as those provided in integrated preschools, including clinicians and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff
- collaboration between agencies across all levels of government and non-government services
- collaboration between State agencies (including child safety, justice, education and health agencies), the National Disability Insurance Agency, disability service providers and families to support wellbeing and safety for C&YP with disability
- whole services and systems offering trauma informed care and space for healing
- flexibility – supporting services to be child-centred
- First Nations workers at pivotal points in services and systems to support and facilitate access for communities
- confidence among existing services to liaise with each other.

Cultural appreciation

Northern Rivers stakeholders identified the need for significant focus on improving cultural appreciation and using a trauma lens to understand the situations children, young people, families and communities are facing, and the impact of their experiences. This goes beyond one-off opportunities for cultural awareness or competency training. It is about appreciation of culture and history being ingrained in practice, in the way services, programs and activities are delivered and how community connects with them.

Consultation participants noted acknowledgement of Aboriginal communities is often lip-service and many communities are suffering with intergenerational trauma that is not being addressed. We identified need to acknowledge and appreciate those providing local services and engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and to build the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Workforce capability

Developing the capability of our workforce is critical to support wellbeing for children, young people and families. Specific issues and priorities identified include:

- services being culturally competent and understanding the impact of trauma
- capacity to offer carers and parents the support they need
- culturally appropriate and informed assessment tools
- matching the percentage of Aboriginal staff in the NSW Department of Communities and Justice to the percentage of Aboriginal children in out of home care
- trauma informed approach to all workforce education and practice
- leaders with a hands-on reality-based approach who can mentor this to others
- good relationships with case workers with lived experience.

Engagement, participation and decision-making – children, young people, families and communities

Children and young people's participation enhances their wellbeing (Anderson & Graham 2016⁴⁸). Authentic involvement of C&YP at all stages of policy development and implementation needs to sit above the priorities in Australia's child and family wellbeing policy/ plan. The involvement of C&YP in this way is a fundamental right and also a key pillar of child safe organisations (<https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/>). Collaboration with C&YP throughout the process of decision making, policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation is also critical to a rights-based approach (Byrne & Lundy 2019⁴⁹). Including C&YP people with disabilities is also critical.

In addition to children and young people's participation in policy, our national policy needs to support involvement in decisions and planning about individual children, young people, families and communities. Priorities and considerations include:

- working with the whole community and understanding that child protection is everyone's business and affects all communities
- understanding that people don't feel heard and strengthening accountability by supporting stakeholders to drive and determine outcomes – ask people most affected what they think, what success looks like, what services need to do to support their needs, and move to a system where community have much more involvement at all levels
- engaging men
- taking services to where they are needed, including reaching out to mission communities, rather than just focusing on major towns
- finding ways to deliver funding directly to communities where projects are co-designed with community and integrate services and supports
- re-calibrating funding so that supports are distributed to all family members around the child
- a relational approach to consultation and connecting children, young people and families with services and community activities
- importance of language to support accessibility of services and policies
- asking and listening to C&YP who have experience within service systems, including those with disability, and culturally diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander C&YP
- supporting family empowerment through family-led decision-making, including collaborating with families on achievable safety plans
- including extended family and kin supports in plans.

⁴⁸ Anderson, D., & Graham, A. (2016) Improving student wellbeing: having a say at school, *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 27:3, 348-366, DOI: 10.1080/09243453.2015.1084336

⁴⁹ Byrne, B., & Lundy, L. (2019). Children's rights-based childhood policy: a six-P framework. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 23(3), 357–373. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2018.1558977>

Early intervention and prevention

Northern Rivers stakeholders provided very clear input about the need for greater focus on investment in prevention and early intervention services and supports. This includes:

- evidence-based early intervention programs with therapeutic services
- focus on the first 1000 days of life
- support survivors of abuse to be the best parents they can be
- more funds directed to early drug and alcohol support and
- more funds directed to mental health and other wellbeing services to support adults and young adults who have come out of out of home care to break the cycle
- more support for pregnant women and their partners, including high-risk birth alert triggering interagency/ multidisciplinary support
- broad opportunities for C&YP and their families to participate in other social support activities that foster wellbeing and belonging
- protective behaviour workshops in schools, parenting classes/child care courses, education on contraception and awareness around domestic and family violence
- ensure early intervention services are sustainable and available as families grow, and culturally competent
- invest in targeted early intervention led and delivered by Aboriginal organisations
- address trauma and its links to poverty, including the challenge of parenting on Newstart
- reduce stigma associated with involvement in universal and early intervention services.

Stable funding and systems

Short-term and unstable funding to support child and family wellbeing is a serious concern among Northern Rivers stakeholders. The national policy/plan needs to support consistent long-term funding for ongoing and sustainable programs and activities, including resources and time required to support a relational approach in our work and flexibility to respond to the needs of children, young people, families and communities.

Stakeholders noted need for consistent, long-term funding for successful, evidence-based programs and longer-term funding for workers on the ground to support job security and staff retention; and funding for community led groups, such as Grandmothers Against Removal, and for supporting Kinship carers at the same level as non-related carers.

Accountability

National practice standards supporting stability, accountability and follow-through were identified by Northern Rivers stakeholders as essential to accountability required to support child and family wellbeing. It was noted that national frameworks and policy are often aspiration and need greater focus on accountability for investment in infrastructure and early intervention needed to support successful implementation.

Specific considerations and issues related to accountability are listed below.

- Ensure children, young people, families and communities with a stake in decisions about them and policy that affects them are heard – ensuring accountability for all elements listed in the engagement, participation and decision-making section earlier in this report.
- Solid program evaluation driving ongoing investment to scale up programs and activities that work.
- Key person support – offering a lead contact for support alongside a child, young person or family.
- State Government agencies audit where resources are going aligned with policy and shift it towards national policy priorities. Being accountable, delivering the infrastructure to implement national priorities.
- Understanding what good enough parenting is; and strengthening relationships and trust needed for a shared understanding of neglect between family, community and agencies.
- Acknowledge cultural capital and relationships needed to support effective service delivery.

- Services are culturally informed, use culturally informed assessment tools and employ local Aboriginal staff – supporting culturally informed assessment of wellbeing, risk and safety.
- Government and non-government services provide safe and inclusive supports for C&YP with disability – underpinned by a sound understanding of the rights of C&YP, the barriers they face, and service providers' responsibilities.
- Following cultural and community protocol.
- Multidisciplinary and collaborative responses – are visible to and include those who have a stake in an issue, opportunity, child, young person, family or community.
- Authentic dialogue between services, children, young people, families and communities.
- Policy, programs and activities are informed by evidence, research and lived experience.
- Outcomes and performance measures for organisations and programs are relevant to local needs and are informed by children, young people, families and communities.
- The NSW Aboriginal Case Management Policy supports practitioners to engage early with Aboriginal families to shape case planning and identify tailored solutions to keep children safe with their family and community. Stakeholders identified this policy, which shifts power back to family-led decision-making is not being used well enough. There is opportunity for greater collaboration to support implementation of this NSW policy.
- SNAICC, the National Voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, is leading the call to establish a National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People⁵⁰. This is an important accountability measure to support wellbeing and safety for children, young people, families and communities.

Organisations contributing

- Bundjalung Ballina Grandmothers Against Removal
- Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University
- Coraki Preschool
- Department of Social Services
- Heartfelt House
- Human Nature Adventure Therapy
- Jarjum Centre
- Murwillumbah Community Centre
- Ngunya Jarjum Aboriginal Child and Family Network
- Northcott
- Northern Rivers Child Care Services
- Northern Rivers Community Gateway
- Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre
- NSW Department of Communities and Justice
- NSW Department of Education
- NSW Department of Health
- Social Futures
- Stepping out Program Inc.
- The Family Centre
- YWCA

⁵⁰ See the Family Matters Report 2019, <https://www.familymatters.org.au/>

Appendix 1 – workshop data from the Northern Rivers consultation, Ballina October 2019

Key issues/ elements/ priorities for national policy on child and family wellbeing – as documented at the October consultation workshop

- Empowering families, including family lead decision making.
- Services are culturally competent and understand the impact of trauma.
- Understanding what is good enough parenting?
- Focus on cultural appreciation.
- Continued, sustainable, targeted, multifaceted and authentic programs and activities.
- Multidisciplinary approach to early intervention.
- Society – improve access to housing, health, mental health, education, transport, employment, etc.
- Consistent, long-term funding and evidence-based programs in early intervention with therapeutic services.
- National best practice standards for stability, accountability and follow through.
- Outcomes driven by stakeholders – accountability.
- Relational approach.
- More engagement with the children this is all about.
- Reach out to mission communities.
- Work with the whole community. Understand that child protection is everyone's business and affects all communities.

Question 1: What needs to be in our national policy to support children and families' wellbeing and safety?

- The voices of children.
- Consultation with communities.
- More funds directed to early drug and alcohol and mental health support.
- More funds directed to supporting adults and young adults who have come out of 'out of home care' to break the cycle.
- Services targeted to high risk areas, instead of just putting them in major towns.
- Same amount of funds and support given to Kinship carers as non-related carers.
- Funding for community led groups, such as GMARs (Grandmothers Against Removal).
- Continual, sustained, funded community support systems.
- NSW Department of Family and Community Services (now Communities and Justice) should match the percentage of Aboriginal staff to the percentage of Aboriginal children in care/ removed.
- Same percentage of Aboriginal people involved in decision-making and policy making.
- Language is important.
- Inclusion of children with disabilities – needs assessment for families.
- Focus on first 1000 days.
- How to align programs to early prevention, including mental health for C&YP.
- Highlight needs of survivors of abuse- some may not have the support to be the best parents.
- Wrap-around funding.
- Need cultural appropriate assessment tools.
- Strengthen family-led decision making.
- Placement principles – with consistent reflection.
- Need longevity of programs as engagement can take a long time.
- Safe, affordable housing for women and children.
- Focus on prevention:
 - key person support
 - education in protective behaviours
 - public health approach
 - more support for pregnant women:
 - including education and implementation

- intense support i.e. high-risk birth alert, triggers an interagency support and response.
 - Multidisciplinary response to domestic violence.
- Continuation and increased funding to roll out programs (i.e. losing staff).
- Create universal children's and police checks – check is a free service and nationwide not just in each state.
- Addressing trauma and poverty.
- Program evaluation and scale up those that work.

Participation

- How will we/the policy plan for more meaningful and authentic engagement with key stakeholders, on all policy development and delivery points?
- How can participation play a central role?
- For example, advanced indicators for services and children e.g. a child not turning up to school.

Holistic Approach

- How could the policy encourage a holistic approach between agencies?
- More collaborative and less competitive - services are child-centred and longer term.

