

# SAFE & SUPPORTED

THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROTECTING  
AUSTRALIA'S CHILDREN 2021-2031

FIRST ACTION PLAN

2023-2026



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Commonwealth First Action Plan 2023-2026 under Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031

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Children's Strategy

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## Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which Australians live and work, and pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. We acknowledge that Australian governments have been complicit in the entrenched disadvantage, intergenerational trauma and ongoing institutional racism faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must have a genuine say in the design and delivery of services that affect them for better life outcomes to be achieved. We commit to ongoing partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in designing, implementing and monitoring this Action Plan, in accordance with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The First Action Plan was developed in partnership between Australian, state and territory governments, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group (Leadership Group), with a significant contribution from SNAICC – National Voice for our Children, Families Australia, and the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing (National Coalition) Steering Group.

The Action Plan represents our shared commitment, and use of the word ‘we’ throughout refers to the shared voice of Australian governments, the National Coalition and the Leadership Group.

We recognise the rich contributions of those involved in developing the Safe and Supported: First Action Plan. This includes a special thanks to all of the individuals, children, families and communities who through our consultations provided their invaluable input, sharing their experiences and aspirations about what is needed for children and young people to thrive and fulfil their potential.

We would also like to thank the National Children’s Commissioner, Ms Anne Hollonds **for** her support and input into the development of the Action Plans.

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**Artwork featured on this page and in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan was created by Jordan Lovegrove, a Ngarrindjeri artist from South Australia. More about the artwork is available in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan.**

# Foreword from Community Services Ministers

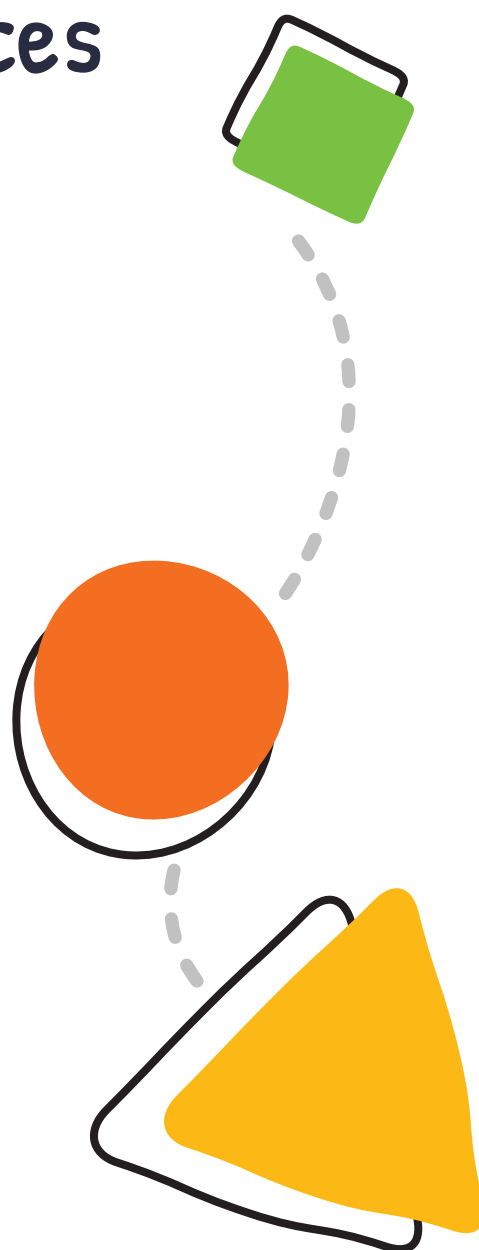
Our vision is that children and young people in Australia reach their full potential by growing up in safe and supportive homes, free from harm and neglect.

The First Action Plans build on *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, 2021–2031* (Safe and Supported), developed by Australian, state and territory governments in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and with collaboration from the non-government sector represented by the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing (National Coalition).

The First Action Plan demonstrates all parties' shared accountability to children, young people and families for ensuring systems are effective and contribute to better outcomes.

We recognise different agencies across the governments play key roles in policies and programs relating to child and family outcomes, including in health, housing, education and employment.

The First Action Plan, along with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan, is an integral part of the commitment made in *Safe and Supported* to strive to make our vision a reality. The First Action Plan, in parallel with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan, outlines the initial scope of activity under the *Safe and Supported* framework and sets out how we will continue to move forward on our commitments, measure success and work in partnership.



# Foreword from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group

This Action Plan sets out the first critical steps to achieving the shared goal of *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031* – to make significant and sustained progress in reducing the rate of child abuse and neglect and its intergenerational impacts.

As recognised by *Safe and Supported*, all Australians share a responsibility to protect the right of children and young people to grow up in a safe environment with their families and communities. This Action Plan has been developed by the Australian, state and territory governments in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and the non-government sector. We sincerely thank all parties for their efforts in developing this Action Plan and for their commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and families across Australia.

Embedding the Priority Reforms set out in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap at all levels of government is integral to achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. In accordance with the Priority Reforms, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and organisations have been formal partners in the development of this Action Plan.

We have negotiated with governments to secure commitments to changes to child protection and family support systems that families and communities have been calling for over a very long time. This does not mean that we were able to secure all the commitments we asked for. Nor have all governments yet followed through and accounted for their reform commitments. But we do believe that if governments work with us to invest in and implement these actions we can change the systems that continue to harm our children and to pull our families and communities apart.

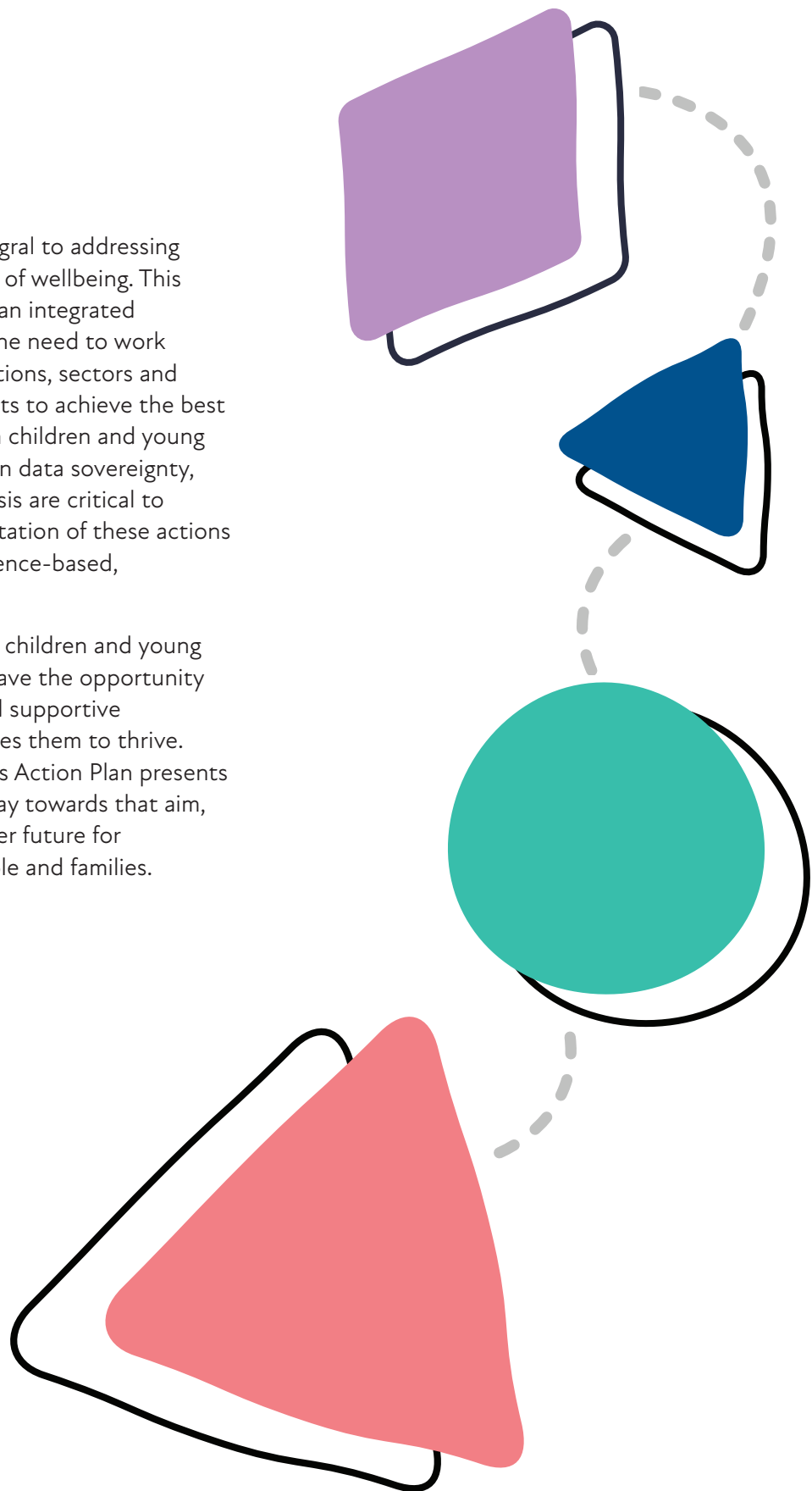
The 5 elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle have been considered in developing these actions. This helps to ensure that legislation, policy and programs are culturally safe and reflect the importance of strong connections to culture and community in achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

The strength, knowledge and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, communities and organisations must be built into the implementation and monitoring of this Action Plan for it to succeed. Implementation will be overseen by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group and through the work of the Closing the Gap Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership. This will enable the exercise of true authority in ongoing monitoring and ensure true accountability to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



Collective action is integral to addressing the social determinants of wellbeing. This Action Plan introduces an integrated approach, recognising the need to work together across jurisdictions, sectors and government departments to achieve the best outcomes for Australian children and young people. Improvements in data sovereignty, methodology and analysis are critical to best practice implementation of these actions and to developing evidence-based, responsive policy.

Our shared aim is for all children and young people in Australia to have the opportunity to grow up in a safe and supportive environment that enables them to thrive. We are hopeful that this Action Plan presents a transformative pathway towards that aim, working towards a better future for all children, young people and families.



# Statement from the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing

The safety and wellbeing of our children should be Australia's most compelling national priority. Yet, despite a decade of concerted effort to advance child safety, thousands of Australian children remain subject to abuse, violence and neglect. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) Child Protection Snapshot (June 2022) identified that one in 32 Australian children received child protection services in 2020–2021. Action to increase the safety and wellbeing of Australia's children is urgent and important.

As the National Coalition of over 200 non-government organisations and individuals working to support children and families and keep them safe, we are deeply committed to this task.

We bring to this work the expertise of thousands of front-line service workers and care services who work with families in distress and crisis every day, and of researchers who dedicate their lives to understanding the issues that drive this complex challenge. Drawing strongly on this expertise will be crucial for Australia to make further and faster progress.

We welcome the commitment of Australia's governments to *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031*.

The new framework is the product of a vast amount of work by many people over many years. People working in national, state and territory governments; the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group; and the National Coalition representing Australia's non-government sector.

Powerful partnerships and ongoing collaboration between all parties will be key to delivering the First Action Plan under the new framework. The National Coalition is dedicated to our part of the work, and to working closely with the other key partners.

One of the most urgent tasks before us is to ensure all Australian children are safe and thriving. But to make real progress we also need to concertedly tackle the broader drivers of families living in crisis including chronic poverty, the housing crisis for low-income Australians, gaps in urgent healthcare and entrenched inequality and racism in society.

In particular, there must be a focus on prevention and early intervention. Safe and Supported must be supported by an immense effort across the whole of national, state and territory governments, the NGO sector – including both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) and non-Indigenous organisations – and by members of the broader Australian community.

Driving deep structural and systems change will take a concerted and sustained effort. We are up to our part of this work. Supporting families to thrive, so we can keep children safe and out of the care and protection systems, is vital.

# Seeking support

## Crisis and suicide prevention

**If you or someone else is in immediate danger call Triple Zero (000)**

### **Lifeline**

13 11 14

[www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

Please refer to state and territory-specific child safety websites if you have a child protection concern.

If you speak a language other than English and need help understanding this document, you can contact the free Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450.

If you are deaf and/or find it hard hearing or speaking with people who use a phone, the Nation Relay Service (NRS) can help you. Please contact the NRS Helpdesk on 1800 555 660.

## Mental health support and advice

### **Kids Helpline**

1800 551 800

[www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)

### **eheadspace**

1800 650 890

[www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

### **ReachOut**

[www.au.reachout.com](http://www.au.reachout.com)

### **Beyond Blue**

1300 22 4636

[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

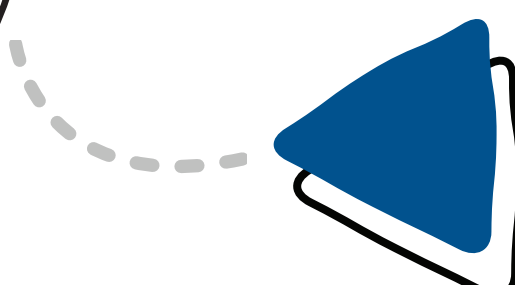
### **MensLine Australia**

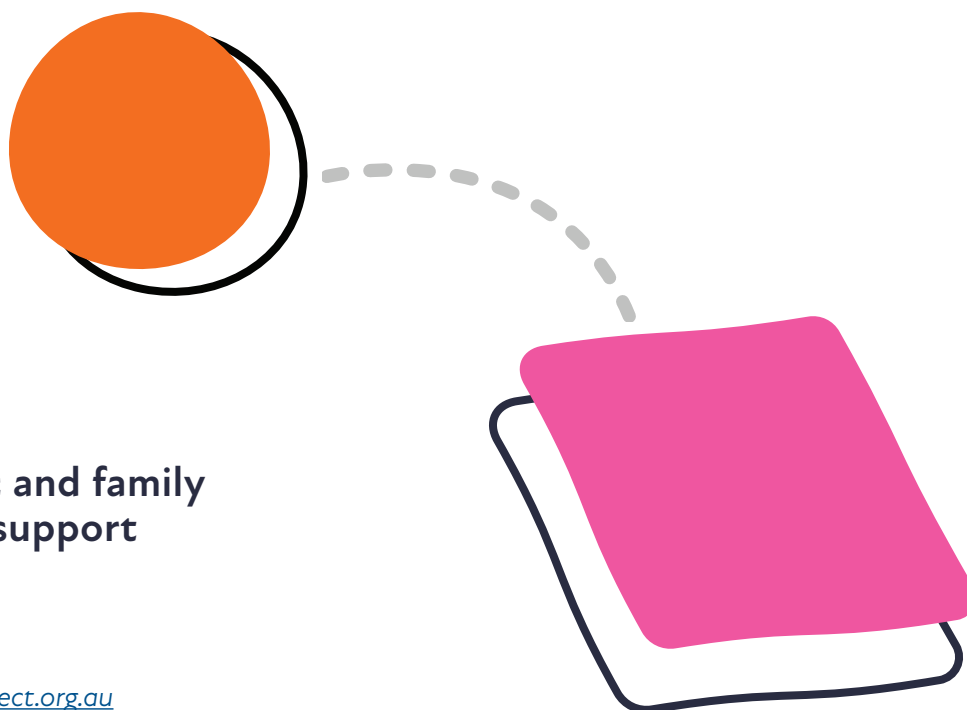
1300 78 99 78

[www.mensline.org.au](http://www.mensline.org.au)

### **Head to Health**

[www.headtohealth.gov.au](http://www.headtohealth.gov.au)





## Domestic and family violence support

**1800Respect**

1800 737 732

[www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au)

## Child sexual abuse support and advice

**Bravehearts Support Line**

1800 272 831

[www.bravehearts.org.au](http://www.bravehearts.org.au)

Links and contact details for support services for parents and carers are below:

**New South Wales: Parentline NSW**

1300 130 052

[www.parentline.org.au](http://www.parentline.org.au)

**Australian Capital Territory:**

**Parentline ACT**

(02) 6287 3833

[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)

**Northern Territory:**

**FACES Family Support Line**

1800 999 900

<https://tfhc.nt.gov.au>

**Queensland: Parentline Queensland and Northern Territory**

1300 301 300

[www.parentline.com.au](http://www.parentline.com.au)

**South Australia:**

**Parent Helpline South Australia**

1300 364 100

[www.cyh.com](http://www.cyh.com)

**Tasmania: Parentline Tasmania**

1300 808 178

[www.health.tas.gov.au](http://www.health.tas.gov.au)

**Victoria: Parentline Victoria**

132 289

[www.services.dffh.vic.gov.au](http://www.services.dffh.vic.gov.au)

**Western Australia:**

**Ngala Helpline**

(08) 9368 9368 (metropolitan)

or 1800 111 546 (regional callers)

[www.ngala.com.au](http://www.ngala.com.au)

The background features abstract geometric shapes in various shades of blue and white. In the top right, there are several squares and triangles, some with white outlines. In the bottom left, there is a large circle and a square with a white outline. The word "Introduction" is centered in a light blue, rounded font.

# Introduction

**All governments agree that all children and young people in Australia have the right to grow up safe, connected and supported in their family, community and culture. They have the right to grow up in an environment that enables them to reach their full potential.**

Through *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031* (Safe and Supported) the Australian Government, state and territory governments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and the non-government sector are working together towards the shared goal of making significant and sustained progress in reducing the rate of child abuse and neglect and its intergenerational impacts.

Safe and Supported sets out how governments and the non-government sector will work together to help children, young people and families who need support, particularly those who are experiencing disadvantage or are vulnerable to abuse or neglect.

It sets out a 10-year strategy to improve the lives of children, young people and families experiencing disadvantage or who are vulnerable to abuse and neglect. It will drive change through collective effort across governments and sectors that impact the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

Safe and Supported is for all Australian children, young people and families, with a targeted focus on 4 priority groups that experience disadvantage or are vulnerable to abuse and neglect. Achieving safety and wellbeing outcomes for these families will help Safe and Supported achieve its goal. Safe and Supported will improve outcomes for these groups through actions in 4 focus areas.

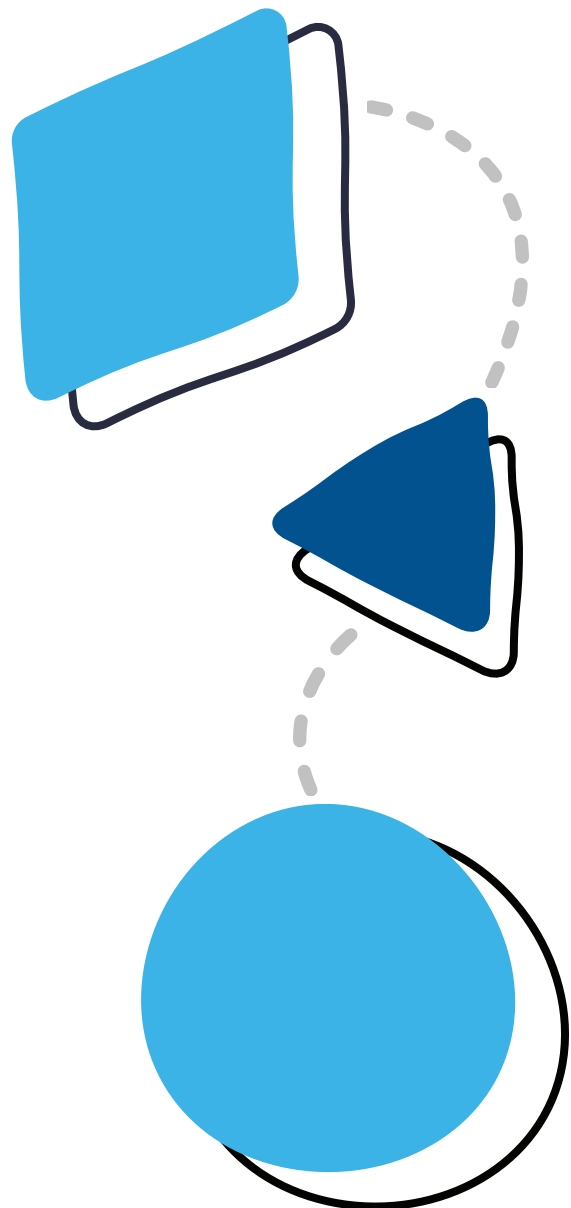




Figure 1: Safe and Supported at a glance

**Safe and Supported will be supported by 2 sets of Action Plans. For the first time, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will have their own specific Action Plan across all aspects of Safe and Supported.**

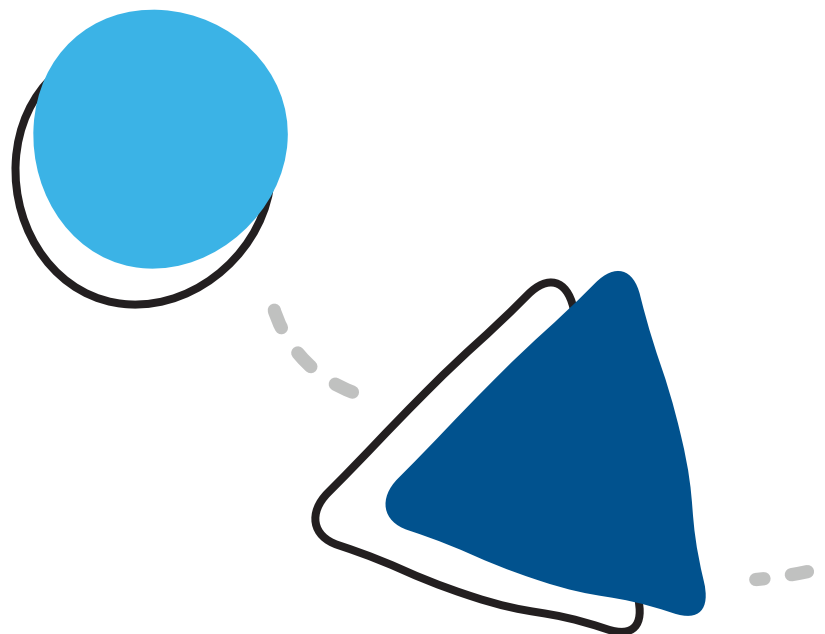
This First Action Plan (Action Plan) addresses the needs of all Australian children. It has a targeted approach, with a focus on children and families who are experiencing disadvantage and/or are vulnerable. This includes an emphasis on the 4 priority groups under Safe and Supported.

