

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR
PROTECTING AUSTRALIA'S
CHILDREN 2009–2020

Protecting Children is Everyone's Business



2016–17
& 2017–18
**ANNUAL
REPORT**

with a focus on
key activities for
national priorities

ISBN: 9781925318906

ISSN: 22059032

DSS Product Number: DSS2392.07.19

Copyright notice – 2020



This document, *2016–17 and 2017–18 Annual Report of The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020*, is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode)

Licence URL: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

Please attribute: © Commonwealth of Australia ([Department of Social Services](#)) 2020

Notice:

1. If you create a derivative of this document, the Department of Social Services requests the following notice be placed on your derivative: Based on Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services) data.
2. Inquiries regarding this licence or any other use of this document are welcome. Please contact: Branch Manager, Communication Services Branch, Department of Social Services. Phone: 1300 653 227. Email: communications@dss.gov.au

Notice identifying other material or rights in this publication:

1. Australian Commonwealth Coat of Arms — not Licensed under Creative Commons, see <https://www.pmc.gov.au/government/commonwealth-coat-arms>
2. Certain images and photographs (as marked) — not Licensed under Creative Commons

Foreword

This is the seventh in a series of reports on the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020* (the National Framework), combining the two reporting years 2016–17 and 2017–18. In October 2018, the Children and Families Secretaries group (CAFS) agreed to continue to produce annual reports that span two years, until the framework concludes in 2020. This report outlines continued progress and commitment towards the National Framework's high-level outcome that Australia's children and young people are safe and well.

The initiatives in this report highlight the ongoing commitment of the Australian, state and territory governments and the non-government sector — through the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing (the National Coalition) — to continue to work together to protect and advance the wellbeing of Australia's children and young people.

The goal of all parties is that children grow up to become resilient, independent and productive members of society. The National Framework's key message — 'Protecting Children is Everyone's Business' — reflects the understanding that joined-up effort is the only way to address complex issues, ensure that children get the best start in life, and are given the opportunity to realise their full potential.

This report describes the contributions and achievements of all jurisdictions and the non-government sector in the final two years of the National Framework's Third Action Plan 2015–2018.

Contributions to this report have been provided by the Australian and state and territory governments and the National Coalition.

Contents

Foreword	iii
‘Protecting children is everyone’s business’	1
Governance	2
What is the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020?	3
The high-level outcome	3
The six supporting outcomes	3
National Framework action plans	3
Reporting achievement	5
Key activities in 2016–17 and 2017–18	6
Supporting Outcome 1: Do our children live in safe and supportive families and communities?	7
Key activities under National Priorities in 2016–17 and 2017–18	9
Supporting Outcome 2: Do children and families access adequate support, promoting safety and early intervention?	20
Key activities under National Priorities in 2016–17 and 2017–18	22
Supporting Outcome 3: Are the risk factors for child abuse and neglect being addressed?	44
Key activities under National Priorities in 2016–17 and 2017–18	46
Supporting Outcome 4: Are children who have been abused or neglected receiving the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing?	65
Key activities under National Priorities in 2016–17 and 2017–18	67
Supporting Outcome 5: Are our Indigenous children supported and safe in their families and communities?	90
Key activities under National Priorities in 2016–17 and 2017–18	92
Supporting Outcome 6: Is child sexual abuse and exploitation being prevented and are survivors receiving adequate support?	106
Key activities under National Priorities in 2016–17 and 2017–18	108
Abbreviations	119

‘Protecting children is everyone’s business’

The National Framework’s key message — ‘Protecting Children is Everyone’s Business’ — aspires to make child safety and wellbeing ‘everyone’s responsibility’ and change the way governments, non-government organisations (NGOs) and the broader community act to protect children. It reflects the understanding that building collaboration and capability within the child and family welfare sector, and across other service sectors and reform agendas, is the only way to address complex issues, ensure that children get the best start in life, and are given the opportunity they need to realise their full potential and grow up to become resilient, independent and productive members of society.

Since the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed the National Framework in 2009, all Australian governments and the non-government sector, through the National Coalition, have been working together to ensure Australia’s children and young people are safe and well.

The National Coalition, established in 2007, has played an important role in advocating for, negotiating, and helping to implement the National Framework. The National Coalition is made up of about 200 non-government community organisations that provide services to children, young people and families across Australia, as well as many key advocates and researchers in the fields of child protection and children’s wellbeing.

Governance

Shared responsibility across the Australian, state and territory governments and the non-government and research sectors underpins the National Framework.

Commonwealth, state and territory ministers for portfolios such as family, community, disability, children and young people, child protection and social welfare are responsible for agreeing to the national strategies and actions and overseeing the progress and overall direction of the National Framework.

The Children and Families Secretaries (CAFS) group consists of senior officials from relevant government departments and supports Ministers to implement the Third Action Plan. It ensures whole-of-government involvement with the National Framework by engaging and partnering with departmental officers within jurisdictions and at a national level. CAFS is responsible for the policy directions of the Third Action Plan.

The National Forum for Protecting Australia's Children (the National Forum) comprises representatives from the Australian Government, state and territory governments, key non-government organisations and the National Children's Commissioner. Non-government organisations and researchers are represented by the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing. The National Forum provides advice and consultation to support actions under the National Framework where required.

The Third Action Plan has additional governance arrangements — strategy working groups for each of the three strategies, a Research Advisory Committee and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group. The working groups provide oversight and drive implementation and include representatives from the Australian Government, state and territory governments and key non-government organisations, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives.

What is the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020?

The high-level outcome

The National Framework is a long-term, ambitious approach to promote and enhance the safety and wellbeing of Australia's children and young people. Its high-level outcome and six supporting outcomes span domains associated with child protection and child wellbeing. Activities to achieve the outcomes are implemented through a series of action plans.

The high-level outcome for the National Framework is that Australia's children and young people are safe and well.

The six supporting outcomes

The National Framework sets out six supporting outcomes, and associated national priorities, to help focus effort and actions to reach the high-level outcome that Australia's children and young people are safe and well. They are:

1. Children live in safe and supportive families and communities.
2. Children and families access adequate support to promote safety and intervene early.
3. Risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed.
4. Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing.

5. Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities.
6. Child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented and survivors receive adequate support.

National Framework action plans

The National Framework is planned and coordinated through a series of action plans.

The *First Action Plan 2009–2012* (First Action Plan) outlined a series of national priorities and major reforms focused on jurisdictional inconsistencies in the statutory child protection system, as well as programs and services targeting at-risk families and children.

The *Second Action Plan 2012–2015* (Second Action Plan) built on the foundation of the First Action Plan, embedding the success of the ongoing commitment to ensure Australia's children are safe and well. The critical focus of the Second Action Plan was 'working together' across government and non-government sectors to improve the safety and wellbeing of children through strengthening families, early intervention, prevention and collaboration through joining up service delivery with mental health, domestic and family violence, drug and alcohol, education, health and other services.

The *Third Action Plan 2015–2018 — Driving Change: Intervening Early* (Third Action Plan), launched in December 2015, sets out an early investment approach, prioritising efforts on early intervention and prevention and highlighting action — under three overarching strategies — in areas critical for children and young people’s safety and wellbeing.

The Third Action Plan set out three nationally significant overarching strategies and two cross-cutting areas of focus, building on the findings from the last two action plans. The three strategies of the Third Action Plan are:

1. Early intervention with a focus on the early years, particularly the first 1,000 days for a child.
2. Helping young people in out-of-home care to thrive into adulthood.
3. Organisations responding better to children and young people to keep them safe.

Significant gains were made through the first three Action Plans, including:

- development of Australia’s first *National Standards for out-of-home care* (the National Standards)
- development of a consistent approach to Working with Children Checks across all states and territories
- establishment of the first National Children’s Commissioner
- development of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

- delivery of the National Community Awareness Raising Strategy
- delivery of the Towards Independent Adulthood (TIA) trial
- delivery of reports and projects under the Inter-jurisdictional Child Protection Information Sharing Project
- introduction of reforms to the Transition to Independent Living Allowance.

The Fourth Action Plan (2018–2020) will be the final Action Plan of the National Framework. It will continue to build on priorities from the Third Action Plan, such as improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are at risk of entering, or are in contact with, child protection systems, and improving outcomes for children in out-of-home care. This Action Plan will be reported on in the 2018–19 and 2019–20 Annual Report of The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020.

Reporting achievement

This document provides an overview of the key activities undertaken in 2016–17 and 2017–18 across all jurisdictions to achieve the National Framework's outcomes.

Progress towards the National Framework's high-level outcome and six supporting outcomes is measured through a suite of performance indicators. National Framework performance indicator data for 2016–17 and 2017–18 is available in the National Framework's web products, found on the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's (AIHW) website at www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/nfpac/contents/summary

For previous annual reports on the National Framework, go to www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/publications-articles

Reporting under the National Framework is complemented by a range of other publications that provide information on the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, such as the AIHW's report *Child protection Australia*, the Productivity Commission's report on *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* and the National Children's Commissioner's *Children's Rights Report*.

An independent evaluation of the National Framework, *Measuring Progress Under the National Framework: An evaluation of progress under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*, was conducted in 2014–15. The report of the evaluation was published on the [DSS website](#)

Key activities in 2016–17 and 2017–18

This section provides examples of key initiatives undertaken across jurisdictions during 2016–17 and 2017–18 to help focus efforts against the National Framework’s national priorities.

Table 1 shows the identified national priorities mapped against the National Framework’s supporting outcomes and the performance indicator domains.

Table 1: Supporting outcomes, performance indicator domains and national priorities

Supporting outcome	National priorities	Performance indicator domains ¹
1. Children live in safe and supportive families and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocating nationally for children and young people Early childhood Education Community and business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family functioning Perceived safety
2. Children and families access adequate support to promote safety and intervene early	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing information Seeing early warning signs and taking early action Joining up service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family support service use Early childhood education Antenatal care
3. Risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building workforce capacity and expertise Domestic and family violence Health and mental health Disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parental substance use Parental mental health Homelessness Domestic violence
4. Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing the evidence base Filling the research gaps National Standards for out-of-home care Transitioning to independence Improving support for carers Sector development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child protection re-substantiations Placement stability Carer retention Rebuilding resilience of abuse survivors Literacy and numeracy Leaving care plans Cross-sector clients
5. Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closing the Gap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placement of Indigenous children Cultural support plans
6. Child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented and survivors receive adequate support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with children checks Responding to sexual abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual abuse substantiations Child sexual assault

¹ AIHW Performance Indicators can be found at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/nfpac/contents/summary>

SUPPORTING OUTCOME 1:

**Do our children live in safe
and supportive families
and communities?**

What is being done to ensure our children live in safe and supportive families and communities?

The National Framework recognises that Australian children and young people have the right to live in safe and supportive families and communities. To help achieve this outcome, the National Framework has identified strategies to improve family functioning and increase the number of children who feel safe and supported in their communities. These strategies focus on strengthening the capacity of families to support children; educating and engaging community about child abuse and neglect; and implementing effective mechanisms to involve children and young people in decisions affecting their lives.

To help progress against the performance indicators and towards the high-level outcome, the Second Action Plan outlined four National Priorities against Supporting Outcome 1:

- **Advocating nationally for children and young people** — focusing on initiatives to improve awareness of children’s rights amongst the broader community
- **Early childhood** — exploring opportunities to provide quality early childhood experiences for vulnerable and at-risk children
- **Education** — focusing on improving educational outcomes for children and young people in care
- **Community and business** — encouraging greater community and business engagement in the protection and wellbeing of children.

Key activities under National Priorities in 2016–17 and 2017–18

Advocating nationally for children and young people

National Child Protection Week:

The Australian Government continued to provide annual funding for the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) to coordinate National Child Protection Week, which aims to engage and educate all Australians to understand that they have a part to play in keeping our children and young people safe. National Child Protection Week provides a platform to enhance the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by informing, empowering and resourcing organisations and communities to play their part in creating safe and nurturing environments for children. A key part of National Child Protection Week is NAPCAN's Play Your Part Awards for inspiring prevention projects.

Building Capacity in Australian Parents trial (branded 'Parent Link'):

The Australian Government has committed \$2.94 million to deliver the Building Capacity in Australian Parents (BCAP) trial, which is an initiative from Strategy 1 of the Third Action Plan of the *National Framework*. The BCAP trial tests approaches aimed at improving the wellbeing and future economic and social outcomes of children.

The BCAP trial pilots ways to build parenting skills and strengths-based parenting behaviours in the target group of expectant parents and carers whose children are aged up to two years (also known as the first 1,000 days of life).

It involves two approaches:

1. Local Area Coordinators in each trial region deliver a tailored training package to local organisations interacting with families in the early years, to improve their awareness of the importance of the first 1,000 days for child development, their capacity to engage with parents to promote strengths-based parenting approaches and their collaboration to support parents by building a learning network.
2. A voluntary text messaging service for parents and carers provides evidence-based parenting information to build parental efficacy, encourage help-seeking and highlight strengths-based parenting behaviours.

The pilot phase of the trial commenced in May 2018 and is being delivered in the Toowoomba, Ipswich and Rockhampton/Livingstone regions until 31 December 2019. An evaluation report with trial findings and recommendations is expected in 2020.

ACT Youth Roundtable: The ACT hosted a Youth Roundtable on 24 November 2018 to hear the views of young people who are currently in out-of-home care or who have been in out-of-home care. The purpose of the Roundtable was to involve young people in policy and program development related to out-of-home care service provision.

Following the Roundtable, a report was developed identifying the priorities young people wanted to have considered in policy and practice development, and next steps to act on what was discussed. The Community Services Directorate incorporated these priorities into projects, including the design of the new client management system, embedding trauma-informed therapeutic practice and refreshing the ACT's *Charter of Rights for Kids in Care*.

New South Wales – Improving child protection information sharing:

In February 2018, NSW agreed to amend the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2012* to extend Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*. NSW has the broadest provisions nationally with respect to the inter-jurisdictional exchange of information and is the first state to introduce changes that allow for 'prescribed bodies', and not just child protection agencies, to exchange child protection information directly with interstate equivalent state and territory child protection agencies. This change represents progress by NSW towards implementing information-sharing recommendations from

the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and improves child protection outcomes by reducing information fragmentation, delays and inefficiencies. These changes came into effect on 4 February 2019.

South Australia's Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies)

Act 2016: The *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016* came into operation on 10 November 2016. The Act provides for the establishment of the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Child Development Council (CDC). It also provides for the continuation of the Guardian for Children and Young People and the Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee, both of which were previously established under the *Children's Protection Act 1993*. The legislation is available at www.legislation.sa.gov.au

The South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People

is an independent position. The inaugural Commissioner was appointed on 18 April 2017 and has powers and functions to advocate at a systemic level to improve the wellbeing of children and young people in South Australia. The Commissioner has a crucial role to play in advocating for, and promoting the rights and interests of, all children and young people across South Australia and to ensure that South Australia, as a part of the Commonwealth, fulfils its international obligations.

From June to August 2017 the Commissioner engaged in a Listening Tour, which involved face-to-face conversations with 1,419 children across the state. The tour focused on gaining an understanding of matters that were important to children and young people, hearing how the lives of young South Australians could be improved and informing what the role of the Commissioner should focus on. The final report and findings were released in December 2017 and are available from the Commissioner's website at www.cyp.com.au

Late in 2018, the position of Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People was created to develop policies and practices that will improve the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people. The inaugural position establishes a highly visible and powerful champion for Aboriginal children, young people and communities, who will work closely with the Commissioner for Children and Young People, engaging with Aboriginal children, families, communities and service providers in South Australia to ensure better services for Aboriginal children.

Early childhood

Australian Government – Connected Beginnings:

The Australian Government's Connected Beginnings program, part of the Community Child Care Fund, provides funding for projects to support the integration of early childhood, maternal and child health, and family support services with schools in a number of selected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities experiencing disadvantage. The aim of the program is to ensure a successful transition to school by 0–5-year-old Indigenous children. Over time, it is anticipated that this will contribute to a reduction in the disparity in school readiness and educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children.

During 2016–17 and 2017–18, projects were progressively implemented in 12 communities: Doonside and Mt Druitt in New South Wales, Mildura in Victoria, Doomadgee in Queensland, Kalgoorlie in Western Australia, Ceduna and Port Augusta in South Australia, Alice Springs, Angurugu, Galiwin'ku and Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory, and Bridgewater/Gagebrook in Tasmania.

In parallel with the Department of Education and Training integrated service delivery program, the Department of Health is delivering a grants-based program focused on integrating health services in primarily the same communities. The two departments work closely to deliver these programs under the co-branding of 'Connected Beginnings'.

The two departments have jointly funded an evaluation of the program, which began in 2017. The Australian Healthcare Associates conducted the evaluation and a final report was provided in June 2019. Findings from the evaluation will be used to strengthen program arrangements from 2019–20.

ACT Children’s Services Program:

The Children’s Services Program (CSP) assists vulnerable children and families in the ACT community, where the primary caregiver is unavailable, to access short-term early childhood education and care. The CSP provides access to quality early education and care services for children who are most likely to benefit and may not otherwise have access to these services.

In 2017–18, the CSP provided support to 434 children and, of these, 386 were new referrals. Applications were approved for 76 children who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The program provided vulnerable children and families with greater access to early childhood education and care in their familiar environments, supporting them to engage in their local community.

The CSP funded Belconnen Community Service to deliver Family Foundations, a parenting enhancement program that aims to intervene early to improve life outcomes for children. The program supported parents and carers to develop their parenting knowledge, skills and capacity by implementing strengths-based parenting interventions. In 2017–18, the ACT Government supported Belconnen Community Service to redesign and strengthen the program’s guidelines and procedures.

ACT’s Child and Family Centres:

The ACT’s Child and Family Centres (CFCs) provide welcoming, community-based hubs for families with young children. They bring together an extensive range of government and non-government services and programs for families to receive support, encouragement and advice that is tailored to their individual strengths, needs and aspirations.

The CFCs are staffed by highly skilled, experienced and qualified practitioners with social work, psychology, specialised nursing or other health, welfare and education qualifications. The staff at the CFCs deliver a range of support programs and services to assist parents and young children from pre-birth to 8 years (selected services can be offered to children up to 12 years of age).

In 2017–18, the Community Services Directorate integrated the Growing Healthy Families (GHF) program into the CFCs’ service delivery. The GHF program is a community development program delivered in collaboration with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, offering a range of culturally-informed health, early childhood development and parenting services, including case management for families with high and complex needs.

In 2017–18, the NDIS EACH (the ACT’s early childhood early intervention provider) was co-located at CFCs to support families by providing accessible information about services and referral pathways.

Northern Territory — Starting Early for a Better Future: In 2018 the Northern Territory Government launched Starting Early for a Better Future, Early Childhood Development in the Northern Territory 2018–2028, a comprehensive 10-year early childhood strategy. This includes the establishment and expansion of more integrated service centres for children and families, which are equipped to understand and respond to local community needs and challenges. These are community-led, and deliver universal and targeted services, with an emphasis on supporting families experiencing vulnerability.

Programs provided under the strategy include Early Childhood Learning, Hearing Health, Healthy Under 5 Kids, and Child and Family Centres.

For more information, go to earlychildhood.nt.gov.au

Northern Territory — Safe, Thriving and Connected: Generational Change for Children and Families 2018–2023:

In March 2018, the Northern Territory Government released its response to the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. The Royal Commission was established in August 2016 by the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments and the final report, with 227 recommendations, was delivered on 17 November 2017.