Accountability and infrastructure

- State governments commit to audit where resources are going aligned with policy and shift it towards national policy priorities. Being accountable, delivering the infrastructure to implement national priorities.
- Deliver funding directly to communities where projects are co designed with community with integrated services. Long-term funding, 10 years plus.
- Delivery in established organisations that have cultural capital. Long term relationships.
- Engagement and participation as long-term indicators and ability of families to access services independently and increased capacity.
- Build relationships and educate families. Many people don't understand FACS' [NSW Department of Communities and Justice] interpretation of neglect, however this can't be done without trust and relationship.
- Significant focus on improving cultural appreciation of those providing services and engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families: localized perspective, capacity building of Indigenous staff.
- Equality of social determinants that impact on issues such as health, employment, mental health, wellbeing – e.g. increase Newstart allowances.
- Co-designed programs- sustainable long-term funding.
- Improve access to Early Intervention Services that are multi- disciplinary.

Question 2: Which of these are the 2 most important things – likely to produce the best outcomes for children and families?

- Continued, sustained, targeted, multi-faceted approach that is an authentic dialogue.
- Accountability that concentration of funds at the coalface- individual communities consulted.
- Empowering families, through; family led decision making; involving families right across the spectrum; and ensure carers/parents have the support they need which is trauma informed.
- Longevity of successful programs.
- Ensure culturally informed services for example local Aboriginal staff, culturally informed assessment tools. Think about “what is ‘good enough’ parenting?”
- Consistent long-term funding for successful, evidence-based programs.
- Examples of local early intervention, prevention and therapeutic programs:
 - Ready Set Go (YWCA)
 - PUP [Parents Under Pressure] (Northern Rivers Community Gateway (NRCG))
 - Trauma Informed Practices and Counselling (NRCG)
 - Sexual abuse therapy (Heartfelt house)
 - Family Referral Service (Social Futures)

- Elements (Social Futures)
- Kids in Mind (Social Futures)
- Headspace (Social Futures)
- Brighter Futures
- Flourishing Families (NRCG).
- National Best Practice Standards for stability, accountability and follow through.
- Relational approach to consultation.
- Meaningful participation and sustained consultation with C&YP.
- Outcomes driven by stakeholders:
 - For example: young person turning up at the service
 - organisations to set outcomes relevant to local area needs
 - accountability to people being funded
 - evidence-based and research.
- Policies informed by evidence/research/lived experience.
- Delivery in established organisations that have cultural capital. Long-term relationships.
- Multi-disciplinary approaches to early intervention supports, such as those provided in integrated preschools (includes clinicians (early childhood experts, speech, occupational therapists, physiotherapists) and Indigenous staff. Whole service offers trauma informed care. Examples: Jumbunna, Jarjums (preschools).
- Make a more equitable society – improve social determinants – health, education, transport, employment, housing, communications and technology
- Significant focus on improving cultural appreciation and using a trauma lens.

Question 3: How will we know if we have been successful?

- Data will demonstrate a reduction in child reports and removals for all people.
- We would see happier, healthier communities designing and delivering their own support services.
- Asking the family how they are going.
- Ask what services need to do to support their needs.
- Increased service collaboration.
- See a decrease in children receiving child care/protection services.
- Increase in families and community resource and capacity.
- Long term early intervention and voluntary services.
- Decrease in stigma over receiving/involvement in support services.
- Increased confidence in services already in place to liaise with each other.
- See Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities having a voice and choice of control over their own mobs.
- Ask what does success look like for us?
- Transparency of data.
- Reduction of children in out of home care can't come at the cost of their wellbeing.
- Evaluation of early intervention services.
- Evaluation of interventions should include children and young people's views/ measures should be suitable for C&YP (e.g. youth friendly).
- Evaluation through the whole program.
- Face to face consultation with young people rather than surveys.
- Relational approach to consultation.
- Good relationships with case workers with lived experience.
- Engagement and participation as long-term indicators and ability of families to access services independently and increased capacity.
- Most children will have:
 - access to pre-natal, post-natal, early intervention, quality child-care, preschools
 - have happy, healthy lives
 - connection to their communities
 - be in affordable housing.
- Less children in care.

- Access to quality health services.
- Access to family preservation services.

Question 4: How can we balance child and family wellbeing with the need to protect children?

- Re-calibrating funding so that supports are distributed to all family members around the child.
- Wellbeing services.
- Broader opportunities for children and families to participate in other social support activities that foster wellbeing, belonging.
- Space for healing.
- Need to ensure assessment tools are cultural appropriate to assess risk and safety.
- Make support and education for case workers.
- Trauma informed approach to all education to better inform workforce.
- Better understanding of family need.
- “Good enough parenting”.
- Respect of a child’s voice and actions to bring in a safe environment.
- Protective behaviour workshops – parenting classes/ child care courses in high school contraception and domestic violence awareness.
- Leaders that have a hands-on reality-based approach and mentor this to others.
- Policy shift from victim of family violence to perpetrator.
- Early intervention.
- Build relationships and educate families. Many Indigenous people don’t understand FACS’ (now NSW Department of Communities and Justice) interpretation of neglect, however this can’t be done without trust and relationship.
- Develop with families – achievable safety plans to support families
- Include extended family and kin supports in plans, make sure they are family-led.
- Ensure early intervention services are sustainable and available as families grow, they are culturally competent.

Regional and local examples of things that are working well

Participants at the October 2019 consultation were also invited to identify examples of successful programs and activities that support child and family wellbeing, building on some the information under question 2 above. They are listed below. Some are described in more detail, where information was provided.

- Jumbunna Community Preschool and Early Intervention Centre.
- Heartfelt House, including sexual abuse therapy service.
- Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre, including legal advice and support relating to domestic and family violence and child protection matters.
- Brighter Futures.
- The Family Centre (including parenting and relationship support, parenting courses, supported play groups, youth housing, youth mental health, intensive family preservation, men's domestic and family violence support, and REALskills High Schools). See www.thefamilycentre.org.au for more information.
- Northern Rivers Community Gateway (including Parents Under Pressure, Trauma Informed Practices and Counselling and Flourishing Families). See www.nrcg.org.au for more information.
- Social Futures (including Family Referral Service, Elements Youth and Family Relationships Program, Mijung Jarjum Kids in Mind family mental health support service, and Headspace). See www.socialfutures.org.au for more information.
- The Communities for Children Program (facilitated by YWCA Australia) aims to deliver positive and sustainable outcomes for children (aged 0-12) and their families in disadvantaged communities. In the Northern Rivers areas of Lismore and Murwillumbah, Communities for Children facilitates a range of place-based programs and community development initiatives, including: Kids Caring for Country; Early Years Network; REALskills Primary Schools; Therapy Connect; Ready Set Go; Lismore Transition Program; In School Support; Jump Up Jarjum Homework Hub; Jarjum Community Development; Parent Education; Ngalingah Mijung Dubais (Our Happy Women); and Child and Family Forums / Sector Professional Development.

For more information about CfC programs please visit: www.childandfamilysupport.info/community-partners/

- Lismore Transition Program is a locally designed, evidence-based early childhood learning program for children from vulnerable families who are in the year before school and have developmental delays or behavioural challenges. Evaluation of the program is ongoing and has showed improved developmental outcomes, regular attendance at school in first year, and an increase in parent/carer knowledge and skills in supporting their child⁵¹.
- The Family Referral Service (FRS) supports families to connect with services and community based on their individual needs using a holistic and strengths-based approach and applying a child-focused lens. The FRS case coordination framework supports families to identify achievable goals, navigate and connect with services and supports, and to connect with their community. The program also advises workers across the human services system to understand options for families and navigate pathways for support and intervention⁵².

⁵¹ See also Communities for Children above.

⁵² See also Social Futures above.

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.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
	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.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A reduction in the rates of children and young people presenting with mental health disorders.
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.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
	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.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
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.'

'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.'

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

'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.'

'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.'

'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.'

'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.'

'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.'

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

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"> • is bipartisan and long-term; • is supported by all governments and the non-government sector and promotes ongoing collaboration to deliver positive outcomes for all children; • makes a clear, unapologetic commitment to all children to deliver on their rights, needs and aspirations; • includes a vision for all children and families underpinned by key pillars such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Safe and supported; ○ Healthy and connected; ○ Learning and participating. • includes nationally agreed, consistent targets or benchmarks with incremental milestones to drive change over time; • 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; • is broad in scope to capture key drivers such as domestic and family violence, mental health, homelessness, poverty, drug and alcohol abuse; • 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; • challenges untruths and key false assumptions that can perpetuate poor policy - get the starting point right; • leverages evidence-based mechanisms to help reduce social isolation and social exclusion as key drivers of poor outcomes for children and families; • 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; • is appropriately resourced through new as well as existing investments and opportunities to re-purpose or better coordinate funding; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The successor plan endures beyond political cycles as a whole-of-government, generational approach. ▪ 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. ▪ All children know about and can exercise their rights consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. ▪ 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"> ○ Better coordination and greater efficiency allows for an increased investment in prevention and early support services with fewer families requiring crisis responses. ▪ Data is available and used more effectively: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the full potential of existing data sets is utilised. ○ 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. ○ data empowers community level, place-based responses in targeted locations, for example the AEDC, SEIFA, social inclusion measures. ▪ Local government is acknowledged as a key stakeholder in the successor plan and plays an active role as expert in their local communities. ▪ There is collaborative decision-making across jurisdictions in relation to funding and investment priorities. ▪ Funding approaches are cross-sectoral and foster active collaboration and accountability - health, education, early childhood, social and community services. ▪ There is broad acceptance in policy and service provision that poverty is not 'neglect'. ▪ Improvements against agreed indicators including the life domains in measures of social exclusion, particularly in targeted communities. ▪ Child protection issues don't overwhelm the successor plan.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is linked with relevant international agreements such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. 	
	Address inconsistencies and gaps in legal systems across jurisdictions including Children's Court, Family Court, Criminal Court.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are provided with support to have agency in court proceedings. Decisions are made in the best interest of the child. Decisions respect and uphold children's rights balanced with safety, including mothers escaping domestic and family violence. Nationally consistent approaches around legal frameworks across jurisdictions.
	Invert the pyramid spend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal services are used by children, young people and families and initiate referrals to early support services routinely as required. Fewer children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability are not engaging with support systems. Children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability are proactively engaged by services and early support changes trajectories. Fewer children, young people and families require intensive or crisis responses and experience long-term adverse outcomes.
	Recognise the important role parents and families play in children's lives, including keeping them safe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong investment in support for families to optimise their capacity to raise happy, safe children. More families are seeking help early and are diverted away from tertiary responses. Families whose children are removed are actively supported to help address critical issues to help promote reunification where it is safe to do so.
	A shift away from the deficit lens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive framing and language around children and young people, parenting and families. Indicators of change are positively framed around predictors of good outcomes. Multi-pronged approach across life domains and across the life course. Focus on the positive change we are aspiring too, not the deficits we are trying to fix.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less stigma for children, young people and families.
	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"> ▪ 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.
	Actions to keep children and young people safe online.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong leadership and action through the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner. ▪ Parents are empowered to help keep their children safe on line. ▪ Schools are actively educating students about online safety. ▪ Social media platforms prioritise the safety of children and young people in their operations.
	Engage schools as active partners in the successor plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Schools are included in local community efforts to improve the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. ▪ Schools have access to appropriate resources so that they can help facilitate access to support to promote school engagement, educational attainment and student wellbeing. ▪ 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. ▪ Reduce stigma within the school community for children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability.
	Local communities are critical partners in decision-making and accountability mechanisms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programs and services are tailored to the needs of the local community. ▪ 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.
	An integrated service system that is built around the needs of children, young people and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less complex system for families to navigate. ▪ The right services for the right clients at the right time. ▪ No wrong door. ▪ Greater engagement by children, young people and families in support services.
2. Cultural responsiveness	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"> ▪ Increase in the number and capability of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) responding to the needs of