This Action Plan is complemented by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan with dedicated strategies and actions to achieve the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* (Closing the Gap) Target 12 – to reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% by 2031. This recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families have unique rights, strengths and needs that must be considered.

Implementing this Action Plan will involve working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations to develop solutions specific to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.

This Action Plan is a living document, which means we can respond to emerging evidence and issues from reports, including relevant royal commissions such as the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

There will be a strong focus on monitoring implementation and measuring progress of Safe and Supported. To support this, the Outcomes Frameworks outline what we aim to achieve through the activities under Safe and Supported. The Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy will provide a way to regularly monitor and publicly report on progress towards the overarching goal.





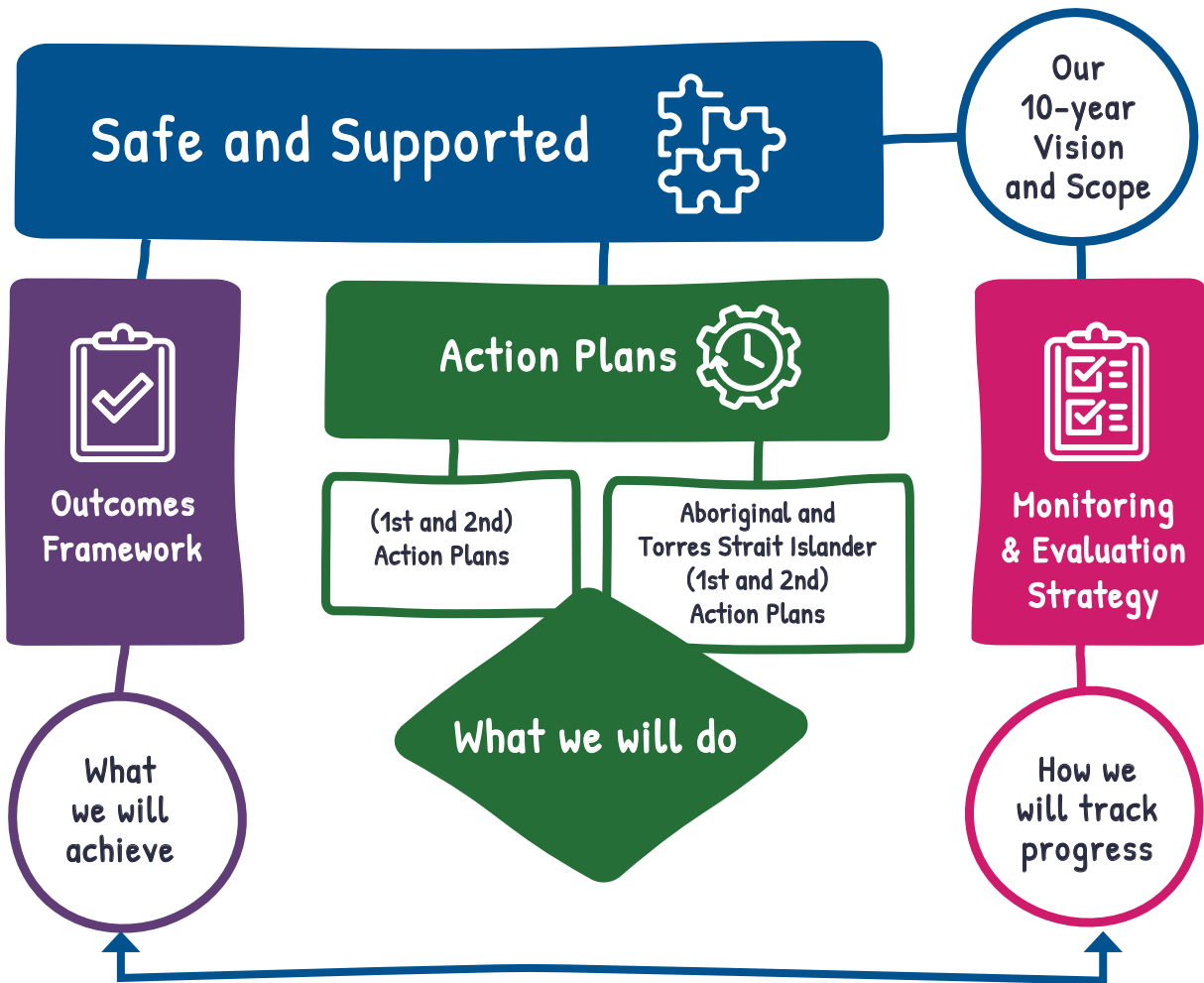
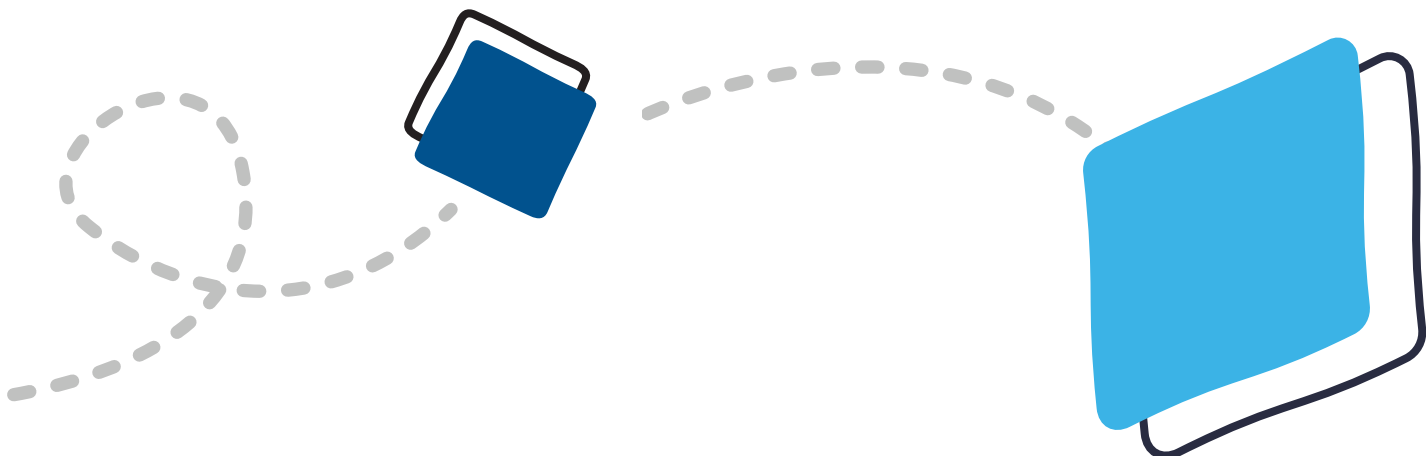


Figure 2: Implementing Safe and Supported



## How were the Action Plans developed?

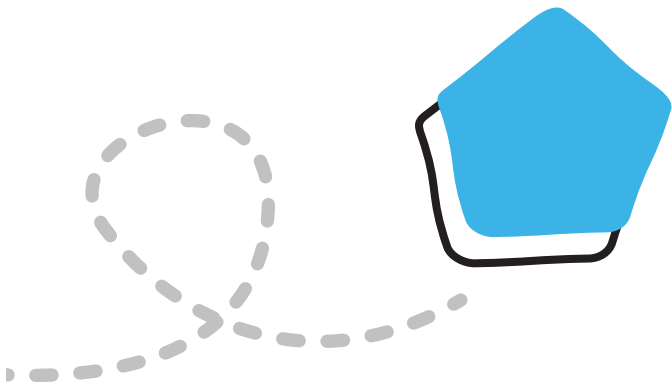
The Action Plans have been developed in partnership with SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (SNAICC), the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the Leadership Group,<sup>1</sup> and state and territory governments. The Action Plans were also developed in close collaboration with the non-government sector through the National Coalition’s Steering Group<sup>2</sup> and the National Children’s Commissioner.

An intersectional lens has been used in developing this Action Plan and in all the actions and activities. This includes considering cohorts such as children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, the LGBTIQ+ community and those living in regional and remote areas.

The Action Plans are shaped by a range of consultations, including:

- national consultations led by SNAICC with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, families and experts
- a public consultation process through the Department of Social Services’ (DSS) Engage platform to engage the general public and non government organisations
- national consultations led by the National Children’s Commissioner, Ms Anne Hollonds, with children, young people and families
- national consultations led by Families Australia on the future of national child and family wellbeing policy.

There were many common themes in the consultation findings. Summaries of these consultation reports can be found at Appendix C.



<sup>1</sup> The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group comprises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and experts in the child and family sector. Members include representatives of peak bodies, leading community-controlled child and family services, academics, and Commissioners for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

<sup>2</sup> The National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing (National Coalition) comprises non-government organisations and researchers who are committed to advancing the national campaign on child safety and wellbeing in Australia. Families Australia convenes the National Coalition. The National Coalition Steering Group is the principal representative group for the National Coalition.

## What children and young people told us:

‘Sometimes people know about disability. Other people know about queer people. Some others know about First Nations communities. It’s so rare to find someone who makes me safe across all my identities.’ (National Children’s Commissioner consultations 2021)

‘I think the government should focus on what children and young people are saying we need them to do. I think it’s very important for them to understand that we know our struggles best and often know what works for us and what doesn’t.’ (National Children’s Commissioner consultations 2021)

The Action Plans have also been informed by national consultations undertaken by Families Australia in 2019 and 2020 and by the 2020 PricewaterhouseCoopers Evaluation of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020*.

Regular workshops throughout 2021 and 2022 were held with all Australian governments, SNAICC and the Leadership Group, the National Coalition Steering Group and the National Children’s Commissioner to discuss and prioritise actions and activities. From this, the Action Plans are designed to address the most pressing issues and priorities for children and young people that align with the focus areas and priority groups identified in Safe and Supported.



## Collective action for real change

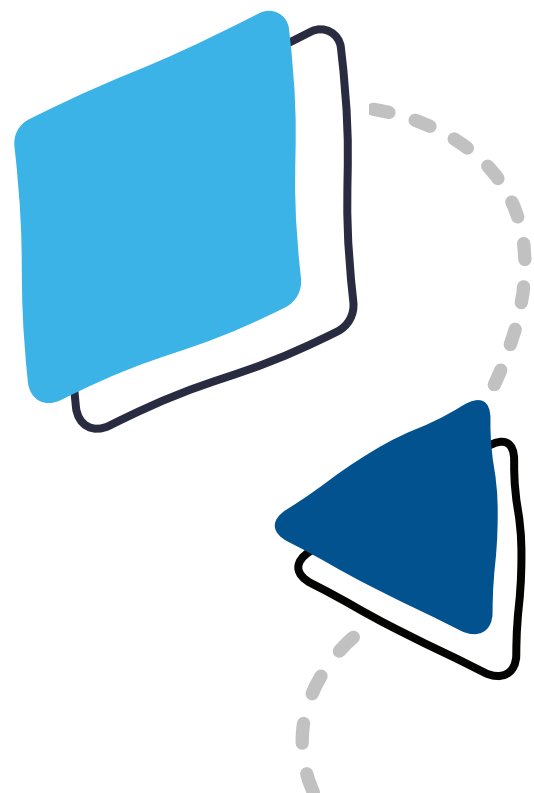
The Action Plan builds on the work of the first *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020* (first National Framework). A key learning from the first National Framework is that Safe and Supported cannot achieve change in isolation.

The Action Plan recognises that governments, relevant sectors and communities must work together to keep children safe and supported. This includes focusing on actions and activities where there is a benefit in having a national approach. It also includes all governments and relevant sectors working together in areas such as disability, early childhood education and care, health and mental health, alcohol and other drug treatment and prevention, domestic and family violence, adult and youth justice, housing and employment to address the social determinants of wellbeing.

State and territory governments are responsible for managing child protection systems, but all governments have a role in driving early intervention and prevention and providing universal services for children and young people. The Action Plan will intersect with initiatives being implemented by individual jurisdictions, including the Australian Government Early Years Strategy, which will create a new integrated, holistic approach to early childhood and support.

The Action Plan will also intersect with work under way for other national initiatives that support systemic change for children, young people and families (see Appendix A for further information). This includes:

- the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*
- the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2031*
- the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy*
- Closing the Gap initiatives (such as the *Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan* and the *Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership*).

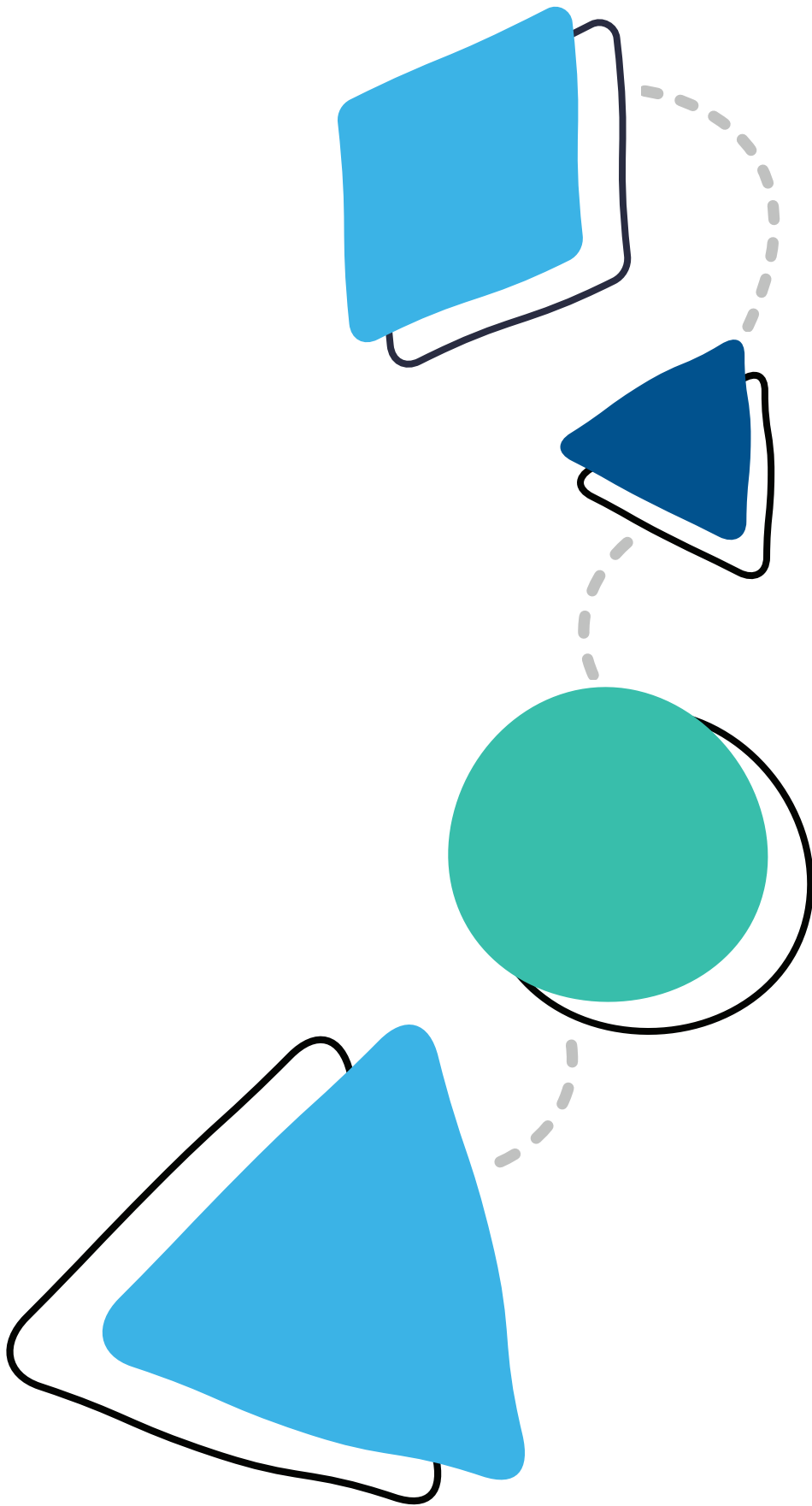


## Summary of Actions

See the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan for further actions addressing Focus Area 2.

We note that while this Action Plan spans 2023 to 2026, some actions may carry over to the second Action Plan (2027 to 2031).

Actions	Short Description	Focus Areas	Priority Groups
Action 1	<b>Early Supports</b> – Address the social determinants of child safety and wellbeing through early and targeted support and improved access to services for vulnerable children and families.	1	All
Action 2	<b>Data and Research</b> – Establish a national coordinated data and research approach.	3	All
Action 3	<b>Workforce</b> – Agree a national approach or strategy for a sustainable and skilled children and families services workforce.	4	All
Action 4	<b>Listening to Living Experience</b> – Embed the voice of the child and living experience in program and policy design in the context of Safe and Supported implementation.	All	All
Action 5	<b>Out-of-Home Care</b> – Improve lifetime outcomes for children and young people in and leaving out-of-home care through strategies that support proactive access to universal services	1	4
Action 6	<b>Carers</b> – Improve support for carers.	4	All
Action 7	<b>Disability</b> – Ensure effective and timely responses for parents and carers living with disability and children and young people with disability and/or developmental concerns.	1	3
Action 8	<b>ATSICPP</b> – Implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) to the standard of active efforts.	2	2



The background of the page is a dark navy blue. It is decorated with various abstract geometric shapes in shades of pink and white. In the top right corner, there is a large pink circle, a smaller pink square, a white circle, a pink triangle, and a white square with a white outline. In the bottom left corner, there is a large pink shape, a white square with a white outline, a pink pentagon, a white pentagon, and a pink triangle. The text 'Theory of Change' is centered in the middle of the page in a pink, rounded font.