The Northern Territory Government accepted the intent and direction of all recommendations. Recognising that a whole-of-government approach was required to deliver the intergenerational change required, the Northern Territory Government mapped the recommendations into 17 cross-government work programs, with a focus on:

- putting children and families at the centre
- improving care and protection
- improving youth justice
- strengthening governance and systems.

In April 2018 significant funding was committed over five years to implement the systemic reforms outlined in *Safe, Thriving and Connected* and to better support children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability.

For more information go to rmo.nt.gov.au

Northern Territory's Age-Appropriate Pedagogies:

In 2018, the Territory progressively implemented the Queensland Government's Age-Appropriate Pedagogies program in the Transition year at 39 schools across the Northern Territory. Transition is the first year of full-time schooling.

Age-Appropriate Pedagogies is a research-informed and research-led program that uses an engaged, learner-focused teaching approach to take account of children's interests, strengths and capabilities. Transition teachers are also supported to share their learning and expertise with each other to help improve their expertise and teacher impact. The program has seen increased student attendance, engagement and parent input at Bradshaw Primary School in Alice Springs. The school's research-based project was about improving the early literacy results of Aboriginal students, informed by testing results. The Transition students at Bradshaw Primary School achieved outstanding results, with students' literacy improving by a whole year's worth of learning in only 10 weeks. Student behaviour at the school also improved, and it helped close the gap in school attendance in 10 weeks, with Aboriginal student attendance rates increasing above those of non-Aboriginal students.

Healthy Tasmania Five Year Strategic Plan and Healthy Kids Toolkit:

Healthy Tasmania was released in 2016 to overcome significant health challenges faced by Tasmanians. Healthy Tasmania identifies 24 initiatives across four priority areas to improve the health of Tasmanians in relation to smoking, healthy eating and physical activity, community connections and screening and management of chronic conditions.

Key Healthy Tasmania achievements include introducing legislation tripling the cost of the Tobacco Sellers Licence Fee and providing additional funding to the Cancer Council Tasmania to deliver quit smoking campaigns; supporting a range of innovative, community-driven programs across the state to improve health, reduce health inequities and increase community connections through the Healthy Tasmania Community Innovations Program; and implementing anticipatory care trials to help Tasmanians with chronic diseases remain well in their home and community.

A key Healthy Tasmania initiative is the Healthy Kids Toolkit, launched in 2017. This web-based resource offers parenting information focused on feeding children and being active, and has links to key partner programs in Tasmania. The toolkit organises information into categories for pregnancy, baby, early childhood, school age and young people to ensure information is easy for parents to navigate, and includes helpful resources such as fact sheets on how to introduce solid foods and active play ideas for families.

Tasmania's B4 Early Years Coalition:

From the moment life begins, a child's experiences and environments will shape their lifelong learning, health and development. No single policy, government department, organisation, community, or family can ensure every child in Tasmania gets a great start. The early years need a collective-impact approach to make a difference. By working together, Tasmanians can create strong and positive communities that support families to provide experiences and environments that allow children to thrive.

B4 is an initiative of the Tasmanian Government that was launched in August 2016, with the name 'B4' representing the early years of a child's life from pregnancy to age four. As a collective-impact initiative, B4 connects, supports, engages with and encourages individuals and organisations to work together to ensure all children in Tasmania in the early years reach their potential.

Every person in Tasmania — families, grandparents, aunts, uncles, community members, educators, workplaces and service providers — has a part to play in helping Tasmanian children to reach their potential. When every child thrives, all Tasmanians benefit.

B4's membership consists of more than 200 leaders, members, supporters and friends, supported by a backbone organisation, the B4 Support Team. B4's members are passionate about and committed to supporting children from pregnancy to 4 years to get a great

start, by working together with their families and communities. The B4 vision, 'Every child in Tasmania is cared for and nurtured through their early years, no matter what', has three goals:

- Everybody values the early years.
- Everybody supports the early years.
- Everyone works together for the early years.

Western Australia — Best Beginnings

Plus: Best Beginnings was a two-year home visiting program for families of new infants, delivered in partnership with the Department of Health. During 2016, the then Department for Child Protection and Family Support reviewed and realigned the Best Beginnings service to focus on the most vulnerable families in order to prevent children from entering out-of-home care.

In January 2017, the updated service — Best Beginnings Plus — commenced operation. Best Beginnings Plus staff work with parents who may be experiencing alcohol and other drug issues, family and domestic violence and mental health issues.

Best Beginnings Plus runs over one year and works intensively with families to improve parent/child safety and wellbeing. It is available only for families who have an open case with the Department of Communities Child Protection and Family Support.

Priority is given to Aboriginal families, children in care who are parents or are expectant parents, and families involved in a child protection pre-birth case.

Western Australia — Early Years

Initiative: In March 2018 the Western Australian Government announced an unprecedented \$49.3 million, 10-year partnership to design and deliver better outcomes for Western Australian children and families.

The Western Australian Government joined with Minderoo Foundation and Telethon Kids Institute (through CoLab) to support four Western Australian partner communities in a place-based approach to transform health, learning and development outcomes for children from conception to age four.

The Early Years Initiative examines the five key domains of the Australian Early Development Census:

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills
- communication skills and general knowledge.

It considers a range of factors that influence these domains.

The Early Years Initiative will design, implement and evaluate evidence-informed models for capacity-building and service delivery, and involve community leaders, all levels of government, researchers, business and philanthropy.

As the Early Years Initiative is the first of its kind in Western Australia, a foundational concept is to consistently test, at frequent intervals, new ways of working and adapt the approach based on the demonstrated impact ('rapid cycle review').

Education

Queensland's Respectful Relationships Education in Primary School Pilot:

The Queensland Department of Education entered into a partnership with Our Watch in 2017 to develop and trial a transferable whole-school approach to respectful relationships education in 10 primary schools to June 2019.

Our Watch has provided a range of supports to participating schools, including professional development, guidance on implementing a whole-school approach and leading the evaluation in partnership with Deakin University. From July 2018, pilot activities will involve implementation of 10 hours of curriculum instruction for students in years 1 and 2 and evaluation.

The Queensland Government is committed to supporting programs like this in state schools in response to the Not Now, Not Ever taskforce report and its focus on the prevention of domestic and family violence. The evidence generated from this program will be used to inform national and international approaches to the primary prevention of domestic and family violence through school settings.

Tasmania's Child and Student

Wellbeing Strategy: The *2018–2021 Department of Education Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy: Safe, Well and Positive Learners* was developed to deliver on the department's wellbeing goal that all children and students are safe, feel supported and are able to flourish, so they can engage in learning.

The strategy's definition of 'wellbeing' aligns with the Tasmanian Government Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework to support a common narrative and holistic understanding of wellbeing across the domains of wellbeing outlined in the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth's (ARACY) 'The Nest' (see also the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework in 'Seeing early warning signs and taking early action' under Supporting Outcome 2).

The strategy supports the department's broader commitment to the wellbeing of Tasmania's children and families through whole-of-government initiatives such as *Safe Homes Safe Families: Tasmania's Family Violence Action Plan 2015–2020* and *Strong Families, Safe Kids*.

Community and business

National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing — Families Australia and Child Aware Approaches Conference:

Families Australia was integrally involved in the development of the National Framework. Child Aware Approaches (CAA) conferences and events are an activity of the National Framework Second Action Plan (2012–2015) and Third Action Plan (2015–2018). CAA conferences are the premier event to showcase the National Framework. Since their inception in 2013, the conferences have become the key platform for creating greater national awareness of 'child safety and wellbeing as everyone's shared responsibility'.

CAA2017 conference — Families Australia hosted the 5th Child Aware Approaches Conference (CAA2017) at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre on 15–16 May 2017.

CAA2017 aimed to advance the goals of the National Framework, the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022 as well as the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The 2017 key theme, 'Driving national action on child safety and wellbeing', set the scene for a stimulating and challenging two days.

The conference was structured around the three themes of the Third Action Plan:

- advancing children’s development and wellbeing in the first 1,000 days
- building child safe organisations and environments
- supporting young people in out-of-home care to flourish into adulthood.

A significant overarching focus of all CAA conferences has been attention on strengths and capabilities, including those that support and draw on the wisdom and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices and heritage to help address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in child protection systems. The importance of early intervention and prevention as key characteristics for effective policy and practice was also a focus.

The conference objectives were to:

- strengthen our knowledge and capacities to better support children, their families and local communities
- promote new and effective evidence and practice to enhance child wellbeing and safety
- activate thoughtful and innovative approaches to policy and practice
- inspire new ideas
- broaden and strengthen professional networks
- work collaboratively to improve child wellbeing outcomes.

CAA2017 brought together a broad range of practitioners, researchers and policy-makers from across the country, motivated by their

interest in developing deeper understandings of the approaches needed to make the safety and wellbeing of Australia’s children a shared community responsibility.

Highlights of CAA2017 were:

- the Families Australia 2017 Oration, delivered by Professor Ngiare Brown. Entitled ‘Children at Heart’, the oration addressed advancing the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, their families and communities. It contained a powerful and inspiring message based on the importance of love when caring for children. This message permeated the remainder of conference proceedings.
- four keynote presentations addressing each of the conference key themes, delivered by:
 - Professor Frank Oberklaid OAM, on ‘Advancing children’s development and wellbeing in the first 1,000 days’
 - Professor Keith Kaufman, on ‘Building child-safe organisations and environments’
 - Natalie Lewis and Shannieka Martino, on ‘Supporting young people in out-of-home care to flourish in adulthood’
 - Professor Brigid Daniel, entitled ‘Getting it Right for Every Child’, Scotland’s Framework for Children’s Services.
- 14 *XPRESS Podium* presentations — a novel style of presentation delivered in five minutes
- 33 paper presentations
- 16 interactive workshops
- 9 *Policy Think Space* sessions.

More information about CAA2017 and previous conferences can be found on the [Child Aware](#) website hosted by Families Australia.

Queensland Family and Child Commission Community Education initiatives:

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) has a legislative and strategic role to promote the responsibility of families and communities to care for children. In 2017–18, the QFCC provided a suite of community education campaigns addressing:

- help-seeking (seeking and accepting help). This focused on both the parents of children up to four years old as well as bystanders (Talking Families campaign)
- awareness of, and access to, family support services by sector professionals and the community — through the oneplace Community Service Directory, a website that provides a single point of access to 48,000 services across Queensland
- children's online safety (Out of the Dark campaign)
- preventable child deaths (Seconds Count campaign)
- professionals' awareness of the child protection and family support system reforms (Travelling the Reform Roadmap campaign).

The QFCC is committed to delivering targeted initiatives that build a contemporary awareness of positive parenting and bring about positive behavioural change. The QFCC's ongoing community education

and engagement campaigns contribute to the Queensland Government's commitment to give every child a great start.

South Australia's Child Development Council:

The Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016 creates a legislative framework for the rights, development and wellbeing of children and young people in South Australia. The new Child Development Council is one of four oversight and advocacy bodies established under the Act. The council formally commenced its work on 28 March 2018. Dr Anne Glover AO, Presiding Member, leads a membership whose national and international experience and expertise includes education, health, disability, epidemiology, youth justice, guardianship and bullying.

The council's key function is to develop and maintain a whole-of-state Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People (birth to 18 years), including a Charter for Children and Young People. The charter will represent a shared commitment to promote the development, wellbeing and rights of South Australia's young citizens and set out the conditions that would allow every child and young person to thrive.

In developing the framework, the council must engage broadly, including with children and young people, their parents, carers and families. The framework is in its development phase and it is envisaged that, following open consultation across the state and ministerial approval, it will be gazetted in 2019. For more information go to www.childrensa.sa.gov.au

SUPPORTING OUTCOME 2:

**Do children and families
access adequate support,
promoting safety and
early intervention?**

What is being done to ensure children and families access adequate support, promoting safety and early intervention?

The National Framework recognises the importance of children and families having access to adequate support to help promote safety and early intervention. To help achieve this outcome, the National Framework identified strategies that aim to improve antenatal care and early childhood education and increase the number of families accessing family support services.

To help progress against the performance indicators and towards our high-level outcome, the Second Action Plan outlined the following National Priorities against Supporting Outcome 2:

- **Sharing information** — exploring and improving information-sharing protocols across all levels of government
- **Seeing early warning signs and taking early action** — drawing upon substantial research that suggests that supporting individuals at key life-transition points can help to maximise their long-term social and economic outcomes
- **Joining up service delivery** — emphasising locally based responses by bringing together the efforts of government and community sector organisations to meet the needs of families who experience multiple or complex needs.

Key activities under National Priorities in 2016–17 and 2017–18

Sharing information

Business Research and Innovation

Initiative: During 2016–17 the Department of Social Services collaborated with the former New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services (now the New South Wales Department of Communities and Justice — DCJ²) to submit a challenge to the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science Business Research and Innovation Initiative (BRII).

The Department of Social Services was successful in its submission, resulting in the *Sharing information nationally to ensure child safety* challenge, which was announced by the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science on 17 August 2016. The challenge aims to develop an innovative technical solution that supports state and territory child protection agencies to share child protection related information across borders, to better identify and understand potential risks to children.

A Stage One feasibility study was conducted in 2017. Following its successful outcome, two competing small to medium-sized enterprises were funded to participate in Stage Two, to develop proofs of concept (POCs) solutions to enable the states and territories to share child protection

information. Stage Two is guided by a Challenge Management Group comprising the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, the Department of Social Services, former New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services, and ACT Community Services Directorate on behalf of the national BRII Inter-Jurisdictional Consultative Group (ICG), for Children and Families Secretaries (CAFS). Stage Two will conclude in 2018–19 after both POCs are delivered. Stage Three will comprise evaluation of the two POCs.

This initiative aligns with the Third Action Plan of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020*, Strategy 3, Signature Action 3.2.1 'share jurisdictional approaches to develop a best practice model of information exchange'. The challenge also aligns with recommendations 8.6, 8.7 and 8.8 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

ACT — Information sharing: In November 2017, the ACT Government introduced legislation to improve information sharing within the ACT to ensure that child protection, law enforcement and oversight bodies have access to the information they need to effectively deal with child welfare and safety concerns.

² As of 1 July 2019 the functions of the NSW Department of Family and Community Services form part of the New South Wales Department of Communities and Justice.

The ACT Government has committed to expand the scope of the development of the new Child and Youth Protection Services client management system to include the Child and Family Centres and the Child Development Service, and to build capability to integrate with key stakeholders. The Child and Youth Record Information System went live in 2019. It allows automated real-time information exchange of risk, safety and wellbeing information about children and young people.

Other work undertaken by the ACT includes collaborating with other jurisdictions to:

- identify and remove barriers to information sharing and develop methods to promote and enable information sharing
- implement interjurisdictional child protection information-sharing protocols
- develop nationally consistent standards for Working with Children Checks.

Further legislative amendments were developed to enhance the operation and administration of the Working with Vulnerable People Scheme in the ACT and align the scheme with the recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, specifically in relation to Working with Children Checks and information sharing.

Queensland’s increased interagency information sharing: In its final report, the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry recommended specific changes to the *Child Protection Act 1999* to provide a contemporary information-sharing regime for the child protection and family support

system and highlighted the importance of ensuring all service providers could effectively and efficiently share information to protect children and young people.

The *Child Protection Reform Amendment Act 2017* was passed by the Queensland Parliament in October 2017. The new information-sharing regime clarifies the ability of individuals and organisations to protect children and young people, and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, while protecting individual privacy as far as possible and safeguarding sensitive information.

The Queensland Government took a staged approach to implementing the Amendment Act throughout 2018, with the final amendments commencing operation on 29 October 2018.

Queensland’s missing children

protocol: In 2016, a new joint agency protocol, Protocol for Joint Agency Response — When a Child is Missing, was announced. The protocol aims to strengthen the response of Queensland Government agencies to children missing from care. Its purpose is to ensure a quicker and better coordinated response involving police, schools and child safety authorities.

The protocol was developed after the Queensland Family and Child Commission undertook a whole-of-government systems review of arrangements for responding to missing children in care. This review highlighted that more could be done to improve whole-of-government systems and ensure more timely and coordinated responses for children when missing from care.

South Australia's Public Sector

(Data Sharing) Act 2016: The South Australian Government holds vast amounts of information that can be used to better inform policy and better support citizens of South Australia. Following the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission, the *Public Sector (Data Sharing) Act 2016* was established to improve information sharing between government departments. The Act and its Regulations commenced operation on 30 May 2017. The Act enables public sector agencies to share their data with each other and with external entities. The Act:

- promotes the management and use of public sector data as a public resource that supports good government policy making, program management and service planning and delivery
- removes barriers to sharing public sector data between public sector agencies
- facilitates faster sharing of public sector data between public sector agencies
- provides protections in connection with public sector data sharing
- enables the Minister for the Public Sector to enter into data sharing agreements with other non-public sector entities.

The Office for Data Analytics is a team of data, analytics, research and policy professionals in the South Australian Department of the Premier and Cabinet who coordinate, collaborate and advise across the whole of government on data sharing under the Act. One of its areas for focus is building the government's capacity to securely and efficiently share administrative information to improve service delivery to vulnerable families and children.

Victoria — Child wellbeing and safety and family violence information-sharing schemes and the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management framework:

The Victorian Government passed information-sharing legislation in 2017 and 2018 to enable service collaboration and earlier and more effective risk assessment and support for families and children.

Three interrelated reforms have been introduced in Victoria that will be integral to reducing family violence and promoting child wellbeing and safety. These reforms respond directly to recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse:

- The Child Information Sharing Scheme enables authorised organisations and services to share information to promote the wellbeing and safety of children.
- The Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme enables authorised organisations and services to share information to facilitate assessment and management of family violence risk to children and adults.
- The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework sets out the responsibilities of different workforces in identifying, assessing and managing family violence risk across the family violence and broader service system.

The reforms aim to promote a shared understanding of family violence and children's wellbeing and safety across the service system and remove barriers to information sharing. This enables organisations, services and professionals to

make informed decisions and work together to support families before harm occurs.

The reforms are being rolled out in a phased approach, to allow workforces time to prepare. The first phase commenced in 2018 and includes child and family services, maternal and child health and family violence specialist services. Further phases will likely include education and health services.

Together, these reforms help to create a more collaborative, integrated system that can intervene earlier to improve safety and wellbeing outcomes for all Victorians. More information is available at www.vic.gov.au/infosharing

Seeing early warning signs and taking early action

ACT's Child Development Service:

The Child Development Service (CDS) was established in 2016 as a collaboration between the ACT's Community Services, Health and Education Directorates.

The CDS focuses on early identification of developmental delays and/or disability for ACT children from birth to 6 years of age and facilitates links to appropriate services to provide early intervention supports to children and families.

The CDS also provides autism assessment for children aged up to 12 years.

In 2017–18, the CDS worked with more than 160 children from birth to 6 years and their families who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Services included attendance by early childhood teachers, speech pathologists and Indigenous

allied health staff at Koori preschools and playgroups, parenting programs, and Mums and Bubs groups. Support included promoting childhood development, supporting health promotion activities related to speech and language development, and providing information to parents and assessment and referrals for children identified with developmental delay.

ACT's Early Support: Changing Systems, Changing Lives initiative:

The ACT Government has developed the Early Support Initiative, a joint initiative of the Community Services, Health, Education, and Justice and Community Safety Directorates, to reform how human services systems provide early support for children, young people and families.

The initiative began in 2018 to enhance early support capacity in the ACT to improve life outcomes, with a particular focus on three priority groups:

- vulnerable children and families (focused on the early years)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families
- families who have experienced domestic and family violence.

The ACT has undertaken extensive consultation, demonstrating its commitment to inclusionary community engagement. This includes talking with people who are accessing services and those who are not accessing any services, so that supports designed truly meet their needs.