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
– cross cutting theme		<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ACCOs are working directly with governments to implement culturally appropriate and safe solutions for their own peoples. ▪ Data demonstrates ACCOs are effective in diverting children, young people and families away from child protection systems. ▪ No over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in child protection and justice systems.
	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"> ▪ All five elements of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle (ACCP) are implemented by all jurisdictions. ▪ The ACCP guides policy, legislation and practice. ▪ Priority indicators are retained and reported against and show a positive shift over time. ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people retain a strong identity and connection to kin, country and culture.
	Prioritise actions to address intergenerational trauma.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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. ▪ Reduction over time in the number of families with complex needs requiring tertiary level services across multiple sectors.
	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 ACCOs. ▪ 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. ▪ Fewer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in child protection and justice systems.
	Address pervasive racism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stronger education about, and action to support diversity. ▪ Diversity seen as a positive aspect of Australian society.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children, young people and families have access to services are culturally appropriate, sensitive and safe. Reduction in social exclusion and social isolation for children, young people and families from diverse backgrounds.
3. Participation	Active engagement of the broader community as part of the successor plan.	<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 ongoing conversation.

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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"> 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"> This includes children, young people and families that we do not usually hear from – ‘the quiet voices’. Children, young people and families from diverse backgrounds are included in monitoring and reporting under the successor plan. Capturing the views of children is part of the reporting framework for the successor plan.
	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"> Local media is playing a role in community education around local issues and progress towards change. Australian community understands the issues, supports the need for investment and is demanding change.
	The impact of the online world on children, young people and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children, young people and families are consulted about actions to improve safety online. Parents are educated on options to help keep their children safe online. 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.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
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"> ▪ All services have a child focus. ▪ Adult-focussed services, including legal services, are responsive to the needs of children. ▪ Appropriate and timely referrals are part of standard practice.
	Investment in practice approaches that are proactive, tailored and holistic to meet individual needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinated, long term case management approaches are provided to children, young people and families with complex needs. ▪ Families are supported to navigate the service system to have their needs met. ▪ Families are actively engaged with services. ▪ Workers are proactive in ensuring this engagement is sustained. ▪ Fewer closed cases because of children, young people and families failing to follow through on referrals.
	Active efforts to translate policy to practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practice aligns with policy. ▪ Policy is implemented on the ground in a clear and coherent way.
	Service design and delivery prioritises accessibility as well as effectiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service design actively enables access for children, young people and families, including those in regional and remote areas. ▪ Services are accessible outside standard business hours. ▪ Technology is utilised to enable access.
	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"> ▪ Practitioners routinely use relevant data to inform practice. ▪ Practice is responsive to real-time indicators of change. ▪ Data is used as evidence to support effective practice.
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"> ▪ Child wellbeing is clearly defined and children are at the centre of policy decisions. ▪ A child/young people focus is central in program design and delivery.
	Successor plan is underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children are empowered to exercise their rights and be heard. ▪ Children's rights are considered in all decisions that affect them.

'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.'

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

'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.'

'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.'

'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.'

'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.'

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

'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 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.'

'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 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.'

'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".'

Consultation in Darwin 21-22 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 55 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 tenth jurisdictional consultation on the successor plan and included a separate, targeted discussion with members of the Territory Families Youth Advisory Group. 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), Sydney (1 November 2019) and Perth (7 November 2019). Delegates at the Child Aware Conference in May 2019 were also consulted on the successor plan.

Participants in Darwin emphasised the importance of the successor plan being a 'generational' plan that pieces together all the initiatives, strategies and frameworks across governments and aligns outcomes for children, young people and families currently sitting across portfolio boundaries. The need for better integrated and coordinated services across Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments was identified as a key priority, given the significant overlap and fragmentation that currently exists across children and family programs. Stronger implementation and accountability mechanisms and more rigorous evaluation and reporting requirements were also seen as critical to success. Participants highlighted the importance of allowing implementation activity to be contextualised to the jurisdictional, regional and community levels and to 'enable' community led responses. Involving children, young people, families and broader communities in all aspects of the successor plan was also seen as critical – in the development of the overarching, national policy; in co-design at a regional level to ensure contextual relevance and appropriateness (given the diverse needs of regional and remote communities across Australia); in driving local implementation; and in identifying local outcomes that can be different for different places. Participants called for a rights-based approach, focussed around prevention and early support and structured around the social determinants of health and wellbeing (social determinants). Another particular emphasis was the need to reduce the impact of alcohol, noting the rates of alcohol-fuelled violence in some communities, the lifelong impacts of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and the intersections between alcohol abuse and the child protection and justice systems. Early support and education using public health approaches was seen as a critical strategy here.

The successor plan should also:

- Be a bipartisan, long term approach with a clear scope, agreed definitions, indicators of success and achievable and measurable outcomes.
- Provide an overarching, national policy framework for children, young people and families that uses a common language and coordinates investment and efforts across all levels of government and with non-government organisations. Responsibilities must be clearly identified.
- Include a strong focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families, particularly in remote areas, with outcomes driven by First Nations Peoples.
- Focus on prevention and early support as key to changing trajectories for families and children, particularly those with high or complex needs.
- Recognise safety as one element of a broader policy supporting positive outcomes for children, young people and families.

- Recognise and leverage existing initiatives and actions. Use a child development approach starting before birth and extending to parenthood and nest this within an ecological model that incorporates family, service providers and 'community' in its broadest sense.
- Be informed by evidence about what works, where and for whom.
- Utilise longitudinal data sets and surveys, and data linkage to monitor long-term outcomes such as educational engagement and attainment, vocational training and employment, community participation.

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 Darwin. 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, long-term, bi-partisan, national child and family wellbeing policy that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • takes a whole of government, outcomes-based approach to the safety and wellbeing of children, young people, families and communities; • includes a clear implementation plan that maps to outcomes across policy, program and service delivery levels; • leverages other relevant strategies and plans focusing on better outcomes for children, young people, families and communities eg. National Children’s Mental Health Strategy, National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, Family Law reviews, (proposed) National Framework for Child Safety, National Alcohol Strategy, National Partnership Agreements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Need to address the drivers of child maltreatment and trauma such as domestic and family violence, mental health, homelessness, poverty, drug and alcohol abuse as well as improve responses; • continues to reference the public health approach while also bringing in the principles of primary health care, and social determinants as drivers of wellbeing and safety; • has a strong focus on prevention and early support as part of the broader continuum of responses available to children and families across the family life course; • is framed around agreed, positive outcomes for children, young people and families that are supported by evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ‘healthy and connected’ ○ ‘safe and supported’ ○ ‘learning and participating’ ○ ‘contributing to the community’. • includes child safety as one important element of a broader approach to wellbeing; • clearly identifies the roles of different levels of government including local government in supporting positive wellbeing and safety outcomes for children, young people and families; • enables communities to work locally and/or regionally to deliver agreed outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All relevant parts of the system supporting children, young people, families and communities are actively engaged and all policy levers are used to drive wellbeing and safety outcomes. ▪ Local level initiatives, innovation and contextually appropriate solutions. ▪ Strong implementation and accountability mechanisms. ▪ The successor plan binds together other relevant national plans, strategies and frameworks to maximize effort using a common narrative. ▪ Investment and focus goes beyond child safety and child protection. ▪ Political cycles at national or state and territory levels do not adversely impact the successor plan. ▪ The public health approach continues to inform the successor plan and is well understood, accepted and actively engages all stakeholders across the continuum of support. ▪ Equity, access, empowerment, community self-determination and intersectoral collaboration (the principles of primary health care). ▪ Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and their agencies are working together to deliver the continuum of services for children, young people and families in a coordinated, systematic and efficient way. ▪ Qualitative and quantitative data, including linked national data sets, is used more effectively to inform progress against outcomes and inform changes to policy, program and/or service delivery over time. Broader than just child protection data. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Longitudinal data is used to demonstrate longer term outcomes such as educational attainment, employment, relationships etc. ▪ Local government is playing an active role in the successor plan, including development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. ▪ Community resources increase and are sustained over time. ▪ Child protection issues do not overwhelm the successor plan. ▪ Positive shifts across an agreed set of indicators informed by the social determinants.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
	Break down policy, funding and service delivery silos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policy decisions complement one another and work together to deliver better outcomes for children, young people, families and communities. ▪ Areas requiring priority investment are negotiated with local as well as jurisdictional level stakeholders and meet community need eg. investment to reduce Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and overcrowding, particularly in remote communities. ▪ Decisions have fewer, adverse 'unintended consequences' impacting the wellbeing and safety of children, young people, families and communities. ▪ Holistic services are easily accessible. ▪ Funding decisions and investment priorities are more coordinated and collaborative and provide certainty for communities. ▪ There is a broader service response to the needs of children, young people and families eg. maternal and child health is a key stakeholder in the successor plan. ▪ Governments regain the trust of communities. ▪ A continuum of services is available to children, young people and families, and child protection intervention is truly a last resort.
	Empower families to be central agents in the wellbeing and safety of their children by leveraging across all sectors, services and supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effective parenting and strong parental relationships. ▪ Families seek support early, including relationship support. ▪ Reduced stigma – early help-seeking is normalised, actively encouraged and rewarded. ▪ Fewer families engaged in family law proceedings and family courts. ▪ Family-led decision-making where it is safe and appropriate and that is in the best interest of children. ▪ Increase in school attendance, engagement and learning. ▪ Increase in child development and health outcomes. ▪ Fewer children, young people and families require intensive or crisis responses and experience long-term adverse outcomes.
	Focus on strengths, not deficits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Positive framing and language around children, parenting and families. ▪ Indicators of change are positively framed eg. positive health and education indicators.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Positive family functioning measurable against indicators and outcomes.
	Engage schools as active partners in the successor plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Schools are included in local community efforts to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of children and young people. ▪ Schools have access to appropriate resources and can facilitate access to support. Issues such as domestic and family violence, substance abuse and mental health of children and young people are identified early and support is provided. ▪ Reduced stigma within the school community for children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability. ▪ Innovative models that are evidence-based are scaled up and learnings are shared across jurisdictions eg. Clontarf and Stars programs.
	Local communities are critical partners in decision-making and accountability mechanisms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programs and services are tailored to the needs of the local community. ▪ 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. ▪ Communities are functioning well - measured against indicators and outcomes. ▪ Social inclusion - as measured by existing indicators and evidence.
	An integrated service system that is built around the needs of children, young people and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less complex system for families to navigate. ▪ Greater engagement by children, young people and families in support services, as needed. ▪ Support is provided earlier and is more tailored. ▪ Services are available for children, young people and families in remote locations.
2. Cultural responsiveness – cross cutting theme	Prioritise actions to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in child protection and justice systems by addressing the drivers and improving responses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The successor plan includes priorities to complement and strengthen national and jurisdictional level plans, strategies, frameworks and initiatives. ▪ 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.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families are engaging with ACCOs for early support and diverted away from child protection and justice systems. ▪ Local solutions are led and driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and services are available in remote locations, not just urban areas. ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families are not over-represented in child protection and justice systems. ▪ Increased numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are meeting developmental milestones and extra support is received by those who need it. ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people have a secure and stable base to engage with education and participate productively in their communities.
	Implement all five elements of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) across all jurisdictions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All five elements of the ATSICPP guides policy, legislation and practice across all Australian governments. ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people retain a strong identity and connection to family, community and culture. ▪ Key human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families are protected.
	Prioritise actions to address intergenerational trauma and promote healing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Services and policy responses ensure evidence-based, long-term support is provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families to help break the cycle of intergenerational trauma. ▪ A reduction over time in the number of children, young people and families with complex needs requiring tertiary level services across multiple sectors, including health and justice. ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families receive culturally safe services and culturally appropriate support.
	Prioritise actions over the long-term to facilitate family restoration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The need for long-term support is recognised, authorised and enabled through funding and program mechanisms.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families whose children are removed continue to receive support so that children can be returned where it is safe to do so. Young people transitioning from alternative care to independent adulthood receive support through leaving care plans to reconnect with family where it is safe to do so. Fewer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are removed from family.
	Tailor elements of the successor plan for First Nations Peoples.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respect for, and use of, First languages. Includes cultural elements and is culture-centred. Identity is a key outcome for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have ownership of actions under the successor plan. Place-based, community led solutions and strong governance mechanisms that support effective implementation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
	Address racism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger education about, and action to support diversity. Diversity seen as a positive aspect of Australian society. Children, young people and families have access to services that are culturally appropriate, sensitive and safe. Reduction in social exclusion and social isolation for children, young people and families from diverse backgrounds.
3. Participation	Children, young people and families from a diverse range of backgrounds are consulted and engaged in the development and implementation of the successor plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new plan includes the voices of children, young people and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and those with disability.
	Representatives of all key stakeholders including children, young people and families have an ongoing, active role in governance mechanisms for the successor plan – national through to community level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The successor plan is responsive to the voices and contributions of children, young people and families. There is broad ownership of the successor plan. Stronger focus on implementation and monitoring of outcomes. The successor plan is an active approach – not a ‘set and forget’ one.
4. Practice/ Workforce	Ongoing workforce development and training to build capacity and capability in priority areas eg. First 1000 days, child development including brain development and impacts of adverse childhood experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An agile workforce across all sectors including education. Services that can be delivered over longer periods to meet complex needs. Services that meet agreed definition of ‘trauma-informed’. (AIFS)