# Theory of Change

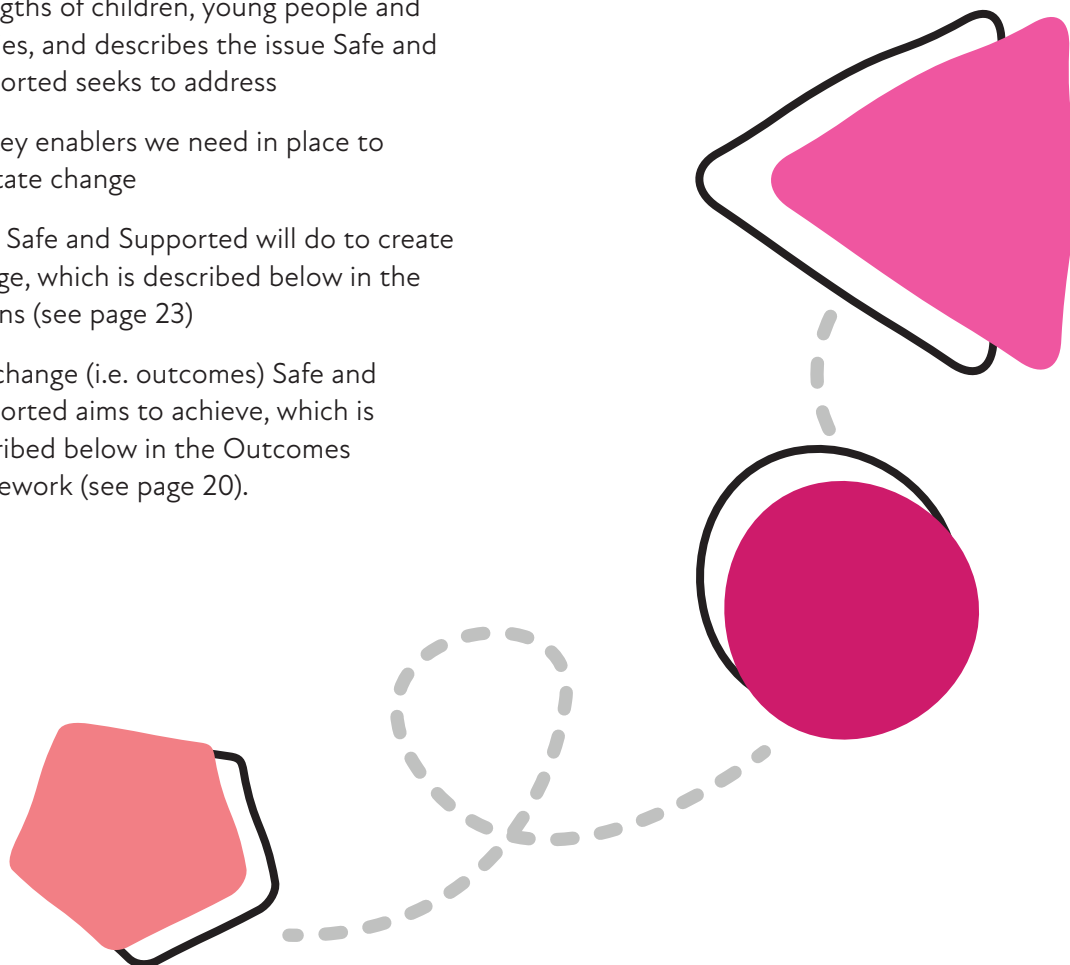
**Safe and Supported is underpinned by a Theory of Change explaining how and why we expect change to occur for children, young people and families, including parents and carers, across all priority groups over the next 10 years.**

It is recognised that First Nations people have a unique starting point and journey under Safe and Supported. This is outlined in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theory of Change, which can be found on page 9 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan.

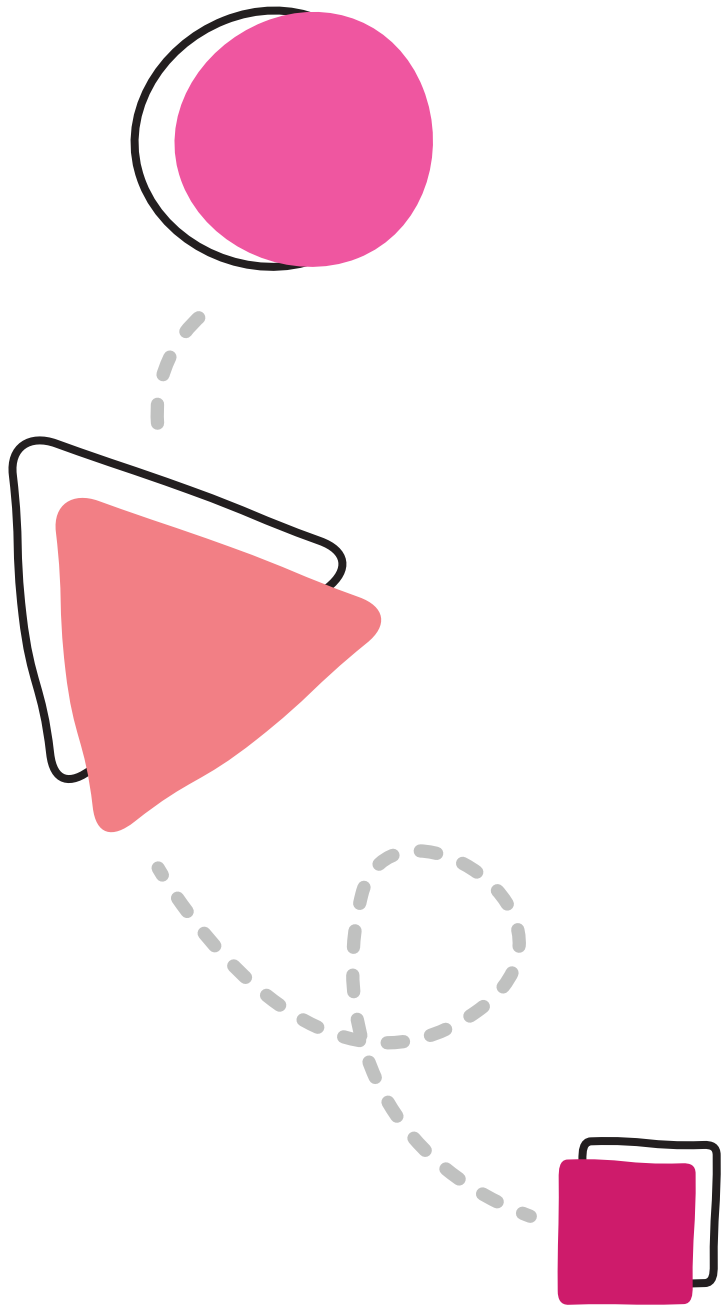
A summary diagram of the Safe and Supported Theory of Change is on page 14. The full Story of Change that underpins Safe and Supported is at Appendix B.

The Safe and Supported Theory of Change outlines:

- our starting point, which recognises the strengths of children, young people and families, and describes the issue Safe and Supported seeks to address
- the key enablers we need in place to facilitate change
- what Safe and Supported will do to create change, which is described below in the actions (see page 23)
- The change (i.e. outcomes) Safe and Supported aims to achieve, which is described below in the Outcomes Framework (see page 20).







# Safe & Supported: summary of the Theory of Change



<b>STARTING POINT</b> What are the issues that need to be addressed?	When the social determinants of child safety and wellbeing are not fulfilled this can undermine a family's ability to keep their children safe and well.	Intergenerational trauma and disadvantage often underpins experiences of child abuse and neglect.
	Need to improve services and supports for children and families across the service spectrum, from prevention to out-of-home care and supports for care leavers.	

<b>UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES OF SAFE AND SUPPORTED</b>	Access to quality universal and targeted services designed to improve outcomes for children, young people and families	Excellence in practice and policy development, based on evidence, data and information sharing	Listening and responding to the voices and views of children and young people, and the views of those who care for them

<b>KEY ENABLERS OF CHANGE</b>	Recognising the expertise and authority of children and young people on their needs and lives, with respect to their age and maturity.	Recognising the expertise and authority of parents/ carers and communities on the needs of their children.	Valuing the living experience of children, young people and families.	Understanding the needs of children, young people and families in their own words.

<b>FOCUS AREAS UNDER SAFE AND SUPPORTED</b> Where are we focusing our collective effort?	A national approach to early intervention and targeted support for children and families experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage.	Addressing the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems.
	<b>Action 4: Listening to Living Experience</b>	
<b>ACTIONS TO DRIVE CHANGE: SAFE AND SUPPORTED: FIRST ACTION PLAN</b> What will stakeholders do/support/develop? <small>*See pages 23 to 42 for details on the Actions.</small>	<b>Action 1: Early Supports</b>	<b>Action 8: ATSICPP</b>
	<b>Action 5: Out-of-Home Care</b>	See the <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan</i> for other actions that will address Focus Area 2 and outcomes in the <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outcomes Framework</i> .
	<b>Action 7: Disability</b>	

## HOW WILL THESE ACTIVITIES HELP US ACHIEVE THE 10-YEAR OUTCOMES AND SUB-OUTCOMES FOR ALL PRIORITY GROUPS AT...

<b>THE SYSTEM AND SERVICE LEVEL?</b>	<b>S1(b)</b> – Systems and services prioritise resourcing, strengthening and supporting families to stay safe together.	See the <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outcomes Framework</i> for outcomes specific to Focus Area 2.
<b>THE CHILD AND FAMILY LEVEL?</b>	<b>S1(a)</b> – Children and young people grow up in safe and nurturing homes, supported by strong families and communities.	<b>S5(a)</b> – Children, young people, families and communities have their holistic needs fulfilled. As such, fewer families experience social, emotional and economic risk factors for child abuse and neglect.
	See the <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outcomes Framework</i> for outcomes specific to First Nations children and families.	

<b>SAFE AND SUPPORTED VISION AND GOAL</b>	<b>Vision:</b> Children and young people in Australia reach their full potential by growing up safe and supported, free from harm and neglect.
	<b>Goal:</b> To make significant and sustained progress in reducing the rates of child abuse and neglect, and its intergenerational impacts.

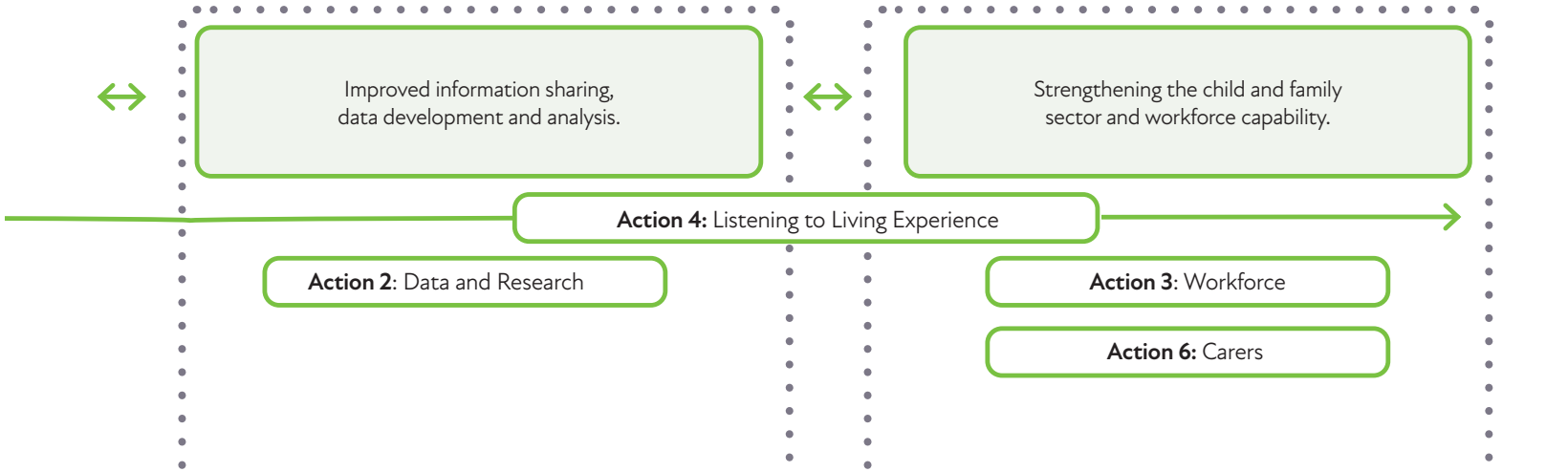


Many children, young people and families face systemic and service-level barriers (e.g. discrimination) to accessing opportunities and supports.	Services and systems work in silos – need to shift focus towards more holistic and early supports.	It is recognised that First Nations people have a unique starting point under Safe and Supported (see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theory of Change).
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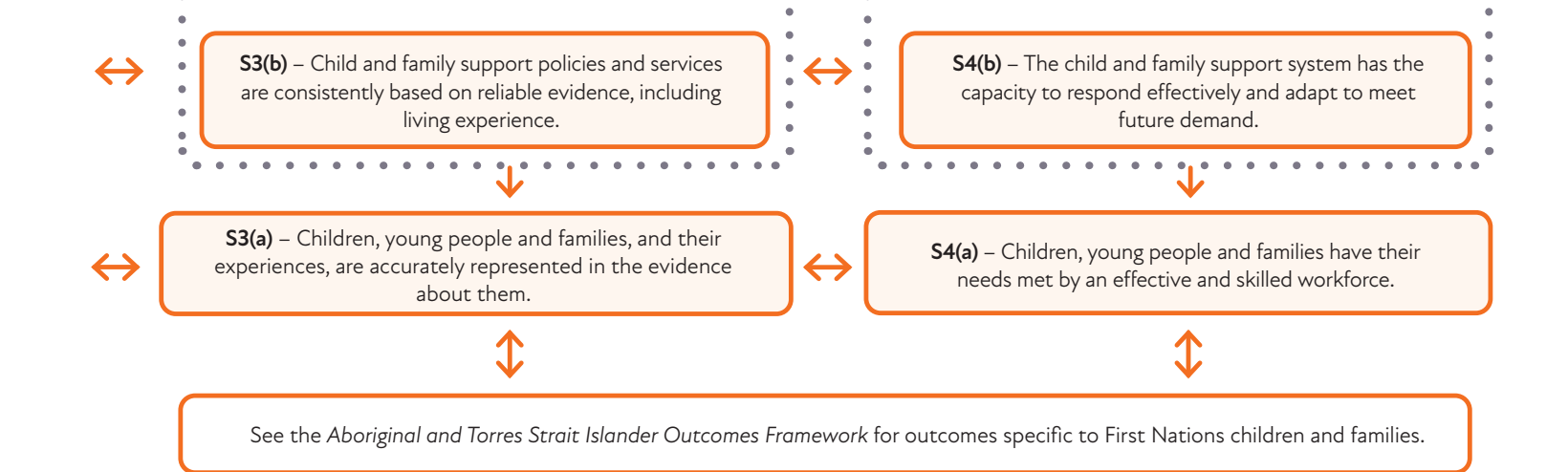
Need to improve services and supports for children and families across the service spectrum, from prevention to out-of-home care and supports for care leavers.

Clear responsibilities and strong monitoring, evaluation and achievement of outcomes	Trauma-informed, culturally safe and inclusive policies and actions	Embedding the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP)
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Collaboration between communities, services, governments and other organisations.	Collaboration across different sectors that impact the social determinants of child safety and wellbeing.	Strong and capable workforce.	Sufficient data and research in areas of interest.	Sustained commitment to improving child safety.
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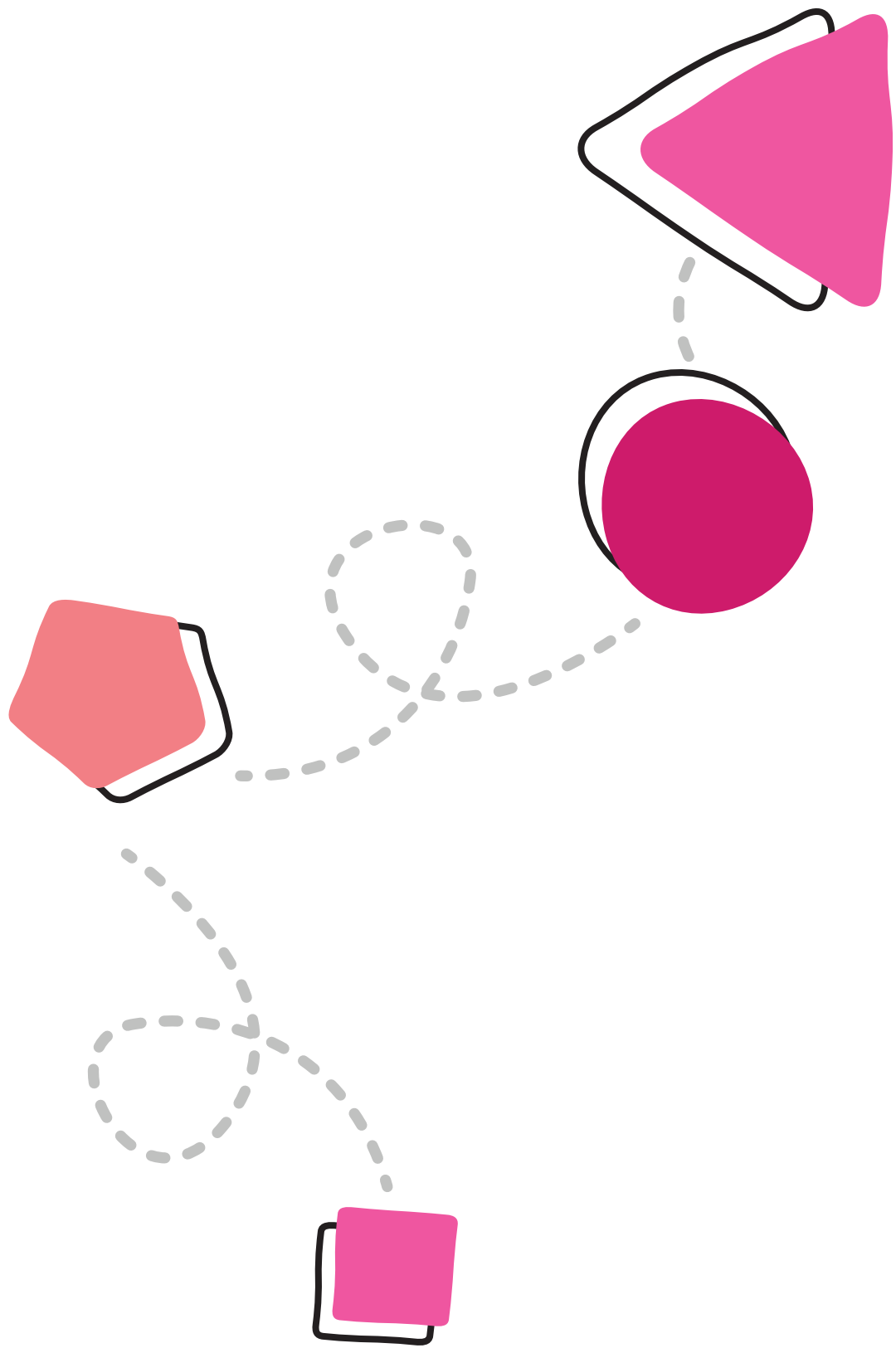


**HOW WILL THESE ACTIVITIES HELP US ACHIEVE THE 10-YEAR OUTCOMES AND SUB-OUTCOMES FOR ALL PRIORITY GROUPS AT...**



**Vision:** Children and young people in Australia reach their full potential by growing up safe and supported, free from harm and neglect.

**Goal:** To make significant and sustained progress in reducing the rates of child abuse and neglect, and its intergenerational impacts.



The background is a dark navy blue. In the top right corner, there is a large yellow triangle, a white circle, a white square with a white outline, and a large orange circle. Below these are several smaller shapes: a yellow square, an orange square, and a yellow triangle. In the bottom left corner, there is a large yellow shape, a white square with a white outline, an orange pentagon, a white pentagon, and a yellow triangle. The text "What will we achieve?" is centered in a yellow, rounded font.

What will  
we achieve?

**The high-level Outcomes Framework, on page 20, outlines the outcomes Safe and Supported aims to achieve for all priority groups over its 10-year life span. This includes changes we wish to see in the lives of children, young people and families, including parents and carers (child and family-level outcomes), as well as changes in the design and delivery of the services and systems they use (system-level outcomes).**

The outcomes were informed by the priorities raised by children, young people, parents and carers, and advocates through various consultations.