New South Wales — Landmark child protection reform, Their Futures Matter

Matter: In late 2016, the NSW Government commenced implementing a landmark reform — *Their Futures Matter: A new approach*. This reform is a long-term strategy to transform the child protection and out-of-home care systems in NSW by adopting an investment approach to service design and delivery, and features an unprecedented level of collaboration across government. Their Futures Matter sets out an accountable system that shifts investment to evidence-based services and interventions and delivers tailored needs-based support packages to vulnerable children and families. A cross-agency implementation unit has been established to implement this reform, supported by \$190 million over four years.

A core innovation of this reform is the commencement of two world-class evidence-based family preservation and restoration programs to keep families together: Functional Family Therapy through Child Welfare (FFT-CW[®]) and Multisystemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN[®]). These new programs aim to reduce entries into out-of-home care and increase exits from out-of-home care by responding directly to trauma and other underlying causes of child abuse and neglect. These are operating in more than 14 priority locations, serviced by 23 teams to help keep 900 families together per year, with half of all placements

designated for Aboriginal families. At 31 July 2018, 780 families had consented to and participated in a program, 488 families were active in MST/FFT, and 134 families had completed a program.

Their Futures Matter is also developing a new Trauma Treatment Service, which will investigate placement preservation services and develop new models of aftercare services.

The outcomes of these programs are promising and are resulting in positive change for children and families who come to the attention of child protection services.

New South Wales — Family group conferencing

conferencing: The former FACS (now DCJ) is using family group conferencing (FGC) to help resolve child protection concerns before bringing proceedings in the Children's Court.

FGC is a family-focused and strengths-based form of alternative dispute resolution conducted by an impartial facilitator which aims to improve relationships between child protection agency professionals and family members and provide a culturally appropriate means of resolving child protection concerns. As a key practice tool, FGC provides an opportunity for families to develop their own plan to keep their children safe, encouraging family preservation and restoration and thereby reducing the need for children to enter care.

FGC has demonstrated success in NSW and internationally in keeping families together, diverting entry into, and improving exits from out-of-home care. FGC has demonstrated that families can themselves address and lower risks to children and young people, which reduces casework, court processes, reports of harm and entries into care. As a result of this success,

changes to legislation, which came into effect in NSW on 4 February 2019, now require child protection caseworkers to offer families alternative dispute resolution, such as FGC, before commencing care proceedings. For more information go to facs.nsw.gov.au/families/out-of-home-care/parents-with-kids-in-oohc

New South Wales Family Group Conferencing case study

Julie* is a young Aboriginal girl living with her Mum and Dad in Western NSW. Julie's caseworker suggested a Family Group Conferencing (FGC) to support her Mum and Dad to keep Julie safe in their care.

Julie, her Mum and Dad and both sides of their family attended the FGC. The family were initially nervous about the unknown, as this was completely new to them. They were nervous that the FGC would be more formal than they were used to, but they felt more comfortable after speaking with the facilitator during the preparation phase. This also allowed the family to plan what they wanted to achieve from the FGC and to come prepared.

During the FGC, the family were able to talk through the most confronting things in an open and kind way. Most surprising to the family was how much support was always available but not known or utilised. Initially, Julie's Dad had viewed the maternal side of the family as a source of conflict. However, following the FGC he identified them as his biggest support network. It was great for Julie's caseworker to see the family work together to remain child-focused and plan for Julie's safe upbringing.

The FGC gave Julie the opportunity to continue living with her Mum and Dad in a safe and loving environment without being exposed to drugs and violence. Julie's extended family were able to play a significant role in her life and provide support to her Mum and Dad.

*Name changed

New South Wales – Permanency

Support Program: Commencing October 2017, the Permanency Support Program (PSP) is one of the biggest reforms to the NSW child protection and out-of-home care systems in decades. It aims to achieve:

- fewer entries and re-entries into care by keeping families together
- shorter time in care by returning children home or finding other permanent homes for more children (e.g. through guardianship or open adoption)
- a better care experience by supporting children’s individual needs and their recovery from trauma.

This is achieved by providing child- and-family-centred packages that are responsive to need.

The new reforms being implemented in NSW have focused on assisting children to remain living safely with their family. Early results are promising, with a reduction in the number of new entries into out-of-home care. There were 812 fewer children entering care in 2017–18, a 45 per cent reduction from 2015–16.

Northern Territory’s Reform to legislation for children and families:

Territory Families progressed reform to the legislation for children and families and Parliament passed three packages of amendments:

- The Youth Justice Legislation Amendment (Machinery of Government) Bill 2017 was passed on 10 October 2017. The amendments gave the Chief Executive Officer of Territory Families legal responsibility for youth justice operations and provided the Territory Families workforce with the powers and responsibility for youth community corrections. The legislation took effect on 5 January 2018.
- The Adoption of Children Legislation Amendment (Equality) Bill was passed on 13 March 2018. The Bill amended the *Adoption of Children Act 1994* to allow same-sex and de facto couples to be eligible to adopt children in the Northern Territory. The legislation took effect on 14 March 2018.
- The Youth Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 was passed on 10 May 2018. The amendments implement seven Royal Commission recommendations relating to the use of force and restraints, separation and searches for young people in youth detention. The legislation took effect on 24 May 2018.

Northern Territory — Early intervention, parenting and family support services:

In 2017–18, funding was allocated to improve family support services, including to Aboriginal-controlled and non-government providers of family support services to deliver a wide range of programs such as toy libraries, therapeutic intervention services, advice, resources, and parenting and family support services. Territory Families worked with families to address risks to their children and provided family support to the parents and primary carers of 1,120 children. Support was provided directly to children and families through Territory Families' Strengthening Families and Remote Family Support and Youth Outreach and Re-engagement teams.

Northern Territory's FACES helpline:

In 2017–18 a dedicated helpline was established to connect Northern Territory families with support services and resources. Known as FACES (Family and Children's Enquiry and Support), the helpline was opened from 8 am to 8 pm Monday to Friday and staffed by a team of specialist child practitioners. The service was available to any Northern Territory family experiencing difficulties, such as parenting problems, family relationship problems, difficulties managing money and housing problems.

The helpline was a further critical early intervention to help prevent children and families entering the child protection system. It was part of the 'dual pathways' system whereby families experiencing problems can get help without entering that system. The initiative aims to encourage people and families to seek help and support early.

Through a partnership with NTCOSS (Northern Territory Council of Social Services), an accessible family support online service directory was also implemented.

Northern Territory — Strengthened investment in services for vulnerable young people:

New youth services grants were provided for after-hours and school holiday programs in major regional towns to support a range of sporting, cultural, social and development activities. This funding complemented other services to deliver more comprehensive after-hours and school holiday programs in Central Australia.

As an example in Alice Springs, the 'Summer in Alice' program, funded through the Youth Innovation Grants Program, had 230 activities spread over 45 days of the school holidays, including a youth drop-in centre, soccer and night programs, arts and craft programs and music workshops, library activities, and events using the skills of Aboriginal Elders.

The Northern Territory's Healthy Under 5 Kids — Partnering with Families program

was piloted in 2016–17 in remote areas of the Northern Territory. The program guides the delivery of preventative primary health care to children under five years. The program involves assessment of a child's physical growth and health status, and of their relationship with their caregiver, home environment, and social and emotional wellbeing (including domestic and family violence). It provides scripting for practitioners to address health promotion and education for families based on the best available evidence, appropriate to the child's age.

The Healthy under 5 Kids — Partnering with Families program will be rolled out to all Northern Territory government primary health services. Health and wellbeing is promoted through early detection and early intervention.

Sustained nurse home visiting programs are provided by eight organisations in the Northern Territory with funding from the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments. A structured program of nurse-led home visiting is delivered to families at risk of poorer maternal and child health developmental outcomes. Sustained nurse home visiting provides support during the antenatal period, the postnatal period and the first years of life. These programs are designed to be more accessible for vulnerable families, with an emphasis on continuity of care.

In 2018 the *Addressing Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in the Northern Territory 2018–2024* strategy was released.

Prevention is the strategy's main focus, with emphasis on these four key areas:

- broad awareness-raising across the entire community
- initiatives that focus on adolescent females and women of childbearing age before pregnancy
- improving availability of alcohol treatment for women (both pregnant and not pregnant)
- support for new mothers once a baby is born.

Advancing Queensland's child protection and family support reforms — Supporting Families Changing Futures:

The Queensland Government continued to implement the wide-ranging 10-year reform program to strengthen the family support and child protection system to make sure Queensland children are cared for, protected, safe and able to reach their full potential.

In 2016–17, the Queensland Government invested in initiatives and services to support Queensland families earlier and reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system. Queensland:

- achieved statewide coverage of Family and Child Connect and Intensive Family Support services to support families to care for their children safely at home
- rolled out collaborative case management in Intensive Family Support services to better respond to families with multiple and complex needs

- continued to grow *oneplace* — *Community Services Directory* to include more than 48,000 records to help Queensland children, families, community members and professionals get the right service at the right time
- commenced the statewide rollout of 20 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services, with 14 services established to assist families to access support and build their capacity to protect and care for children
- established the first three domestic and family violence integrated service response trials in Logan–Beenleigh, Mount Isa and Cherbourg to ensure that people affected by domestic and family violence receive quality, consistent and coordinated support
- invested in the Triple P program to support Queensland parents to build their parenting skills and learn new strategies for managing their children’s behaviour.

In 2017–18 Queensland:

- expanded Intensive Family Support services across Queensland to support families to care for their children at home
- funded eight early childhood development coordinators to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families’ engagement with the early childhood education and care system and to support Family Wellbeing Services to promote early learning.

South Australia’s Early Intervention

Research Directorate: The Early Intervention Research Directorate (EIRD) was established in November 2016 in response to recommendations in the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission and is supported by an External Expert Consortium of child protection and human services academics.

During 2016–17 and 2017–18, EIRD worked closely with the research sector to build the evidence base about the services children and families need, when and where they need them, and which services are most likely to work in local communities and contexts. EIRD applies data systemically to support South Australia’s service planning and uses the best evidence to guide decisions about prevention and early intervention for child abuse and neglect.

EIRD has a specific focus on addressing the disproportionate number of Aboriginal children in the child protection system. An Aboriginal Leaders Group was also established to provide governance for EIRD’s commissioning of research from the Australian Centre for Child Protection. For more information go to www.dhs.sa.gov.au

South Australia’s Child and Family Health Service targeted and sustained

services: The Child and Family Health Service (CaFHS) plays a pivotal role in a child’s early years and is one of many organisations in an integrated early childhood system comprising health, education, child protection, disability and social welfare services from both the government and non-government sectors.

To ensure that services are contemporary, evidence-informed, child-centred, culturally responsive and effective, CaFHS embarked on a review of how it delivers services to families and responds to approximately 20,000 births in South Australia each year, including an estimated 900 births in Aboriginal families. CaFHS examined the latest available data and evidence about children in the early years and consulted with staff and other key partners about a best practice approach to delivering services.

In early 2018 this resulted in the development of the CaFHS model of care, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable and assisting and supporting all infants, children and families into the future. The model of care has three service responses: universal service, targeted and sustained service, and statutory care service. The targeted and sustained service focuses strongly on early intervention to ensure as much as possible that infants, children and families who are identified as requiring additional assistance and support receive a service response quickly, and ideally before the child reaches three years of age. All interventions provided for Aboriginal infants, children and families are underpinned by an understanding and recognition of the importance of Aboriginal culture, practices and beliefs, which are reflected in the support provided to children and families. Infants and children involved with the Department for Child Protection but not under guardianship orders will be supported through the targeted and sustained service. Children under guardianship orders are supported through the CaFHS statutory care service response, which is currently being developed.

South Australia's Child and Family Assessment and Referral Networks:

The Child and Family Assessment and Referral Networks (CFARNs) provide coordinated, targeted and culturally appropriate earlier intervention to improve safety, health, development and education outcomes for children and families where risk factors exist. The focus of the CFARNs is to work with children and their families in the first 1,000 days (antenatal to 24 months old).

CFARNs commenced a phased implementation in July 2017 through three pilots to deliver better collaboration and coordination of early intervention services. The northern and southern metropolitan CFARNs are led by the Department for Education, and the western metropolitan CFARN is led by a non-government organisation, Relationships Australia South Australia.

CFARNs is an approach to working with children and families linking to universal, tertiary and statutory services within government and the non-government sector. Where possible, CFARNs provides an earlier intervention response than government services have previously managed. The focus of the CFARNs is to:

- coordinate partner agencies to ensure the local service system complements rather than duplicates service responses to families
- promote a restorative practice approach among partner agencies, information sharing, and use of a common assessment framework

- foster strong local links and service pathways
- provide case management where required.

An integral part of the CFARNs model is to engage identified at-risk women in the antenatal period to build their level of protectiveness and strengthen their parenting capacity in preparation for the birth of their child. The model uses a comprehensive cultural response to guide practice and work with Aboriginal children and families.

South Australia’s Child Safety Pathway:

The Child Safety Pathway was established in response to a number of recommendations outlined in the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission’s report ‘The life they deserve’. The report identified challenges with how notifications about child safety were received, assessed and responded to through the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL). The Child Safety Pathway (CSP) was subsequently developed as a strategy to improve the safety of children and young people who were notified to the child protection system. It aims to improve response rates to children and young people at risk of child abuse and/or neglect, and increase the number of agency interventions delivered to improve supports for vulnerable families and lessen the requirement for statutory intervention, where that is safe and appropriate.

Phase 1 of the implementation of the CSP focused primarily on implementing solutions, such as the call-back feature and e-log, and establishing foundation systems, including the introduction of a

Mandated Notifier Guide to reduce call wait times, ensure timely assessment of e-CARL (electronic) notifications and improve the overall caller/notifier experience.

Phase 2 will build on these improvements, focusing on expanding and consolidating alternative pathways and strengthening interagency governance and responses. A key focus will be improving our response to high-risk infants, as South Australian evidence-based research has revealed that better investment in this group will have the greatest long-term benefits.

The Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework and the Child and Family Wellbeing Assessment

Tool: As part of the Strong Families, Safe Kids project the Tasmanian Government launched the Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework in June 2018. The framework provides a contemporary definition of child and youth wellbeing using the ARACY’s ‘The Nest’ as the foundation for an evidence-based definition.

The framework’s primary aim is to ensure that everyone, in all parts of Tasmania’s service system as well as in the broader community, has a strong, common understanding of child and youth wellbeing. This common language and understanding will help to facilitate the state sector’s efforts to ensure that Tasmanian children and young people are loved and safe, have access to material basics, have their physical, mental and emotional health needs met, are learning and participating, and have a positive sense of culture and identity.

The framework is the foundation of a suite of other products that the Tasmanian Government will provide to support ongoing efforts to improve child and youth wellbeing in Tasmania. For instance, as part of the launch of the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line in December 2018 the Government released the Child and Family Wellbeing Assessment Tool. While not a diagnostic tool, the Assessment Tool is designed to help practitioners:

- assess the wellbeing of the child, young person or family at the time of presentation to the practitioner
- use the common wellbeing domains to identify and describe the type of support the child, young person or family requires at the time of presentation
- develop a shared understanding of the level of response that is required to address the particular needs of the child, young person or family.

Embedding these types of common tools and understanding of child and youth wellbeing across the service sector facilitates the sector's ability to get families access to adequate support as early as possible.

For more information or to download a copy of the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework, go to www.communities.tas.gov.au

Victoria — initiatives focusing on early intervention and prevention: The Victorian Department of Health and Human services is undertaking a range of initiatives aimed at children in the early years of their life and their families. The initiatives align with Victoria's Roadmap to Reform and focus on early intervention and preventative programs:

- The development of the 10-year Early Parenting Centre (EPC) service plan will determine the most appropriate EPC model of care, service offerings and future positioning of EPCs within the child and family services sector. This EPC service planning recognises increasing demand on existing EPC services and a marked increase in the number of children aged 0–2 years who are reported to Child Protection. It is important that the EPC service plan addresses the needs of this vulnerable group of young children and their families to prevent further involvement with child protection and reduce the incidence of children placed in out-of-home care.
- Victoria significantly expanded the Cradle to Kinder (C2K) and Aboriginal Cradle to Kinder (Aboriginal C2K) programs in the 2016–17 financial year. The C2K and Aboriginal C2K program is an intensive ante and post-natal support service to provide longer term, intensive family support for vulnerable young mothers and their families. Parents are supported to build their capabilities to provide for their child's health, safety and development, as well as developing their own self-reliance through links to education, vocational training and employment. This

expansion resulted in the C2K program increasing from eight to 17 sites and the Aboriginal C2K program increasing from two to ten sites. The expansion of these services means that there is now capacity to work with 683 young children and their vulnerable families at any one time through 24 services that deliver 27 service interventions across 37 outlets.

- **smalltalk** — embedding an evidence-based curriculum in supported playgroups: Victoria has implemented an evidence-based model of supported playgroups that improves the quality of the early home learning environment. It targets disadvantaged families with children aged 4–7 years exhibiting emotional and behavioural difficulties. Qualified staff assist families to attend supported playgroups and other support services such as early childhood education and care services and family services. Data is collected regarding parents' perceptions of their skills and confidence upon commencing and when they leave a supported playgroup.

Western Australia — Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy: In 2016–17, the Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy was launched. The strategy reprioritises the provision of earlier and more intensive support to the families most at risk of their children coming into care, especially Aboriginal families, and aims to divert families from having contact with the child protection system and safely reduce the number of children entering out-of-home care.

The strategy involves redesigning, enhancing and reforming many Department of Communities services. Western Australia recognises that services delivered collaboratively across government and the community services sector can improve outcomes for children and families through targeted investment, culturally secure practice, and shared outcome measurement.

The strategy involves building new partnerships and strengthening coordination across government to support families who are most vulnerable to their children coming into care.

One of the strategy's key initiatives is the shared outcomes framework for all earlier intervention and family support programs in Western Australia. This shared outcomes framework for the government and community sector organisations refocuses resources towards achieving outcomes to improve the lives of the most vulnerable families in the community.

Services redesigned or enhanced as part of the strategy include:

- The Aboriginal In-Home Support Service
- The Family Carer Support Service
- The Family Support Network Lead Agency
- Intensive Family Support Services.

Joining up service delivery

NSW Quality Assurance Framework:

The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) is a co-development collaborative project undertaken by the former FACS (now DCJ) in partnership with the Parenting Research Centre. The aim is to put in place a standard framework for collecting and reporting information about children and young persons in statutory out-of-home care, so that caseworkers and agencies can more effectively identify how they can improve individual outcomes. The QAF will focus on the child or young person's outcomes across a number of domains, namely safety, permanency and wellbeing. The QAF began as a trial in September 2016, with three non-government organisations — MacKillop Family Services, Key Assets Fostering and Burrun Dalai Aboriginal Corporation — selected through a tender process to conduct the trial. In February 2017, the trial was expanded to include the former FACS Mid North Coast District.

As well as providing valid and reliable tools that carers will use in regard to wellbeing, DCJ and partnering organisations have formulated questionnaires that children and young people complete, focusing on their sense of safety and permanency as well as their cultural connections. Trial sites have been receiving a Child Overview that summarises information on the child or young person's safety, permanency and wellbeing. To date the Child Overview contains DCJ administrative data, summary data from the valid and reliable tools that carers complete and administrative data from the Department of Education on

student mobility and National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy participation and achievement. The Child Overview is designed to provide meaningful information to support decision-making and good practice, rather than replace professional judgment and expertise. See www.facs.nsw.gov.au for further information.