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are empowered and supported to be effective parents, including those experiencing family separation or breakdown. The best interest of the child are is the centre of professional decisions.
	A skilled workforce that is able to use evidence to guide practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about 'what works' is shared through multiple avenues and is easily accessible for workers. Programs and approaches that work are scaled up and workers are trained and supported in their implementation. Co-design of programs and approaches with workers. Training about intergenerational trauma and trauma-informed practice is prioritised, including for school teachers and support staff.
	A national policy for the 'care' workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear ownership of workforce policy similar to education and health. Increased availability of skilled workers. Service providers aren't competing with one another just to sustain skilled workers.
5. Child/ young people focus	A focus on the early years followed up with investments in middle years/pre-teens, adolescence and transitioning to independent adulthood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicators of child development are positive and Australia benchmarks well in international comparisons. Indicators of positive transitions – primary school to high school; high school to education and training, or employment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work readiness and employment outcomes. A child/young people focus is central in program design and delivery.
	Successor plan is underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are empowered to exercise their rights and be heard. Children's rights are considered in all decisions that affect them.
	Engage the media around reporting of child maltreatment. Actions to encourage reporting of positive stories about children and young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting is respectful of children, young people and families and the child protection system.

'There is a lot of overlap and fragmentation in child and family policy and programs at Commonwealth and State and Territory Government levels that needs to be addressed to make the system more efficient and effective – a cooperative framework and no more "spray and pray approaches".'

'There are significant programs of reform occurring in most jurisdictions and a number of these have been influenced by the increased focus established under the National Framework. The National Framework has also fostered collaboration across jurisdictions in areas of shared responsibility. This momentum shouldn't be lost.'

'The successor plan should set out a whole-of-government, national policy for children, young people and families that binds together investments and drives action across all relevant agencies around an agreed set of key outcomes.'

'The way we measure outcomes and the way we fund services is not right. This is hampering our ability to do things differently and deliver real change for children and families in our community.'

'It's not until you see it that you understand it. To get where we want to be under a successor plan we must address poverty and increase our focus on social inclusion.'

'We need to keep a national policy approach to help drive change, particularly in remote communities.'

'Who is responsible for children at the Commonwealth level? There is no COAG committee, no national structure providing oversight. This needs to change if we are to make children the national policy priority they should be.'

'The six supporting outcomes of the National Framework are still relevant and should help to inform the successor plan.'

'There are some green shoots appearing in some jurisdictions including Queensland and the Northern Territory and these need to be recognised, celebrated and amplified in the successor plan.'

'We must use evidence and mechanisms that will drive systems change. The system must be outcomes focused, put children, young people and families at the centre and operate around some agreed key principles such as integration, collaboration, communication, facilitation, implementation and evaluation.'

'We have so many frameworks we can draw on but they need to be joined up across the silos – shared outcomes and data, complementary strategies, strong accountability mechanisms that cross portfolios and community level implementation.'

'The lack of sustainability of programs is a major barrier to achieving long-term outcomes. Funding arrangements are too short, ad hoc, inflexible and not decided in collaboration with communities.'



**Consultation with the Northern Territory Government
Office for Youth - Youth Roundtable
21 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 greatly appreciates the support and engagement of staff within Territory Families and the Office for Youth in facilitating this session that included Youth Roundtable representatives from Nhulunbuy and Alice Springs.

Members of the Roundtable emphasised the importance of forming authentic relationships with children and young people as part of the co-design of the successor plan. They called on governments and non-government organisations to listen to, and work in partnership with, children and young people to ensure their voices are elevated and their views are included in an ongoing way.

Roundtable members identified education as a fundamental building block and an essential element to support the wellbeing and safety of children and young people into adulthood. They spoke passionately about the importance of strategies to strengthen the engagement of children and young people with school, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and those in remote areas. They gave two examples of education initiatives in the Northern Territory that are working well and achieving good outcomes and advocated for programs like these to continue to grow and expand into other locations:

1. The Clontarf Foundation that works with young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and boys to improve their education, discipline, life skills, self-esteem and employment prospects and equip them to participate more meaningfully in society.
2. The Stars Foundation that works to improve education and health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young women at risk of disengagement from school.

Access to health services and health education including sexual health and mental health were also key areas of concern. Clinic 34, a free and confidential sexual health service operating in five major centres in the NT, was seen as a positive example of a support service that could be further improved and enhanced as a 'safe' place for young people seeking help and advice. Lack of availability or limited access to mental health services such as Headspace was identified as a critical gap that needed to be addressed, noting the particular issues and challenges faced by children and young people in regional and remote areas in the Territory. The importance of mental health to wellbeing and safety, engagement in education and positive peer relationships was discussed in some length during the consultation. In this context, the influence and impact of mainstream media reporting and social media on the wellbeing and safety of children and young people was also a key point of discussion. Roundtable members called for actions to change attitudes towards young people – to counter the pervasive impact of negative stereotyping and stop the negative reporting about young people occurring in the mainstream media.

Other key elements identified as critical for the successor plan included:

- a much stronger and ongoing engagement with children and young people in all aspects of the successor plan including development, implementation and reporting on outcomes;
- dedicated resources and a specific national focus on the needs of children and young people to help address issues such as increasing rates of stress and anxiety, negative body image, depression, alcohol and other drugs, bullying, barriers to engagement with education, training and employment; and online safety concerns;
- linking up actions across health, mental health and education recognising the significant intersections that exist in these areas in relation to wellbeing;
- innovative approaches including reliable technology to overcome the access barriers to resources and services for children and young people in areas more remote from larger centres;
- ensuring the successor plan is written and structured in a way that makes it accessible to, and understood by, children and young people.

Many insightful and powerful contributions were made by participants in response to the consultation questions. These have been collated and are summarised under each question in the attachment.

1. What should be our vision for Australia's children?

'All children and young people in Australia have the opportunity and resources to be healthy and happy.'

'Children and young people have a voice and are believed, listened to and respected.'

'All children and young people have the resources and support to stay connected to education.'

'The contributions of children and young people are recognised and celebrated.'

'All children and young people are valued in all their diversity.'

'Children and young people are included in decisions that affect them.'

'Children and young people have access to the services and support they need to grow up happy and healthy no matter where they live.'

'All children and young people are empowered to be the best they can be.'

'A bright and better future.'

'The positive contributions of children and young people are promoted in mainstream media instead of the negative stereotypes.'

'Children and young people are encouraged to celebrate their gifts and talents in their own communities.'

2. What are the main barriers to making Australia a nation where all children grow up safe and well?

'Access to services in rural and remote areas, particularly mental health services and emotional support. Some communities don't have services like Headspace at all, or only have fly-in fly-out services. It's too expensive to travel to a major centre to get access to a service so you just have to wait and this can be months.'

'The negative influences in media reporting, that come through social media, that are out in the community and even at home. These influences have a negative impact on the development of children and young people. It's very hard to stay positive when there are so many negative influences around you.'

'Children and young people living in Indigenous communities can be out of school for long periods of time because of ceremonies for family members and they fall behind. They struggle to catch up and risk disengaging from education because it gets too hard.'

'Young people don't always gel with a counsellor and if there's only one available in your school or community, you miss out.'

'The negative stereotypes and negative attitudes towards young people that are used by the media. There are so many young people who are doing great things and making valuable contributions but they aren't recognised in the mainstream media or acknowledged by the broader community.'

'Information and resources available from some services aren't engaging for children and young people so we don't read them or we don't understand them.'

'We need more services for children, young people and communities dealing with drug and alcohol abuse as well as mental health issues.'