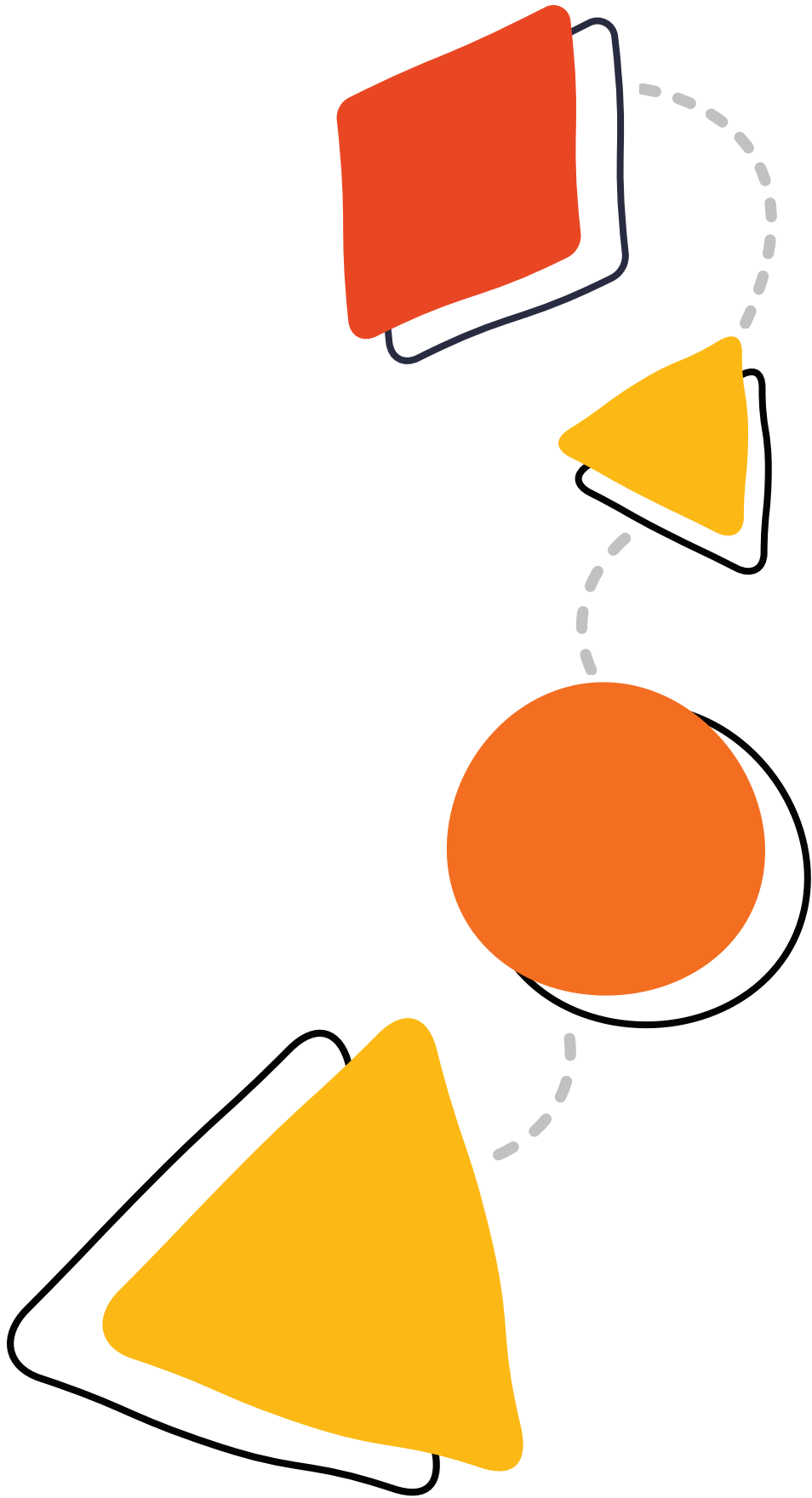
There are 2 tiers of outcomes – 10-Year Outcomes, with Sub-outcomes under each that show the smaller changes needed to achieve them. Outcomes are grouped by focus area, although it is recognised some may overlap.

There are also several outcomes that require collaborating with areas outside the direct remit of Safe and Supported. These are called ‘interface outcomes’ and focus on addressing the social determinants of child safety and wellbeing.

It is recognised that there are specific changes Safe and Supported needs to achieve in order to address Focus Area 2 (which relates to Target 12 under Closing the Gap) and realise the rights of First Nations children, young people and families under the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. These outcomes are outlined in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outcomes Framework, which can be found on page 18 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan.

Each activity under this Action Plan will contribute to achieving one or more of the outcomes in the Safe and Supported Outcomes Framework. Activities have been mapped to the relevant 10-Year Outcomes and Sub-outcomes in the *What will we do? (Actions and Activities)* section starting from page 23. Some of these actions will also contribute to outcomes under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outcomes Framework.

Measuring progress towards the outcomes will be important over the next 10 years. However, the outcomes are ambitious and deal with complex issues, meaning it may take time to see clear signs of change. The Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy outlines how we will measure success for all outcomes and monitor progress towards the goal of Safe and Supported (see page 47 for details).



# Safe & Supported: Outcomes Framework



## VISION

Children and young people in Australia reach their full potential by growing up safe and supported, free from harm and neglect.

Safe and Supported is for all Australian children, young people and families (including parents and carers), with a targeted focus on groups that are experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability.

## FOCUS AREA

## 10-YEAR OUTCOMES

**1. A national approach to early intervention and targeted support for children and families experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage.**

### CHILD AND FAMILY LEVEL

**S1(a)** Children and young people grow up in safe and nurturing homes, supported by strong families and communities.

### SYSTEM LEVEL

**S1(b)** Systems and services prioritise resourcing, strengthening and supporting families to stay safe together.

**2. Addressing the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems.**

Refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outcomes Framework on page 18 in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan.

**3. Improved information sharing, data development and analysis.**

**S3(a)** Children, young people and families, and their experiences, are accurately represented in the evidence about them.

**S3(b)** Child and family support policies and services are consistently based on reliable evidence, including living experience.

**4. Strengthening the child and family sector and workforce capability.**

**S4(a)** Children, young people and families have their needs met by an effective and skilled workforce.

**S4(b)** The child and family support system has the capacity to respond effectively and adapt to meet future demand.

## INTERFACE OUTCOMES

## 10-YEAR OUTCOMES

**Cross-portfolio action to strengthen child safety and wellbeing will form a key foundation for successfully achieving outcomes across the four Focus Areas.**

**S5(a)** Children, young people, families and communities have their holistic needs fulfilled. As such, fewer families experience social, emotional and economic risk factors for child neglect and abuse.

## MEASURING OUTCOMES

There will be a strong focus on measuring progress towards the outcomes under Safe and Supported, recognising the work different jurisdictions are doing to address child safety.

A mixed methods approach to measurement and evaluation will be used, in recognition of the complexity of the outcomes.

This approach would include quantitative trend data supported by more detailed qualitative analysis and storytelling.

The indicators will be included in the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy. They will be chosen with regards to what we are aiming to measure and how best this can be achieved.

\*S means 'Safe and Supported' and refers to outcomes in the Safe and Supported Outcomes Framework.



## GOAL

To make significant and sustained progress in reducing the rates of child abuse and neglect, and its intergenerational impacts.

Safe and Supported is for all Australian children, young people and families (including parents and carers), with a targeted focus on groups that are experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability.

## SUB-OUTCOMES

- S1.1** Parents and carers are supported to meet the needs of the children and young people they care for.
- S1.2** Children and young people are protected and enabled to heal from the impacts of intergenerational trauma.
- S1.3** Children and young people who have experienced out-of-home care, child abuse and/or neglect have life outcomes on par with their peers.
- S1.4** Children, young people and families have their needs identified early and are able to access the quality services and supports they need, when they need them.
- S1.5** Children, young people and families are supported to exercise greater choice in decisions affecting them and their families.
- S1.6** Services are trauma-informed, culturally safe and responsive to the living experience and needs of each of the Priority Groups.
- S1.7** Children, young people, families and communities have greater confidence in child protection systems.

Refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outcomes Framework on page 18 in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan.

- S3.1** The living experience and expertise of children, young people and families is valued and applied to policy and program design, delivery and evaluation.
- S3.2** Evidence is improved about children, young people and parents/carers, with particular focus on the Priority Groups.
- S3.3** Policy development and service planning is consistently underpinned by an evidence base.
- S3.4** Evidence, including data, is shared across governments, sectors and communities to enable best practice and informed decision-making.
- S4.1** The child and family workforce recruits and retains skilled workers according to demand.
- S4.2** The child and family workforce operates in a culturally safe, strengths based and trauma informed environment, and without discrimination on the basis of race, disability, sex or gender identity.
- S4.3** The child and family workforce has access to supports and training to meet its needs and maintain a positive workforce culture.

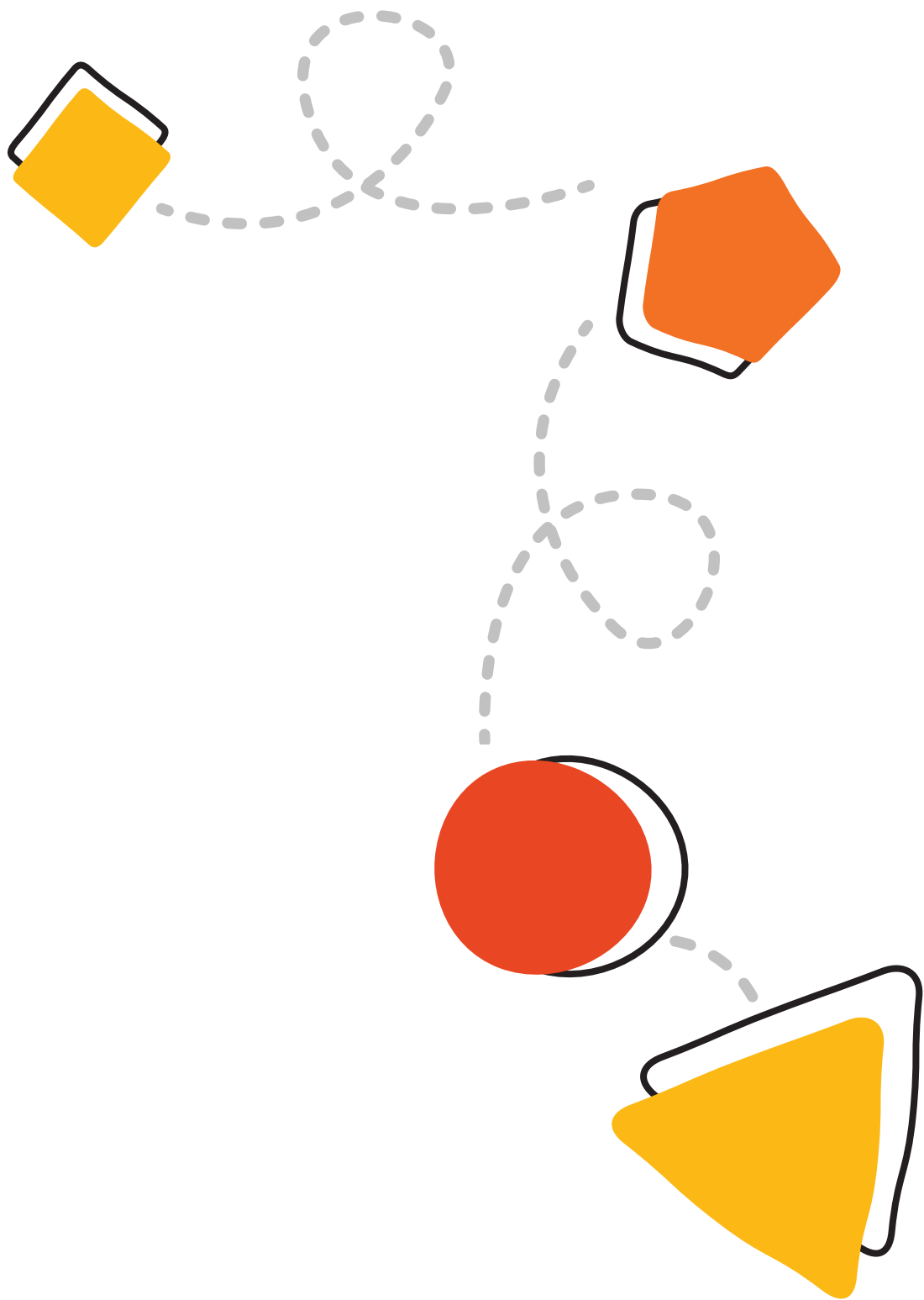
## SUB-OUTCOMES

- S5.1** Children, young people and families have improved access to better quality and more equitable services and supports in the following areas:
  - stable family employment, financial independence and security
  - homes and communities that are free from violence and discrimination
  - holistic physical and mental health, including healing services that address the impacts of trauma
  - safe and stable housing
  - education (early childhood to tertiary)
  - family law systems
  - justice services and supports
  - disability services and supports.
- S5.2** Inter-jurisdictional and inter-departmental leadership supports improved connections and collaborations across systems, jurisdictions and policy areas.

## MEASURING OUTCOMES

Potential data sources are expected to include:

- the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set
- other national datasets relevant to child and family safety and wellbeing
- other government reporting
- case studies
- surveys
- program evaluations
- data linkage projects
- targeted analysis projects.





# Actions and Activities



# Action 1

## Early Supports: Address the social determinants of child safety and wellbeing through early and targeted support and improved access to services for vulnerable children and families.

### Commitment

This action will improve outcomes for Safe and Supported priority groups, particularly vulnerable children, young people and families at risk of entering the child protection system, through early and targeted intervention and improved access to services and supports.

**Note:** This links to Action 8.b in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan.

Activities	Deliverables
<p>a. Explore new partnerships in existing select place-based initiatives to identify new community-led and evidence-informed approaches to provide safe and supported ways for all children in the community to thrive.</p>	<p>a.i. Scoping of approach to clearly define:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Objectives and outcomes relating to child safety and drivers of child abuse and neglect, reflecting community needs and priorities.</li><li>• Parameters of what is and is not in scope.</li><li>• Roles of the Commonwealth, states and territories, service providers and the community.</li><li>• Design an approach to support place-based design and delivery which utilises to greater effect available in scope resources/services.</li></ul> <p>a.ii. Implement project sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Criteria for site selection developed and agreed.</li><li>• Expression of interest (or similar process) to reach out to communities to explore a partnership opportunity bringing living experience of children, young people and families and evidence to the project.</li></ul> <p>a.iii. Design and conduct an evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluation process agreed with data provided regularly (frequency to be determined).</li><li>• Final evaluation report on outcomes achieved and the factors and challenges resulting in the outcomes.</li></ul>

**Timing:** 3 years, 2023 to 2025.

Activities	Deliverables
<p><b>b.</b> Strengthen the interface between policies and service systems supporting children and families, and those addressing the social determinants of safety and wellbeing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This includes advocating and engaging with portfolios in the areas of early childhood development, adult and youth justice, domestic and family violence, disability, health and mental health, drugs and alcohol, education, housing, social security and employment services.</li> </ul>	<p><b>b.i.</b> Establish an agreed communication and collaboration process/approach between Safe and Supported and other national initiative governance structures representing social determinants of wellbeing (including those listed at Appendix A).</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Over the course of the First Action Plan, from 2023.</p> <p><b>b.ii.</b> The National Children’s Commission will lead national consultations and advocate for child safety and wellbeing across key national strategies, plans and frameworks and portfolios.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Over the course of the First Action Plan, from 2023.</p>
<p><b>c.</b> Actively support a holistic and coordinated response to achieving the targets under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. This includes the following Commonwealth measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a first step, the Improving Multidisciplinary Responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families with multiple and complex needs initiative, which will be implemented commencing in 2023. Governments and the Leadership Group will determine the priorities of this action over the course of the First Action Plan.</li> <li>Governments will also collaborate and support the implementation of related disability initiatives, including the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan and <i>Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021–2031</i>.</li> <li>A targeted and focused approach will be taken in prioritising other joint initiatives.</li> </ul>	<p><b>c.i</b> Undertake joint initiatives as agreed to by all parties.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Over the course of the First Action Plan.</p>

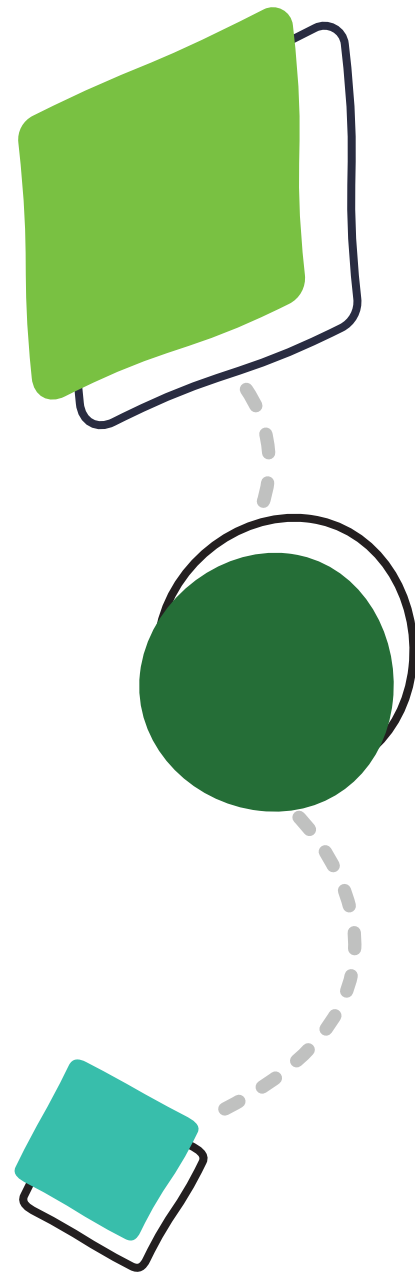
## What difference will we make?

This action will support achievement of the following 10-Year Outcomes.

- S1(a) – Children and young people grow up in safe and nurturing homes, supported by strong families and communities.
- S1(b) – Systems and services prioritise resourcing, strengthening and supporting families to stay safe together.
- S5(a) – Children, young people, families and communities have their holistic needs fulfilled. As such, fewer families experience social, emotional and economic risk factors for child neglect and abuse.

Activities will support a number of Sub-outcomes, including:

- S1.4 (activities a, b and c)
- S1.6 (activities a, b and c)
- S3.1 (activities a and b)
- S3.3 (activity a)
- S5.1 (activities a, b and c)
- S5.2 (activities a, b and c).



# Action 2

## Research and Data: Establish a national coordinated data and research approach.

### Commitment

This action will help ensure that all policies and programs under Safe and Supported are data-driven and based on current evidence.

Activities	Deliverables
<p>a. Review existing national child protection reporting mechanisms and recommend a consolidated reporting approach with flexibility to accommodate future data and analysis requirements.</p>	<p>a.i. A product that includes the findings and recommendations of the review. <b>Timing:</b> 1–2 years, 2023 to 2024.</p>
<p>b. Establish a coordinated approach building on the recommendations from activity 2(a) by establishing a consolidated approach to national child protection data and analysis that has capacity to evolve with data requirements.</p>	<p>b.i. A revised national child protection related product that includes consolidation of existing reporting and capability to respond to either once off or ongoing emerging policy requirement priorities. <b>Timing:</b> 1–2 years, 2023 to 2024.</p>
<p>c. Identify key data and analysis requirements to support the Safe and Supported Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy, including specific requirements for the priority groups.</p>	<p>c.i. A product that presents identified current data and analysis requirements and recommendations on addressing them. <b>Timing:</b> 2–3 years, 2023 to 2025</p>
<p>d. Build Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sovereignty of data and improve the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander evidence base to ensure services and systems in child protection and family support services are culturally safe (as per the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan – Action 3).</p>	<p>d.i. As for activities under Action 3 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan.</p>

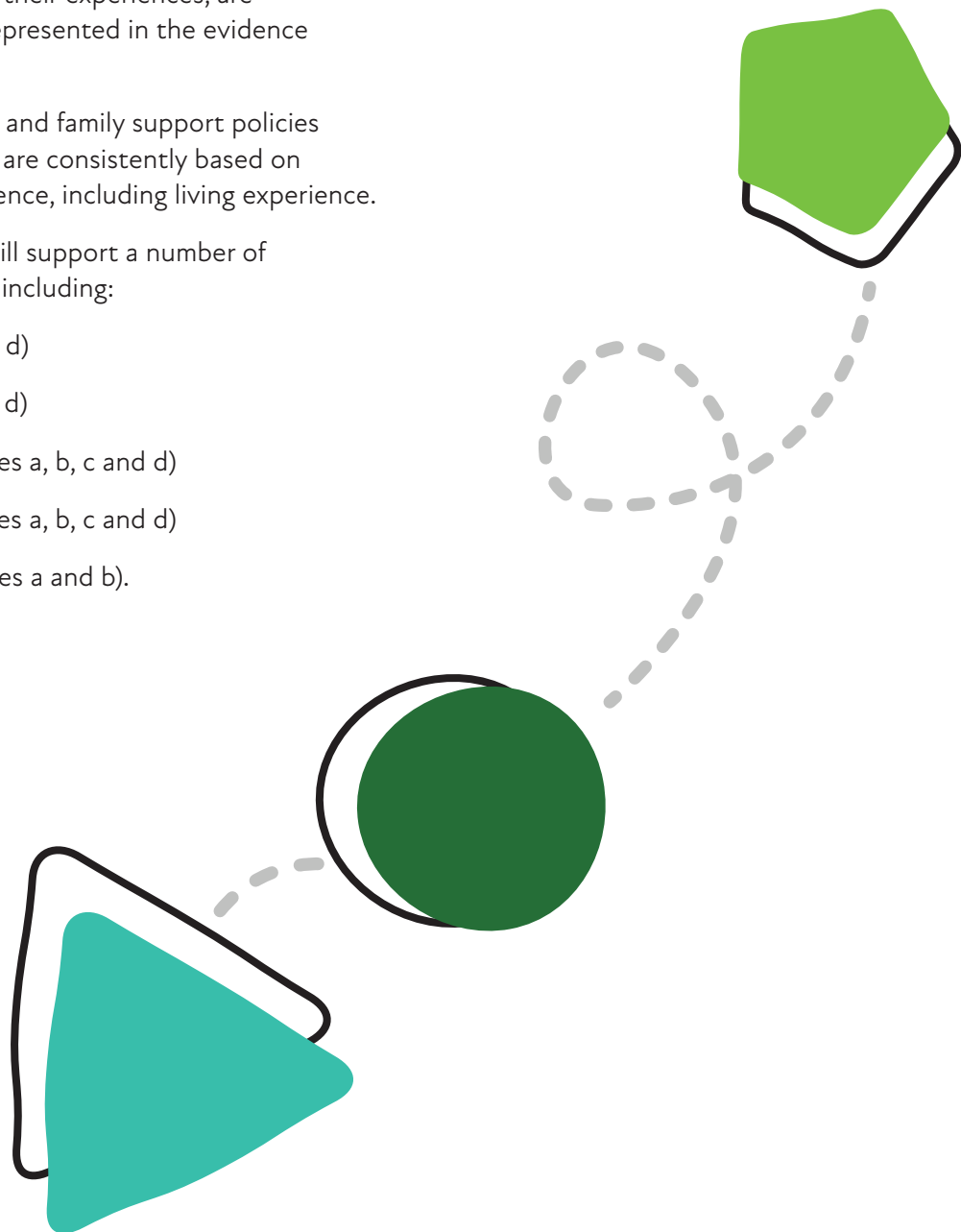
## What difference will we make?

