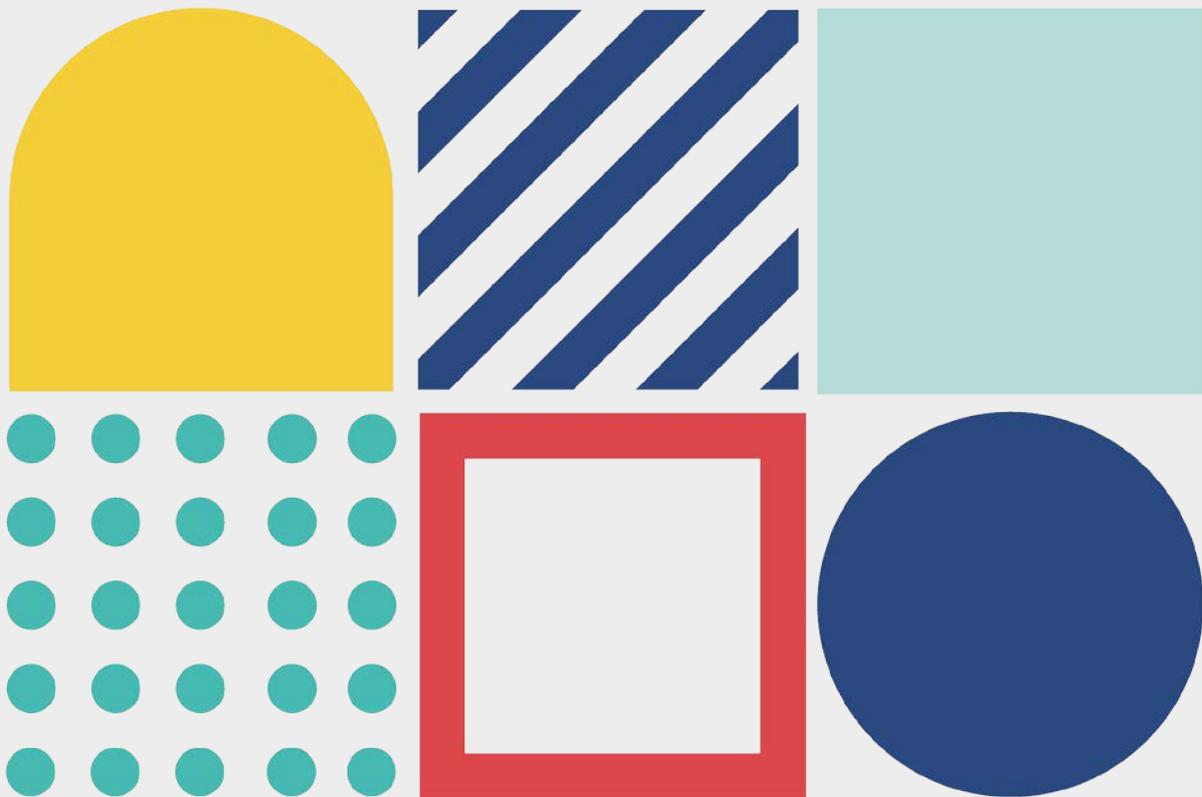




Australian Government
National Office for Child Safety

National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse Final Development Consultation Paper

March 2021



Overview

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) uncovered the hidden nature, the complex causes and dynamics, and the devastating impacts of institutional child sexual abuse in Australia. We know that child sexual abuse is not limited to institutions and is prevalent in family settings and, increasingly, in online contexts. Children are most often sexually abused by someone they know.

Australian, state and territory governments are committed to better preventing and responding to child sexual abuse in all settings. This is why, led by the National Office for Child Safety, we are working together to develop the *National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse* (National Strategy).

The National Strategy, which was a key Royal Commission recommendation (Volume 6, Recommendation 6.1), will provide the framework for a whole-of-nation approach to preventing and responding to child sexual abuse. It will have a 10-year lifespan, from 2021-2031, and will deliver measures to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse in Australia, online and abroad.

The National Strategy will be driven by a four-year First National Action Plan (2021-2025), with Commonwealth and State and Territory governments jointly delivering its actions. The National Strategy will also be driven by a First Commonwealth Action Plan (2021-2025), which will focus on Commonwealth-only actions that will be delivered by Commonwealth agencies. Two sets of three-year national action plans and Commonwealth action plans (2026-2028 and 2029-2031 respectively) will likely follow in future to cover the full 10-year course of the National Strategy.

Related Plans and Initiatives

The National Strategy will exist alongside, and complement, significant national and state and territory level plans already being implemented by Australian, state and territory governments. These plans contribute to ensuring children and young people are safe and well in all areas of their lives, and include the below.