3. What initiatives are showing promise in overcoming these barriers?

'Clontarf is a great program that empowers and celebrates the achievements of boys and young men at risk of dropping out of school. They really listen to young people and work with us by establishing genuine relationships.'

'The Stars program for girls and young women. It's achieving some great things in helping change the way the girls think about themselves and their futures. The mentors and activities offered through Stars help to build confidence and improve health and education outcomes.'

'Opportunities to share good news stories and celebrate the diversity of children and young people. We need more of these.'

'Involving children and young people in things like Regional Youth Action Plans. This gives young people the opportunity to have a real say in the development and implementation of regional solutions to improve outcomes for young people.'

'The Arnhem Allied Health Centre in Nhulunbuy is a good example of an initiative that is helping overcome the geographical and other barriers to health services for people in our region. It acts a one stop shop with all the services working together and available in the one location.'

'Technology helps with access to services like mental health support and counselling but technology doesn't always work. It needs to be more reliable and accessible to make a real difference. Maybe schools could be set up as technology hubs to enable greater access to services and information for children and young people, particularly in more remote areas.'

'Hearspace Kids teaches meditation and helps children understand their feelings. This service is available on line but not face-to-face through Hearspace in Darwin or Alice Springs. Technology can be unreliable and a barrier to online support.'

'Clinic 34 provides sexual health services for young people in a confidential and safe way. You don't need a Medicare card to be able to access their services.'

4. What should be the key elements of national policy for child and family wellbeing and safety beyond 2020?

'Greater engagement with children and young people in the new plan. Consider forums through schools or youth centres, surveys, through existing youth networks like the Youth Roundtable.'

'Actions to improve the general conversation about young people that is currently so negative. We need to change community attitudes and perceptions and provide opportunities to showcase the value of young people.'

'Include in the national policy, actions specifically aimed at meeting the needs of young people and their safety and wellbeing so they can reach their full potential in all areas as adults.'

'Link health, mental health and education as key elements of the new plan as they are essential for safety and wellbeing.'

'Provide opportunities for youth engagement platforms and organisations to promote and celebrate the diversity and value of young people. This will support their wellbeing and safety.'

'Actions to increase the engagement of children and young people in education and help them catch up when they fall behind.'

'Innovative actions to reduce the isolation of young people in remote communities and ways to help them access early support. This would help to prevent or reduce the negative impacts of isolation on safety and wellbeing.'

'Health literacy to teach young people what they need to know and do to be safe and well.'

Consultation in Canberra 28 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 80 participants including Senior Officials from the Commonwealth and ACT governments, executives and representatives from the non-government sector and research and academic representatives.

This was the eleventh 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), Sydney (1 November 2019), Perth (7 November 2019) and Darwin (21-22 November 2019). Delegates at the Child Aware Conference in May 2019 were also consulted on the successor plan.

Participants in Canberra emphasised the importance of a bipartisan, ambitious, long term approach to the wellbeing and safety of children and families that plays a key role in joining up and leveraging across national policy agendas that currently operate in silos. They called for the successor plan to have a clear scope and a strong narrative about the importance of child, youth and family wellbeing in driving broader, high level outcomes around economic, social and community participation. In this context, initiatives that promote community wellbeing - in its broadest sense – must be embedded in the successor plan.

The need to privilege prevention and early support for children, young people and families experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, vulnerability through new investment was identified as a priority. New investment across portfolios and across jurisdictions would necessarily preserve resourcing for tertiary level services where demand remains intractably high. Stronger implementation and accountability mechanisms were also seen as critical to success, including the continuation and strengthening of the tripartite approach to governance introduced under the National Framework.

As has been the case in other consultations, accessible data and outcomes measurement were identified as essential to track progress and monitor change over time using 'well chosen' performance indicators. Participants acknowledged the significant program of work that will be required over the longer term to develop national level indicators and data sources to track progress around wellbeing; investments in prevention and early support; and outcomes. They noted the large volume of work being undertaken at both a national and jurisdictional level linked to wellbeing that could help inform this task. Commonwealth leadership was identified as critical in relation to this issue.

The successor plan should also:

- be endorsed by COAG.
- be underpinned by a public health approach and governance mechanisms that ensure accountability and enable significant collaboration and coordination.
- include mechanisms that encourage investment decisions that cross portfolio boundaries.
- include a robust implementation plan and comprehensive evaluation strategy. A strong reporting framework is also required to identify short, medium and long-term achievements as well as areas requiring additional effort.
- place a strong focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families, as well as those from refugee and migrant backgrounds and those living with disability.
- continue to drive action around the needs of children, young people, families and communities experiencing high degrees of vulnerability and disadvantage, though targeted and intensive support and place-based approaches where appropriate.

- carry through certain priorities from the National Framework that require a continued national focus.
- renew the focus on the needs of young people and those in the 'middle years' – ages 8 -12 – using a life course approach that would also recognise the importance of investment in the early years including the First Thousand/Two Thousand days.
- engage broader, cross sectoral representation in all aspects of the successor plan, including strong representation from community level stakeholders e.g. local government, schools, clubs.
- connect all relevant national plans, frameworks and strategies contributing to child, youth, family and community wellbeing under a broader wellbeing approach.
- be able to adapt to future contextual issues and constraints such as an ageing population; tighter fiscal environment; increasing numbers of children, young people and families from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

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 Canberra. 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, long-term, bi-partisan, national child and family wellbeing policy that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a strong focus on prevention and early support as part of the broader continuum of responses available to children and families across the family life course. • takes a whole of government, outcomes-based approach that includes safety as one important aspect of wellbeing for children, young people, families and communities. • leverages, but does not duplicate effort occurring under, other relevant strategies and plans focusing on improving outcomes for children, young people, families and communities e.g. <i>National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children</i>; (proposed) <i>National Strategy for Child Safety</i>; <i>National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020-2030</i> and <i>National Children's Mental Health Strategy</i>; <i>National Quality Framework</i> and <i>Early Years Learning Framework</i>; <i>Australian Student Wellbeing Framework</i>. • includes a limited number of better coordinated actions to deliver outcomes against a few core priorities (<i>Leeds' Children and Young People's Plan 2018-2023</i> is a good example). • is supported by a strong, long-term implementation plan and measurable outcomes. • recognises but does not duplicate State and Territory Government wellbeing frameworks and initiatives. • continues to reference the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the public health approach while also bringing in the social determinants and measurable indicators of wellbeing. • clearly identifies the roles of different levels of government and non-government stakeholders in supporting positive wellbeing and safety outcomes for children, young people and families. • enables communities to deliver local solutions to achieve agreed outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relevant national plans, strategies and frameworks are linked together as part of the successor plan to maximize effort around shared outcomes. ▪ Policies supporting positive outcomes for children, young people, families and communities across sectors are aligned to drive wellbeing and safety outcomes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All policy levers across health, housing, employment, education, social services and income support are used collectively, and shared outcomes are linked. ▪ Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and their agencies are working together to deliver the continuum of services for children, young people and families in a coordinated and efficient way. ▪ Commonwealth, State and Territory Government roles and responsibilities around child safety and protection are clearly articulated in the successor plan. The Commonwealth Government continues to play a leadership role in driving national consistency, data sharing and building the evidence base. ▪ Investment and focus goes beyond child safety and child protection. ▪ The public health approach to wellbeing and safety guides actions and investments under the successor plan. ▪ Local level initiatives, innovation and contextually appropriate solutions are implemented and success is shared. ▪ Strong implementation and accountability mechanisms ensure sustained action and delivery of outcomes. ▪ Political cycles at national or state and territory levels do not adversely impact the successor plan. ▪ National data is accessible and informs progress against outcomes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Longitudinal, disaggregated, linked and survey data. ▪ Local government is playing an active role in the successor plan, including development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. ▪ Child protection issues do not overwhelm the successor plan. ▪ Positive shifts across an agreed set of indicators over time. ▪ Communities are enabled to support families to care for their children.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
	Strategies to overcome the barriers created by policy, funding and service delivery silos.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding agreements are longer term (5+ years) and more flexible to support holistic, joined up approaches. ▪ There are mechanisms at all levels to promote collaboration and coordination of policy, funding and service delivery decisions. ▪ Place-based, systems approaches to policy, funding and service delivery decisions. ▪ Policy decisions complement one another and inform program and practice so that all parts of the system work together to deliver better outcomes. ▪ There is a broader service response to the needs of children, young people and families e.g. wrap around services, case management approaches.
	Empower families to be central agents in the wellbeing and safety of their children by leveraging across all sectors, services and supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policies for families and children are connected and drive integrated program and service delivery responses. ▪ Effective parenting. ▪ Families seek support early and receive holistic responses. ▪ Fewer children, young people and families ‘falling through the cracks’. ▪ Reduced stigma – early help-seeking is normalised, actively encouraged and rewarded. ▪ Family-led decision-making - where it is safe and appropriate - that is in the best interest of children. ▪ Increase in school attendance, engagement and learning. ▪ Increase in child development and health outcomes. ▪ Fewer children, young people and families require intensive or crisis responses (including alternative care arrangements). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Families whose children are removed receive adequate, ongoing support to facilitate reunification where it is safe to do so.
	Focus on strengths, not deficits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Positive shifts in strengths-based indicators that tell the story of positive change. ▪ Positive family functioning measurable against indicators and outcomes. ▪ Positive community functioning measurable against indicators and outcomes. ▪ Positive framing and language around children, parenting and families.
	Prioritise investment in scaling up what works and contextualising evidence-based approaches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ‘Green shoots’ emerging under the National Framework are supported to grow. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Approaches and results are shared across communities, jurisdictions, policy and practice. ▪ Evidence-based/evidence informed programs receive long-term funding.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ‘Practice iterations’ to help contextualise programs locally are actively supported.
	Engage local communities in decision-making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programs and services are tailored to the needs of children, young people and families in the local community. ▪ Communities are collecting and sharing information about what works in supporting families to care for children. ▪ Communities are functioning well - measured against indicators and outcomes. ▪ Social inclusion - as measured by existing indicators and evidence.
	An integrated service system that is built around the needs of children, young people and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children are seen within the context of families and carers. ▪ Less complex system for families to navigate. ▪ Support is provided earlier and is more tailored, including for kinship and grandparent carers. ▪ Greater engagement by children, young people and families in support services when needed. ▪ Improved family functioning. ▪ Risk factors for child abuse and neglect are identified early and families are supported to address them. ▪ Fewer children are removed into alternative care arrangements. ▪ Grandparent and kinship carers are better supported, recognising the important role they play in the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and families.
2. Cultural responsiveness – cross cutting theme	A priority focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families are not over-represented in child protection and justice systems. ▪ Integrated, cross portfolio policy approaches. ▪ Joined up service delivery approaches across health, education, housing, employment and social services, from universal through to targeted and intensive support. ▪ More Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations are providing culturally safe services to more children, young people, families and communities. ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families seek early support. ▪ Key human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families are protected. ▪ Community-led, place-based solutions that engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ‘to pursue their own visions of what makes for a good life, to