This action will support achievement of the following 10-Year Outcomes.

- S3(a) – Children, young people and families, and their experiences, are accurately represented in the evidence about them.
- S3(b) - Child and family support policies and services are consistently based on reliable evidence, including living experience.

The activities will support a number of Sub-outcomes, including:

- S1.6 (activity d)
- S1.7 (activity d)
- S3.2 (activities a, b, c and d)
- S3.3 (activities a, b, c and d)
- S3.4 (activities a and b).





# Action 3

## Workforce: Agree a national approach or strategy for a sustainable and skilled children and families services workforce.

### Commitment

This action will develop strategies to ensure the future sustainability of the child and family sector workforce and to better support the Safe and Supported priority groups. This will include attraction and retention, capacity and capability approaches, embedding trauma-informed and culturally aware services, and peer support.

Activities	Deliverables
<p>a. Scope current and future needs of the child and family sector and its workforce, including a consideration of the impact other activities under the Action Plans will have on the workforce (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan – Action 2).</p>	<p>a.i. Child protection and family support workforce development report that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• analysis of current and projected workforce needs across states and territories, including formal and relevant qualifications</li><li>• identification of barriers and opportunities to inform development of strategies for a sustainable workforce.</li></ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> One year, 2023.</p>
<p>b. Develop strategies for a sustainable workforce pipeline, including attraction and retention, with particular focus on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.</p>	<p>b.i. Jurisdictional strategies to develop the children and families services workforce, which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• vocational training modules and other resources to support capability and resilience</li><li>• tertiary education pathways that recognise child protection-specific modules or qualifications</li><li>• attraction and retention approaches across the sector including for peer-based family support and family inclusion approaches across the sector.</li></ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 2 years, 2023 to 2024.</p>

Activities	Deliverables
<p><b>c.</b> Support capacity building through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing and implementing cultural awareness training across front-line staff with consideration of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives</li> <li>◦ the experience of people with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Training modules and other resources to improve consistency of support and assistance to families.</li> <li>• Research and share successful best practice approaches to workforce capacity building, including for trauma-informed approaches.</li> </ul>	<p><b>c.i.</b> Child protection and family support workforce best practice in capacity building report that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• case studies on successful approaches</li> <li>• sharing information and findings on successful approaches and supporting scaling up.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 6–9 months.</p> <p><b>c.ii.</b> Cultural awareness training framework that includes training modules and other resources to support capability building.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> 2 years, 2023 to 2024.</p>
<p><b>d.</b> Scope national accreditation of the child protection and family support services workforce.</p>	<p><b>d.i.</b> Identify advantages and disadvantages of national accreditation for social workers and other child and family services workers to inform approaches for a national accreditation scheme.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> One year, 2023.</p>

### What difference will we make?

This action will support achievement of the following 10-Year Outcomes.

- S4(a) – Children, young people and families have their needs met by an effective and skilled workforce.
- S4(b) – The child and family support system has the capacity to respond effectively and adapt to meet future demand.

The activities will support a number of Sub-outcomes, including:

- S1.6 (activity c)
- S1.7 (activity c)
- S3.1 (activity c)
- S3.4 (activity c)
- S4.1 (activities a and b)
- S4.2 (activities a and c)
- S4.3 (activities a, b, c, and d)
- S5.2 (activity d).

# Action 4

## Listening to Living Experience: Embed the voice of the child and living experience in program and policy design in the context of Safe and Supported implementation.

### Commitment

This action enables ongoing and continuous feedback from priority groups, including children and their care givers experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability. In doing so we will strive for best practice across the Safe and Supported framework and help to achieve Principle 3 – Listening and responding to the voices and views of children and young people and the voices and views of those who care for them.

A national approach to listening to the voice of children and young people in the context of Safe and Supported will be supported and facilitated by the National Children’s Commissioner.

Activities	Deliverables
<p><b>a.</b> Develop or enhance existing mechanisms to inform implementation and monitoring of the Action Plans across jurisdictions with specific regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• children and families with complex needs</li><li>• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability</li><li>• children and young people with disability experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability</li><li>• children and young people who have experienced abuse and/or neglect, including those in out-of-home care or leaving care.</li></ul>	<p><b>a.i.</b> Report on current mechanisms in jurisdictions that includes coverage and capacity. <b>Timing:</b> One year, 2023.</p> <p><b>a.ii.</b> Mechanisms agreed and implemented, including within the Governance Structure. <b>Timing:</b> Within the first 2 years, 2023 to 2025.</p>

For listening to the living experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, parents and carers experiencing disadvantage, please refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan.

The specific parameters and functions of the National Advocate will be co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives ahead of establishing and recruiting for the role in 2023.

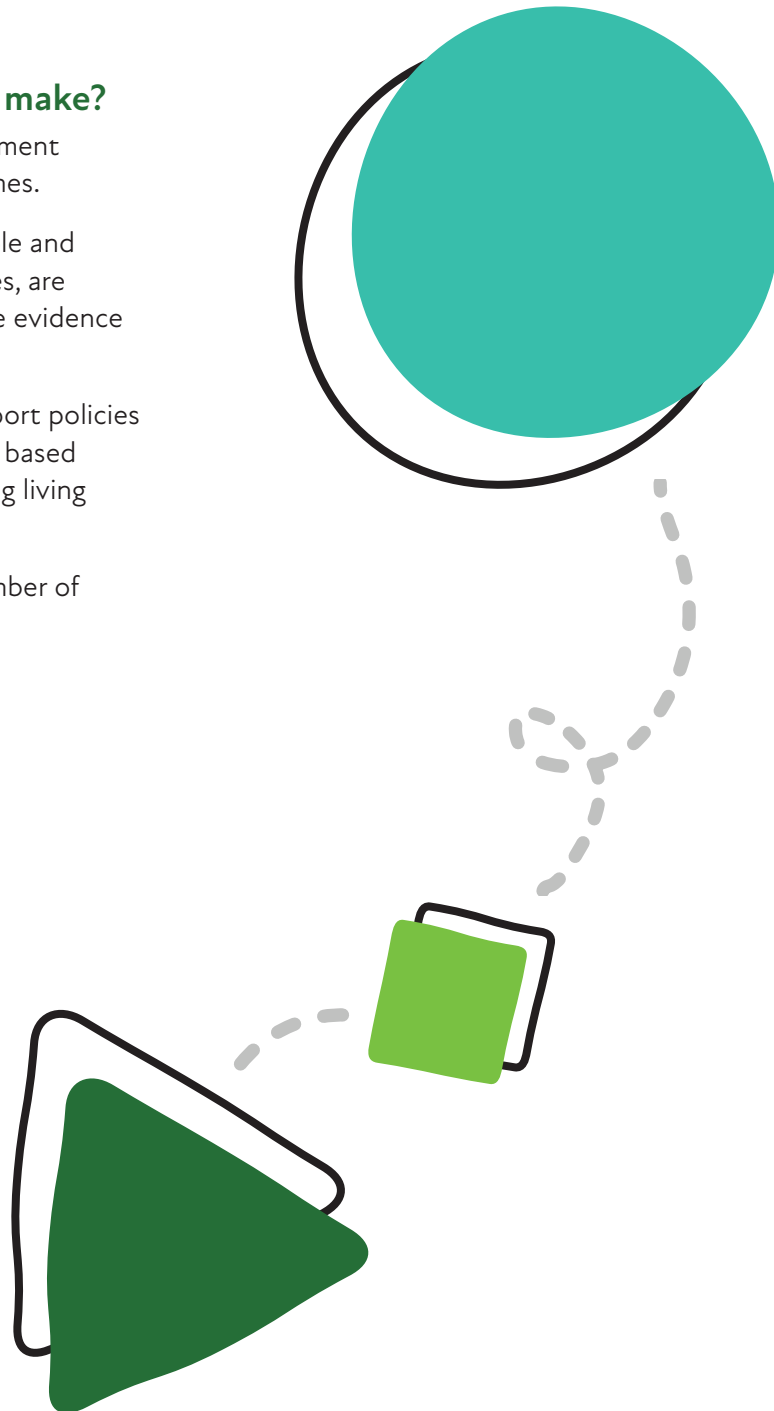
## What difference will we make?

This action will support achievement of the following 10-Year Outcomes.

- S3(a) – Children, young people and families, and their experiences, are accurately represented in the evidence about them.
- S3(b) – Child and family support policies and services are consistently based on reliable evidence, including living experience.

The activities will support a number of Sub-outcomes, including:

- S1.6 (activity a)
- S1.7 (activity a)
- S3.1 (activity a)
- S3.2 (activity a).



# Action 5

## Out-of-Home Care: Improve lifetime outcomes for children and young people in and leaving out-of-home care through strategies that support proactive access to universal services.

### Commitment

This action will drive service access improvements for children and young people in out-of-home care in order to ensure their lifetime wellbeing outcomes are on par with their peers.

Activities	Deliverables
<p><b>a.</b> Increase utilisation of existing fee-free or subsidised tertiary education, vocational and apprenticeship training, as well as targeted employment and transition to work services for young people with care experiences. Specific consideration will be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• children and young people with complex needs</li> <li>• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people experiencing disadvantage and/or vulnerability</li> <li>• children and young people with disability experiencing disadvantage and/or vulnerability.</li> <li>• Young people who have been in out-of-home care and involved with the adult or youth justice system.</li> </ul>	<p><b>a.i.</b> A review of the barriers across governments to tertiary education, vocational support and apprenticeship training that young people with care experiences face after exiting care. The review would be undertaken in partnership with researchers/NGOs and would scope potential enhancements and provide recommendations for ways to improve the coordination of services for young people transitioning to adulthood from care.</p> <p><b>a.ii.</b> A review of existing Australian Government programs such as Transition to Independent Living Allowance and employment services to better understand and improve how young people with care experiences connect and experience these supports.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Reviews to be completed within 12 months, 2023.</p>
<p><b>b.</b> Review the Transition to Independent Living Allowance, including possible different approaches for the funding, and ways to improve access and utilisation.</p>	<p><b>b.i.</b> Bilateral discussions with jurisdictions, a desktop literature review and surveying eligible young people, carers and caseworkers on their experiences accessing the payment.</p> <p><b>b.ii.</b> Development of options.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> 2 years, 2023 to 2024.</p>

Activities	Deliverables
<p>c. Improve access for children, young people and families to services such as housing, education, income support and health.</p>	<p><b>c.i.</b> Out-of-Home Care/Health: National approach developed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve access to allied health services and health management plan for children and young people with a care experience</li> <li>• promote awareness and utilisation of Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) items with health practitioners, carers and caseworkers</li> <li>• raise awareness among GPs and allied health professionals of the impact of trauma on health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people in care</li> <li>• improved access to and use of MBS items by children and young people in care.</li> </ul> <p><b>c.ii.</b> Out-of-Home Care/Education: Resources developed that raise awareness for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• programs that provide young people with care experiences with assessment, planning and review of their educational needs</li> <li>• the importance of early childhood education for children in care in the 2 years prior to starting school</li> <li>• the impact of trauma on health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people in care, with a focus on reducing suspension and exclusion.</li> </ul> <p><b>c.iii.</b> Out-of-Home Care/Housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist vulnerable young people to achieve social and economic independence through a housing and support framework for those transitioning to adulthood from care.</li> <li>• Partner with key groups to facilitate inclusive housing responses and actions to support families affected by Domestic and Family Violence.</li> </ul> <p><b>c.iv.</b> Out-of-Home Care/Income Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote awareness and maximise utilisation of income Support payments to assist vulnerable young people to achieve social and economic independence</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> Over the course of the First Action Plan.</p>



Activities	Deliverables
<p><b>d.</b> Refresh the National Out-of-Home Care Standards and Indicators.</p>	<p><b>d.i.</b> Consultation with key stakeholders on the standards and indicators to determine the best approach for those with living experience and to align with contemporary policy settings.</p> <p><b>d.ii.</b> Reframe the standards and indicators to ensure they reflect the views of young people, and ensure clarity of terms such as wellbeing and identity, and how we measure them.</p> <p><b>d.iii.</b> Consider options to report revised standards.</p> <p><b>d.iv.</b> In partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, align standards and indicators with the national standards for active efforts to implement the ATSI CPP, as set out in Action 5 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> 3 years, 2023 to 2025.</p>

### What difference will we make?

This action will support achievement of the following 10-Year Outcomes.

- S1(a) – Children and young people grow up in safe and nurturing homes, supported by strong families and communities.
- S1(b) – Systems and services prioritise resourcing, strengthening and supporting families to stay safe together.
- S5(a) – Children, young people, families and communities have their holistic needs fulfilled. As such, fewer families experience social, emotional and economic risk factors for child neglect and abuse.

of Sub-outcomes, including:

- S1.2 (activity c)
- S1.3 (activities a, b, c and d)
- S1.4 (activities a, b, c and d)
- S1.5 (activity d)
- S1.6 (activities c and d)
- S1.7 (activity d)
- S5.1 (activities a and c)
- S5.2 (activity c).

Activities will contribute to a number

# Action 6

## Carers: Improve support for carers.

### Commitment

This action commits all parties to better coordinate and improve supports for grandparents, foster and kinship carers to better enable them to keep Australia's children and young people safe and supported.

Activities	Deliverables
<p><b>a.</b> Improve coordination of support for carers between Commonwealth and state and territory services, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a review of supports available for carers including accessibility of financial support with a view to support recruitment and retention.</li><li>• expansion and renaming of the Grandparents Adviser Line to improve support for all types of carers by helping them navigate payments and other relevant government services.</li></ul>	<p><b>a.i.</b> Review to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• assess carer payments for adequacy, consistency and accessibility and explore opportunities, including assessing taxation and employment related barriers, to grow family based care (including professional carers)</li><li>• assess the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers</li><li>• explore opportunities for working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in some jurisdictions) to support carers</li><li>• improve awareness of and access to financial supports for carers</li><li>• explore ways that government can take national action to improve carer recruitment.</li></ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 2 years, 2023 to 2024</p> <p><b>a.ii.</b> Grandparents Adviser Line is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expanded and renamed Grandparent, Foster and Kinship Carer Adviser program commencing 1 July 2022.</li></ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 4 years, 2021–22 to 2024–25</p>



Activities	Deliverables
<p><b>b.</b> Provide support for parents and carers, including raising awareness of supports to strengthen parenting practices.</p>	<p><b>b.i.</b> Targeted Communications for parents and carers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A tailored communication approach will be implemented to target parents and carers with a focus on the Safe and Supported priority groups.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 5 years, 2022–23 to 2026–27</p>

### What difference will we make?

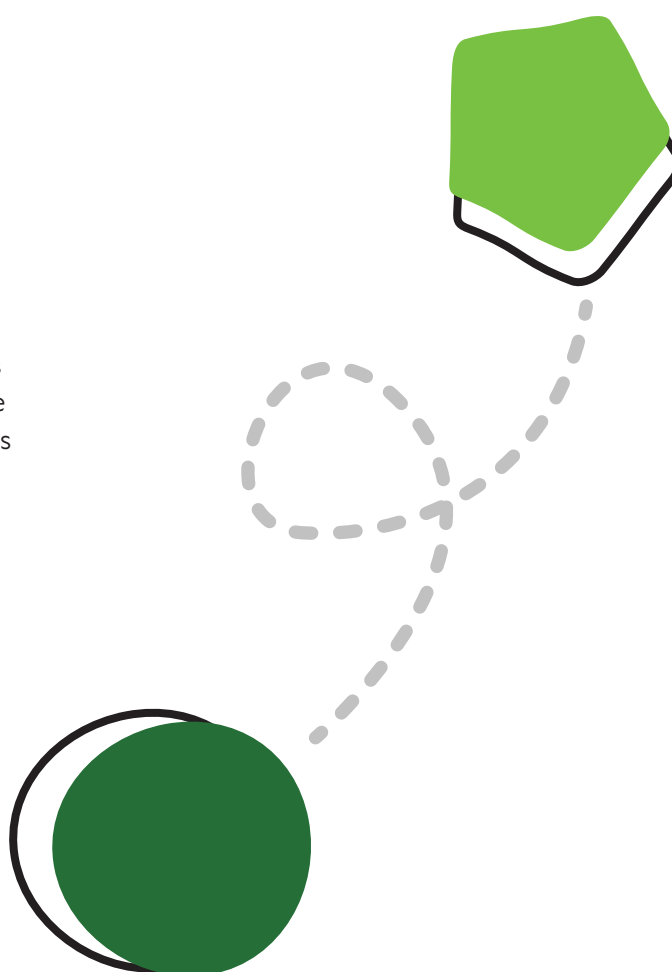
This action will support achievement of the following 10-Year Outcomes.

- S1(a) – Children grow up in safe and nurturing homes, supported by strong families and communities.
- S1(b) – Systems and services prioritise resourcing, strengthening and supporting families to stay safe together.
- S5(a) – Children, young people, families and communities have their holistic needs fulfilled. As such, fewer families experience social, emotional and economic risk factors for child neglect and abuse.

Activities will contribute to a number of Sub-outcomes, including:

S1.1 (activity a and b)

- S1.4 (activity a and b)
- S4.1 (activity a)
- S4.3 (activity a)
- S5.1 (activity a)
- S5.2 (activity a).



# Action 7

**Disability: Ensure effective and timely responses for parents and carers living with disability and children and young people with disability and/or developmental concerns:**

- at risk of entering the child protection system
- in out-of-home care, or
- transitioning to adulthood from out-of-home care.

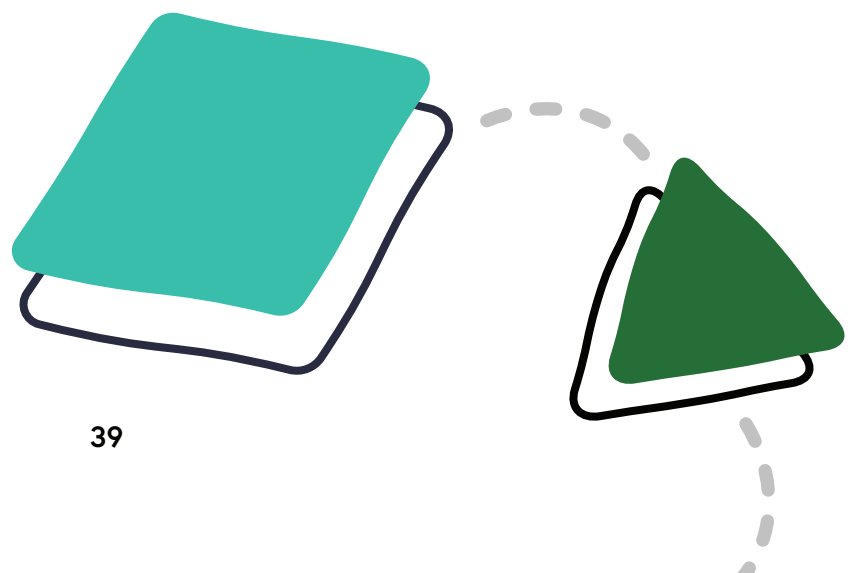
## Commitment

Child protection services, family support services, universal services (such as education and health) and the National Disability Insurance Scheme will work together at the local level to ensure services are family-centred and culturally safe for the Safe and Supported priority groups. This includes to plan and coordinate streamlined services for families, parents, carers, children and young people living with disability.