- **National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children** (2009-2021), and its upcoming successor framework, which aims to reduce child abuse and neglect in Australia and its intergenerational transmission.
- **National Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children** (2010-2022), and its upcoming successor plan, which aims to reduce the levels of violence against women and their children.
- **National Centre for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse**, which is expected to provide a national strategic focus to coordinate research, raise awareness, reduce stigma, and build service and workforce capability to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse in all settings for (1) victims and survivors and (2) children and young people. The forthcoming National Centre is expected to form an integral part of the National Strategy, and will be responsible for implementing and working with Australian, state and territory governments on actions under the National Strategy.

Australian, state and territory governments are working in close collaboration to ensure the National Strategy does not duplicate measures under these plans.



Consultations to date

The National Office has undertaken intensive consultations with a range of non-government stakeholders throughout 2018 and 2019. This includes six co-design workshops and individual consultations involving over 300 stakeholders, including governments, non-government organisations, institutions and individuals.

Non-government stakeholders provided the following consistent feedback through the co-design workshops and consultations:

- there is a need to raise public awareness and embed cultural understanding of child sexual abuse and reduce stigma to improve disclosure and help-seeking
- the service system is not appropriately trauma-informed, culturally safe, accessible or responsive
- we must focus on prevention, including age-appropriate measures to support children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours¹
- a research agenda would improve understanding of child sexual abuse, its underlying causes, and effective responses.

In response to these consultations and the Royal Commission's recommendations, the First National Action Plan proposes the following five priority themes on which to focus Australia's efforts to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse in Australia.

1.	Education and building child safe cultures
2.	Supporting and empowering victims and survivors
3.	Support services for children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours
4.	Offender prevention and intervention
5.	Improving the evidence base

The National Strategy's First National Action Plan and First Commonwealth Action Plan will include actions that sit under each priority theme. These actions have a strong focus on responding to the Royal Commission's recommendations and will also support the design, implementation and evaluation of actions in future action plans.

Final round of consultations and request for written submissions

We are committed to ensuring the National Strategy reflects community needs. We are conducting a final round of development consultations, via this Consultation Paper, to provide an opportunity for individuals, non-government organisations and peak bodies to support the design and implementation of National Strategy measures.

¹ For the purposes of the National Strategy, children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours is defined as children or young people under the age of 18 years who have behaviours that fall across a spectrum of sexual behaviour problems. These include behaviours that are problematic to the child's own development, as well as those that are coercive, sexually aggressive and predatory towards others.

In this final round of consultations, we aim to:

- seek views on the high-level vision, objective and values that we anticipate will underpin the National Strategy
- understand how relevant stakeholders wish to be involved in the design and implementation of individual measures under the National Strategy once it is launched.

These consultations are the beginning of a conversation regarding the ongoing implementation of the National Strategy. We remain committed to working in partnership with a diverse range of stakeholders throughout the life of the ten-year National Strategy.

The Consultation Paper includes questions on which we welcome written feedback. In addition to the questions, stakeholders may also provide further comments and suggestions, **noting we ask that you aim to keep total responses to no more than three pages**. If written responses are not possible or practical for you, you can also contact us at the email address provided below to arrange an alternative approach.

Your submission may be published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website. **Please let us know if you would like your submission to remain confidential**. If your submission contains information that would identify any person who is a victim or survivor of child sexual abuse, where appropriate we will seek the individual's agreement to this detail being published.

Submissions should be sent to nationalofficeforchildsafety@pmc.gov.au by **Friday 23 April 2021**.

Consultation questions

We welcome your feedback on any or all of these questions.

Vision, objective and values

We have developed a proposed vision, objective and values for the National Strategy (**see Attachment A**). We are continuing to refine these but welcome your views on the questions below.

1. *Do the proposed vision and objective reflect what our aim should be and what success should look like under the National Strategy?*
2. *Do the proposed values reflect the values that should be guiding our work under the National Strategy?*

Strategic priority themes

The Royal Commission's recommendations and previous National Strategy consultations have set a clear direction for the proposed actions to be delivered under the First National Action Plan and First Commonwealth Action Plan. Consequently, we have identified five strategic priority themes for the National Strategy (**see page 2**).

3. *Do these strategic priority themes reflect the areas of focus for Australia over the life of the First National Action Plan and First Commonwealth Action Plan under the National Strategy (i.e. 2021-2025)?*



Working in partnership

We are committed to working in partnership with a diverse range of stakeholders throughout the life of the National Strategy, including:

- victims and survivors of child sexual abuse
 - children and young people and their support networks
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians
 - culturally and linguistically diverse communities
 - people with disability
 - people who identify as LGBTQIA+, and
 - regional and remote communities.
4. *What are the best ways for Australian, state and territory governments to listen, engage and collaborate with these groups / individuals? Are there any groups you feel are missing?*
 5. *Are there best practice mechanisms, existing consultation mechanisms or comprehensive co-design approaches that Australian, state and territory governments should use to consult and partner with these groups / individuals?*
 6. *Do you belong to or represent one of these groups and wish to be involved in design and implementation of individual actions under the National Strategy once it is launched?*
 - a. *If yes, please identify which priority themes appear most relevant to you, noting you will have the opportunity to confirm your involvement in individual actions once the National Strategy is launched (and your answer here will not prevent you from being invited to be involved in actions outside any priority themes you have identified).*

Feedback provided on the Consultation Paper will help to inform finalisation of the National Strategy, scheduled to be launched in late 2021. There will be ongoing opportunities for stakeholders to support the design and implementation of actions under the National Strategy following its launch.