Northern Territory Child and Family

Centres: During 2016–17 and 2017–18, child and family centres offered a soft entry point for vulnerable and disadvantaged children into preschool and school by engaging children from birth, and their families, in quality, integrated early childhood education and care programs. Centres operated in six locations — Yuendumu, Maningrida, Ngukurr, Gunbalanya, Palmerston and Alice Springs. A seventh child and family centre was under construction in Tennant Creek. The model was successfully fostering collaborative and integrated services. School principals manage the overall operations of the centres in collaboration with a local advisory group, and everyday operations are managed by a centre manager and an Aboriginal coordinator. Long day-care services at the centres are regulated under the National Quality Framework. Partnerships with government and non-government agencies enable the delivery of integrated programs to the community, such as preschool; Families as First Teachers; crèche; play groups; Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture; and Healthy Under 5s health checks. Since July 2017 the Child and Family Centres realigned their focus from being a 'one stop shop' for children and families to being the focus for a whole-of-community 'no wrong door' approach.

Northern Territory — Partnerships with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations:

In July 2017 Territory Families formed a partnership with APONT (Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory) and SNAICC — National Voice for our Children to redesign a holistic, culturally appropriate, and child-centred out-of-home care system focused on achieving the best outcomes for children and young people. Development of a strategy for building Aboriginal-led and managed out-of-home care services in the Northern Territory was commenced.

Aboriginal children placed with kin or Aboriginal foster carers experience greater cultural safety and connection to family and community. Funding was provided to Tangentyere Council in Alice Springs for a new program to identify Aboriginal foster and kinship carers for Aboriginal children in care in the Central Australia and Barkly Regions.

To support the social and emotional wellbeing of young people in detention, a partnership with Danila Dilba Health Service and the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress was entered into. The programs and activities that Danila Dilba and Congress ran for young people at the Don Dale and Alice Springs Youth Detention Centres were culturally appropriate, build resilience and enhance personal creativity and expression.

Northern Territory — Reinvigorating and expanding child safety and wellbeing committees:

As part of a commitment to local and community-led solutions, in 2017–18 Territory Families expanded the multi-agency Child Safety Coordination Groups (CSCGs) in key remote Aboriginal

communities. The CSCGs provided advice and local responses to child safety and wellbeing issues. CSCGs were run in key communities, including Maningrida, Borroloola, Kalkarindji, Wurrumiyanga, Wadeye, Yuendumu and Jabiru.

Northern Territory’s Young Mothers Strong Mothers Program:

The Young Mothers Strong Mothers program has been operating since 2016. In 2018, the Department of Education expanded the program to include young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fathers. The program provides access to integrated and coordinated education, pregnancy and parenting care pathways across the Northern Territory. The program aims to intervene early in a child’s life, even before birth, and strengthen the capacity of young teenage parents to care for their children by providing them with wrap-around care. The program addresses areas such as nutrition, substance abuse, hygiene and homemaking skills to prevent or decrease risk factors in pregnancy for low birth weight. It also emphasises the need for the young mothers to complete their secondary education and secure paid employment. Outcome measures such as increased school attendance, increased regular child health assessments, and reductions in child protection notifications and crime rates are being used to assess the program’s medium and long-term effectiveness. There are examples of where Families as First Teachers and this program are working concurrently to improve outcomes for both children and young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers.

Northern Territory's Engagement

Programs: During 2016–17 and 2017–18, the Department of Education funded three non-government organisations to facilitate engagement programs at 14 school sites to support the educational engagement, retention and achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and girls.

Full-time school-based staff, employed by providers, support students through relationship-based programs, providing a welcoming environment and diverse range of activities to develop improved self-esteem and socialisation and address challenges that may present barriers to student engagement in education.

Outreach support to families in the Northern Territory

The Remote Family Support Service (RFSS) is a community-based service staffed by local community members, providing culturally safe practices and support to families to keep children safe, strong and connected.

In a Top End community, a request for RFSS assistance was received to provide support to a family who lived outside the service area. There were ongoing, serious concerns around the children's health and failure to thrive. The Health Clinic, CatholicCare and Territory Families child protection staff had all previously raised these issues with the mother, who had difficulty engaging and taking action.

The RFSS team visited the family and, while initially the mother was reluctant to participate, the persistence, skill and cultural connectedness of the local Aboriginal family support workers resulted in useful dialogue. The RFSS team discussed the children's low weight, and it became clear that the mother hadn't previously been aware of the seriousness of her children's situation and did not fully understand the concept of a growth plan and the advice given by health clinic staff. The RFSS facilitated a meeting with the nurse and the mother was better equipped to understand and absorb the information provided.

The RFSS assistance enabled the mother to understand more about her children's low weight and its negative impact on their health and development, resulting in her working with service providers to address these concerns. The RFSS Aboriginal family support workers bridged cultural and language barriers between the family and community service providers.

Queensland's Child Safety

Officers: Child Safety Officers work collaboratively across government and the non-government sector to address the complex and interrelated needs of clients and communities.

In 2017–18:

- 12 Child Safety Officer Health Liaison positions were funded to work in Hospital and Health Service catchments for earlier intervention and better case management with children and families known to the department and funding was provided to employ 20 nurses to work within each of the Family and Child Connect service catchments
- three new Joint Response teams from Child and Family Services and the Queensland Police Service in Toowoomba, Townsville and on

the Gold Coast were established, while an additional four Child Safety Officers were stationed at Police Headquarters in Roma Street, Brisbane.

Tasmania's Joined Up Services Project:

The Lead Support Coordination Service (LSCS) has been trialled since 2017 to provide a lead coordinator to support realising life goals for people with multiple and complex needs. The LSCS does this through building long-term trusted relationships through a client-centred service model. The service aims to build trusted relationships, reciprocity, self-agency and confidence for individuals, adults, youth and families, as part of the journey between client and lead coordinator. The LSCS facilitates access to services and support, fosters networks, and is flexible to suit the changing circumstances of clients.

Lead Support Coordination Service case study

Kate (not her real name) is the mother of four young children and her partner is in prison. Two of her children are in care and two live with her. At the time of referral, she was homeless and using drugs and at risk of losing custody of the children. She suffers from anxiety.

Kate believes, had it not been for the LSCS program, she would not be alive. For her, the LSCS coordinator is a translator, advocate and navigator of services.

... if all these programs out there had a lot more workers like LSCS and just people that understood and worked with us. You know, she's become not like family but she has, you know, without crossing the line with your program or anything like that. She's just been — like I said, if it wasn't for her, I just believe things like that has opened my eyes up too. If they had more people and more programs like this for all my lifetime, maybe I wouldn't have ended up here? Maybe it wouldn't have ended up this bad because there would have been a stop to it but there wasn't.

A point of difference between the LSCS and her previous experience with support services is that she does not feel judged. Kate's coordinator has helped with simple things like using a diary and basic computer skills like sending emails. In addition, the coordinator has been a positive role model and this has made a difference to Kate's own coping skills.

Yes, she's (LSCS) been a great support and a positive person. That's what I realise, having positive people in your life really helps. Someone that's just good and makes you feel better in yourself, you know, let's you know that you can do it and believes in ya. And I guess LSCS believed in me and I knew she believed in me and I didn't want to let her down because she'd helped me so much. I knew I could do it but I just needed that bit of help.

Kate has learned how to better plan her days and weeks and to set some longer-term goals around her family unit and meeting her children's needs. Her main goal is to get her family back and create a positive future for them while recognising there are still challenges to be overcome.

Tasmania's Intensive Family

Engagement Service: A key finding of Professor Maria Harries' *Strong Families, Safe Kids* Redesign Report was that current early intervention services designed to support families (that is, Integrated Family Support Services) are unable to meet the needs of a cohort of families at the brink of entering the statutory service system. If we better support families earlier, before they get into crisis, children are less likely to be removed from their families and relationship breakdown can be prevented.

Many of the families falling into this service gap receive insufficient help and as a result often find themselves subject

to multiple notifications as the children are left in a risk-laden environment.

To address this gap, a trial of the Intensive Family Engagement Service (IFES) program was initiated as a new type of service for Tasmania.

The IFES is delivered on behalf of the Tasmanian Government by non-government providers, using a mix of therapeutic models focused on building the capacity of the parents and practical support for the family in addressing the everyday needs that are impacting on their ability to care for their children.

The primary aim of IFES is to prevent the imminent separation of children from their

primary caregivers and reduce the level of risk to children by addressing the needs of these families, to build their capacity to become self-sufficient. By enabling these families to have their children remain safely in the family home by providing them with wrap-around, intensive, assertive

support, the service aims to remove the requirement for statutory intervention.

The service generally focuses on improving family functioning and parenting skills and is intensive in nature (15–20 hours per week for approximately 12–20 weeks).

Intensive Family Engagement Service case study

Katherine (not her real name) and her family joined the IFES program after Child Safety referred her as a result of repeated notifications concerning her children and the fact they were not attending school.

Katherine is a single mother with two teenage sons and two daughters — one a teenager and one newborn. Katherine had been feeling alienated from her family and community and that she had too much to cope with on her own. She feels very positive about her time with IFES:

... it was really good, I really enjoyed it, I moved forward with my life.

Katherine says her IFES worker helped her establish a better relationship with her children's school, supported the establishment of before-school routines, and helped create a more positive home environment.

The IFES worker also developed connections for the family that have endured after the conclusion of the IFES intervention — for example, her children are attending classes at their local Police Citizens Youth Club, and the family has transitioned back to lower support services.

Katherine says that IFES helped her to see that she is in control of her life and to regulate her emotions more effectively. Katherine said that a positive aspect of IFES is that the workers are not judging her:

... workers aren't judging me, they're working with me.

Western Australia's Target 120

program: Target 120 is a collaborative and flexible early intervention program that commenced in 2018 with the aim of preventing young people reoffending and improving community safety. Led by the Department of Communities, Target 120 will support up to 300 young people and their families across Western Australia.

Dedicated case workers will work in partnership with multiple agencies, including police, health, education, child protection and justice, as well as non-government service providers. This will ensure that there is a coordinated and well managed response to each young person and their family to get them back

on track, with targeted intervention to address the issues that increase a young person's likelihood of offending, such as substance abuse, lack of housing, domestic violence, trauma, mental health issues, and poor attendance at school.

The Target 120 program will also use data to inform and improve decision making. Through sharing, linking and analysing data gathered across a number of agencies, vulnerable individuals and groups can be identified earlier, and their current and future needs better understood.

The initiative will be delivered across multiple locations in a phased approach over the next four years.

Positive outcomes of integrated services delivery for some of Western Australia's most vulnerable families

The Kalgoorlie–Boulder Earlier Intervention and Family Support Service is a locally designed service that was launched in May 2017. This service included representatives from local, state and Commonwealth government agencies, as well as local not-for-profit and Aboriginal organisations. The model provides a coordinated early intervention response to identified families. It works with a wide range of local services, parents, families and the community to keep children safe and prevent them from needing to enter out-of-home care and, if in care, to return home.

Working with some of the state's most complex families, services focus on parenting goals related to education, employment and home skills, which include:

- supporting parents to develop and maintain children's routines, to provide a stable environment in which children can thrive
- assisting parents in maintaining their homes and managing budgets to ensure tenancies are sustained and children have a stable living environment
- building on homemaking skills
- attending to appropriate health, mental health, drug and alcohol and other appointments with services
- supporting families to abstain from criminal and anti-social activity
- addressing family and domestic violence, with a focus on perpetrator accountability.

By taking this holistic approach to services that were previously delivered and assessed in silos, the model is achieving significant outcomes for families. Less than a year into service delivery, four families that had been issued eviction notices had their evictions reversed and successfully maintained their tenancy, and eight children were returned to their families with intensive in-home supports.

The program received the 2018 Best Practice in Corporate Social Values Award at the 2018 Institute of Public Administration Australia (Western Australia) Achievement Awards.

SUPPORTING OUTCOME 3:

**Are the risk factors for
child abuse and neglect
being addressed?**

What is being done to ensure the risk factors for child abuse and neglect are being addressed?

The National Framework recognises that in order for our children and young people to be truly safe and well we must ensure the risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed. To help achieve this outcome, the National Framework has identified strategies that focus on reducing parental substance abuse, improving parental mental health, and reducing homelessness and domestic and family violence.

These strategies include:

- enhanced alcohol and substance abuse reduction initiatives
- enhanced programs that reduce family violence
- increased services and support for people with a mental illness or disability
- expanded housing and homelessness services for families and children at risk
- increased capacity and capability for the 'system' to identify children at risk.

To help progress against the performance indicators and towards the high-level outcome, the Second Action Plan outlined the following National Priorities against Supporting Outcome 3:

- **Building workforce capacity and expertise** — exploring options to broaden child and family-sensitive practice through increased access to training
- **Domestic and family violence** — aiming to strengthen families so children and young people grow up in a safe household free from domestic and family violence
- **Health and mental health** — looking for opportunities to better meet the health and mental health needs of vulnerable and at-risk women, children and young people
- **Disability** — identifying opportunities to link with the roll-out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the National Disability Strategy.

Key activities under National Priorities in 2016–17 and 2017–18

Building workforce capacity and expertise

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations: The [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) (National Principles) are a key national reform progressed by all Australian governments during 2016–18 to establish a national approach to building capacity and embedding child-safe culture and practices in organisations engaging with children across Australia.

The National Principles were initiated by Community Services Ministers across Australia under the *Third Action Plan 2015–2018* of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020* to address early findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Oversight of the development of the National Principles was co-led by the former New South Wales Government Department of Family and Community Services (now the Department of Communities and Justice), as the lead jurisdiction for Strategy 3 of the Third Action Plan, and the Australian Government (represented by the Department of Social Services).

The National Principles were developed in 2017–18 through a national consultation process led by the National Children's Commissioner. Consultations on the National Principles and supporting resources involved key sectors across Australia engaging with children and young people, key advocacy groups and academics. State and territory representatives from all jurisdictions, as well as representatives from the non-government and research sector, also contributed to the development of the National Principles.

The National Principles give effect to the Royal Commission's recommendations relating to the child safe standards. They provide a nationally consistent approach to cultivating organisational cultures that foster child safety and wellbeing across all sectors in Australia.

In February 2019, the National Principles were endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments. The National Office for Child Safety is leading national coordination and implementation of the National Principles in close partnership with all state and territory governments. Implementation of the National Principles will be prioritised under the Fourth Action Plan of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020*.

For more information on the National Principles, including resources to support implementation, go to the [National Office for Child Safety](#) website.

The NSW Practice Framework, launched in September 2017, aims to improve the quality of child protection practice in NSW. Its goal is to provide consistency, shared identity and direction on the basics of good child protection practice. The framework brings together practice capabilities, approaches, reforms and priorities to guide child protection work across systems, policies and practice. United by principles, language and standards, the framework puts children and families at the forefront. Importantly, the framework seeks to line the whole of the agency behind practitioners so that the best decisions can be made for children and their families.

There are five integral elements to the implementation of the Practice Framework:

1. the implementation of Group Supervision across the state as a forum for collective decisions
2. the delivery of skill-building training modules to districts
3. the development and introduction of a Quality Improvement model
4. establishment of the Practice Framework Sub-Committee
5. an extensive evaluation of the Practice Framework to enable changes to occur as required.

The evaluation commenced with a readiness assessment, showing that child protection staff support the Practice Framework overwhelmingly and believe it will make a positive difference to children and their families. The next phase of the evaluation will be informed by data (quantitative and qualitative) as well as feedback from practitioners, agency partners and children and families.

The NSW Practice Framework has synergies with the National Framework outcomes. The four outcomes of the NSW Practice Framework are:

- Children experience safety.
- Children, young people and families are connected to family and community.
- Children, young people and families reach their potential.
- Children, young people and families experience child protection staff as helpful.

The Practice Framework is being implemented according to the Implementation Science methodology. For details of the NSW Practice Framework, go to www.facs.nsw.gov.au

Northern Territory's Youth Outreach and Re-engagement Teams:

Youth Outreach Re-Engagement Officer (YOREO) positions were established to work in the statutory environment, with duties including case management, assessment and report writing and the provision of trauma-informed care. The newly delegated Senior YOREOs accepted 164 active cases from Community Corrections in January 2018. This followed significant efforts to amend legislation that resulted in Territory Families becoming responsible for youth community corrections. The Senior YOREOs worked closely with young people who transition back into the community from the Don Dale and Alice Springs Youth Detention Centres as part of a 'through-care' service model.

Youth Outreach and Re-engagement Teams continued to focus efforts on client and community engagement and development of collaborative working partnerships with stakeholders.

Northern Territory – Sexual Behaviours in Children Guidelines and mandatory reporting training:

During 2016–17 and 2017–18 the Department of Education continued its requirement for all staff in schools to undertake training in mandatory reporting at the commencement of each school semester. The department's policy position is set out in the Mandatory Reporting of Harm and Exploitation of Children Guidelines, which align with the mandatory reporting obligations on all adults in the Northern Territory as outlined in the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007*. The department promotes staff understanding of their obligations by providing presentations in schools and to departmental staff to inform and encourage discussion. Principals are specifically held responsible for ensuring that training occurs and that evidence of the training is reported to the department. The utilisation of the Sexual Behaviours in Children Guidelines, developed in 2015, continues to be embedded into NT schools. These guidelines use the Traffic Lights® guide developed by True Relationships (formerly Family Planning Queensland) to help staff to identify age-appropriate sexual behaviour, as distinct from concerning or serious sexual behaviour.

Northern Territory — Early Years

Rewarding Careers: Launched in October 2017, Early Years Rewarding Careers is a cross-department, cross-agency strategy aimed at meeting the increasing need for high-quality early childhood educators in the Northern Territory. Early Years Rewarding Careers showcases the professional opportunities available in early childhood services and provides learning pathways into the sector for Northern Territory senior secondary students and Aboriginal people aged between 17 and 25 years. The Early Years Rewarding Careers initiative provides a pathway into the early childhood education sector and blends work experience and work placement in early years school environments as well as quality education and care settings. This initiative provides an innovative solution to two issues in community — the need for stable employment options and the need for qualified educators for early childhood education and care services. Upon successful completion of the qualification, both the Aboriginal trainees and the high school students exit with a comprehensive skill set and have the option to apply for full-time employment in the sector and in schools, or continue on to higher education. The availability of qualified local workers is key to providing quality early childhood education to all young Territorians.

Queensland’s Child Safety Practice

Manual Rebuild: Frontline child safety staff rely on clear and contemporary practice tools to support their work to keep children safe. Throughout 2017, service delivery staff played a key role in the Child Safety Practice Manual rebuild project. The project will result in a web-based system that is designed to better meet the needs of Child Safety staff, partner agencies, families and community members. This is accomplished through:

- providing clear, consistent and succinct procedural advice, integrated with legislative reforms, contemporary practice approaches and tools to support frontline work and develop staff capability
- building cultural integrity in practice by strengthening and embedding principles of safe care and connection and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle throughout the practice tools, policies and procedures
- increasing accessibility and usability through the use of a new, visually engaging web platform.

The new manual will continue to be both an internal and public-facing resource, increasing transparency in practice.

South Australia's Child Wellbeing

Practitioners: The Child Wellbeing Program has been operational since mid-2016.

The program aims to use the significant access that public education has to children and families as a platform to facilitate earlier identification of, and the provision of support to, children and families who are vulnerable to risk. The program is designed to support more than 300 education sites across country and metropolitan areas.

Child Wellbeing Practitioners work in public schools to identify children and families at risk and connect them to appropriate support as an early intervention measure — before situations escalate to a potential

child protection response. Senior Aboriginal Family Practitioners have also been appointed to work in the program. Program practitioners have close links with child protection staff and have access to the child protection electronic database.