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
		be healthy, prosperous, and secure'. (National Indigenous Australians Agency - Closing the Gap ⁵³).
	A priority focus on children, young people and families from refugee and migrant backgrounds and those living with disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children, young people and families have access to services that are culturally appropriate, sensitive and safe. Reduction in social exclusion and social isolation for children, young people and families from diverse backgrounds. Stronger education about, and action to support, diversity. Diversity is seen as a positive aspect of Australian society. Key human rights of children, young people and families from refugee and migrant backgrounds and those living with disability are protected. Investment in community-led solutions.
	Prioritise actions to address intergenerational trauma.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services and policy responses ensure evidence-based, long-term support is provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families to help break the cycle of intergenerational trauma. A reduction over time in the number of children, young people and families with complex needs requiring tertiary level services across multiple sectors, including health and justice. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families receive culturally safe services and culturally appropriate support.
3. Participation	The voices of children and young people are included in policy, program and service delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy, program and service delivery is child-centred and decisions are made in the best interest of the child. Children and young people are included in all aspects of the successor plan. Australia's Children's Commissioners and Guardians are active participants in the successor plan and have the resources to actively involve children and young people on an ongoing basis over the life of the successor plan.
	Children, young people and families from a diverse range of backgrounds are consulted and engaged in the development and implementation of the successor plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The successor plan includes the voices of children, young people and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and those living with disability. The successor plan is culturally responsive to the needs of children, young people and families from migrant and refugee backgrounds.
	All key stakeholders including children, young people and families have an ongoing, active role in governance mechanisms for the successor plan – at the national level through to the community level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The successor plan is responsive to the voices and contributions of children, young people, families and communities. Carers – including kinship and grandparent carers – are engaged in the development and implementation of the successor plan.

⁵³ Accessed at <https://www.niaa.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/closing-gap>

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is broad ownership of the successor plan. ▪ Stronger focus on implementation at the local level and monitoring of outcomes. ▪ The successor plan uses an 'iterative' approach – research informs policy and policy informs practice/ practice in turn informs research and research informs policy.
4. Practice/ Workforce	Mechanisms to enable the sharing of evidence-based and evidence-informed practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communities of practice and practice networks are developed and supported. ▪ Online and other resources are available for workers to help them translate research into practice. ▪ Information about 'what works' is synthesised and easily accessible for workers including through Commonwealth funded research agencies, academic institutions and philanthropic organisations. ▪ Ongoing professional development and workforce training is a priority. ▪ Programs and approaches that work are scaled up and workers are trained and supported in their implementation. ▪ Co-design of programs and approaches with workers as well as children, young people and families. ▪ Workforce understands, and is able to respond effectively to, the impacts of intergenerational trauma and provide trauma-informed practice, as defined in the literature.
5. Child/ young people focus	A child, youth and family lens is applied across all policies and programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A child/young people focus is central to policy and program design. ▪ Service delivery is child and family centred.
	A focus on the middle years/pre-teens and adolescence as well as the early years and First Thousand Days.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Middle years and adolescence are recognised as key transition points and appropriate support is provided. ▪ Indicators of positive transitions – primary school to high school; high school to education and training, or employment. ▪ Strategies and initiatives supporting children and young people through the middle years and adolescence are leveraged in the successor plan and gaps in services for these cohorts are addressed.
	Successor plan is underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children are empowered to exercise their rights and be heard. ▪ Children's rights are considered in all decisions that affect them.

'The successor plan must help to reduce the Commonwealth-State disconnects and inefficiencies and start to build a much more effective service system that can deliver the outcomes children, young people, families, communities and governments are seeking.'

'We need to see children, young people and families as experts in their own lives and work authentically with them to solve the challenges they are facing.'

'The successor plan must include a strong narrative that tells the story about why the wellbeing of children, young people, families and communities is so important to the future prosperity of this country. It's about investing in one of our key resources – our people.'

'The voices of children and young people must be central to every part of the process for the successor plan.'

'Why aren't we connecting the dots across portfolios? The issues and the outcomes we need are broader than just family services.'

'We need to acknowledge that a program of change requires time, resources and political will, even just to achieve national consistency. The successor plan must be long-term but include key milestones, review points and opportunities for adjustments along the way.'

'Measuring outcomes across safety and wellbeing is not straightforward and not all measures of safety correlate with wellbeing. We may need to consider different outcomes frameworks for different cohorts and short-term as well as long term outcomes.'

'We need a plan that will help to create an environment that supports the wellbeing and safety of children, young people, families and communities, not one that just provides a response.'

'The successor plan must be considered in the context of broader plans including the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children that will come to an end in 2022. Policy agendas need to be joined up.'

'Continue the public health approach but operationalise it well and educate the community about why it's important and what it is aiming to achieve.'

'Priority areas of the successor plan need to target all children, not just those already in crisis. Otherwise it will be another National Framework that again focusses on the tertiary end of the service system. Investment in prevention and early support is key.'

'Families are coming to us with increasingly complex and multifaceted needs. There must be adequate and ongoing investment in training and support for workers as well as mechanisms to allow workers across different sectors and from different funding streams to come together around the clients.'

Consultation in Melbourne 17 February 2020

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 60 participants including Senior Officials from the Commonwealth and Victorian governments, executives and representatives from the non-government sector and research and academic representatives.

This was the twelfth 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), Sydney (1 November 2019), Perth (7 November 2019), Darwin (21-22 November 2019) and Canberra (28 November 2019). Delegates at the Child Aware Conference in May 2019 were also consulted on the successor plan. Participants in Melbourne emphasised the importance of continuing Commonwealth Government leadership in a national approach to build child and family wellbeing and improve safety outcomes. Continuing the gains made under the National Framework was identified as a priority, with a stronger focus on facilitating system level change in order to shift the curve for children, young people and families experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, vulnerability. Participants called for a long-term, bipartisan and whole of government commitment to the successor plan including new investment in prevention and early support services to divert children, young people and families away from child protection systems. Addressing the 'adult problems that cause children's pain' through child inclusive approaches across policy settings and organisational contexts was seen as key.

The importance of a rights-based approach, consistent with Australia's obligations under international conventions and agreements including the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child, UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the UN Sustainable Development Goals was also highlighted by participants in Melbourne. As has been the case in other consultations, addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in child protection and justice systems and embedding robust policy development, implementation and accountability mechanisms that join up and leverage across national policy agendas emerged as key themes. A uniform national data set, including data linkage, was also seen as a critical element.

The successor plan should also:

- be developed through a process that embeds the practicality of implementation and a robust evaluation as part of the design.
- be underpinned by a public health approach to help drive the necessary investment in universal and targeted prevention and early support services. This will also help to establish a clear delineation in roles between the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments in the service system.
- be supported by tripartite governance mechanisms that ensure accountability at all levels, including at the practice level.
- include an agreed set of principles to ensure actions and investment decisions cross portfolio boundaries.
- ensure the voices of children, young people and families are included in an ongoing way in all aspects – design, approaches to implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- adopt a life-course approach that recognises the importance of investment in the early years including the First Thousand days, the middle years, adolescence and transitions to adulthood. A life-course approach will also ensure the needs of children and young people are considered in the context of families.

- addresses structural issues driving adverse outcomes for children, young people and families including poverty and housing insecurity.
- build on the momentum and successes achieved under the National Framework and maintain a focus on the needs of children, young people and families experiencing high levels of vulnerability and disadvantage including those in child protection systems and out-of-home care (OOHC).
- include achievable and measurable outcomes, short-term and long-term indicators of success and a strong focus on quantitative and qualitative data and evidence. Where research and/or data gaps exist, ensure these are clearly identified and addressed over the life of the successor plan.