Activities	Deliverables
<p>a. Develop mechanisms to ensure an effective interface between child and family services and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) that supports timely responses and information sharing.</p>	<p>a.i. Child and family services and the NDIA have mechanisms in place to ensure an effective interface that supports timely responses for eligible parents, children and young people with disability at risk of coming into contact with the child protection system, in out-of-home care and young people transitioning to adulthood from out-of-home care. The interface mechanisms will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• operational working arrangements</li><li>• escalation processes</li><li>• priority triggers</li><li>• information and data sharing arrangements, and</li><li>• ongoing arrangements to support engagement between parties</li></ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> Consultation within 18 months – 2023 to 2024. Delivery 2024 to 2025.</p>

Activities	Deliverables
<p><b>b.</b> In consultation through existing jurisdictional disability stakeholder mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the early identification, information, supports and referral pathways of children and young people with disability and/or developmental concerns and parents and carers with disability to enable timely access to child and family supports and, for those eligible, to specialist disability services through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).</li> <li>• Ensure child and family service systems, universal service pathways and the NDIS are accessible, family-centred and responsive to the needs of children and young people and parents and carers with disability.</li> </ul>	<p><b>b.i.</b> Practice guidance, training and implementation support for child and family services as well as consideration of training and implementation support for associated universal services to increase staff capability in understanding, identifying and working with people with disability to access appropriate services (including diagnostic services) and services provided through the NDIS (including specific regard to First Nations people with disability and culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability).</p> <p><b>b.ii.</b> Practice guidance, training and implementation support for NDIA staff to increase capability in understanding the unique needs of vulnerable children and the systems that support children, young people, parents and carers with disability in contact with child and family services (including specific regard to First Nations people with disability and culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability).</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Consultation within 12 months – 2023. Delivery in 2024.</p>

For specific disability actions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, parents and carers experiencing disability and developmental concerns, please refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan.



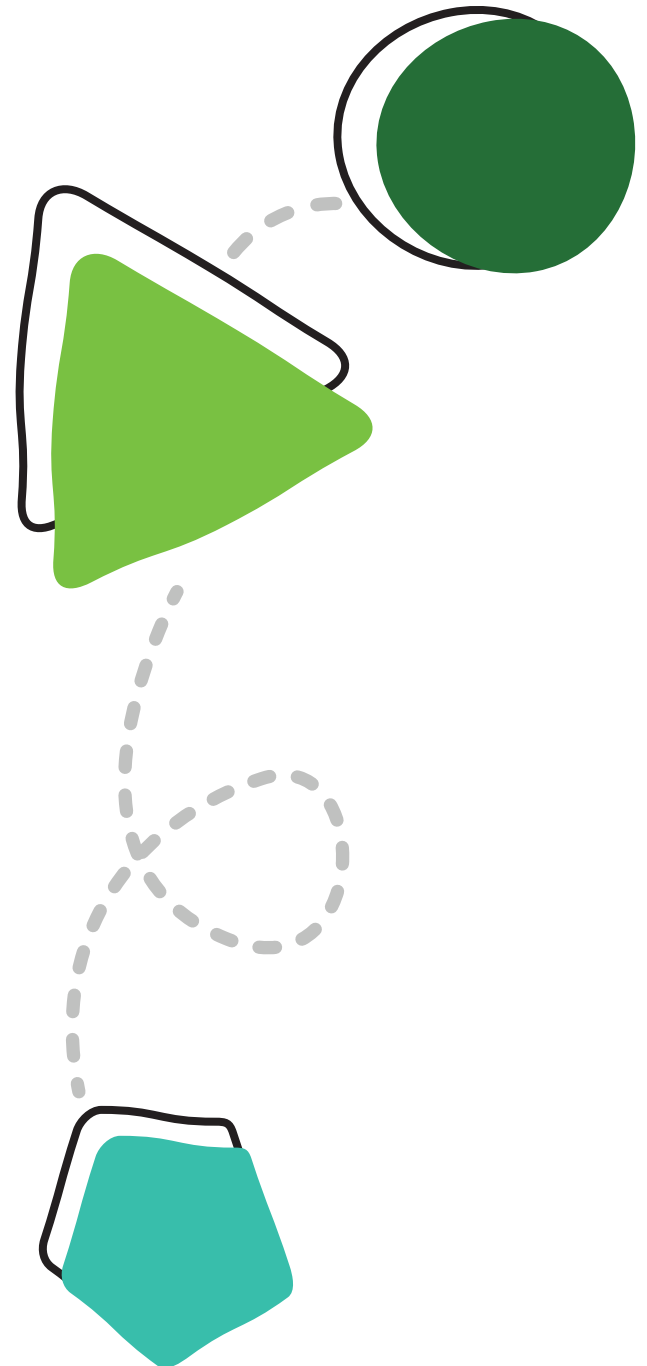
## What difference will we make?

This action will support achievement of the following 10-Year Outcomes.

- S1(a) – Children grow up in safe and nurturing homes, supported by strong families and communities.
- S1(b) – Systems and services prioritise resourcing, strengthening and supporting families to stay safe together.
- S4(a) – Children, young people and families have their needs met by an effective and skilled workforce.
- S4(b) – The child and family support system has the capacity to respond effectively and adapt to meet future demand.
- S5(a) – Children, young people, families and communities have their holistic needs fulfilled. As such, fewer families experience social, emotional and economic risk factors for child neglect and abuse.

Activities will contribute to a number of Sub-outcomes, including:

- S1.1 (activity a and b)
- S1.3 (activity a)
- S1.4 (activity a and b)
- S1.6 (activity a, b and c)
- S1.7 (activity b and c)
- S3.1 (activity a and c)
- S4.2 (activity b)
- S4.3 (activity b)
- S5.1 (activity a and b)
- S5.2 (activity a and b).



# Action 8

## ATSICPP: Implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) to the standard of active efforts.

### Commitment

Safe and Supported commits to progressive systems transformation that has First Nations self-determination at its centre. This Action recognises that all service providers have a responsibility to respect and protect the rights of children and to provide culturally safe services that support First Nations peoples to maintain and practise their cultures.

For non-Indigenous organisations who deliver services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families, it is important to form genuine partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. Enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to lead these partnerships not only helps provide more culturally safe and responsive services (in line with all 5 elements of the ATSICPP), but also promotes an environment in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can exercise their right to self-determination.

This Action also closely links with actions under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan, recognising that a key priority is to increase the proportion of services delivered by ACCOs.

Activities	Deliverables
<p>a. Building on Action 5 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan, enhance the capacity and capability for all child and family organisations to implement the 5 elements of the ATSICPP to the standard of active efforts.</p>	<p>a.i. Promote the dissemination and use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led ATSICPP-specific resources across government agencies, and among other child and family organisations, for supporting their capacity to work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations for implementing the ATSICPP and building genuine partnerships.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Within the first 2 years, 2023 to 2025</p>

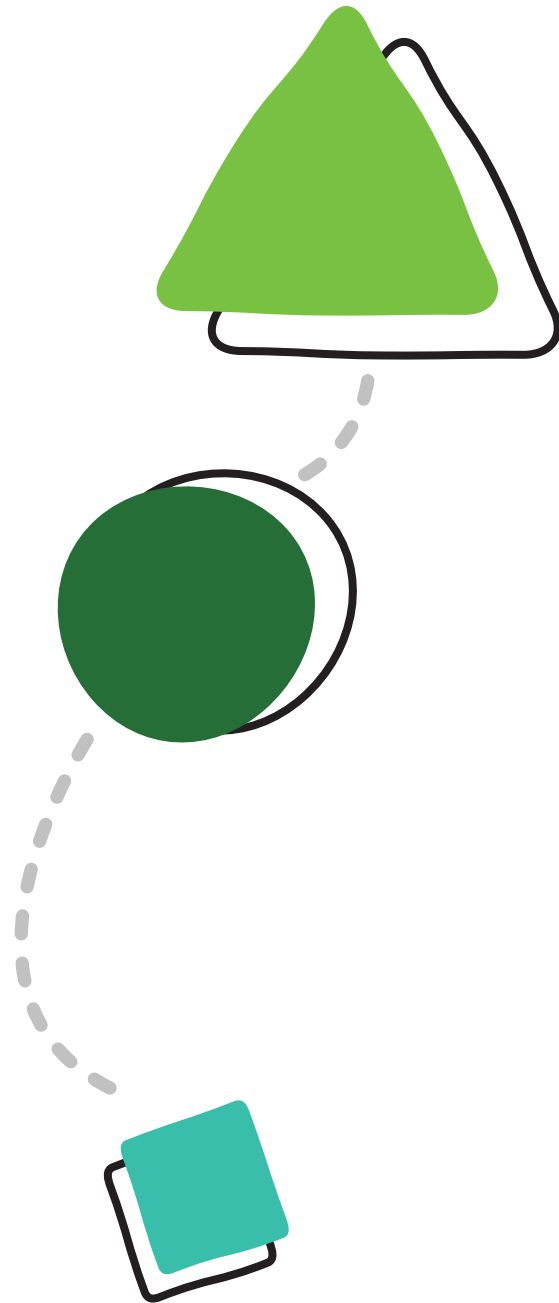
## What difference will we make?

This action will support achievement of the following 10-Year Outcomes.

- S1(a) – Children and young people grow up in safe and nurturing homes, supported by strong families and communities.
- S1(b) – Systems and services prioritise resourcing, strengthening and supporting families to stay safe together.
- S4(a) – Children, young people and families have their needs met by an effective and skilled workforce.
- S4(b) – The child and family support system has the capacity to respond effectively and adapt to meet future demand.

Activities will contribute to a number of Sub-outcomes, including:

- S1.5 (activity a)
- S1.6 (activity a)
- S1.7 (activity a)
- S4.2 (activity a).



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# Oversight and Accountability

# Governance

**Different bodies or groups serve different governance purposes. Some perform a high-level oversight role, tracking the progress of Safe and Supported and changing its direction if necessary. Others will be directly involved in the day-to-day management of certain actions. All will have a role in engaging with external groups and keeping key stakeholders involved through ongoing consultation.**

Governance arrangements are shown on page 46. These aim to streamline interaction and support alignment between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan and this Action Plan. The Terms of Reference, agreed to by all Safe and Supported parties, clarify roles and responsibilities and how the bodies interact.

The governance structure will also deliver on Priority Reform 1 of Closing the Gap by supporting genuine partnerships and shared decision-making between Australian governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through a formal agreement. Shared decision-making across the governance structure is outlined in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan.

The National Coalition, established by Families Australia, is the non-government collective group that promoted and advised on delivery of the first National Framework, including the need for a stronger governance role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders. This is now realised under Safe and Supported. The Leadership Group is one of the 4 parties to Safe and Supported, along with the National Coalition, the Australian Government and state and territory governments.

The key Safe and Supported governance bodies are described below.

## **Community Services Ministers (CSM) and Children and Families Secretaries (CAFS)**

CSM and CAFS comprise ministerial representatives of statutory child protection and family support portfolios and senior officials from relevant government departments. The Leadership Group will partner with Australian, state and territory governments through these forums to share decision-making for Safe and Supported.

These forums will also engage with ministers responsible for other portfolios, including education, health, disability, adult and youth justice, housing, employment, Indigenous affairs and family safety to influence improved social determinants' outcomes for children and families.



## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group

The Leadership Group, convened by SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children is the main Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander oversight and shared decision-making body in relation to delivery of both Safe and Supported First Action Plans. Their role is further outlined in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan.

## National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing

The National Coalition, convened by Families Australia, comprises over 200 non-government organisations, consultants and academics committed to advancing Safe and Supported. Represented via a Steering Group, National Coalition members sit on the Strategic Advisory Body and Working Groups and are engaged by CSM, CAFS and the Leadership Group to inform decisions.

The National Coalition brings together sector views and advice and has a critical role in delivering Safe and Supported and ensuring it achieves its vision of supporting families, children and young people.

## Shared Decision-making Body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children

This is the key body overseeing delivery of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan. It brings together members of the Leadership Group and governments. It considers and makes decision on items from this Action Plan concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.

## Strategic Advisory Body

The Strategic Advisory Body brings together all parties to help coordinate and sequence delivery across this Action Plans, ensuring Working Groups are aligned with related strategies and national initiatives. This includes alignment with Closing the Gap, *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031*, National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030, and National Plan to End Violence against Women and their Children 2022–2032.

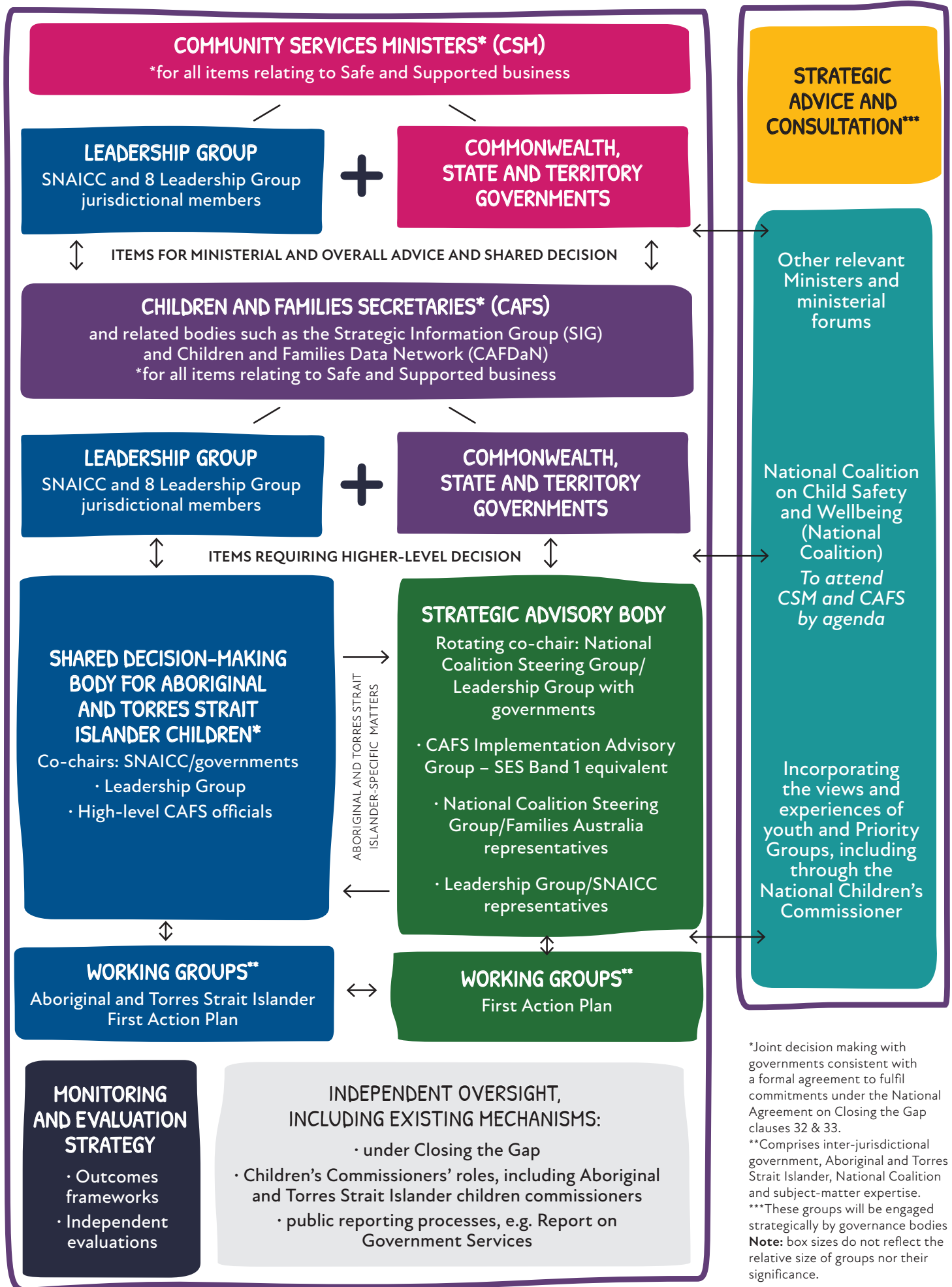
## Implementation Working Groups

Working Groups are established as needed to plan implementation and drive delivery of the Action Plans. They include subject matter experts from all government and non-government parties. Separate Working Groups with separate reporting lines are raised to support delivery of both Action Plans.

## The voice of living experience

Governance bodies will incorporate the voices of experience into the design and delivery of actions. This includes being responsive to the findings from the National Children's Commissioner consultations with Safe and Supported priority groups. The best mechanisms to represent these voices through governance will be informed by Action 4 (Listening to Experience). Mechanisms for incorporating First Nations voices are outlined in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan.

## Governance structure



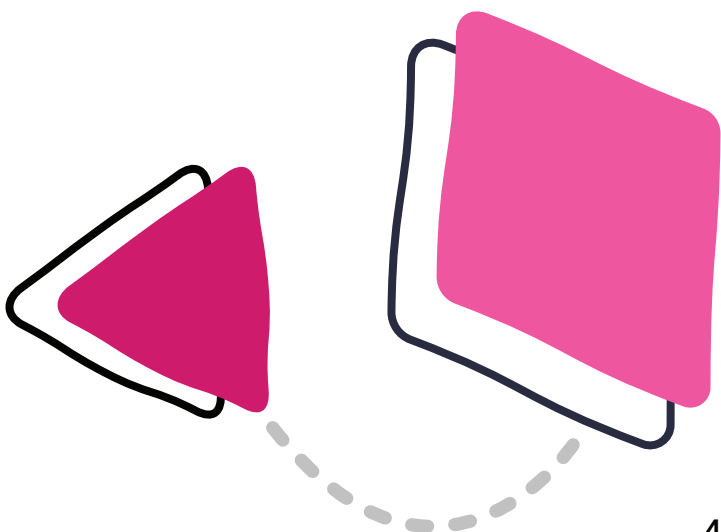
# How will we measure progress?

**Progress will be assessed through regular monitoring and reporting under the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy. This will include tracking and publicly reporting progress against the outcomes set out in the Safe and Supported Outcomes Framework and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outcomes Framework. Monitoring and reporting includes AIHW Child Protection Australia reporting and the Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services, among others. Public reporting will support accountability and transparency.**

It will be important to hear feedback directly from children, young people and families about how we are doing. The Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy will incorporate their voices into evaluations. This, in turn, will help us to adjust our approach as needed over the next 10 years. These voices will also inform future efforts to address child abuse and neglect and improve children and young people's wellbeing.

A mixed methods approach will be used to monitor and evaluate progress. This will supplement quantitative data with more detailed story-telling and analysis to provide a fuller picture of progress. It will also help address existing data gaps so progress can be measured for all outcomes. Indicators will continue to be reviewed and refined over the life of Safe and Supported as work continues to improve data and links between datasets.

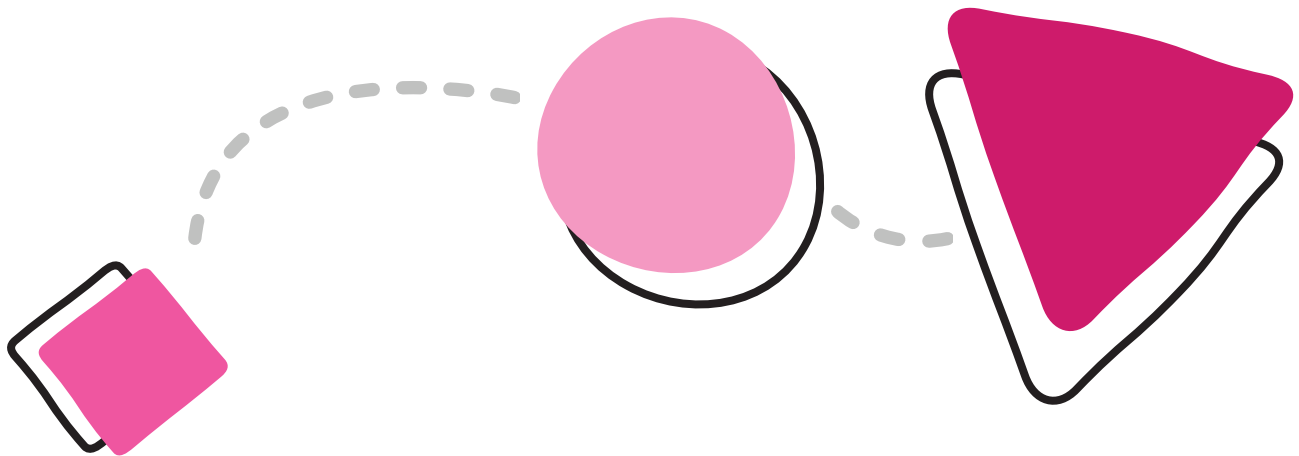
The Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy will also include a focus on First Nations ways of measuring success. This will help ensure the effects of Safe and Supported on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – children, young people, families, communities and organisations – are reflected accurately and in full accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outcomes Framework.



## References

Australian Human Rights Commission (2021)  
*Keeping Kids Safe and Well - Your Voices*

United Nations (2007) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, GA Res 61/295, UNGAOR, 61st sess, 107th plen mtg, Supp No 49, UN Doc A/RES/61/295 (2 October 2007, adopted 13 September 2007).