Child Wellbeing Practitioners provide a range of responses, including working directly with children and their families to support change and reduce risk, and supporting and building staff capacity within education sites to assist in responding to the child or family. Practitioners also work to develop and support community connections that enhance service delivery and community partnership approaches.

Minimum qualification requirements for residential care workers in Victoria

Children and young people who reside in residential care deserve the best possible care that can be provided. In order to build the capacity of the residential care workforce to provide such high-quality care, the Department of Health and Human Services and community services organisations are working to develop a stable and appropriately skilled workforce.

Minimum qualification requirements set a benchmark to ensure all residential care workers have a common level of residential care specific skills and knowledge.

Mandatory training covers the provision of trauma-informed care, managing behaviours, and working with children and young people in residential care who have been subjected to or at risk of harm, abuse and neglect.

Through a collaborative partnership comprising the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Health and Human Services, training providers and the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (the peak body representing organisations delivering child and family services), training was delivered to more than 2,000 residential care workers since training commenced in February 2017.

To sustain the established minimum qualification requirements and to continue to support children and young people in residential care, the training is currently supported by Department of Education and Training initiatives, which provide subsidised or free training for Victorians.

Domestic and family violence

The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022 (the National Plan):

The National Plan is a long-term strategy that brings together the efforts of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the community to make a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children. Under the Second Action Plan 2013–2016 of the National Plan, the Australian Government funded *The Line*, a national social marketing campaign that encouraged healthy and respectful relationships among young people aged 12 to 20 years by challenging and changing attitudes and behaviours that support violence.

The Third Action Plan 2016–2019 of the National Plan, which was developed across 2015–2016 and launched in October 2016, makes strong links to the National Framework.

The Third Action Plan of the National Plan includes a new national priority area — Responding to children living with violence — which focuses on improving interactions between the family law and child protection systems and child protection agencies, recognising that a non-abusive parent is not responsible for a perpetrator's violence against a child. The Third Action Plan complements the National Framework's First 1,000 Days Strategy. Focusing on early childhood development

will contribute to increased awareness and understanding of its importance and the critical role positive parenting and role models play in these early years.

For more information about the Third Action Plan of the National Plan, go to www.plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au

The Australian Government recognises the important role that respectful relationships education can play as a catalyst for generational and cultural change by giving young people the skills to reject aggressive behaviour and discrimination, and challenge negative gender stereotypes. To help bring about this change, the Government committed \$5 million under the 2015 *Women's Safety Package* to fund the development of the *Respect Matters* program to develop respectful relationships education resources to change the attitudes of young people to violence. The resources will include a digital education platform with programs designed for students from Foundation Year through to Year 12, professional learning modules for teachers, and a curriculum connection tool on the Australian Curriculum website. They will be freely available to all Australian students, teachers and families later in 2019. The program has been developed in close consultation with community members, teachers, school leaders and subject matter experts. This has ensured that all content is relevant and engaging for students, aligned with the Australian Curriculum, and consistent with community standards.

ACT — Improving service responses to domestic and family violence:

In 2017–18, the ACT Government, in partnership with the community sector, made considerable progress towards implementing commitments made in the *ACT Government Response to Family Violence* (the Response). The Response addressed the following reports:

- *Report of the Inquiry: Review into the System Level Responses to Family Violence in the ACT*, Laurie Glanfield (April 2016)
- *Findings and recommendations from the Review of Domestic and Family Violence Deaths in the Australian Capital Territory*, Domestic Violence Prevention Council (May 2016)
- *ACT Domestic Violence Service System Final Gap Analysis Report*, Community Services Directorate (May 2016).

Of the 41 separate commitments, almost all were fully implemented by 2017–18, with the remainder well advanced to bring about necessary changes within the system. The focus for an initial challenge facilitated by the ACT's new Family Safety Hub was women and families during pregnancy and early parenting, recognising that these life phases represent periods of increased risk for exposure to domestic and family violence. A workshop in May 2018 helped identify opportunities and ideas to address this period of increased risk.

In 2017–18, the ACT Government commissioned the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Association of the ACT (ATODA) to scope and design a multi-component project to increase the capacity of the alcohol and other drug sector to integrate best practice in family violence prevention. Using a co-design approach, ATODA has developed and released a suite of tools to strengthen the sector's ability to respond to domestic and family violence.

In 2018, the Domestic Violence Prevention Council hosted an extraordinary meeting on the needs of children and young people affected by family and domestic violence in the ACT. The Office of the Coordinator-General for Family Safety in the ACT will continue to oversee the implementation of recommendations from the meeting.

ACT Family Safety Hub: In 2017–18, the ACT Government launched the Family Safety Hub, a collaborative network that uses evidence-based and innovative approaches to bring together relevant stakeholders to develop better responses to domestic and family violence.

The Family Safety Hub was co-designed over 18 months through a partnership between the ACT Government and the community sector. Consultations revealed that the domestic and family violence system in the ACT was focused on crisis responses, with service gaps in prevention, early intervention and recovery. In response, it was agreed that the Family Safety Hub would focus on priority areas for action, including enhancing:

- understandings of the dynamics of domestic and family violence among the service and justice systems, including perpetrators' use of power and control
- trusted people's capacity to respond to victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence, especially isolated clients
- the integration of services that support families experiencing domestic and family violence.

New South Wales — Expanding perpetrator interventions: In 2016–17, the NSW Government invested \$15 million over four years for intervention programs led by non-government organisations. This was followed by an investment of \$10 million (2017–18) for behaviour change interventions and initiatives for high-risk offenders.

An independent evaluation of the first community-based Men's Behaviour Change Program (MBCP) pilots in NSW has commenced. The evaluation will assess the impacts of these programs, which offer individual and group therapy for men who use violence, as well as counselling, case support and referrals to partners and children. In addition, government-funded MBCPs in NSW have been expanded from 18 locations to 35 across NSW. These perpetrator-focused interventions offer a whole-of-family approach to supporting everyone in the cycle of domestic and family violence.

The Government has also developed an automatic referral pathway from NSW Police to the Men's Telephone Counselling and Referral Service for men who have perpetrated or been implicated in a domestic and family violence incident as the primary aggressor. This streamlines the offer of immediate counselling and referral to appropriate support services.

New South Wales — Domestic and Family Violence Innovation Fund: In 2016, the NSW Government announced a \$20 million Domestic and Family Violence Innovation Fund as part of the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016–2021: Safer Lives for Women, Men and Children. This fund aims to support innovative prevention and early intervention strategies, and crisis responses, with a focus on place-based approaches. There have been two rounds of funding, with the initial round in 2017 supporting seven community projects that targeted specific local issues and strategies to increase awareness and change behaviours.

The Northern Territory Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018–2028, Safe, Respected and Free from Violence, was launched in December 2017 to reduce violence and work together to achieve safer homes, communities, workplaces and schools.

The first Action Plan under the Framework, Action Plan 1 — Changing Attitudes, Intervening Earlier and Responding Better (2018–2021) focused on four key areas of activity across the five outcomes of prevention, early intervention, response and recovery services, perpetrator accountability and a robust service system.

Through the framework and in partnership with non-government and specialist services, Territory Families committed to five-year funding contracts to provide certainty in service delivery. Territory Families committed to building an evidence- and needs-based approach to how it funded and supported the non-government sector.

To support and complement this, NTCOSS (the Northern Territory Council of Social Services) was contracted to identify capacity needs in the sector. Charles Darwin University and the Menzies School of Health Research received funding to produce a best-practice review of domestic, family and sexual violence services in the Northern Territory and an evaluation framework for the first action plan.

In May 2018, the Safe, Respected and Free from Violence Prevention Fund was launched, which provided funding for locally driven, community-informed violence prevention activities, including those focused on supporting children and young people to engage in healthy, respectful relationships. Funding was provided to the Working Women's Centre for a pilot program that will build capacity and support the provision of domestic and family violence leave in the Northern Territory Public Service.

Northern Territory domestic and family violence initiatives: Many of the larger Northern Territory communities have child safety and wellbeing committees, which work to address complex challenges facing vulnerable families by combining the knowledge and resources of service agencies. Primary health care representatives participate in the work of these committees.

In 2018 Northern Territory Health finalised domestic and family violence (DFV) clinical guidelines to provide guidance and support to clinicians responding to DFV. This work is part of Northern Territory Health's strategic approach to DFV and contributes to the Northern Territory Government's *Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework* led by Territory Families. Northern Territory Health also participates in Family Safety Framework meetings (FSF). The FSF is an action-based integrated service response to individuals and families who are at high risk of serious injury or death as a result of experiencing DFV. FSF meetings occur regularly (usually monthly), are chaired by Northern Territory Police and use a coordinated approach to reducing the risk of serious injury or death.

Queensland – domestic and family violence (DFV) capability development:

To bring together the reforms in the domestic and family violence sector and the child protection system, Child Safety Services has adopted the Safe and Together (S&T) model as the foundation and theory on which to build DFV capability across Child Safety Service Centres (CSSCs) in Queensland. S&T is a domestic violence

informed approach to working with families. It centres on perpetrator accountability and a strong alliance with mothers and children (as survivors). Six hundred staff have been trained directly in S&T and many partner agencies have also taken up the model. The direct training has been supported by access to online modules in the context of group supervision.

To further embed and sustain S&T practice, the Walking With Dads (WWD) trial commenced in 2016. A WWD worker provides domestic and family violence specialist support in four CSSCs (Caboolture, Caloundra, Gympie and Mt Isa). The trial maintains a specific focus on perpetrator intervention work with fathers alongside improved partnership work with mothers (as survivors). The WWD workers provide casework, coaching, training and consultation to develop the S&T practice.

The DFV research centre at Central Queensland University has been undertaking an evaluation of the impact of WWD. The final report is due in 2019. Preliminary reports indicate the model improves assessment, risk management, safety planning, intervention and collaboration. Further work is underway to consider expanding WWD.

The most recent development to support staff capability was the creation of a new DFV Practice Leader role in CSSCs in 2019. The role is expected to build on the practice foundations and to lead change at the systemic level to sustain the new S&T way of working with families where DFV is an issue.

Queensland — Stop the Hurting — End Domestic Violence Youth Campaign:

The report of the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence — *Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic Violence in Queensland* — identified the need for a comprehensive communication strategy to challenge community attitudes and increase awareness and understanding of and action in response to domestic and family violence.

Central to the Queensland Government response is the *Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Engagement and Communication Strategy 2016–2026*. The strategy comprises several campaigns targeting specific population groups (for example, youth, bystanders and the LGBTIQ community) over three years.

The goal of the first communication campaign, *Stop the Hurting — End Domestic Violence*, was to influence behaviour and attitudes of 12- to 17-year-old Queenslanders to help break the intergenerational cycle of domestic and family violence.

Youth were targeted in this first campaign, as research shows that early adulthood is a life stage during which prospects for prevention are particularly strong. Educating children and young people is also key to breaking the intergenerational cycle of behaviours and attitudes on domestic and family violence.

Tasmania's Safe Families Coordination Unit (SFCU)

is a multi-agency Tasmanian Government unit working together to provide the best available information about family violence incidents, which is used to ensure that victims of high-risk family violence are identified and supported, and that family violence perpetrators are held to account.

SFCU undertakes detailed analysis of high-risk family violence incidents and develops recommended actions for Tasmania Police, partner government agencies and service providers to support those that are affected, including children, and manage those that commit family violence. SFCU works closely with Safe at Home, Tasmania's whole-of-government integrated criminal justice response to family violence.

The SFCU has resulted in many positive outcomes — for example, a mapping exercise identified a young and highly vulnerable child victim who was witness to a high-risk family violence incident. The child had not previously been identified in records of the family violence incident. SFCU made several timely and coordinated recommendations to support the child.

Tasmania’s Safe Homes, Safe Families:

The Department of Education’s Safe Homes, Safe Families (SHSF) Support Team consists of social workers and psychologists dedicated to working with the inter-agency Safe Families Coordination Unit, school principals, Child and Family Centre (CFC) leaders, school-based professional support staff, and teachers to ensure the necessary supports are in place for children and families impacted by family violence.

Since being established, the SHSF Support Team has evolved to provide the following range of supports to Tasmanian Government schools and CFCs:

- consultation with principals, CFC Leaders, school-based support staff, and other school staff in relation to children and families experiencing family violence
- advice and professional learning on the impacts of family violence, and resources/techniques to establish trauma-informed practice
- working with schools and CFCs to undertake needs/safety assessment of selected cases
- working with schools and CFCs to identify and manage risks
- individual support to students impacted by family violence
- short-term interventions — for example, protective behaviours and safety plan discussions
- participation in school-based care teams
- referring children and families to relevant family violence service providers.

Victoria — The Orange Door:

In November 2016 the Victorian Government committed to establishing Support and Safety Hubs statewide in response to the Royal Commission into Family Violence. The Orange Door is how the hubs are known and branded.

The Orange Door is a new way for women, children and young people who are experiencing family violence to get help, and for providing support to families who need help with the care, wellbeing and development of children or young people. The Orange Door also plans interventions for perpetrators to address the risk they pose, challenge their violent and abusive behaviour, and hold them accountable.

The Orange Door provides:

- a more visible contact point so that people know where to go for support
- a connection to a wide range of supports across the spectrum of prevention, early intervention and response
- a coordinated and integrated service response for women, children and men where practitioners draw on specialist expertise
- an immediate response for people in crisis (during business hours) by linking them to specialist services, medical treatment and care, accommodation and practical assistance
- specialist support and tailored advice for victim survivors, families and children, with a strong focus on perpetrator accountability, based on the best available information and risk assessment tools.

The Orange Door brings together different workforces and practices to create an integrated Orange Door team and a consolidated intake point in each Orange Door area. The Orange Door team consists of workers from organisations that currently:

- receive police referrals for women and children who are victim survivors of family violence
- receive police referrals for perpetrators of family violence
- receive child wellbeing referrals (as ChildFIRST transitions to The Orange Door)
- deliver other relevant services as appropriate, such as those delivered by Aboriginal services.

By 30 June 2018, The Orange Door was established in three areas. The Orange Door in Bayside Peninsula commenced operation on 14 May 2018. The Orange Door in Barwon and Mallee commenced operation on 31 May 2018.

Since then, The Orange Door in North Eastern Melbourne commenced operation on 10 July 2018, and The Orange Door in Inner Gippsland commenced operation on 20 November 2018.

The Orange Door will be established across Victoria in each of the 17 Department of Health and Human Services areas by 2022. Over time a complete access network will be established and people will be able to access The Orange Door how they want, when they want, and in ways that are safe. As well as through the telephone, online, outreach and physical

locations, over time The Orange Door will be increasingly accessible through:

- alternative satellite locations, which deliver a core set of functions of The Orange Door
- out-posted workers who are based within other services.

The existing service system continues in areas where The Orange Door is yet to be established, with specialist family violence services, child and family services and men's services responding to women, children and their families.

Victoria – Adolescent Family Violence Program:

In March 2016, the Royal Commission into Family Violence raised the issue of adolescents who use violence in the home, citing a lack of options for both the adolescent and the families experiencing the issue, lack of research and the need to build the evidence for earlier intervention options.

The Adolescent Family Violence Program (AFVP) provides therapeutic services to adolescents who use violence in the home in three locations in Victoria. The program is targeted at young people aged 12 to 17 and their families and seeks to reduce violence, support young people to remain connected to education and employment, improve family relationships and prevent the need for statutory interventions.

Young people who access the service are helped to address issues that may be contributing to, or resulting from, their use of violence, such as mental health, homelessness and disengagement from education.

The program also includes strengthening the parent–adolescent relationship through the development of communication, problem-solving and relationship skills within the family.

An evaluation, completed in 2016, found that the AFVP was meeting an important need in the community and that most existing family violence services were unsuitable for adolescents.

In 2016–17, funding of each of the three AFVPs was enhanced by around \$230,000, enabling support to be provided to an additional 32 young people and their families.

Work is also underway to strengthen practice guidance for generalist and specialist workforces to help them recognise and respond to adolescents using violence in the home.

Western Australia – Responding to domestic and family violence:

During 2017, the incoming Western Australian Government announced key election commitments, including initiatives to prevent and respond to domestic and family violence.

The Department of Communities leads the implementation of the state Stopping Family and Domestic Violence policy. Key achievements in 2017–18 were:

- joining the national Our Watch primary prevention initiative, a vehicle for driving cultural and behavioural change and correcting the power imbalances associated with violence against women and their children
- establishing a family and domestic violence counselling service in the Peel region of Western Australia
- developing a service model for an additional residential facility for Breathing Space, Western Australia’s behaviour change program for male perpetrators
- extending financial counselling services to support family and domestic violence victims
- working with the Departments of Health, Education and Justice and the Western Australia Police Force to coordinate the following joint initiatives:
 - planning for the introduction of a Respectful Relationships program in Western Australian schools with the Department of Education. The program will support school staff to teach students about positive and healthy relationships in the context of family and domestic violence prevention, and implement of a whole-of-school approach to violence prevention
 - initial work on the design of a central secure database to support information exchange about family and domestic violence, with the Western Australia Police Force and Departments of Justice, Education and Health
 - supporting the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety in developing the Residential Tenancies Legislation Amendment (Family Violence) Bill 2018, which aims to

remove tenancy-related issues that can be a barrier to leaving a violent relationship — for example, by strengthening safety arrangements at a property and removing a perpetrator from a tenancy agreement. These amendments came into effect on 15 April 2019.

Health and mental health

Connecting Care to recovery 2016–2026 — Queensland’s plan for state-funded mental health, alcohol and other drug services:

In 2016, the Queensland Government allocated more than \$350 million in new investment over five years to enhance mental health and alcohol and other drug treatment services. The plan includes programs to address risk factors that can contribute to instances of child abuse and neglect. For example, it includes programs to address problematic substance use (including by parents) and parental mental health.

More than \$43 million is allocated over five years for new alcohol and other drug services to expand access to specialist treatment, including expanded family support and new flexible service models, and programs that take into account the needs of parents with dependent children.

Additionally, \$31 million has been allocated to enhance the perinatal and infant mental health (PIMH) service system in Queensland. PIMH provides specialist mental health assessment and intervention for mothers

with severe and complex mental health disorders during pregnancy and early parenthood. Enhancements have included new specialist, community-based clinicians, the establishment of the first public mother–baby four-bed mental health unit in 2017, the roll-out of a day program in seven hospital and health services and the launch of a statewide tele-psychiatry outreach service.

The Queensland Government is reviewing its ‘Working with Parents with mental illness’ guidelines. The guidelines will be expanded to address issues related to parents with substance use disorders and updated to reflect contemporary service delivery and related legislation. As part of this review, recommendations will be made to embed content from the new guidelines into established training programs relating to risk and clinical assessment.

Other programs under the plan include the allocation of funding to initiatives to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, enhancements to the Assertive Mobile Youth Outreach Service to deliver community mental health treatment services for difficult to engages adolescents, and the allocation of \$5.2 million for the expansion of the existing ED-linQ program across Queensland to support more schools to better help students experiencing mental health issues.

The Queensland Government also funds the Evolve Therapeutic Services (ETS) program, which provides specialist intensive trauma-informed mental health therapeutic interventions for children and young

people with severe and complex mental health issues who are subject to active child protection interventions, including psycho-education and skill development to foster/kinship carers, residential care providers, government, non-government and private sector service providers.

South Australia’s Metropolitan Youth Health Young Parents Program, Youth and Women’s Safety and Wellbeing Division:

The Metropolitan Youth Health Young Parents Program (MYHYPP) is an evidence-based specialist therapeutic care program for young pregnant and parenting people. The program provides a range of interventions across the continuum of pregnancy, as well as pre- and post-natal periods. MYHYPP incorporates clinical services, therapeutic counselling and therapeutic care coordination/case management, peer education and group work, alongside accredited flexible learning education options to support young parents to access the resources they need for their own health and wellbeing and that of their children.