Seeking help and support

Child sexual abuse is a difficult issue for many people and may bring up strong feelings. Please take care of yourself as you read through this paper, and seek support if you need it. You may wish to talk to your family and friends, or seek professional assistance. There are support services available which you may wish to contact for assistance and support:

- Lifeline: **13 11 14** or visit www.lifeline.org.au
- Beyond Blue: **1300 22 4636** or visit www.beyondblue.org.au
- Kids Helpline: **1800 55 1800** or visit www.kidshelpline.com.au
- 1800Respect: **1800 737 732** or visit www.1800respect.org.au
- MensLine Australia: **1300 78 99 78** or visit www.mensline.org.au
- QLife: **1800 184 527** or visit www.qlife.org.au
- BraveHearts: **1800 272 831** or visit www.bravehearts.org.au
- REACHOUT: www.au.reachout.com
- For local sexual assault services, visit health direct: www.healthdirect.gov.au/sexual-assault-and-abuse-helplines

Additional links and contact details for national and state and territory government services can be found on the National Office for Child Safety website:

www.childsafety.pmc.gov.au/support-services-and-related-links



If you have difficulty understanding this document, you can contact the free Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450.

Privacy collection notice

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (the Department) is collecting your personal information as part of the stakeholder consultation being conducted by the National Office for Child Safety (National Office) on the National Strategy.

Participating in the stakeholder consultation and providing the requested information is voluntary. Unless you indicate otherwise, information you provide in your response – including personal information – may be published on the National Office’s website or disclosed to Australian (including State and Territory) government agencies and third parties who provide services to the Department, for the purposes of informing and supporting the work of the National Office. This information may also be used to communicate with you about your response and the consultation process.

Personal information contained in your response may be included in the National Office’s reports to the Australian Government and related briefings within the Australian Government. Aggregated information received from responses, including key themes and statistics about responses received, may be included in the National Office’s reports, such as a Stakeholder Consultation Summary and other reports published by the National Office.

You can choose to remain anonymous in the public materials by expressly indicating this as part of your submission. If you choose to remain anonymous, please indicate whether you also wish to have no publication, or anonymous publication, of your materials. Similarly, if you do not consent to publication of your submission at all, please indicate this in your correspondence. If you elect to remain anonymous, no identifying information will be published in public materials.

The Department reserves the right not to publish all or part of a submission. Contact us for more information at nationalofficeforchildsafety@pmc.gov.au.

The Department will only use or disclose your personal information for a different purpose where we have obtained your consent, or where we are authorised or permitted to do so under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth).

The privacy and security of your personal information is important to us, and is protected by law. The Department’s [Privacy Policy](#) explains how the Department handles and protects the information provided by you. Our Privacy Policy also explains how you can request access to or correct the personal information we hold about you, and who to contact if you have a privacy enquiry or complaint. If you require a copy of our Privacy Policy contact the Privacy Officer at privacy@pmc.gov.au.

Lastly, documents held by the Department may be the subject of a request under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) (the *FOI Act*). The Department determines requests for access to documents under the *FOI Act* in accordance with that Act.



We have consulted a wide range of stakeholders in the development of the National Strategy. Through these consultations and in line with Royal Commission recommendations, we have developed a proposed vision, objective, and values for the National Strategy noting these are yet to be considered by governments.

Proposed Vision

Australia is committed to a future where children and young people are protected and safe from sexual abuse.

Proposed Objective

The objective specifies what success will look like if the National Strategy is effective.

The National Strategy will reduce the risk, extent and impact of child sexual abuse and related harms in Australia.

Proposed Values

These proposed values are the core principles that underpin the National Strategy. They guide the work being done to achieve the National Strategy's vision and objective, including the design and implementation of actions under the National Strategy.

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| Value One: | Child safety is everyone's responsibility. Australian governments, non-government organisations and institutions, industry, communities, families and individuals all have a role to play. |
| Value Two: | The diverse voices of victims and survivors must and will continue to shape the design and implementation of the National Strategy. |
| Value Three: | We value children's voices and experiences and our engagement is age appropriate, child-centred and tailored to children's diverse needs and circumstances. |
| Value Four: | We work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to embed cultural safety and trauma-informed practice in the design and delivery of child-safe initiatives. |
| Value Five: | All initiatives are evidence-based and use data and research to build understanding of what works to prevent child sexual abuse. |
| Value Six: | We focus on providing behavioural change supports to children with harmful sexual behaviours and delivering evidence-based interventions to deter manage and rehabilitate adult offenders. |