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 Melbourne. 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 national, whole-of-government, long-term plan for the wellbeing and safety of children, young people and families. This plan must be ambitious and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ be overseen by an area within Government that ensures strong national support, accountability and high visibility. ▪ emphasise prevention and early support as integral to the broader continuum of responses available to children and families across the family life-course. ▪ stronger focus on support instead of ‘intervention’. ▪ leverage and connect, but not duplicate, effort occurring under other Commonwealth, State and Territory Government strategies and plans focusing on improving outcomes for children, young people, families and communities. This includes work underway to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. ▪ drive a relational approach to policy development and implementation including child health and development and child care, mental health, alcohol and other drug, family violence, housing and homelessness, welfare support. ▪ include unambiguous, shared goals and outcome measures as part of a national, high level outcomes framework. ▪ require an annual Report Card or similar to be delivered to Parliament as part of the reporting framework. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ reporting against a common outcomes framework across all jurisdictions and for service providers working with children, young people and families. ▪ include a limited number of core priorities and actions that cross portfolio boundaries. Longer term action plans to achieve goals. ▪ adopt a broad conceptual framework including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Convention on the Rights of Indigenous People, and a public health approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased investment in, and efficacy of prevention and early support services and strategies leading to a shift of resources away from OOHC over time. ▪ Policies supporting positive outcomes for children, young people, families and communities across sectors are aligned to drive wellbeing and safety outcomes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All policy levers across health, housing, employment, education, social services and income support are used collectively around shared outcomes. ○ Mitigation and removal of perverse and detrimental outcomes from policy decisions impacting children, families and communities, particularly those experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, high levels of disadvantage. ○ Policy owners have a sense of ‘relationship’ with families and children and are held accountable for the impact of their policies on them. ○ Effective interfaces between systems such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme so that systems are working together and families receive seamless services. ▪ Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and their agencies are working together to deliver the continuum of services for children, young people and families in a coordinated and efficient way. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Different silos are brought together. ○ Jurisdictional cohesion in areas of commonality and clarity about the interactions between Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments. ○ Commonwealth programs are clearly linked to prevention and early support priorities under the successor plan to help divert children and families away from child protection systems which are the responsibility of State and Territory Governments. ○ Child and family inclusive systems across the service spectrum. Examples include Odyssey House and Micah Projects. ▪ State and Territory Governments continue to work with the Commonwealth and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ there is a reduction in rates of substantiations and child removal; ○ child protection systems and processes continue to improve and demonstrate positive long-term outcomes; ○ opportunities to harmonise child protection legislation across jurisdictions are explored. ▪ The public health approach to wellbeing and safety guides actions and investments under the successor plan. ▪ The rights of children and families are embedded in decision-making and service delivery across all sectors, including family law and the children’s court. ▪ Greater focus on implementation and outcomes with all parties held accountable over the duration of the successor plan.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ be underpinned by a solid, accessible evidence base relevant to the Australian context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy architecture is adaptable and responsive to emerging issues such as bullying, online grooming and sexual abuse. ▪ A harmonised outcomes framework with measures that are realistic, achievable and sensitive to change. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Existing frameworks to inform development. ○ Reduced complexity for service providers. ▪ Data and evidence (including prevalence data) is comprehensive, accessible and available to all stakeholders in the successor plan, including practitioners and communities. ▪ Political cycles across jurisdictions do not adversely impact the successor plan. ▪ Positive shifts across an agreed set of indicators over time, including positive indicators such as educational engagement and training, employment, financial security and secure housing.
	<p>Practical strategies and actions that will overcome the barriers to children and families receiving holistic, timely responses that meet needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding agreements are longer term (5+ years) and more flexible to support holistic, joined up approaches. ▪ Place-based approaches and locally led solutions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ capacity building initiatives within organisations and communities to support the broader roll out of these approaches. ○ co-location of services where appropriate and possible such as health, education and family support. ○ active in-reach to families who are not engaging with support services – via universal services. ▪ There are mechanisms at all levels that authorise cross portfolio/cross disciplinary collaboration around the child and family and these are used. ▪ Policy decisions across portfolio areas including income support and employment complement one another and inform program and practice so that all parts of the system work together to deliver positive outcomes for children and families. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider the recommendations of the Senate Committee Inquiry into ParentsNext as one example. ▪ Child impact assessments for new policy and program decisions. ▪ Supports are attached to the child/family and move with them through the service system. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. wrap around services, case management, support packages. ▪ International examples such as Scotland’s <i>Getting it Right for Every Child</i> (GIRFEC) are considered as part of the development process.
	<p>A robust and practical implementation and evaluation plan is developed alongside the policy process. This needs to be informed by evidence relevant to the Australian context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The implementation and evaluation plan is developed in consultation with all key stakeholders including children, young people, families and communities. ▪ Policy is developed that is practical and implementable.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A clear, realistic time frame for implementation and evaluation is agreed up front. ▪ Responsibilities around implementation are clearly identified and agreed. ▪ Implementation occurs at all levels across policy and program, organisation and practice. ▪ Short-term and long-term goals and indicators that are clearer and fixed. ▪ Continued investment in research, evidence and data. ▪ Implementation and governance mechanisms ensure learnings and successes over time are shared with all stakeholders and the successor plan is adaptive where and when required.
	A national data set and collection system that includes qualitative as well as administrative data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A comprehensive national data set is developed to track progress and outcomes and is accessible to all stakeholders. It includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Longitudinal, disaggregated, linked and survey/ qualitative data. ○ Data that captures the story of parents and parenting. ○ Data that tracks the wellbeing and outcomes for children and young people. ○ Prevalence data. ▪ Parents/carers, children and young people are consulted in the development of qualitative data.
	Empower parents and families as central agents in the wellbeing and safety of their children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A clearly articulated strategy is in place to build parental capacity. Parents /carers and kin have access to appropriate tools, information, resources and services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outcome measures track change. ○ A literacy and language for parents around child safety and child development. ○ Appropriate recognition, financial and service support for all kinship carers and children in their care. A national policy response to support informal kinship care arrangements. ▪ Families seek support early and help seeking is actively encouraged and ‘normalised’. (Consider incentives to help drive better outcomes for children.) ▪ Child-centred and family-focused service responses that see families as the solution. ▪ The needs of children are seen in the context of families and policy is family-focused. ▪ Higher levels of satisfaction from families as rights are acknowledged and taken into account, including in legal proceedings. ▪ Child level data is considered in the context of family-level data. ▪ Families whose children are removed are supported to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ address issues leading to child removal; ○ work toward reunification where it is safe to do so; ○ actively participate in a clear support pathway that enables a sustainable exit from child protection services. ▪ Effective parenting that is measured and reported on.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A life course approach to policy and programs supporting family formation and relationships, parenting and raising children. The enablers of success are included as critical elements of the successor plan.
2. Cultural responsiveness – cross cutting theme	<p>A priority focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leverage and connect with other initiatives and strategies such as the National Partnership on Closing the Gap to be led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, National Indigenous Early Childhood Strategy, SNAICC Family Matters Campaign. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, communities and organisations take the lead role in developing actions under the successor plan that will deliver positive outcomes for them. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For example, a dedicated strategy and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Commissioner has been called for by some peak bodies. ▪ True partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, communities, organisations and Leadership that deliver positive change over time. ▪ More Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) are providing culturally safe services to more children, young people, families and communities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For example, in Victoria, state guardianship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children has been transferred to VACCA. ▪ Joined up service delivery approaches across health, education, housing, employment and social services, from universal through to targeted and intensive support. ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families seek early support and that support is culturally safe and appropriate. ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families are not over-represented in child protection and justice systems. ▪ The rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families are respected and protected. ▪ Place-based solutions are led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and ACCOs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Commonwealth Government’s <i>Stronger Places, Stronger People</i> program is a place-based collective impact approach that is demonstrating some green shoots.
	A priority focus on children, young people and families from refugee and migrant backgrounds and those living with disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Services are designed in consultation with children, young people and families from refugee and migrant backgrounds and those living with disability. ▪ Children, young people and families have access to services that are culturally appropriate, sensitive and safe. ▪ Specific indicators are developed to measure change and report outcomes. ▪ Cultural change where diversity is seen as a positive aspect of Australian society. ▪ The rights of children, young people and families from refugee and migrant backgrounds and those living with disability are protected. ▪ Investment in community-led solutions, similar to <i>Stronger Places, Stronger People</i>.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
	Prioritise actions to address intergenerational trauma.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services and policy responses ensure evidence-based, long-term support is provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families to help break the cycle of intergenerational trauma. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A reduction in the number of repeat referrals. A reduction over time in the number of children, young people and families with complex needs requiring tertiary level services across multiple sectors, including health and justice. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women in justice facilities and their children receive specialist support from appropriately trained professionals to support positive parenting and child development.
3. Participation	Clear role for civil society in all aspects of the successor plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil society is a champion for the successor plan. Civil society is an equal participant in the successor plan development, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation. The critical role of civil society is enacted in governance mechanisms.
	The participation of children, young people and families/carers in policy development and at the organisation and service delivery levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The successor plan includes the voices of children, young people and families including those from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and those living with disability. The successor plan is culturally responsive to the needs of children, young people and families from migrant and refugee backgrounds. A rights-based approach ensures the participation of children, young people and families in decisions that affect them.
4. Practice/ workforce	A nationally rolled out workforce development strategy across all sectors, including adult-focused services such as mental health and alcohol and other drugs, to build skills and capability in working with children and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child inclusive practice. Appropriate referrals. Services are co-designed with practitioners and children and families. Mainstream services provide culturally safe and appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. Broader roll-out of a family assessment approach such as that used in the QLD Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shift away from the current 'threshold approach' that is centred on the level of child maltreatment in determining level of care. Move to a response based on a comprehensive understanding of families' needs.
5. Child/ young people focus	A child inclusive approach across all policy, program and service delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A child/young people focus is central to policy and program design. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes Family Law Reform that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children in processes and decisions. Service delivery is child and family-centred. The successor plan addresses the current gap in appropriate, evidence based services for children and young people demonstrating abusive and sexualized behaviours.
	A life-course approach that ensures a focus on all stages of development and transitions to adulthood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middle years and adolescence are recognised as key transition points and appropriate support is provided.

Policy focus	Key elements most likely to produce the best outcomes and balance child and family wellbeing with safety	What will success look like?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indicators of positive transitions – primary school to high school; high school to education and training, or employment. ▪ Strategies and initiatives supporting children and young people through the middle years and adolescence are leveraged in the successor plan and gaps in services and data collections for these cohorts are addressed.
	Attention to the impacts of natural disasters and climate change on children and young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research evidence informs the development of training, resources and services. ▪ Services are delivered that are responsive to the emerging needs of children and young people, such as increased anxiety and trauma. ▪ Climate justice for children and young people. ▪ Decisions about having children are not adversely impacted because of anxiety/trauma arising from natural disasters and climate change.
	A continued focus on the needs of children and young people in OOHC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ State and Territory Governments work together with the Commonwealth in areas of shared interest such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Raising the leaving care age to 21. ○ Raising age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years. ○ Integrated services to support young people leaving care to engage in and sustain education, training and employment and housing tenure. ▪ Best practice approaches are implemented nationally. ▪ All jurisdictions meet or exceed National Standards. ▪ Interruption of ‘transgenerational OOHC’. ▪ Increase in rates of reunification where safe to do so.
	Mechanisms that ensure the voices of children and young people are central to the successor plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children and young people are represented in governance arrangements. ▪ Children and young people participate in service design alongside practitioners. ▪ Children and young people are regularly consulted on progress and outcomes under the successor plan. ▪ Accountability extends to children and young people who have contributed to the successor plan. ▪ There are strong linkages with the National Children’s Commissioner and State and Territory Children’s Commissioners and Guardians. ▪ The successor plan has a strong focus on young people and links with relevant strategies, plans, Government bodies supporting on young people.

'There is a leadership role for the Commonwealth around children and young people who don't fit into state child protection systems. There are strong intersections with family violence, alcohol and other drugs, mental health, housing and homelessness and income support.'

*'Safety shouldn't be the end goal. The end goal should be safety **and wellbeing**. Wellbeing indicators and approaches are already being adopted by numerous State and Territory Governments and are already included in health and education sectors. We should include wellbeing outcomes in the successor plan.'*

'The successor plan provides an opportunity to do things differently for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities, centred around a whole-of-government partnership, empowerment and self-determination. It's now accepted and openly acknowledged that what we have been doing, including on Closing the Gap, isn't working and a new approach and perspective is required.'

'Risk factors for child maltreatment often travel together yet responses are diffused across separate systems. These systems need to work seamlessly with families to deliver a holistic response.'

'Systems change is integral to changing trajectories for children, young people, families and communities experiencing, or at risk of experiencing vulnerability. Actions under the successor plan must help build a child inclusive system – across policy, programs, organisations, practice, and at the community level.'

'Poverty is the elephant in the room and a key driver of child maltreatment. The rate of some income support payments and allowances is working against improving outcomes for children and breaking cycles of disadvantage.'

'Many children in informal kinship care are one step away from child protection intervention due to the vulnerability of care arrangements and the lack of needed supports. There is a role for the Commonwealth Government in providing specialised supports for these children and their carers, including financial supports, to keep children out of child protection systems.'

'Climate change is an issue that needs to be included in the policy agenda. It's adverse impacts will drive an increase in demand for services and support for vulnerable children, young people and families and the system must be ready to respond.'

'Prioritising the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities is a non-negotiable for the successor plan. There is a real opportunity to build on momentum developing in other spaces and work together at the whole-of-government level to drive change.'

'Implementation of the plan must have much stronger accountability across all levels, including Governments and allow sufficient time to achieve the goals. Promising projects are being lost to the system under the current Framework.'

'Investment continues to be dragged into the wrong end of the system while numbers of children, young people and families in child protection systems continue to increase. An appropriately resourced, coordinated prevention and early support strategy is needed to shift the balance.'