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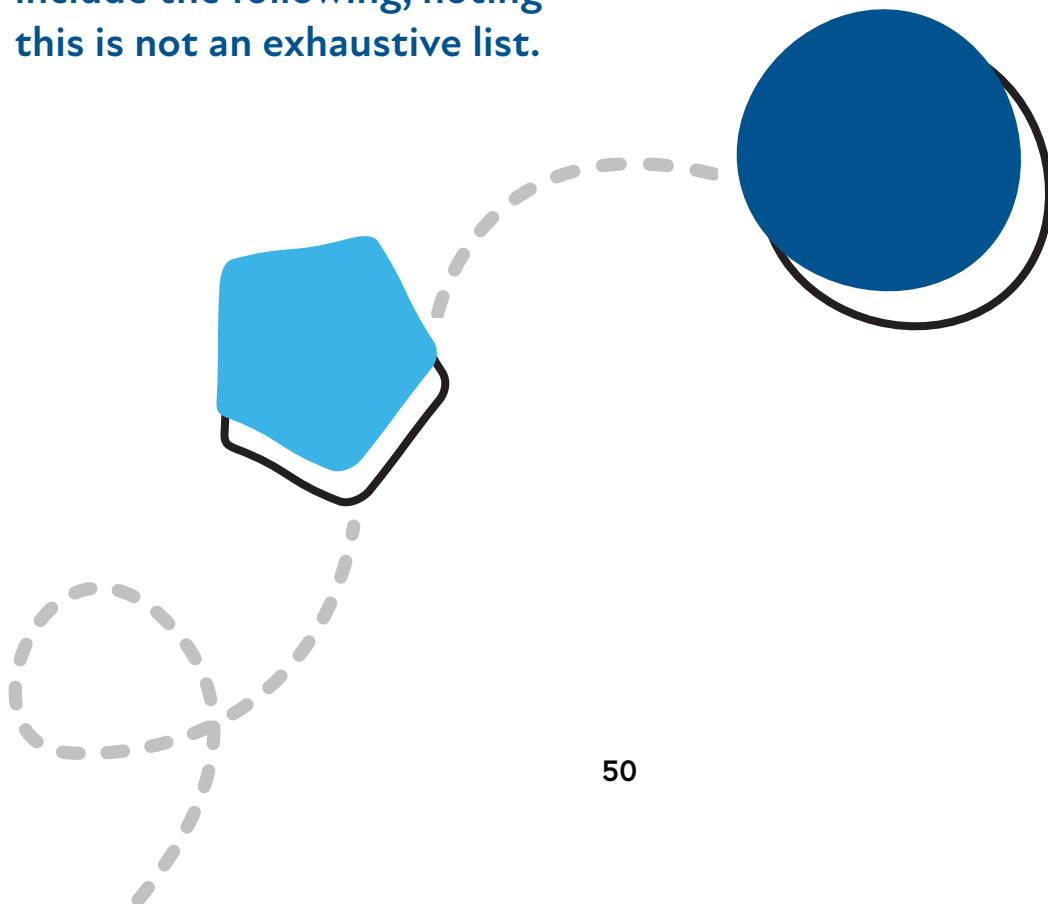
# Appendices

# Appendix A: Other National Initiatives

Safe and Supported will align with other national initiatives that support children, young people and families to be safe. The Australian Government and state and territory governments are working together so that actions are aligned and do not duplicate effort. We will achieve this through the Safe and Supported governance structure and the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy. Key national initiatives relating to Safe and Supported include the following, noting this is not an exhaustive list.

## ***Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031***

*Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031* (the Strategy) was developed by all levels of government together with people with disability, their families, carers and representatives. The Strategy will drive change over the next decade to uphold the rights, inclusion and participation of people with disability in all areas of Australian life. It is based around 7 outcome areas that people with disability identified as important to them: employment and financial security; inclusive homes and communities; safety, rights and justice; personal and community support; education and learning; health and wellbeing; and community attitudes.



## **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy**

The strategy's vision is that 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (0–5 years) are born and remain healthy, nurtured by strong families and enabled to thrive in their early years'. The strategy will aim to address outcomes across all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young children's lives. This includes early learning, health, disability, wellbeing, care and development.

## **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–2031**

The plan's vision is that 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy long, healthy lives centred in culture, with access to services that are prevention-focused, culturally safe and responsive, equitable and free of racism'. The plan recognises that all health and wellbeing approaches must include the following foundations for a healthy life:

- holistic health and wellbeing
- the cultural determinants of health
- the social determinants of health
- a life course approach, including a focus on healthy babies and children and healthy youth and adolescents.

## **National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020–2030**

The Action Plan's vision is that all Australian children and young people, from all backgrounds and all walks of life, have the same opportunities to fulfil their potential and are healthy, safe and thriving. It aims to drive improvement in the health of all of children and young people across the life course, including children and young people who experience violence and abuse and children in out-of-home care.

## **National Agreement on Closing the Gap**

The National Agreement aims to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and government to work together to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It aims to enable them to achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians. This includes outcomes in education, languages, employment, health, wellbeing, safety, land and waters.

## Closing the Gap Sector Strengthening Plans

Under Clause 49 of Closing the Gap, all Australian governments have committed to identifying sectors for joint national strengthening efforts every 3 years through Sector Strengthening Plans. This is in line with Priority Reform 2 – ‘Building the community-controlled sector’.

The Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan focuses on building community-controlled sectors that address:

- early childhood education and care and integrated supports to children and families to support child development
- child protection and family support services that focus on the needs of children and families experiencing vulnerability and/or who are in contact with child protection systems.

The plan also considers how these services intersect with other priority sectors for strengthening to be addressed in other plans, including health, housing and disability.

The Disability Sector Strengthening Plan aims to strengthen the community-controlled disability sector, both within the disability service system and across all service systems, and to improve outcomes for, and the rights of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

## Closing the Gap Policy Partnerships

Under Clause 38 of Closing the Gap, all Australian governments committed to establishing formal policy partnerships by 2022 to develop joined-up advice on 5 priority areas. Policy partnerships include the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership, the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership and the Justice Policy Partnership.

## National Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

This Strategy provides a framework to guide investment in the mental health and wellbeing of children and families. The Strategy outlines the requirements for an effective system of care for children and seeks to create a new, shared understanding of the roles of families, communities, services and educators in promoting and supporting child mental health and wellbeing.

## National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Strategic Action Plan 2018–2028

The Strategic Action Plan aims to reduce the prevalence of FASD and its impact on individuals, families, carers and communities. It provides a clear pathway of priorities and opportunities to improve the prevention, diagnosis, support and management of FASD in Australia.



## National Plan to End Violence against Women and their Children 2022–2032

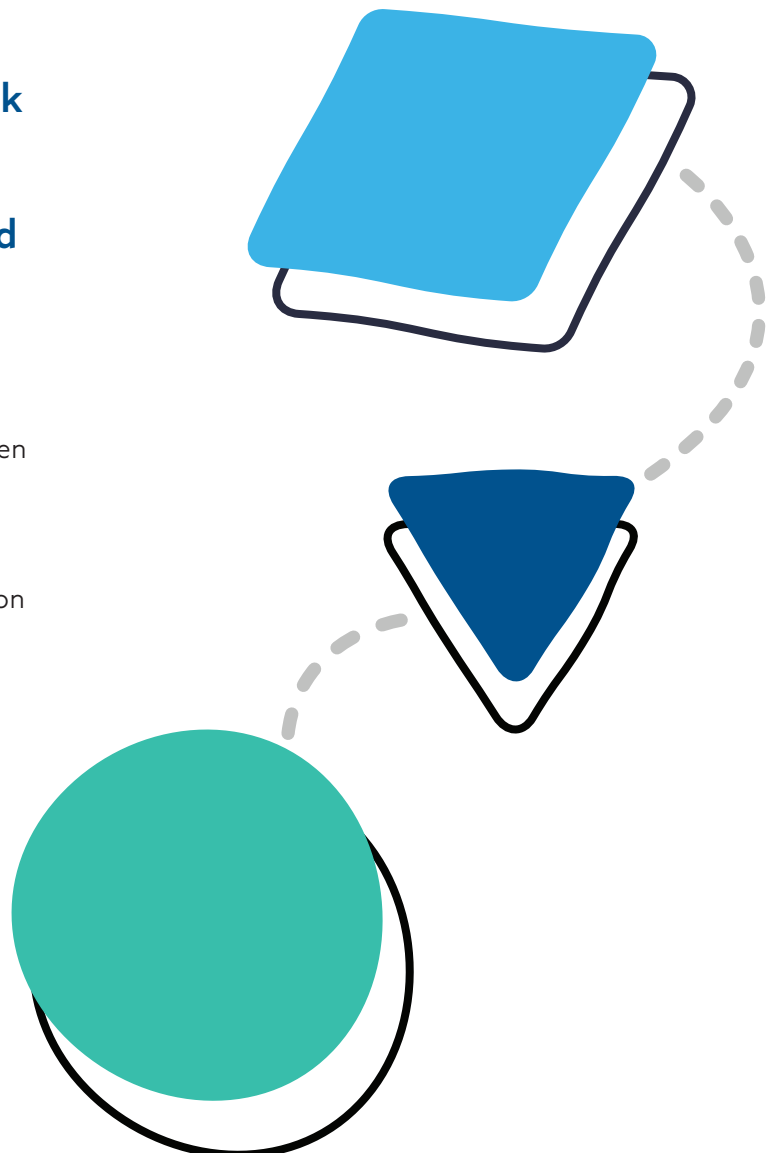
This National Plan is the Australian Government’s commitment to a country free of gender-based violence – where all people live free from fear and violence and are safe at home, at work, at school, in the community and online. This is a human right for all people and the Australian Government has committed to ending violence against women and children in Australia within one generation.

## National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing Between the Family Law and Family Violence and Child Protection Systems

This Framework, endorsed in November 2021, provides a high-level commitment to nationally consistent sharing of family violence and child safety information between the federal family law courts and state and territory courts, child protection, police and firearms agencies. The Framework will complement and build on existing information sharing through co-locating child protection and policing officials in family law registries across Australia.

## National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030

This Strategy aims to ensure children and young people in Australia are protected and safe from sexual abuse in all settings and that victims and survivors of child sexual abuse are supported and empowered. The National Strategy will reduce the risk, extent and impact of child sexual abuse and related harms in Australia and online.



# Appendix B: Our Story of Change

## Our starting point...

**All children and young people have a right to grow up safe, connected and supported to reach their full potential. This right is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), as well as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Yet the number of children and young people involved in child protection systems in Australia is increasing (AIHW 2021). More needs to be done to prevent and address child abuse and neglect.**

Child safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility (CRC 1989). The needs of children and young people are met by the many different people and services they interact with (e.g. schools, healthcare practitioners, family services). However, families, including parents and carers, sit at the heart of their world. Families are fundamental to keeping their children safe and well, and they draw on their strengths and knowledge to do so.

It is also important to recognise children's and young people's expertise about their own needs and desires. This is also reflected in the UNCRC, in particular Article 12 which outlines the right of children and young people to be involved in decisions affecting them, in line with their age and maturity (CRC 1989).

For children and young people to be safe and thrive, their needs must be met across multiple areas such as health, safety, culture, identity and education (AHRC 2021). The needs of each child, young person and their families can differ and may vary over time.

These areas of need align with the social determinants of health and/or wellbeing, meaning the conditions in which people live and grow that impact their sense of wellbeing (WHO n.d.). These areas are also interlinked: fulfilment (or lack of fulfilment) of one affects the other. The ability of families to meet their children's needs and ensure their safety can be positively or negatively affected by the social determinants of child safety and wellbeing.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> While the term 'social determinants of child and safety wellbeing' is used here, it is recognised that other terms may be used when referring to the things that cause and prevent child abuse and neglect (e.g. drivers; risk and protective factors).

The social determinants can act as protective factors. For example, culture and social support play a key role in enabling families to keep their children safe and well (RCDPNT 2017a; Ridings et al. 2017). Access to things like healthcare and stable housing are also important for meeting children's and young people's needs (Fowler and Schoney 2017; Miller et al. 2020). This is where families may draw on assistance from communities, services and governments to help them get what they need to care for their children.

However, some social determinants are linked to risk factors that can undermine a family's wellbeing and increase the risk of child abuse and neglect. These risk factors include poverty, trauma, family violence, homelessness and lack of access to quality services (Chamberlain et al. 2019; AHRC 2020; AHRC 2021).

Often these risk factors are driven by issues within systems, services and broader society that create barriers to opportunities and positive outcomes. An example is where discrimination (e.g. systemic racism<sup>4</sup>) and poor service design (e.g. hard to navigate; lack of disability awareness) prevent children, young people and families receiving quality support (AHRC 2021). Another example is lack of transport and services, which can create barriers for families to access things like healthcare and participate fully within their community (AHRC 2021; RCDPNT 2017b). These systemic issues suggest that current approaches to services and systems need to be improved.

Children, young people, parents and carers have, through various forums, identified key changes needed to support their safety and wellbeing. These include a need to increase focus on keeping families safe together by improving the availability of and access to early supports (AHRC 2020). Many have raised concerns that current services and systems focus too heavily on intervention after families experience a crisis, when earlier support could have prevented it from occurring (AHRC 2021). This links to perceptions of child protection systems being punitive, leading to families fearing their children will be removed if they reach out for help (AHRC 2021; RCVANEPD 2022).

Children, young people, parents and carers have also identified the need to address disjointed service delivery, better tailor services to meet their needs and improve supports for children and young people in and leaving out-of-home care (AHRC 2021; McDowall 2020). There have also been calls to improve disability awareness and awareness of cultural diversity across the child and family workforce and the services they deliver (RCVANEPD 2022; AHRC 2021). Services and systems must be transformed to address these issues.

In addition to systemic issues, some social determinants may be experienced across multiple generations (i.e. intergenerational). Trauma is a common example (see Box 1). Another example is poverty when it acts as a barrier to younger generations experiencing opportunities and outcomes that foster financial security (Vera-Toscano and Wilkins 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Note that 'systemic racism' is sometimes referred to as 'institutional racism'.

## **Box 1: What is intergenerational trauma?**

Trauma refers to experiences of, and reactions to, a terrible event or series of events. Trauma can arise from direct and indirect experiences and can affect both individual people and whole communities. Examples of traumatic events include violence or threats of violence, abuse, neglect, forced family separation and adverse childhood experiences. It is estimated that a significant proportion of the Australian population has or will experience trauma at some point in their lives (AIHW 2022).

How a person responds to trauma can be dependent on their age and circumstance. It can affect the way people think and act, and may sometimes overwhelm their ability to cope and engage. People experiencing trauma can heal from its impacts, but healing takes time and is often a lifelong process. The ways in which people may heal include developing coping mechanisms and drawing on their support systems.

Trauma can continue to affect a person for many decades. When it is unknowingly passed down from a person who has experienced it to their descendants, it is referred to as intergenerational trauma. Intergenerational trauma may be transmitted through a trauma survivor's behaviours, their interpretations of the world, and/or the trauma's physiological and psychological impacts on them.

The impacts of trauma can vary, but can include increased substance use/addiction, relationship breakdown, poor mental health, and physical or emotional violence (Kezelman et al. 2021; Wall et al. 2016).

In this way, trauma may lead to intergenerational cycles of child abuse and neglect (Chamberlain et al. 2019). Most children and young people who experience child abuse and/or neglect do not go on to perpetrate it in adulthood. However, some may become involved in child protection systems as a parent due to the impacts of trauma (Butler and Cockburn 2017). This can be compounded by other impacts of child abuse, neglect and/or involvement with child protection systems, including economic disadvantage and barriers to support created by experiences of stigma (McDowall 2020).

In Australia, it is also important to recognise that inappropriate and inadequate responses from child protection systems can and have caused trauma for children, young people and families. This is particularly important when considering the relationship between child protection systems and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (see the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theory of Change for more details).

Some communities may have unique experiences of certain social determinants of child safety and wellbeing. For example, discrimination (i.e. ableism) and stigma can lead to children and young people with disability having increased exposure to abuse and neglect (RCVANEPD 2022), while parents/carers with disability may face prejudiced assumptions about their parenting abilities (Bromfield and Lamont 2009). New migrants and refugees may face a loss of social supports, compounded by experiences of racism and/or lack of awareness of available services and supports (Kaur 2012). Another example is racism experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which links to the long term impacts of colonisation (Newton 2017; Family is Culture 2019).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theory of Change (see the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan) explains the historical and social context of child safety matters unique to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and what this means for the change they wish to see under Safe and Supported.

Involvement with child protection systems is increasing in Australia (AIHW 2021), and child abuse and neglect has both short- and long-term impacts on children and young people (Hunter 2014a; Hunter 2014b). Yet, we also know what children, young people and their families say works to address this – that by listening to them, addressing the social determinants of child safety and wellbeing and ensuring they can access quality supports when needed, families are empowered to keep their children safe and help them thrive (AHRC 2021).

## The change we want to see...

*Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031* (Safe and Supported) is focused on addressing child abuse and neglect, and its intergenerational impacts. Child safety is a specific issue in the broader space of child wellbeing, though it intersects with many areas of wellbeing as mentioned above.

### Box 2: Who does 'we' refer to in the Safe and Supported Theory of Change?

The Australian Government, state and territory governments, communities and non-government sector will all play a key role in achieving change under Safe and Supported. Genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership is also important to successfully achieve change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theory of Change).

## Priority areas of work for systems reform...

Ultimately, we want to see children and young people reach their full potential by growing up safe and supported, free from harm and neglect. We want to reduce the occurrence of child abuse and neglect and its intergenerational impacts across Australia.

These are ambitious but necessary goals. However, we can break them down into smaller changes (or steps) we need to achieve along the way to reach our goals. These smaller changes can be called 'outcomes'.

The outcomes are grouped by the changes Safe and Supported can make directly and the changes it can make by collaborating with other areas. The 10-Year Outcomes that Safe and Supported aims to achieve are aligned with the 4 focus areas, though it is recognised some outcomes may overlap.

The Safe and Supported Outcomes Framework on page 20 provides a comprehensive outline of the outcomes we want to see for children, young people and families overall. A more in-depth explanation of each area of change is below.

These outcomes were informed by the experience and knowledge of children, young people, families, advocates and service providers in the child and family sector during the development of Safe and Supported.

## Focus Area 1: A national approach to early intervention and targeted support for children and families experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage.

As previously mentioned, when the holistic needs of children, young people and families are not met, they can face a range of challenges that put them at risk of experiencing child abuse and neglect. However, when they are provided the opportunity and support to address these challenges and meet their needs, families are empowered to keep their children safe and well.

A stronger focus on providing early and targeted supports for children, young people and families is needed to enable this empowerment. In this way, the protective and risk factors that underpin child abuse and neglect can be addressed. This in turn can prevent issues from escalating to involvement with child protection systems. Ultimately, this enables families to stay safe together.

Services and systems must also address the unique needs of different cohorts, including the 4 priority groups under Safe and Supported (see Box 3), and provide support for those affected by child abuse and neglect to heal from its impacts.

Achieving our goal will require transforming systems to reduce barriers that prevent access to services and ensuring service quality (for example, services are culturally safe, disability aware, coordinated, and effectively meet the needs of those who use them). This will also require multidisciplinary efforts across a range of areas to ensure children, young people and families are provided the wrap-around services they need.

### Box 3: The priority groups under Safe and Supported

Safe and Supported has a particular focus on 4 priority groups where evidence indicates collective effort is needed to reduce their overrepresentation in child protection systems:

- Children and families with multiple and complex needs
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people experiencing disadvantage or who are vulnerable
- Children and young people and/or parents/carers with disability, experiencing disadvantage or who are vulnerable
- Children and young people who have experienced abuse and/or neglect, including children in out-of-home care or leaving care.

It is recognised that these groups are not mutually exclusive. See Safe and Supported for more details on the 4 priority groups.

### 10-Year Outcomes under Safe and Supported

- **S1(a) – Child and Family Level:** Children and young people grow up in safe and nurturing homes, supported by strong families and communities.
- **S1(b) – System Level:** Systems and services prioritise resourcing, strengthening and supporting families to stay safe together.

### Focus Area 2: Addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems.

All Australian governments have committed to working together, in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, to reduce the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in child protection systems under Target 12 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement). This includes a commitment to progressive systems transformation that has Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination at its centre.

This goal is the primary objective of Focus Area 2. The unique story of change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples under Safe and Supported, which includes explaining how we aim to achieve this goal, can be found in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theory of Change. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outcomes Framework outlines the key changes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations wish to see Safe and Supported achieve.

It is important to note that the achievement of Focus Area 2 will require efforts across the other 3 focus areas.



### Focus Area 3: Improving information sharing, data development and analysis.

Evidence, including data, is important. It informs how policy and services are designed and implemented, and allows us to measure their progress and effectiveness. It enables good policy, practice and service delivery, as well as accountability for outcomes. This in turn leads to better outcomes for children, young people and their families.