MYHYPP aims to build the capacity of vulnerable pregnant people and young parents experiencing adverse health outcomes, and to improve their access to and engagement with services. MYHYPP has a Specialist Youth Clinical Health team that provides a Therapeutic Parenting and Flexible Education program.

The Youth Suicide Prevention Plan for Tasmania (2016–2020):

This plan was released in 2016 and takes an evidence-based approach to reduce suicide, suicidal behaviour and their impact on young people in Tasmania.

The plan identifies these five priority areas:

- Start early by focusing on resilience, mental health and wellbeing of children, parents and families.
- Empower young people, families and wider community networks to talk about suicide and respond to young people at risk of suicide.
- Build the capacity of schools and other educational settings to support young people who may be at risk of suicide or impacted by suicide.
- Develop the capacity of the service system to support young people experiencing suicidal thoughts and behaviours.
- Respond in a timely and effective way to the suicide of a young person to minimise the impact on other young people in Tasmania.

In June 2017, Anglicare Tasmania commenced the Suicide Prevention Early Intervention Service, which supports young people aged 15 and older presenting to a health service who have attempted suicide (Action 3.1 of the plan).

From September 2017, the Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT) was engaged to develop the Tasmanian Mental Health

and Suicide Prevention Communications Charter, to guide activities to June 2020. The MHCT partnered with Everymind and delivered a range of projects, including developing messages on suicide prevention for young people (Action 9.3 of the plan).

In November 2017, the Tasmanian Suicide Register commenced operation, providing valuable data on youth suicide in Tasmania (Action 10.1 of the plan).

In June 2018, trainers from the youth health sector across Tasmania (including staff from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and Children and Youth Services) participated in the inaugural *Connecting with People Train the Trainer Program*.

In November 2018, the National Education Initiative (NEI) was launched as the new Commonwealth-funded *#be you* initiative. The Tasmanian Departments of Health and Education, Primary Health Tasmania, Catholic Education Office Tasmania and independent schools worked together with beyondblue as part of the Tasmanian NEI implementation and Engagement group to support the development and delivery of the initiative (Action 1.5 of the plan).

Tasmania's Everybody's Business Implementation Plan

(Everybody's Business) guides cross-sectoral development of promotion, prevention and early intervention activities and actions in relation to alcohol, tobacco and other drug use in Tasmania.

Everybody's Business aims to address the complex underlying causes of substance use by focusing on the determinants of health and wellbeing by using a multi-strategy approach to promote health and wellbeing at both the community and individual levels. Particular priority areas identified for action include nurturing the early years, strengthening families and fostering resilience and positive self-help actions, especially for young people, and building an integrated service system. The Everybody's Business website was officially launched on 16 November 2016 (www.everybodys.business)

In April 2016, Tasmania launched the Drink Thing website (www.drinkthing.tas.gov.au), a mobile-interactive intervention tool, developed under the Tasmanian Early Intervention Program. Drink Thing contains a range of resources on safer drinking, including tips, information on where to get help across Tasmania and a standard drinks calculator. The site is targeted at young people aged 12 to 17 years (secondary school years 7 to 10) and can be used by young people as a self-screening application to assess alcohol use. The website has been designed to be used by young people, their parents or guardians and within the school environment.

Disability

National Disability Strategy: The *National Disability Strategy 2010–2020* provides a 10-year national policy framework for all levels of government to improve the lives of all people with disability, including children. It is the primary mechanism for implementing the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* in Australia so people with disability can participate in all areas of Australian life and be safe from violence, exploitation and neglect.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme and child protection:

The interactions between the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and mainstream services systems, including child protection and family support, are guided by the legislative framework for the NDIS and the Applied Principles to Determine the Responsibilities of the NDIS and Other Service Systems. The principles were agreed to by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in April 2013, and reviewed in 2015.

In 2017, the Disability Reform Council agreed to prioritise and provide clarification on the interface between the NDIS and child protection and family support systems. To progress this work, Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies with responsibility for disability and for children and their central agencies with oversight of the NDIS implementation are working cooperatively with the National Disability Insurance Agency to ensure the successful roll-out of the NDIS. All jurisdictions

agree that the primary emphasis is to ensure that children with disability receive timely and appropriate support.

South Australian Department for Child Protection's Disability Program:

South Australia's Department for Child Protection (DCP) is committed to a strengthened focus on disability and to significantly improving outcomes for children with disability in out-of-home care. A significant proportion of children in the care of DCP have some level of disability or developmental delay and many are therefore eligible for disability support through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). A Disability Support and Intervention Program was created within DCP in February 2018. This program provides specialist disability experts to help staff across the agency to access a funded NDIS plan for their clients and to ensure that it is fully expended on specialist disability services. The program also supports commissioning of out-of-home care services so that they respond more effectively and efficiently to the needs of children with disabilities. The program team is made up of allied health staff experienced in working with children and young people with disability.

The program works closely with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and the Commonwealth Department of Social Services to escalate matters for resolution and work collaboratively to address the needs of children and young people with complex needs.

South Australia – Disability support and interagency collaboration to support transition from care

Jack (not his real name) is a 17-year-old South Australian Aboriginal person with complex needs and an intellectual disability. Jack has been under the guardianship of the Minister since a young age and has lived in residential care. Jack was also in receipt of a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plan. Transition from care arrangements that met Jack's needs required finalisation.

Jack became highly apprehensive about transitioning from care as he approached his 18th birthday. He physically assaulted the young people he was living with, was detained in a youth justice facility and was then released two weeks before his birthday. Alternative accommodation and support for Jack post-care were urgently required. The Department for Child Protection's (DCP) new Disability Program worked closely with the National Disability Insurance Agency to ensure that his NDIS plan would provide him with the specialist disability support he needed to transition from care and meet his highly complex needs

An Aboriginal community-controlled agency skilled in supporting Aboriginal young people with disability was engaged and accommodation was then arranged.

Jack now remains with the agency of his choice and his high level of support will be stepped down as his skills develop. He has re-engaged in education and is interested in undertaking employment readiness programs. Services are now liaising with the NDIS Support Coordinator and Jack's aunty and cousins are kept informed of any decisions and changes made.

SUPPORTING OUTCOME 4:

Are children who have
been abused or neglected
receiving the support and
care they need for their
safety and wellbeing?

What is being done to ensure children who have been abused or neglected are receiving the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing?

Although the National Framework is ambitiously leading the way towards achieving a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse, the evidence indicates that too many of our children and young people are facing abuse and neglect. In response to this, the National Framework acknowledges the importance of providing support and adequate care for these vulnerable children and young people.

To help achieve this outcome, the National Framework has identified strategies that aim to:

- reduce child protection substantiations
- increase the resilience of abuse survivors
- improve the educational outcomes of children in out-of-home care
- ensure children leaving care have adequate leaving care plans
- examine the link between children who are subject to child protection substantiations and have also had services support from across the sectors.

These strategies focus on:

- enhancing access to support services for recovery where abuse or neglect has occurred
- supporting grandparent, foster and kinship carers to provide safe and stable care
- improving support for young people leaving care
- supporting enhanced national consistency and continuous improvement in child protection services.

To help progress against the performance indicators and towards the high-level outcome, the Second Action Plan outlined the following National Priorities against Supporting Outcome 4:

- **Enhancing the evidence base** — improving data collections relating to children’s health, development and wellbeing
- **Filling the research gaps** — supporting research focused on issues relevant to protecting children from abuse and neglect
- **National Standards for out-of-home care** — identifying opportunities to improve outcomes for children and young people in out-of-home care
- **Transitioning to independence** — providing support in areas such as health, housing, education and employment to vulnerable young people transitioning to independence from out-of-home care

- **Improving support for carers** — addressing issues facing carers of children and young people unable to live at home with their own families, by exploring opportunities for professional care, removing barriers to caring for working families and developing a national survey to better understand what carers need
- **Sector development** — strengthening support for the education, professional development and retention of the child protection workforce, including enabling the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce to be more actively involved in the tertiary child protection system.

Key activities under National Priorities in 2016–17 and 2017–18

ACT — A Step Up for Our Kids:

In 2017–18, the ACT Government committed an additional \$43.8 million over four years to support the statutory child protection system. This package provided additional resources for Child and Youth Protection Services, enhancing the ACT Government’s investment in services and reforms through the implementation of *A Step Up for Our Kids*, the ACT’s five-year out-of-home care strategy.

A Step Up for Our Kids — Out of Home Care Strategy 2015–2020 is a five-year reform program for the child protection and out-of-home care system. It provides strategic direction to ensure children and young people are at the centre of decision-making and have every chance to grow and develop in a safe, supportive and stable home environment.

The strategy strives to deliver a therapeutic, trauma-informed system of care through three key domains:

- strengthening high-risk families
- creating a continuum of care
- strengthening accountability and ensuring a high-functioning care system.

The strategy integrates external governance, joint governance and joint practice panels to enable high-level collaboration and a shared focus on quality practice among partner agencies, including ACT Together — a consortium of providers comprising Barnardos Australia, OzChild and Australian Childhood Foundation. The organisations work together to deliver a comprehensive continuum of care service for children and young people in out-of-home care through to 18 years of age, and support for care leavers up to 25 years of age.

The evaluation framework was developed to identify a baseline and to measure outcomes at the mid and end points of the strategy.

The mid-strategy evaluation report is expected to be released in the first quarter of 2019. This allows sufficient time for implementation and consolidation of the various aspects of *A Step Up for Our Kids* and will provide a comprehensive view of how the service system is performing against the evaluation framework.

The Baseline Report establishes a working benchmark of services and highlights what had been achieved at June 2017. The Baseline Report is not a full evaluation but tests the strategy's outcomes framework to make sure that the measures are correct and provide valuable information for the mid-strategy review.

ACT – Therapeutic assessments:

A key element of the ACT's out-of-home care strategy, *A Step Up for Our Kids*, is the provision of therapeutic assessments and plans for every child and young person in care. Therapeutic assessments identify the needs of children and young people entering care, informing the development of a therapeutic plan for every child or young person and a child or young person's care plan. Children and young people are placed at the centre of the assessment process and are involved in developing their own plan, along with their family and/or carers.

A therapeutic assessment aims to review the impact that trauma has had on a child or young person's development. This assists in identifying how carers can be best supported to meet the therapeutic needs of the child or young person in different areas of their life, including health, education, behavioural and emotional development, culture and identity, family and social relationships. The assessment process ensures that any related difficulties are identified and treated as early as possible and provides the child's support network with education on the neurobiology of the brain and how childhood adversity is likely to affect the developing brain.

This assessment process produces positive outcomes for children and young people who come to the attention of Child and Youth Protection Services by promoting an innovative, child-centred and trauma-informed approach and providing children with therapeutic recommendations targeting their vulnerabilities and identifying their strengths. At the end of the assessment period, the report and recommendations are delivered to the child or young person and their declared care team, which may include, for example, the carer, case manager, parents, school, day care and community agencies. The case management team incorporates the recommendations in the child's case plan for ongoing monitoring and review. The assessment is revisited and reviewed after 12 months.

ACT – A Step Up for Our Kids

‘Michaela’ (name changed) entered care at 10 months of age following concerns about her mother, ‘Janelle’ (name changed) and her parenting capacity, periodic homelessness and the possible effect these were having on Michaela’s health and development. Michaela was placed with an ACT Together emergency carer who provided a home and stability for Michaela’s time in care. ACT Together also facilitated weekly contact visits between Michaela and Janelle, to develop their attachment.

The Therapeutic Assessment Team within Child and Youth Protection Services undertook an assessment of Michaela to identify her particular needs and supported the care team to meet them. To support a restoration plan, Janelle entered Uniting’s Children and Families ACT program, where she received training in the Circles of Security parenting program and was assisted at contact visits in developing attachment with Michaela.

Once Janelle was ready and settled into a new home, the care team helped to restore Michaela home to her mother after only eight months in care. Michaela and Janelle continue to participate in the Children and Families ACT program, receiving ongoing support in their home. Janelle has remained in contact with ACT Together’s emergency carers and is using their support for monthly respite for Michaela.

Michaela’s story is just one of many examples of how we can ensure greater stability for children and young people in care under *A Step Up for Our Kids*.

South Australia’s Children and Young People Safety Act 2017: The Department for Child Protection commenced a staged implementation of the *Children and Young People Safety Act 2017*. This Act was part of a suite of new legislation designed to underpin the wholesale reform of South Australia’s child protection and child wellbeing systems in response to the state Child Protection Systems Royal Commission. The first phase commenced on 26 February 2018 and the remaining sections of the Act came into effect

on 22 October 2018. The first stage of implementation focused on embedding the priorities and principles of the Act across the child protection sector. The sections of the Act implemented in the first phase included those that give voice and better representation to children and young people under custody and guardianship orders in decisions that will affect their lives, greater rights to carers, assistance to care leavers, improved information sharing, and greater oversight of decision making, including rights to internal and external review.

The Act promotes the importance of ensuring Aboriginal children and young people are safe, cared for and connected to culture, family and community and enshrines the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle in South Australian legislation.

Key provisions of the new Act require child protection workers to seek the views of children and young people. Children and young people must be asked about their views in all phases of the child protection system. Where children and young people have a diminished capacity to participate or make decisions, they will be provided accessible information and will have a level of involvement that suits their age, development, ability to understand and psychological state, including information about the decision and rationale for decisions made.

Department for Child Protection staff are required to give due weight to the views of children and young people when considering their broader safety and wellbeing needs, as well as being mindful of the important views of carers, birth families and other professionals.

South Australia's education program for children in residential care to promote their rights to make complaints:

In response to recommendation 136 of the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission, the Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People was tasked with developing an education program for children in residential care to promote their rights to make complaints, including to the Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection, and to inform them of their rights in relation to physical intervention, including the right to speak about their experience. The Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People worked with the CREATE Foundation to consult with children and young people and stakeholders to develop the program, including education materials. The materials have been finalised and were distributed in mid-2019.

Enhancing the evidence base

Young people in child protection and under youth justice supervision:

The AIHW was funded by state and territory government departments responsible for youth justice supervision to develop and implement a data linkage project that explored whether children and young people who have been abused or neglected are at greater risk of engaging in criminal activity and entering the youth justice system.

The project aimed to gain a better understanding of the characteristics and pathways of children and young people who are both in the child protection system and under youth justice supervision. Findings can be used to help support staff, case workers, and policy makers to get the best outcomes for these children and young people.

The report and findings were published in October 2018 and are available at www.aihw.gov.au

Vulnerable young people – interactions across homelessness, youth justice and child protection:

The AIHW was funded by state and territory government departments responsible for homelessness services to undertake a data linkage project that explored young people's interaction with specialist homelessness services (SHS) and implications for service delivery.

The main aims of the project were to:

- gain a better understanding of the characteristics of the children and young people who have accessed SHS agencies and have undergone youth justice supervision and/or received child protection services
- explore the trends in SHS service provision and housing outcomes for these children and young people.

The report and findings were published in December 2016 and are available at www.aihw.gov.au

Western Australia Department of Communities and Telethon Kids Institute – Exploring outcomes for young people who have experienced out-of-home care study:

In 2017–18, the Department of Communities commissioned the Telethon Kids Institute to explore physical and mental health, school achievement, justice involvement and child protection contact for three cohorts of children born between 1 January 1990 and 30 June 1995.

Linked data was used to compare three groups of children and young people:

- a Care group – children who had a period in care
- a Maltreatment group – children with at least one substantiated maltreatment allegation but no time in care
- a Control group – children with no child protection contact, matched to the Care group on age, socioeconomic characteristics at birth, gender and Aboriginality.

The results of the study demonstrated that the Care group had poorer outcomes in most areas compared to the Maltreatment and Control groups. Many of the results were consistent with previous research showing that young people who had been in care had poorer outcomes, and with the literature indicating that past trauma related to past maltreatment, adverse family circumstances and disadvantage all have an effect.

The study provided the Department of Communities with an opportunity to identify policy and practice responses that could strengthen approaches to working with children and young people in the areas of health, education and justice, and result in better outcomes for children and young people with a care experience.

Western Australian Department of Communities and Curtin University-led research team — *Transitioning from Out-of-Home Care: A longitudinal population based study*:

In 2018, the Western Australian Department of Communities partnered with a Curtin University-led research team on the *Transitioning from Out-of-Home Care: A longitudinal population based study*, which aims to better understand young people's pathways into and transitioning out of out-of-home care, and the factors that lead to quality support for this group of young people.

The study addresses a gap in comprehensive research on transitioning from out-of-home care pathways. It will map the pathways and experiences of care leavers and identify key factors for meeting cultural,

social and developmental needs in transitioning. The study also focuses on identifying Aboriginal family and community perspectives on the barriers and enablers important to achieving developmental milestones from a cultural perspective.

The study will help strengthen the evidence base on young people who transition from out-of-home care, enabling the Department of Communities to further enhance supports for this cohort.

Filling the research gaps

Australian Government — Working Together to Care for Kids: The Survey of Foster and Relative/Kinship Carers:

This survey was developed and implemented in response to the recommendations of the 2014 Senate Inquiry into Grandparents who take primary responsibility for raising their grandchildren. The Australian Institute of Family Studies was commissioned and funded by the Department of Social Services to conduct the survey. This national survey involved telephone interviews with 2,203 foster and relative/kinship carers in late 2016 and was aimed at providing a better understanding of the characteristics and needs of the carers of children who are living in out-of-home care in Australia. The findings from the research report, published in May 2018, will inform government policy and practice to support grandparent-headed families.

To see the report and findings, go to aifs.gov.au

New South Wales – The Institute of Open Adoption Studies: A 2015 NSW Government election commitment was to establish an independent research body to bring about cultural change in the use of open adoption as one means of permanency planning for children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC). Open adoption recognises there is often a benefit for children when both their families (birth and adoptive) remain in contact with each other after an adoption order has been made. It is understood that openness in adoption supports a child’s identity development.

The NSW Government committed \$2.85 million in 2015 to help establish an independent Institute of Open Adoption Studies. Open adoption can provide a permanent and safe home to children and young people who can’t safely return to their families or live with kin. However, in NSW only a small number of children or young people in care are being adopted each year despite the research showing the benefits of adoption.

The former FACS (now DCJ) is working to increase the number of open adoptions from care in NSW. While adoption is not appropriate for all children in OOHC (particularly Aboriginal children), more can be done to ensure that it is considered as an option when it is in the best interests of the child.

The Institute of Open Adoption Studies is an independent research centre funded by the NSW Government and the University of Sydney to ensure NSW’s open adoption practices are best practice and deliver positive outcomes.

Current activities of the Institute of Open Adoption Studies include:

- Institute Newsletter ARC Linkage Grant: Fostering lifelong connections in the best interest of children
- Measuring the return on investment of permanency pathways: A scoping study
- Exploring motivations and barriers to adoption through surveys
- Sydney Policy Lab Fellowship Program
- Best interests of the child — interpretation by courts
- Developing a practice model to promote timely family restoration and other pathways to permanency
- Evaluation of post-adoption support.

National Standards for out-of-home care

National Standards for out-of-home care:

The Australian Government, state and territory governments and the non-government sector developed National Standards to ensure that children in need of out-of-home care are given consistent, best practice care, no matter where they live. A set of 23 measures was developed to report on the impact of the 13 National Standards in driving these improvements. In 2017–18, 20 of the 23 measures were reportable.