'The voices of children and young people must be central to every part of the process for the successor plan.'

**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 foster 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).



Attachment E: Families Australia preliminary report on consultations (November 2019)

Beyond 2020: Update on progress towards a successor plan for the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020

Background

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 (National Framework), Australia's first ever COAG endorsed plan to improve the safety and wellbeing of children, comes to an end next year.

Families Australia has been commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS) to lead national consultations on a successor plan on behalf of the National Coalition for Child Safety and Wellbeing (National Coalition). Families Australia is working closely with SNAICC – National Voice for our Children and the Family Matters Campaign, DSS and State and Territory governments on the successor plan to the National Framework. National consultations are expected to be completed in early March 2020. Families Australia will then provide a final report to DSS.

The National Framework has achieved some significant outcomes including the National Standards for Out-of-Home Care, the appointment of the inaugural National Children's Commissioner, the development of the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set and improved information sharing protocols across jurisdictions to better protect children and families who move across borders.



Above: Beyond 2020 Adelaide consultation August 2019

However, the goal to strengthen the focus on prevention and early support as key elements of the public health approach adopted under the Framework has not been achieved to the extent anticipated and child protection statistics have continued to track higher nationally. In addition, the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in child protection and justice systems remains stubbornly high. These issues are being explored as part of the national consultations.

There are also a number of other policy developments and initiatives occurring across governments and in the community relevant to discussions on the successor plan. These include:

- the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse;
- trials for new ways of working through place-based, collective impact approaches and coordinated commissioning;
- the work of the Productivity Commission including its consultation paper on Systems for Protecting Children and Draft Report on Expenditure on Children in the Northern Territory;

- national strategies and frameworks that also support the wellbeing of children such as the National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020-2030 and the Children's Mental Health Strategy;
- significant investments by State and Territory governments to reduce siloed approaches to service design and delivery to better meet the needs of families and children experiencing vulnerability;
- the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* and calls from the sector for a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Strategy;
- the evaluation of the National Framework currently being undertaken by PwC and due to report to Government in early 2020;
- recognition of the importance of including the voices of children and young people in policy and program design and implementation.



Above: Beyond 2020 Brisbane consultation October 2019

Method

Families Australia will host over 20 national consultations with outcomes to inform a final report due to DSS by the end of March 2020. The consultation program includes broad, public consultations and focused, invitation-only leadership group discussions with up to 20 key thinkers. Participants for the leadership group discussions are identified in consultation with Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and the National Coalition.

To date, Families Australia has hosted nine workshops and six leadership group discussions with over 400 registered participants:

- Hobart 16 March 2019 – public consultation.
- Child Aware Conference – workshop 17 May 2019 that also included young people from the Conference's Young People's Plenary Panel.
- Adelaide August 2019 – public consultation and leadership group discussion.
- Brisbane 9 October 2019 - public consultation and leadership group discussion.
- Townsville 10-11 October 2019 – one public consultation with strong representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and community representatives, one targeted consultation with parents from the Family Inclusion Network Townsville and representatives from Act for Kids Townsville, and one leadership group discussion.
- Northern Rivers 15 October 2019 – one public consultation with good representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, young people and community representatives.
- Sydney 1 November 2019 – one public consultation and one leadership group discussion.
- Perth 7 November 2019 – one public consultation including some young people identified through the Valuing Children Initiative and one leadership group discussion.

Families Australia has received very strong support from State and Territory governments who have been highly engaged in the process. Officials have assisted with invitation lists and promoting the consultations - both internally and across their networks. Attendance has been very pleasing.

Workshops in Brisbane and Sydney were also supported by Ernst and Young who provided the venue and catering. The Perth workshop was supported by Deloitte as a key partner of the Valuing Children Initiative. Deloitte provided the venue and catering.

DSS has also assisted with invitation lists and promotion. Representatives from the Department also attended and spoke at all public consultations and leadership group discussions. Advisor to the Hon Michelle Landry MP, Assistant Minister for Children and Families, attended the public consultations in Brisbane and Townsville.

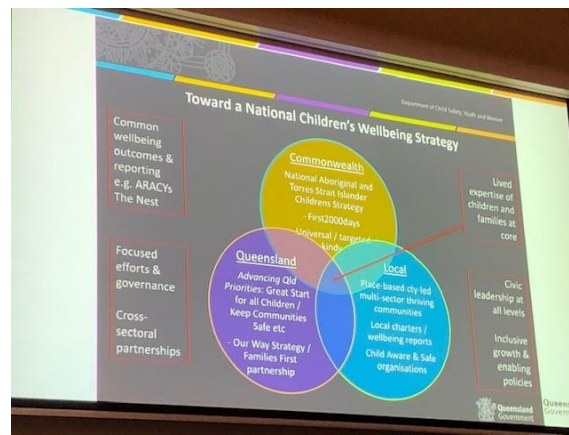


Above: Beyond 2020 Sydney consultation November 2019

Key findings

Major themes identified from the consultations to date are:

1. Because many children and families still face major challenges, it is imperative that COAG agree to an ambitious, long-term national child and family wellbeing plan when the National Framework ends next year.
2. The new plan must give far greater weight to prevention approaches and be underpinned by substantial ongoing funding, especially to support families with multiple and complex needs.
3. A major priority is to address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities, especially to tackle over-representation in out-of-home/alternative care.
4. Broader wellbeing approaches are being increasingly enshrined in policy thinking in Australia and overseas – Australia should do the same, though not lose focus on the safety of children.
5. Greater collaboration and accountability is needed both within governments and across all levels of government to meaningfully integrate efforts and reap synergies.
6. Leverage and strengthen the tripartite approach to governance established under the National Framework acknowledging the important role of the NGO and research sectors in supporting effective implementation.
7. The voices and perspectives of children and young people need to be enshrined in the next plan.



Above: Beyond 2020 Brisbane consultation at Child Aware Conference, May 2019

Next steps

A public consultation, leadership group discussion and targeted consultation with the Northern Territory Young People's Advisory Group are scheduled for Darwin 21-22 November 2019.

A public consultation and leadership group discussion will also be held in Canberra on 28 November 2019 at the DSS National Office. This consultation is shaping up to be one of the largest yet with well over 125 participants expected to attend.

Under the banner of Child Aware, there will be two consultations in Melbourne on 10 March 2020. Families Australia is working with the Victorian State Government to finalise a workshop and leadership discussion on the successor plan. There will also be an annual meeting of the National Coalition to further test propositions for key elements of the successor plan identified from all Beyond 2020 consultations, to help inform advice to Government. This meeting would normally include government representatives including members of the National Forum and other key stakeholders.

Based on the key themes arising from the consultations, the option of one or more additional, targeted consultations with a broader stakeholder group including health, education and early childhood education and care may seem appropriate. These consultations could occur soon after the current round of national consultations has been completed. Targeted consultations with relevant experts and stakeholders could help to further develop proposals for consideration by Government on a range of important issues including scope and length, engaging children and young people in the vision statement; principles underlying the successor plan; objectives, outcomes and measures; governance and accountability mechanisms.



Above: Beyond 2020 Perth consultation November 2019



***Above: Natalie Lewis, CEO, QATSICPP addressing Beyond 2020
Perth consultation November 2019***

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We thank all participants in the consultations undertaken to date during 2019 and the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments for their support.

Beyond 2020 consultation team

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Attachment F: Letter from Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians



19 September 2019

Dr Brian Babington
Families Australia
PO Box 4386
Kingston ACT 2604
Via email to: Brian.Babington@FamiliesAustralia.org.au

Dear Dr. Babington,

Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians Meeting – May 2019

We write to thank you for your presentation on the 4th Action Plan under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2018 – 2020 at the May 2019 meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians (ANZCCG). We appreciate you, Stella and Marian making time to discuss the work of Families Australia and enquiring into our views about the future of the national strategy after the National Framework ends in 2020.

ANZCCG members wish to lend their support and advocacy for the Framework and its underlying action plans, and extend an offer to continue working with you in the interests of ensuring the current Framework and its successor plan achieve the intended benefits for our children and young people.

ANZCCG

As you know, the aim of the Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians (ANZCCG) is to promote and protect the safety, well-being and rights of children and young people in Australia, and ensure that the best interests of children and young people are considered in public policy and program development across Australia.

Currently, the ANZCCG are focusing their work on the following key priorities:

1. Achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori children and young people
2. Promoting young people's engagement and participation
3. Upholding the rights of children and young people in contact with the youth justice system
4. Improving the safety of children and young people in organisations
5. Ending violence against children and young people
6. Promoting children and young people's safety and wellbeing

The next national plan

The ANZCCG understands that Families Australia has begun hosting workshops to discuss and design key elements of a national child and family wellbeing plan. We would appreciate you providing us with notice of workshops in our respective jurisdictions to enable us to contribute to this work in support of ensuring the successor plan appropriately supports the participation and protection of children and young people.

As Families Australia looks to develop this new national child and family wellbeing plan, we consider that a number of issues discussed at our meeting in May remain important to the successful design and implementation of the next national plan.

ANZCCG members reaffirm the importance of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership throughout all levels of government and community. ANZCCG have concerns that community voices are currently undermined in regards to child wellbeing and capturing these voices is crucial to developing an effective national plan that will achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

During our discussion, we also raised our concerns that a shift to family wellbeing may risk a reduced focus on children's safety and wellbeing. We support a national plan that retains a central focus on children's safety and wellbeing and that ensures children and young people are provided with opportunities to participate in the development of the plan.

ANZCCG members are committed to supporting the implementation of initiatives that facilitate improved outcomes for our children and young people. To this end, we encourage Families Australia to develop, maintain or strengthen linkages with the Commissioners and Guardians in each state and territory as needed so that we can promote investment and commitment by state and territory governments in achieving the aim of improving child safety and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely,

 Jodie Griffiths-Cook Children and Young People Commissioner (ACT)	 Megan Mitchell National Children's Commissioner
 Andrew Johnson Advocate for Children and Young People (NSW)	 Janet Schorer PSM Children's Guardian (NSW)
 Colleen Gwynne Children's Commissioner (NT)	 Natalie Siegel-Brown Public Guardian (QLD)

 <p>Cheryl Vardon Principal Commissioner, Queensland Family and Child Commission</p>	 <p>Philip Brooks Commissioner, Queensland Family and Child Commission</p>
 <p>Helen Connolly Commissioner for Children and Young People (SA)</p>	 <p>April Lawrie Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People (SA)</p>
 <p>Penny Wright Guardian for Children and Young People and Training Centre Visitor (SA)</p>	 <p>Leanne McLean Commissioner for Children and Young People (Tas)</p>
 <p>Liana Buchanan Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People (Vic)</p>	 <p>Justin Mohamed Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People (Vic)</p>
 <p>Colin Pettit Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA)</p>	 <p>Judge Andrew Becroft Children's Commissioner (NZ)</p>