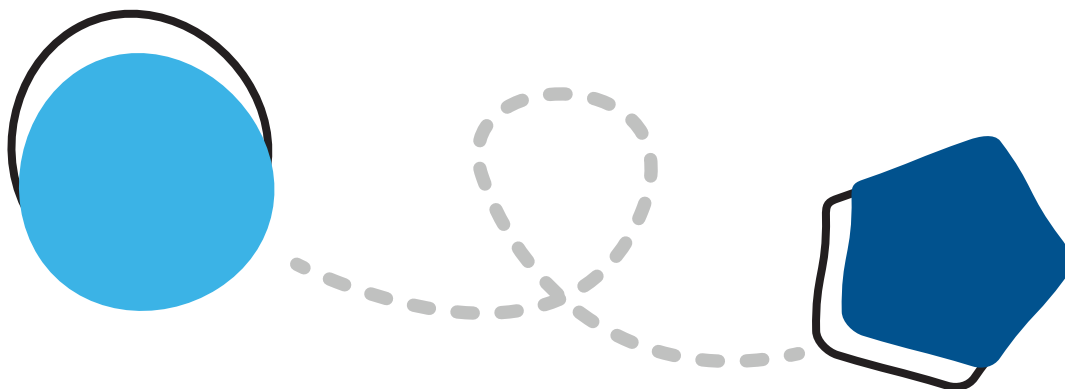
Over the years, data collection in the space of child safety has improved. However, more needs to be done to broaden our understanding of the experiences of children, young people and families, including those across the 4 priority groups. We also know more needs to be done to improve information sharing practices.

Achieving this will require continued efforts to strengthen the evidence base and datasets. It will also require better sharing of information across governments, sectors and communities, in line with ethical obligations.

In addition, policy, services and systems need to better listen and respond to the living experience and expertise of children, young people, parents and carers. While this knowledge is a key form of evidence, many feel their voices have been ignored (AHRC 2021). Safe and Supported recognises the value of these voices, as well as the right of children, young people and families to be involved in decisions affecting them.<sup>5</sup> The voice and living experience of children, young people, parents and carers will be embedded within the foundations of Safe and Supported, including its policies, programs and evaluations.

### 10-Year Outcomes under Safe and Supported

- **S3(a) – Child and Family Level:** Children, young people and families, and their experiences, are accurately represented in the evidence about them.
- **S3(b) – System Level:** Child and family support policies and services are consistently based on reliable evidence, including living experience.



<sup>5</sup> This right is notably outlined in Article 12 of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 4 and 7 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability, and Articles 3, 4, 18 and 19 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.



## Focus Area 4: Strengthening the child and family sector and workforce capability:

The child and family sector and its workforce play a crucial role in supporting children, young people and their families experiencing disadvantage and/or vulnerability. This includes providing early and targeted supports aimed at keeping families safe together, as well as supports for those who experience child abuse and/or neglect. As such, it is important to ensure the sector and its workforce have the necessary skills and capacity to meet the needs of those they work with.

Achieving this will require efforts to build a sustainable workforce through attracting and retaining skilled workers, and improving supports for them. It will also require building on the existing skills and knowledge of the workforce. This includes improving awareness about and ability to respond to the unique needs of different cohorts, including the priority groups.

Safe and Supported will also focus on building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector, in line with Priority Reform 2 of the National Agreement. This is explained further in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theory of Change.

### 10-Year Outcomes under Safe and Supported

- **S4(a) – Child and Family Level:** Children, young people and families have their needs met by an effective and skilled workforce.
- **S4(b) – System Level:** The child and family support system has the capacity to respond effectively and adapt to meet future demand.

See Safe and Supported for more information on each focus area.

## All parts of policy, services and systems need to work together...

To ensure children and young people can thrive and stay safe in their own families, their needs and those of their families must be addressed holistically. As such, Safe and Supported needs to connect with other policy and service areas, like housing, health and education, that have traditionally sat outside the space of child protection but contribute to the social determinants of child safety and wellbeing.

Collaborating closely across these different areas is essential for an effective, holistic response to child abuse and neglect and its intergenerational impacts. These efforts will form a key foundation for change across the 4 focus areas outlined above.

Action under Safe and Supported will foster collaboration between those areas that impact the social determinants of child safety and wellbeing. It will also create change in these areas and improve everyone's understanding of the role they play in preventing child abuse and neglect.

### 10-Year Outcomes under Safe and Supported

**S5(a) – Children, young people, families and communities have their holistic needs fulfilled.** As such, fewer families experience social, emotional and economic risk factors for child abuse and neglect.

## Box 4: Enablers of change

There are a number of foundational things that will enable our efforts and actions to successfully achieve our desired outcomes, including:

- Recognising the expertise and authority of children and young people on their needs and lives, with respect to their age and maturity.
- Recognising the expertise and authority of parents/carers and communities on the needs of their children.
- Valuing the living experienced and expertise of children, young people and families.
- Understanding the needs of children, young people and families in their own words.
- Collaboration between communities, services, governments and other organisations.

- Collaboration across different sectors that impact the social determinants of child safety and wellbeing.
- Strong and capable workforce.
- Sufficient data and research in areas of interest, including the priority groups.
- Sustained commitment to improving child safety.

It is recognised that we need to improve some enablers to ensure they are in place for us to make change. Efforts under Safe and Supported will address this, with particular attention on data/evidence (Focus Area 3) and the child and family sector workforce (Focus Area 4).

See the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theory of Change* for enablers that drive specific change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.

## What we will do to get there...

We will achieve our goals by working together through the Safe and Supported actions and activities to:

- address the social determinants of child safety and wellbeing
- improve the quality of child and family services and supports (including accessibility and effectiveness) for children, young people and families
- improve the skill, capacity and supports of the child and family workforce

- and improve the evidence base and data sharing to inform this work.

This will involve action across various areas to address the factors that influence children's and young people's safety and wellbeing. It will also involve making transformative change to services and systems.

The living experiences and knowledge of children, young people and families will guide our actions and approach.

This Action Plan includes the actions we will undertake over the next 4 years (2023–2026) to achieve our goals for all priority groups.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan includes specific actions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families, recognising that they have unique strengths and needs, but will link closely to the work being done under this Action Plan.

Safe and Supported will prioritise actions to improve outcomes for 4 identified priority groups, where evidence shows that existing supports must be transformed to reduce their over-representation in child protection systems.

In addition, actions will prioritise the 4 focus areas mentioned above. These are areas where there is the biggest need for collective effort to have the greatest impact.

Targeting our approach in this way will complement other Australian Government and state and territory government initiatives. This includes those that provide universal supports for Australians (e.g. Medicare; Income Support measures) and focused responses to related issues (e.g. the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032; National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030; the National Agreement; *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031*; and National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy).

We can leverage this broader work to assist with efforts under Safe and Supported to influence related areas. This includes strengthening the links between child and family services and services for drugs and alcohol, domestic and family violence, health (including mental health), disability, education, adult and youth justice, housing and employment.

Together — and guided by the voices of children, young people, families and their communities — the collective impact of this suite of work will improve the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in Australia.

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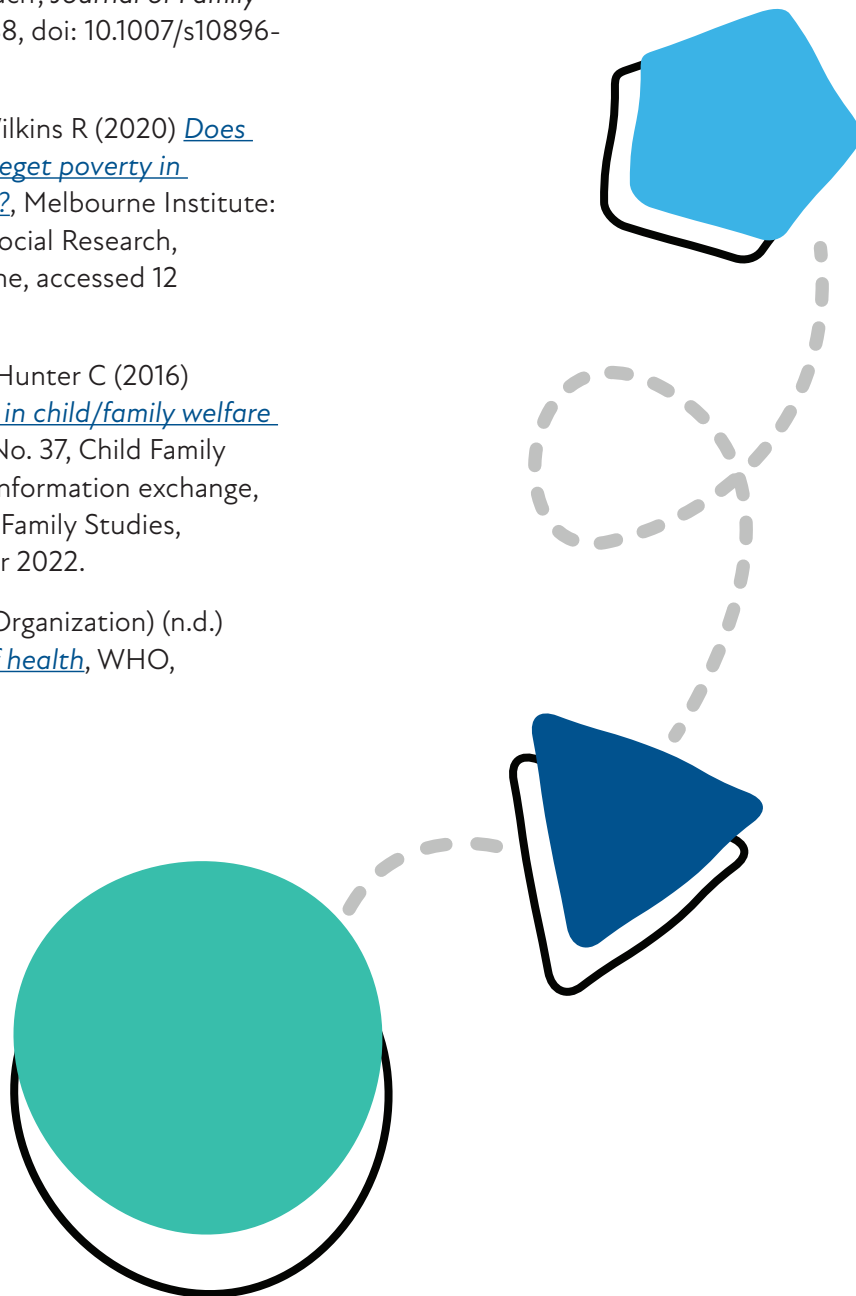
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# Appendix C: Consultation Findings

## Summary of consultations to inform the First Action Plan

### Online public consultation

A summary of the DSS Engage consultation report can be found at [www.engage.dss.gov.au](http://www.engage.dss.gov.au).

From June 2021 to August 2021, the Australian Government undertook an online public consultation process through DSS Engage to support the implementation of Safe and Supported. Around 650 individual themes were identified through this process, with a number of common key themes identified by a significant number of respondents.

Respondents to this public consultation highlighted workforce competencies as the main area of concern, which had double the support of the next highest categories, service collaboration and coordination, and out-of-home care leavers and transitioning. The themes most commonly raised recognise that services are not seen to be centred around service users (i.e. children and families), in terms of their design appropriateness for the communities they serve, the logistics of how they are delivered and the worker skillsets required. These key themes have informed also informed this Action Plan by identifying priority actions for immediate implementation.

## SNAICC consultation report

The SNAICC Consultation Report can be found at [www.snaicc.org.au/protecting-australias-children/](http://www.snaicc.org.au/protecting-australias-children/).

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children conducted a series of consultations to guide the co-design of Safe and Supported and the Action Plans. These consultations were held with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, carers, ACCOs, non-Indigenous organisations and government representatives.

Findings from these consultations included continued frustration from First Nations peoples at the perceived lack of political will to implement actions and to rectify child protection over-representation, lack of government accountability and transparency, and repeated concerns for child protection systems not reflecting First Nations' cultural values.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (2021) *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031 Successor Plan Consultation Report*.

## National Children's Commissioner consultation report

The *Keeping Kids Safe and Well – Your Voices* Report can be found at [www.humanrights.gov.au/safeandwell](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/safeandwell).

Throughout 2021, the National Children's Commissioner, Ms Anne Hollonds, undertook a consultation process to seek the views of children, young people and families across Australia on how to keep children and young people safe and well in their homes and communities. Children, young people and families across Australia were asked about how to keep them safe and well in their homes and communities. The final report (*Keeping Kids Safe and Well – Your Voices*) found that the 3 most important services that kids think could help children and young people and families to be safe were help with housing, mental health services, and help with basic needs.

## Families Australia Beyond 2020 consultation report

The *Beyond 2020* Report can be found at <https://familiesaustralia.org.au/about/beyond-2020/>.

In 2019 and early 2020, Families Australia convened nationwide workshops and consultations on the future of national child and family wellbeing policy. Nearly 800 participants from government, non-government, research and community backgrounds as well as young people, carers and families were involved.





# Appendix D: Glossary of Key Terms

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations:**

Community-controlled organisations deliver services that strengthen and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people and are:

1. Incorporated under relevant legislation and not-for-profit
2. Controlled and operated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
3. Connected to the community, or communities, in which they deliver services
4. Governed by a majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governing body.<sup>7</sup>

**Active efforts:** Active efforts are purposeful, thorough and timely, supported by legislation and/or policy and enable the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Active efforts encompass a variety of strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's connection to family, culture, community and country is maintained.<sup>8</sup>

**At risk:** Refers to children, young people and families whose circumstances are causing concern for the safety and/or welfare of the child or young person.

**Child abuse and neglect:** The World Health Organization defines child abuse and neglect as 'all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power'.<sup>9</sup>

**Child protection:** Services and systems provided by state and territory departments to assist vulnerable children who are suspected of being abused, neglected or harmed, or whose parents are unable to provide adequate care and protection.

**Children:** Individuals under the age of 18, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>10</sup>

**Children and families who are experiencing disadvantage and/or are vulnerable:** In the context of Safe and Supported, this refers to a child/family who experience(s) a condition or circumstance that places them at a higher risk of child abuse or neglect when compared to the general population. These conditions/circumstances are those that evidence indicates are related to the risk factors associated with child abuse and neglect.

**Collective effort:** Refers to where the Australian Government and state and territory governments can make an impact through a national approach. This is in contrast to focusing on individual Australian Government and state or territory government reforms.

<sup>7</sup> Closing the Gap (n.d.) *Building the Community-Controlled Sector*.

<sup>8</sup> SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (2019) *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: A Guide to support Implementation*.

<sup>9</sup> World Health Organization (WHO) (2006) *Preventing Child Maltreatment: A Guide to Taking Action and Generating Evidence*.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.



**Community-led:** A community-led approach means that a policy or program is supported, developed, delivered and evaluated by, or in consultation with, the community or group that will be impacted by the policy or program.

**Culturally safe:** The term ‘cultural safety’ can be defined as referring to an environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It includes shared respect, shared meaning and shared knowledge and experience of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening. Culturally safe service provision is important across all areas of operation, including governance, workforce and relationships with communities. In the context of child safety, cultural safety includes the child being provided with a safe, nurturing and positive environment in which they are comfortable with being themselves and expressing their culture, spiritual and belief systems and are supported to do so by parents, carers or front-line staff.<sup>11</sup>

**Disability:** People with disability include, but are not restricted to, those who have long-term physical, mental, cognitive, intellectual or sensory impairments. The social model of disability recognises attitudes, practice and structures can be disabling and act as barriers preventing people from fulfilling their potential and exercising their rights as equal members of the community.<sup>12</sup>

**Early intervention:** Safe and Supported uses the terms ‘early intervention’ and ‘early support’ interchangeably. Early intervention is often used when talking about public health models, which aim to ‘prevent problems occurring in the first place by targeting policies and interventions at the known risk factors for the problem, quickly identifying and responding if they do occur and minimising the long-term effects of the problem.’<sup>13</sup> In child protection, the public health model ranges from primary intervention services that target everyone, to secondary or early intervention services that target families in need, through to tertiary intervention services that target families where abuse and neglect has already occurred.<sup>14</sup>

**Investigation:** The process by which departments gather more information about a child involved in a notification. Staff assess the harm or degree of harm to the child and their protective needs. Investigations may include sighting or interviewing the child where practical.<sup>15</sup>

11 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children and Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (2021), *Keeping Our Kids Safe: Cultural Safety and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*. Canberra: Australian Government.

12 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2021) *Child protection Australia 2019-20*.

13 Australian Institute of Family Studies (2014) *Defining the Public Health Model for the Child Welfare Services Context*.

14 AIFS (2014) *Defining the Public Health Model for the Child Welfare Services Context*.

15 AIHW (2021) *Child Protection Australia 2019-20*.

**Multiple and complex needs:** Families with multiple and complex needs can have differing needs across different family members, such as disability, alcohol and other drug use and mental health concerns. Other risk factors may be present as well, such as domestic and family violence, or a lack of access to suitable housing and employment.

**Notification:** A notification is a report made to a child protection department alleging child abuse/ neglect, child maltreatment or harm to a child. These reports can be made by individuals or organisations.<sup>16</sup>

**Out-of-home care:** Generally, out-of-home care is overnight care for children aged under 18 who are unable to live with their families due to child safety concerns. It is a medium or long-term arrangement when there is a high level of risk determined by child protection or when parents cannot care for their children for a time. This includes placements approved by the department responsible for child protection for which there is ongoing case management and financial payment (including where a financial payment has been offered but has been declined by the carer).<sup>17</sup>

**Parties:** Stakeholders involved in Safe and Supported and its implementation, as determined by its governance structure. This includes the Australian Government, state and territory governments, NGOs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives.

**Trauma-informed:** There is not yet a common definition of a ‘trauma-informed approach’ or ‘trauma-informed care’. Principles of trauma-informed approaches and care include:

- having a sound understanding of the prevalence and nature of trauma and its impacts on people’s development and functioning
- organisational and operational practices promoting the physical, psychological and emotional safety of people who have experienced trauma
- adopting service cultures and practices that empower people in their recovery, by emphasising autonomy, collaboration and strengths-based approaches
- recognising and being responsive to the lived, social and cultural contexts of people, which shape their needs as well as their recovery and healing pathways
- recognising the relational nature of both trauma and healing.

Principles such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ ownership, definition, design and evaluation of healing initiatives, and designing initiatives based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews rather than Western health understandings alone, are other important considerations. A trauma-informed approach does not necessarily require a service to provide therapeutic treatment addressing the symptoms of trauma.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> AIHW (2021) *Child Protection Australia 2019–20*.

<sup>17</sup> AIHW (2021) *Child Protection Australia 2019–20*.

<sup>18</sup> A Quadara & C Hunter (2016) *Principles of Trauma-Informed Approaches to Child Sexual Abuse: A Discussion Paper*, AIFS.

**Self-determination:** Self-determination is a collective right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to determine and control their own destiny. It is a right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to exercise autonomy in their own affairs and to maintain and strengthen distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions.<sup>19</sup>

**Shared decision-making:** Shared decision-making means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are equal partners with government. In line with Closing the Gap, shared decision-making allows for transparency, with both parties receiving the same amount of information and having adequate time to review and understand the implications of decisions. It allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have their voices heard, including Elders, young people, women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability.<sup>20</sup>

**Strengths-based:** A strengths-based approach recognises, fosters and builds on a person's skills, capacities and competencies. This approach recognises that each person already has skills and expertise in relation to their lives and their families. A strengths-based approach aims to enhance motivation, participation and realisation of identified goals and positive outcomes.<sup>21</sup>

**Substantiation:** A substantiation is the result of a finalised investigation which concludes that there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has been, is being or is likely to be abused, neglected or otherwise harmed. This may include cases where children have no suitable caregiver.<sup>22</sup>

**Services and systems:** Services are provided by governments or NGOs that aim to better the wellbeing of individuals. Systems are a combination of processes and structures and are made up of numerous components, including agencies and organisations, funding and accountability arrangements.<sup>23</sup> Under the National Framework, a systems approach is defined as one that aims to address child abuse and neglect holistically, bringing a greater focus to early supports and strengthening the role of everyone involved in protecting children. This includes governments, NGOs, the community, parents and carers.

**Young people:** Individuals aged between 15 and 24 years, in line with the United Nations' definition. The definition of young people may vary across policies and programs and between states and territories. It often includes individuals up to age 25.

19 United Nations (2007) *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Resolution / Adopted by the General Assembly.*

20 Joint Council on Closing the Gap (2020) *National Agreement on Closing the Gap.*

21 NSW Government (2021) *Prevention and Early Intervention Strategies.*

22 AIHW (2021) *Child Protection Australia 2019–20.*

23 Productivity Commission (2018) *Introducing Competition and Informed User Choice in Human Services.*

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