The views of children and young people:

As a major commitment, the Commonwealth, states and territories agreed to measure and report against the National Standards and to proceed with a biennial survey to capture the views of children and young people in out-of-home care. The survey data reports on eight child-reported indicators under the National Standards. The survey is an ongoing commitment, with the second survey undertaken in 2018. The report and findings are available at www.aihw.gov.au

The Third Action Plan (2015–2018) of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020* notes a commitment to consulting with children and young people regarding aspects of the National Framework and the Action Plan. In 2016, the Australian Government Department of Social Services engaged the CREATE Foundation and the National Children's Commissioner to

conduct a series of consultations with young people across Australia regarding the three strategies outlined in the Third Action Plan.

Facilitators held consultations in March and April 2017 to seek the views of more than 300 young people from across Australia on the strategies of the Third Action Plan and to ensure that their views were considered in the ongoing review and implementation of the National Framework and Third Action Plan. To see the findings from the consultations, go to www.dss.gov.au

NSW Permanency Support Program:

This program commenced in October 2017 and shifts the delivery of services for children in out-of-home care from a placement-based service system to a child-and-family-centred one. This helps achieve better safety, permanency and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people. PSP prioritises finding a permanent home for children within two years. To support this, a PSP funding model tailors funding to each child's individual needs, circumstances and permanency goal through the provision of flexible funding packages.

The service design can be thought of as a 'build-up' approach whereby flexible options can be selected to meet the needs of children, young people and their families, and achieve the overall case plan goal.

Packages are commissioned and delivered by the former FACS (now DCJ) and service providers. The PSP packaged care service model consists of a case plan goal package, baseline package and child needs package. Specialist packages are also

available depending on the child or young person's circumstances and eligibility. In extraordinary circumstances, an additional specialist package for complex needs may also be added.

For more information go to

www.facs.nsw.gov.au

Queensland – Continuous Quality

Improvement: In 2013, the *Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry* (QCPCI) recommended each department with responsibility for child protection outcomes establish quality assurance and performance monitoring mechanisms to provide internal oversight of child protection. Queensland established the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) program in July 2017. The CQI program aims to:

- ensure child protection services are of a consistently high standard and are sustainable
- support continuous improvement and strengthening practice, business systems and processes
- model the *Strengthening families Protecting Children Framework for Practice*
- ensure a strong focus on improving practice and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, parents and families

- influence changes to policies and procedures to support staff to deliver effective services
- make assessments about performance against standards, focusing on outcomes for children, young people, parents and families.

The Quality and Accountability Framework for Out of Home Care –

Tasmania: In 2017–18 the Out of Home Care Foundations project is developing a Quality and Accountability Framework (QAF) for out-of-home care in Tasmania. It will guide how the Tasmanian Government works with service providers and stakeholders to build a coordinated, integrated and accountable system. By identifying the standards of service delivery for out-of-home care, measuring success and embedding a culture of continuous improvement, the QAF will be an important mechanism to achieve wellbeing outcomes for children and young people in out-of-home care.

It is expected that the QAF will reflect the National Standards for out-of-home care, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.

Appointment of Tasmanian Child

Advocate: The Tasmanian Government appointed the state's first Child Advocate in June 2018, providing to children in care a greater voice regarding the quality of and decisions made about their care. This new position was created in response to the recommendation in the Commissioner for Children and Young People's report, *Children and Young People in Out of Home Care in Tasmania*, that mechanisms be in place to seek out and listen to the individual voices of children and young people in the out-of-home care system. This recommendation was also incorporated in the Strategic Plan for Out of Home Care in Tasmania 2017–19.

The Child Advocate provides advocacy services for and on behalf of all children and young people in the care of the Secretary and ensures that children and young people in care have a voice in decisions that affect them and in services provided to them. Where a child or young person expresses concerns about the quality of their care or decisions made about them, the Child Advocate will advocate for them based on their wishes.

Western Australia — Needs

Assessment Tool: In 2016–17, the former Department for Child Protection and Family Support³ implemented the Needs Assessment Tool to assess the needs of children coming into care. By the end of February 2017, all children in care had been assessed using the tool.

The Needs Assessment Tool is a case management tool that assists in consistently identifying and assessing the complex and changing needs of children in the Chief Executive Officer's care. It uses a range of questions to capture information across the nine dimensions of wellbeing and is reviewed at least once per year.

Using the Needs Assessment Tool, Department of Communities child protection workers and the child's care team⁴ can:

- gain an overall picture of a child's needs
- identify a suitable care arrangement for the child
- more accurately determine the financial resources needed to support a child
- track changes in a child's needs over time
- identify system-wide needs through aggregated child data.

3 On 28 April 2017, the Premier of Western Australia announced significant Machinery of Government changes to the public sector. These changes started with the amalgamation of a number of government departments, including the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, Department of Housing and Disability Services Commission, leading to more efficient service delivery for our communities.

4 Every child in care has a care team comprising a group of people important to the child and their carer. The care team maintains and supports a child's care arrangement and their continued connection to their parents, siblings, wider family, network, community and culture.

Transitioning to Independence

Australian Government — Towards Independent Adulthood trial:

In the 2016 Budget, the Australian Government announced an investment of \$3.87 million to deliver a three-year trial aimed at testing a new service delivery model to better support young people as they move from out-of-home care to independent adulthood. The trial was conducted in Western Australia. Wanslea Family Services (Wanslea) delivered the trial service model, which operated in metropolitan Perth and the Peel, Wheatbelt and South West regions of Western Australia. The trial commenced in mid-2017 and ended in 2020.

The trial delivered one-on-one mentoring and targeted supports to 80 young people aged 16 years at the commencement of the trial who agreed to participate. Wanslea personal advisers (referred to as youth workers) helped participants leaving care to gain skills for independent living and to access housing, education, training, employment and specialist support and services, as required.

The trial recruited 80 young people aged 16 who were in state care and linked them with a Wanslea youth worker to assist in their journey towards independence.

Wanslea recruited Aboriginal staff and a partnership with Yorgum Aboriginal Corporation meant that the cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were prioritised.

A key intention of the trial was to evaluate the effectiveness of the intensive one-on-one supports given to young people, particularly in the areas of education, training and employment. The TIA trial included an independent process and impact evaluation to identify aspects of the model that may be used in the future by states and territories in Australia to better support young people transitioning from care to independent living.

The Wanslea youth workers worked closely with Department of Communities case workers to ensure that leaving care plans and cultural plans were developed and reviewed, and included the input of young people. Youth workers also made connections with accommodation, mental health, employment and cultural support agencies to ensure timely access to services for participants.

Group work was a successful component of this trial, including such topics as budgeting and nutritious cooking, self-esteem and personal development, keys for life (driver training) and tenancy training. Overnight camps and retreats focused on wellbeing, social support and encouraging positive self-talk and empowerment.

At March 2019, after nearly two years of operation, there were 76 participants at various levels of engagement with the trial, and some promising outcomes were reported. Researchers are evaluating all components of the trial, including speaking with all stakeholders at different stages of the trial.

Towards Independent Adulthood trial: case study

Georgia* was born in New Zealand and arrived in Australia in early 2008. Before starting with the TIA trial, Georgia was transient and couch surfing — until her TIA Youth Worker advocated on Georgia's behalf with the WA Department of Communities — Housing Division and she was placed in temporary housing to stabilise her living arrangements.

Georgia experienced barriers to gaining financial independence. Support provided to Georgia included help to apply for a one-off payment from Centrelink, resulting in a six-month payment at the Youth Allowance rate. The housing provider** contributed a small weekly allowance for Georgia to develop budgeting skills and to have a small amount of money once she transitioned from the housing placement into stable long-term housing. The TIA Youth Worker established that Georgia was eligible for Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA) and that once she was settled into stable long-term housing TILA could provide additional support.

Since participating in the TIA trial, Georgia has gained her learner drivers permit, is undertaking driving lessons and is enrolled at TAFE. Georgia has received assistance from the Department of Communities to apply for a Centrelink Special Benefits Payment to ensure a stable income.

Georgia had not previously connected with her Maori culture, inhibiting her from forming sound social relationships in her community. By providing intensive case management and advocacy, Georgia's TIA Youth Worker raised the profile of Georgia's situation and the impact her citizenship status had had on her emotional wellbeing, housing options and capacity to plan for future pathways into education and employment.

Georgia has been accepted into long-term supported housing and has connected with a new TIA Youth Worker of Maori origin. Georgia is now attending cultural events and connecting with the broader Maori community to explore her connections and family tree from New Zealand.

*Name has been changed to protect privacy.

** Housing provider name not provided to protect privacy.

Queensland's Next Step After

Care program: Next Step After Care (NSAC) commenced in March 2015 in response to recommendations from the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry, with the aim to provide support to young people aged 15–21 in their transition from care in Queensland.

NSAC services help young people to access a broad range of practical advice and support services, including financial and legal advice, locating accommodation, employment and training, and support with relationships, safety and wellbeing.

Throughout 2016–17 and 2017–18, the Queensland Government has continued investment in the NSAC program. The program offers young people support in two ways:

- the *Connections* program that young people can access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- tailored individual support.

An evaluation of NSAC in 2017 highlighted the value of the program, finding it to be an important form of support for young people. Evaluation findings are being considered to ensure that the program best meets the needs of young people in their transition from care. Ensuring the program is culturally responsive will be a central focus.

In late 2018, amendments to the *Child Protection Act 1999* extended eligibility for transition to adulthood support

to young people up to the age of 25. More than 1,200 young people received support from NSAC services in 2018.

Victoria — Better Futures: A new way of supporting care leavers is being trialled in several areas across Victoria. Commencing in 2016–17 and continuing through 2017–18, Better Futures provides proactive, outcomes-focused, flexible and tailored support to young people as they transition from out-of-home care to independence.

Key elements are:

- Referral at 15 years and 9 months — Child Protection or contracted agencies retain case management responsibility, but early referral allows maximum time for relationship building between the young person and the Better Futures key worker, along with engagement and consultation with the care team.
- Key worker — Fundamental to the model is the allocation of a key worker who supports the young person up to 21 years of age. The worker engages with the young person in care and lends expertise to transition planning. The key worker provides post-care case work support, with a focus on sustainable outcomes.
- Flexible levels of support — Workers ensure young people have an active voice in decisions about their future and provide intensity of support which flexes up and down in response to the changing circumstances and needs of the young person.

- Flexible funding — Young people have access to flexible funding to support their goals for independence. These may relate to engagement in education, training and employment, or housing, health and wellbeing.

Evaluations show that early results are promising, with young people highlighting the relationship with their key worker as one of the strengths of their Better Futures experience. Better Futures rolled out across the rest of Victoria in late 2019.

Victoria — Better Futures case studies

Case study 1: Tammy (not her real name) entered residential care at age 15, at which time she was disengaged from education and engaging in risk-taking behaviour. Tammy was referred to Better Futures and a leaving care readiness assessment was completed. It identified substantial support needs, including securing housing and employment, addressing substance use and mental health management.

Tammy's Better Futures key worker helped her identify her future goals and explore ways that she could contribute to decision making and planning.

Anxiety regarding her housing situation became a barrier to addressing other areas of need, and this led to increased substance use. Despite this, a suitable post-care housing option was secured.

Better Futures support increased during this transition phase, and flexible support funding was used to achieve goals in Tammy's support plan, including funding learner's permit fees and housing establishment costs.

Building on Tammy's strengths and support networks, the Better Futures worker reinforced and supported her capacity to undertake tasks independently — which was evidenced by her ability to secure employment and attend scheduled appointments without her key worker.

Since securing housing and finding employment, Tammy has been proactive in seeking support with her mental health, and her Better Futures worker has linked her in with a youth mental health service. Key outcomes achieved to date are that Tammy:

- is in secure accommodation
- is in a stable relationship
- has positive contact with family
- is not using illicit substances
- has obtained her learner's permit
- is committed to engaging mental health services.

Tammy is continuing to thrive and no longer requires intensive levels of support. Her Better Futures key worker will maintain periodic contact until Tammy turns 21 — providing her the opportunity to access supports when and if required.

Case study 2: Bobby (not his real name), an Aboriginal young man with an extensive history of trauma, was referred to Better Futures in 2017. Bobby's residential care provider and case manager reported that he was displaying high-risk behaviours and was not engaging with his care team or other services.

Bobby's Better Futures worker collaborated with care team members to engage him through persistent and active assertive outreach and reconnected him with Aboriginal services and cultural activities. Through culturally informed practice, the worker has established a positive connection with Bobby and engagement is focused on empowering him to reach his full potential. This has resulted in Bobby's renewed commitment to accessing services and taking steps to achieve positive outcomes — addressing immediate health concerns, reducing his substance abuse, and reconnecting with family and culture.

Bobby's Better Futures worker provided consistent emotional support and was able to respond flexibly when Bobby needed it most. This was particularly important when his aunt passed away in country Victoria. Bobby's worker supported him through the grieving process and supported his wish to visit his aunt's burial site.

Bobby's Better Futures worker is supporting him to participate in care team meetings and contribute to the transition planning process. Work is underway to strengthen his connection with extended family and culture in country Victoria (Bobby is considering moving to live with extended family), build his independent living skills, and identify other aspirations and future goals.

Bobby's involvement in Better Futures has intensified in preparation for a smooth transition of support when his child protection order finishes.

Improving support for Carers

My Forever Family NSW: NSW is implementing a new approach to recruiting and supporting people who wish to become guardians, adoptive parents, or other carers (namely, foster, kinship and relative carers). This strategy is focused on better understanding the roles that people wish to take on in order to support the children and families involved in the child protection system. It will support NSW to implement the Permanency Support Program.

When it comes to emergency, restoration and respite carers, the focus will be on ensuring children and families are supported close to home and within their existing community wherever possible. Where children cannot safely be restored home, the strategy will aim to recruit guardians and adoptive parents to give more children and young people a loving, permanent home for life. NSW has listened to feedback that carers do not always feel adequately supported. As a result, NSW is providing more support, including setting a minimum amount for the carer allowance, and providing flexible training opportunities, better advocacy and more opportunities to share their views and connect with each other.

NSW will need to move to a model that recruits people to specific roles, whether that be prospective adoptive parents, restoration carers or respite carers. We need a system that understands clearly what roles people will take to support children and families involved with the child protection system. The system needs to ensure that children and families can be supported close to their home to ensure that when a child requires care it is within their existing community wherever possible.

NSW Children’s Guardian legislative amendments: In 2018, the NSW Children’s Guardian undertook a statutory review to strengthen Working With Children Check requirements. Following this review a number of legislative amendments were proposed, including the requirement for people to keep their personal details up to date or risk a penalty, employers needing to verify child-related workers or risk a fine, Working With Children Checks being required for all parent volunteers attending overnight kids camps with their own child, and the Children’s Guardian having discretion to allow young people turning 18 while in care to continue to live with their authorised carer in circumstances where they cannot obtain a Working With Children Check clearance. The *Child Protection (Working with Children) Amendment (Statutory Review) Act 2018* was passed through Parliament in April 2018 and came into effect from 1 July 2018.

Northern Territory — Culturally appropriate care arrangements:

In 2017, Territory Families committed to supporting the Family Matters campaign led by SNAICC — National Voice for our Children to improve understanding and application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.

Territory Families also began working with local community members in the East Arnhem region to establish the Mikan Reference Group. Members are Yolngu clan leaders or elders who represent family groups in the area, and were identified by the communities themselves. The Territory Families Arnhem office worked with Mikan to:

- build constructive working relationships between Territory Families and local communities, including outstations and homelands
- ensure Territory Families' practices and processes are culturally safe
- share information and promote child protection awareness in the community
- discuss high-risk cases (with the permission of the family) and jointly develop safety and action plans that aim to divert children away from care whenever safely possible.

The Mikan group provides advice to Territory Families on the care and protection of Yolngu children and to help reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect. Mikan can receive referrals from Territory Families and help to identify family connections and potential kinship carers.

In 2017–18 Territory Families took steps to:

- improve delivery of foster and kinship care training
- increase the use of interpreters for planning and reunification activities and helped to ensure families participate in their first language
- partner with Aboriginal-controlled organisations to increase the number and proportion of Aboriginal children in care placed with Aboriginal carers.

Northern Territory carers charter of rights:

In May 2017, the inaugural Charter of Rights for Foster and Kinship Carers, developed by the Foster and Kinship Carers Association of the Northern Territory, was launched. The charter was developed through broad consultation with Territory Families and within the carer community as the first step of a new program. The charter is part of a broader program between the Foster and Kinship Carers Association of the Northern Territory and Territory Families to recognise the role of carers in the care of vulnerable children, and to celebrate and promote their work. The charter guides Territory Families as it works to improve the circumstances and wellbeing of children in out-of-home care, their families and carers.

Queensland's Partners in Care:

In October 2017, the Queensland Government published the *Partners in Care: Working better with foster and kinship carers* report as a result of a statewide engagement strategy delivered in partnership between the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women and Queensland Foster and Kinship Care.

In 2017, 17 face-to-face workshops were held in 11 locations across Queensland. A total of 249 foster and kinship carers from a broad range of backgrounds participated in the workshops. Together, this group represented 2,558 years of collective experience as carers.

Each Queensland region developed and implemented regional action plans focused on supporting and engaging with carers.

Practical outcomes continue to be achieved to improve support to carers, which in turn supports children and young people in care to receive the care they need for their safety and wellbeing.

Partners in Care recommendations completed to date include:

- a new carer website
- a quick reference guide to carer payments and new streamlined processes for approval of the most common types of financial expenses incurred by carers
- a Carer Connect app providing secure and improved access to information and support, including the ability to lodge reimbursement claims for eligible care costs
- the ability for carers to contribute to a child or young person's life story via the Kicbox app
- priority access to *Get Started Vouchers* to help children and young people in care join a sporting or active recreation club
- online carer resources regarding the National Disability Insurance Scheme and associated training
- specialist services to support staff and carers and access to services for children and young people with disabilities
- expanded ability for carers to exercise more guardianship decision-making when the Chief Executive is the guardian for the children in their care
- a safety and support network resource, providing a collaborative approach to building a network for children and young people in care
- ongoing advocacy to the Australian Government for better access for carers to Medicare, Centrelink and child care benefits.

Tasmania — A new model for family-based care: A new program and service delivery model for foster and kinship care is under development. It will consider how to improve placement stability and continuity of care for children and young people in out-of-home care and how family-based care may be extended to support children and young people with complex behaviours or needs. It will also consider how the system works with, recruits, trains and supports carers to provide the care children and young people need to heal and thrive.

The Out of Home Care Foundations project is working closely with the sector on the future program. The project has released a discussion paper and has consulted widely to gather feedback for consideration in developing the final program.

Tasmania's Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People in Out of Home Care:

As part the *Strong Families, Safe Kids* redesign of the child safety system, the Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People in Out of Home Care sets out clear guidelines and expectations and is a commitment to children and young people about what they can expect.

The framework has been developed in consultation with children and young people in out-of-home care, kinship and foster carers, and service providers and will apply to government and non-government agencies that work with children and young people in out-of-home care.

It was prepared in response to the Commissioner for Children and Young

People's 2017 report, *Children and Young People in Out of Home Care in Tasmania*, and builds on the Tasmanian Government's reforms of the out-of-home care system.

For more information or to download a copy of the Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People in Out of Home Care, go to www.communities.tas.gov.au

Victoria — Carer KaFE program:

The Carer KaFE program (Kinship and Foster Carer Education) provides training and development to support carers to help them provide the best possible care to vulnerable children and young people. Between commencement in 2016 and the end of 2018, more than 3,900 carers participated in over 245 training sessions.

The training is tailored to kinship carers, foster carers, Aboriginal carers and carers of Aboriginal children and covers such topics as developmental ages and stages, managing trauma, culture and resilience.

Carer KaFE also provided sponsorship to carers wishing to complete nationally accredited training and opportunities for carers to attend national conferences. The online Carer KaFE training calendar provides carers with access to online modules, podcasts, camps and face-to-face training.

Carers can attend training at various metropolitan and regional areas throughout the state. For more information go to www.carerkafe.org.au/training/all-training

Victoria — new model of kinship care:

In 2017–18, Victoria commenced a new model of kinship care to meet the growing needs of kinship care placements and

in recognition of the need for additional support for kinship carers and the children in their care. The objectives of the model are to identify kinship networks early when children need out-of-home care; promote placement quality and stability through providing more flexible supports to kinship carers; and strengthen reunification with family where appropriate.

The model includes a First Supports component — support provided to eligible new kinship placements. First Supports conducts a comprehensive assessment to determine the suitability of the placement as well as linking carers and children with the supports they need. Flexible brokerage funding is available to meet any immediate material or financial needs of the kinship placement. First Supports provides support to the kinship carer and works with them to better understand and respond to the needs of the child in their care. First Supports can assist carers to promote connection to culture.

The new model of kinship care also introduced kinship-specific workers located alongside child protection staff. The kinship workers provide a dedicated point of contact for kinship carers to assist in resolving any issues or problems they may have. The kinship workers also conduct kinship finding to find new kinship placements and expand the kinship networks of children in out-of-home care.

The new kinship care model includes investing in supports for the reunification with family of Aboriginal children and young people following kinship placements, and an Aboriginal-specific kinship finding and genealogical service.

For further information go to services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/kinship-care and providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/kinship-care

Western Australia — Homes for Carers:

Homes for Carers was established in September 2016 and is a joint venture between the Department of Communities, the Housing Authority and a community housing provider, Foundation Housing. The program identifies family carers who:

- are caring for children and young people in care
- are living in public housing that cannot accommodate their family size with additional children in their care.

Identified family carers are matched to private rental properties that are more suitable.

Family carers are supported through rent subsidies and Foundation Housing provides tenancy management and property maintenance. Family carers are encouraged to nominate rental locations that maintain the family's existing connections to schools, sports clubs and community groups.

From September 2016 to the end of the 2016–17 financial year, Homes for Carers placed six families in suburbs across Perth, including 18 children in care, which

included an additional eight carers' children. Family carers' families also had housing issues resolved as a result of the program.

Sector development

New South Wales – Contracting partnerships to be responsive to needs:

Implementation of the Permanency Support Program reforms in NSW has required new ways of partnering with non-government organisations so that more children and young people are able to have a loving, permanent home. New contracts for foster care and Aboriginal foster care providers commenced operation on 1 October 2017 and extend to 30 June 2022. The new contracts seek to reshape the system to better respond to the individual needs of children and young people, deliver more permanency outcomes, and enable providers and the former FACS (now DCJ) to track performance against agreed key performance indicators.

New South Wales – Out-of-home care transition:

In 2008 a Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in New South Wales took place. A key recommendation of the Inquiry was to transfer out-of-home-care (OOHC) services from government to the non-government organisation (NGO) sector. In 2009 *Keep them Safe*, a five-year action plan, was launched that supported the transition recommendation.

Since 2012, the NSW Government has been transitioning the provision of OOHC service delivery from the former FACS (now DCJ) to the NGO sector with the aim of improving the OOHC system and delivering better outcomes for children, young people, families and carers. The transition for Aboriginal children was planned to take place over a 10-year period rather than the 5-year period for non-Aboriginal children. This approach was taken to ensure that the transition of children matched the pace and capacity of the developing agencies.

Improving overall outcomes for Aboriginal people is central to the NSW Government's current child protection reforms, including Their Futures Matter, Targeted Early Intervention Program reform, the Permanency Support Program, and the OOHC Transition Project. The full strategy provides a roadmap to scale up the whole Aboriginal child and family sector to achieve the goal of being an integrated, holistic and sustainably resourced Aboriginal services safety-net through which:

- service models for Aboriginal communities are informed by evidence and self-determined
- a high standard of service quality is maintained
- meaningful employment opportunities are provided for Aboriginal people
- strong sustainable organisations provide integrated holistic services to Aboriginal children and families.

Queensland — child and family workforce capacity and capability development:

Having a capable and effective sector means better services and support for children and families, and ultimately better outcomes for Queensland. *Strengthening Our Sector Strategy 2016–19* was launched by the Queensland Family and Child Commission in 2016 following collaboration with peak bodies and industry partners from across the sector. The strategy and its two action plans have delivered:

- a career promotion campaign to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to consider a career in the child and family support sector
- an industry maturity matrix and supporting tools to help organisations measure their business maturity in areas such as funding and financing, research and innovation, workforce, service integration, and governance
- place-based projects across Queensland to learn what works and develop an evidence base approach that will enable communities to lead their own place-based service response
- a child and family sector led framework for excellence on child-safe organisations
- a research project to understand the organisational and systemic opportunities and barriers that impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations in achieving a sustainable child and family support system.

Victoria — development of industry transition plans:

In 2017–18, the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services supported Victoria's child and family services peak body, the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (CFECFW), to lead development of a plan to guide the sector's transition from a service system focused on crisis response to one characterised by early intervention, evidence-informed practice and a more seamless response to meeting the needs of children, young people and families who are disadvantaged or experiencing vulnerability.

Development of the plan included broad and targeted consultation, comprising practice network meetings, practitioner questionnaires, surveys of CEOs, telephone interviews and meetings, a CEO forum, conversations with peak bodies from other sectors, and meetings with staff from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, as well as substantial feedback from the sector in response to a draft plan circulated March–May 2018.

Fundamental to the plan is the sector's recognition that Aboriginal self-determination is a key enabler for improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and families. The plan is consistent with the sector's commitment to building a fair, just and restorative child and family welfare service system.

A number of priorities support sector development under the plan, including developing tools and resources to support child and family system reforms; measures to embed cultural competency and respect for diversity; measures to build workforce capability, including a strategic planning workshop, development of a capability framework, pilots for student internships and placements and establishing a Child and Family Services Leadership Academy; and measures to attract and retain workers, including transferrable long service leave, secondments, and coaching/mentoring options. The plan complements a broader 10-year Community Services Industry Plan. As well as these Centre for Excellence activities, the Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA Vic, formerly Community Housing Federation of Victoria) and the Council to Homeless Persons are developing sector plans for the community housing and specialist homelessness sectors.

SUPPORTING OUTCOME 5:

**Are our Indigenous
Children supported and
safe in their families
and communities?**

What is being done to ensure our Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities?

The National Framework recognises that, in order to ensure our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are supported and safe in their families and communities, strategies to help achieve this outcome need to be developed in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies, mainstream service providers and all Australian governments.

The identified strategies under Supporting Outcome 5 focus on:

- expanding access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream services for families and children
- promoting the development of safe and strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children receive culturally appropriate protection services and care.

To help progress against the performance indicators and towards our high-level outcome, the Second Action Plan outlined the following National Priority against Supporting Outcome 5:

- **Closing the Gap** — aiming to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities are in a position to provide their children with the safe and supportive environments they need to reach their full potential.

Key activities under National Priorities in 2016–17 and 2017–18

Closing the Gap

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group, established under the Third Action Plan, implements a cross-cutting strategy aimed at reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people needing child protection services. The working group ensures that implementation of each action of the Third Action Plan aligns with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP), which seeks to ensure that child and family welfare policy, legislation and practice place importance on connection to family, community, culture and country for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. It involves five elements: prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection. The Working Group is chaired by SNAICC — National Voice for our Children, a long-term partner of the Commonwealth Government.

The working group provided advice on the implementation plans of each strategy working group and guidance on the best way to implement strategies and actions under the Third Action Plan to ensure positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The working group developed a baseline study of the ATSICPP compliance in each state and territory, which informed the working group's role of monitoring progress in relation to implementation of the ATSICPP. The results from this compliance study also informed and facilitated communication and advice between the working group and jurisdictions on key policy reform priorities related to the ATSICPP.

The working group co-hosted a national workshop with SNAICC in April 2017 that explored the development of consistent and comprehensive national data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child safety and wellbeing. The workshop was attended by the working group members and government and non-government representatives from each jurisdiction. The work developed by the workshop laid the foundations for ongoing work in the Fourth Action Plan under Actions 1.3 and 1.5 to produce a report on data gaps and priorities for development and a plan to establish a working group to progress priorities.

Supporting implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle:

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) is the key measure to ensure that connections with family, community, culture, and country for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are prioritised in legislation, policy and practice.

During 2016–17 and 2017–18 SNAICC, in consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group, undertook a number of key projects focused on advancing full implementation of the ATSICPP. This included the [baseline analyses](#) that describe implementation progress in each jurisdiction and were completed in 2017–18.

Over both reporting years, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group, in partnership with SNAICC, developed two resources to support jurisdictions in their journey toward full compliance with the ATSICPP. [Understanding and Applying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: A resource for legislation, policy, and program development](#) describes the intent of the five core and interconnected elements and was completed in 2016–17.

In 2017–18, the Working Group developed and published [The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: A Guide to Support Implementation](#). This resource provides practical guidance for implementing the ATSICPP, and includes delivery of targeted seminars in all states

and territories to support its implementation.

Throughout 2017–18, the Working Group, in partnership with SNAICC, continued to progress data development for measuring compliance with the ATSICPP through a working group with representation from all state and territory governments. A series of immediate priority measures has been identified for development over the next two to three years. The proposed indicators will provide an important data source for monitoring the implementation of ‘active efforts’ across jurisdictions.

Input to the Closing the Gap Refresh process:

Throughout 2017–18, SNAICC provided input to the Closing the Gap Refresh regarding priority areas for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This included providing a [comprehensive submission](#) on a series of proposed new targets for outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, which would be accompanied by long-term strategies. These are consistent with the Family Matters campaign targets, previously supported by the National Forum, and the work of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group.

With members of the National Forum, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group submitted a joint letter to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to reinforce SNAICC’s priority calls for the Refresh, with the support of numerous non-government organisations and a number of jurisdictions.

The key calls were for:

1. an additional Closing the Gap target to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 2040, with the following indicators:
 - the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care
 - compliance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle
 - substantiation and resubstantiation rates
 - rates of referral to early intervention supports following substantiation
 - reunification rates with family or kin.

2. strengthening the current target on early childhood education to close the gap in the early childhood development domains contained in the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) by 2030, with indicators on:
 - development outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as defined by the AEDC
 - access to early childhood education, including expansion of the current target to include 3-year-olds, rather than the current narrow focus on 4-year-olds
 - access to Aboriginal early years services, including for children from birth to 2 years in areas of particular vulnerability.

ACT — Family Group Conferencing:

In November 2017, the ACT established a family group conferencing (FGC) pilot to place decision-making in the hands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and support them to develop family plans for keeping their children and young people safe and cared for within their families and community.

FGC is typically used before, and as an alternative to, court action being taken. FGC ensures that all members of a child's extended family are contacted and encouraged to be involved in the decision-making process about their child's situation. This process is considered in line with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural values of family and community responsibility.

The FGC pilot ran for 12 months with a select group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. At 30 June 2018, a total of 11 families, including 21 children and young people, had participated in FGC. As a result, 18 children and young people remain in the care of their parents and three with their extended family.

Funding for the ongoing delivery of Family Group Conferencing was provided in the 2019–20 ACT Budget.

ACT – Our Booris, Our Way: The ACT Government progressed work to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people through *Our Booris, Our Way*, an independent review established in 2017 to examine the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the ACT’s child protection system.

The review was led by a wholly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Steering Committee and considered why children and young people enter care, how we can reduce these numbers, and how we can improve the experiences of children, young

people and families in the child protection system. On 31 August 2018, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Steering Committee released its interim report.

The final report was released at the end of 2019 and presented major recommendations with a comprehensive analysis of systemic issues in the child protection system. It included detailed analysis of the circumstances of approximately 350 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people who were in contact with the child protection system on 31 December 2017. The interim and final reports can be found at www.strongfamilies.act.gov.au.

ACT – Growing Healthy Families

A family was referred to a Child and Family Centre (CFC) by Child and Youth Protection Services in relation to a report made raising concerns about their living conditions. Workers from the Growing Healthy Families Program (GHF), an initiative tailored specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, developed a relationship with the mother (the primary carer) to help to improve the living conditions of the family. This involved providing waste skips and contacting cleaning services to assist in maintaining the home, as well as liaising with Housing ACT representatives to conduct house repairs.

One of the younger children attending Koori Preschool presented with weight and dental concerns, so the GHF worker organised for a community dental nurse visit. Speech therapist appointments were also organised for two of the younger children, and the mother was offered transport to attend the appointments.

The GHF worker also assisted with enrolling the children in school and preschool. The worker provided regular supportive home visits and referrals for supported playgroups. GHF workers continue to support the family in an ongoing capacity to ensure that the children are enrolled and attending school regularly, and that they have adequate support at home.

NSW Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy:

The *Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2017–2021* (AOS) was developed by the former FACS (now DCJ) and sets out a bold new approach for delivering quality outcomes for Aboriginal people in the next five years.

The AOS focuses on improving the outcomes experienced by Aboriginal people by setting clear expectations and specifying priorities, goals, targets, timeframes and accountability to provide a transparent and cohesive response to efforts to deliver better outcomes and client experience for Aboriginal children, families and communities.

Through the AOS, the former FACS (now DCJ) is committed to organisational targets across the following five key focus areas:

1. Increase access to early intervention for Aboriginal families.
2. Reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care.
3. Improve economic and social outcomes for Aboriginal social housing clients.
4. Increase the number of Aboriginal staff.
5. Increase engagement with disability services.

These targets are underpinned by these key whole-of-organisation initiatives:

- the [Aboriginal Cultural Capability Framework](#)
- Aboriginal Impact Statements
- Aboriginal-led independent evaluation
- measuring client experience and satisfaction
- improving Aboriginal staff engagement.

Many Aboriginal people are living fulfilling lives; however there is still a high number of Aboriginal children, families and communities that do not share the same life outcomes as the broader Australian community. Many of these Aboriginal people are clients of DCJ. The AOS aims to reverse the poor outcomes experienced by these clients.

Northern Territory's Aboriginal Cultural Security Policy and Framework:

Northern Territory Health continues to support its services to implement the Aboriginal Cultural Security Policy and Framework. The Aboriginal Health Policy unit works with services to undertake cultural security assessments for individuals and organisations and develop plans to improve understanding and delivery of culturally safe practices.

In 2016–17 Northern Territory Health also undertook a training pilot to improve communication and cultural safety among health care providers. The *Effective Communication: improving health literacy and cultural safety in healthcare* workshop provided an opportunity for participants to work towards developing effective communication strategies to enable them to practise safely in a culturally diverse health service delivery environment, while exploring ways in which their cultural values, attitudes and beliefs (and those of their workplaces) affect and shape health-care relationships. The training was delivered to more than 50 participants in four regions across the NT.

Northern Territory’s Indigenous Education Strategy 2015–2024 is a long-term approach to ensuring that Aboriginal children are successful and confident in their education journey and have real career choices and options, both within and outside their communities. The strategy is now in its fourth year of implementation, with \$42.8 million invested in 2017–18. Key achievements to date have included the expansion of

the Families as First Teachers program, a new preschool curriculum, mandated literacy and numeracy programs, development of the Employment Pathways program and the completion of the \$20 million ‘Dawurr’ boarding facility in Nhulunbuy. Stakeholder consultations and a review of the first stage of the implementation were conducted in 2017–18 to inform the development of the strategy’s second stage.

Stars Program

The Stars Program is an evidence-based youth engagement program for Aboriginal girls from primary school to Year 12. The program operates in nine schools throughout the Northern Territory and focuses on four key areas: healthy lifestyles; wellbeing; education, training and employment; and community culture and leadership. The program builds on the abilities, interests and strengths of each student and offers activities such as sport and physical activities, creative arts, music and dance. Data from 2017 shows the Stars Program had a positive impact on both school attendance and Year 12 completion rates. Across the Northern Territory, the Stars Program reduced the gap in school attendance by 39 per cent, which equates to four additional weeks of school. In remote and very remote regions, where attendance is a particular challenge for Aboriginal students, Stars reduced the gap by 55 per cent, which equates to eight more weeks of school. Stars Program students have also achieved significantly higher rates of Year 12 completion, with 96 per cent of students enrolled in Stars in 2017 completing Year 12. The gains in educational outcomes are significant to closing the gap for Aboriginal children, as we know that achieving a higher level of education is one of the key factors that is likely to reduce Aboriginal disadvantage.

Queensland — Our Way Strategy 2017–2037 and Changing Tracks Action Plan 2017–2019: *Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017–2037* (Our Way) and the first of seven three-year action plans, *Changing Tracks: An action plan for Aboriginal and*

Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017–2019, were launched in May 2017 by the Queensland Government in partnership with Family Matters Queensland. Our Way is a key initiative under the Queensland Government’s Supporting Families, Changing Futures reform program.

Our Way is an ambitious 20-year commitment to reduce the gap in life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families and to eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system by 2037. Our Way is built on the Family Matters Building Blocks and Queensland is the first state to adopt a co-designed generational strategy to eliminate over-representation. The implementation framework includes three phases of action plans that will progressively establish the systems and services to achieve the Our Way commitments, including Changing Tracks 2017–2022 — setting the foundations; Breaking Cycles 2023–2031 — changing the way services are designed and delivered; and Hitting Targets 2031–2037 — further incremental changes required to achieve targets.

The 35 actions in the first Changing Tracks Action Plan 2017–19 are driven by lead agencies and partnerships across government and non-government agencies. Actions are on track to be completed by the end of 2019. Key achievements include:

- the commencement in October 2018 of amendments under the *Child Protection Reform Amendment Act 2017* enabling self-determination, family-led decision making and delegation of some chief executive functions or powers to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services or agencies
- \$34.34 million per annum to establish 33 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services across Queensland, making it easier for families to access support to improve their social, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing, and build their capacity to safely care for and protect their children
- implementation of the First 1,000 Days Australia program.

Queensland — legislative amendment and the Child Placement Principle:

In October 2017 the Queensland Parliament passed the *Child Protection Reform Amendment Act 2017*, which made a number of significant changes to the *Child Protection Act 1999*. One of the key reforms was the introduction of principles to guide the administration of the Act in regard to recognising the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to self-determination.

Key features of this reform include:

- incorporation of all five elements of the Child Placement Principle in the administration of the Act. Anyone who undertakes functions under the Act, whether that is the department, funded services or the court system, will be required to apply the five elements of the Child Placement Principle
- a new requirement for the Chief Executive, the Director of Child Protection Litigation or an authorised officer under the Act to comply with the Child Placement Principle when making a significant decision

- the removal of reference to recognised entities and introduction of the new concept of Independent Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander entity to support the child and their family in decision-making
- strengthening of the requirement to place an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child with their family group.

Queensland — Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing

Services: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services are delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to provide support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. The statewide roll-out of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services was completed in 2017–18 and there is now an operational network of 33 services across Queensland.

Family Wellbeing Services provide culturally responsive support to improve families' social, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing and build their capacity to safely care for and protect their children. The services offer a variety of supports to families, from prevention and early intervention support to help families at the earliest possible opportunity, through to intensive support for those already in contact with the child protection system.

Service providers offer a diverse range of responses to reflect the circumstances of their target communities. They offer a variety of group programs as well as intensive case management. The latter involves:

- comprehensive needs assessment and goal-setting with families
- coordination of service provision to a family by multiple providers, when required
- practical supports
- personal support and skills development for parents or carers, and supporting connections with kin
- provision of counselling, therapeutic responses or healing practices.

Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Ltd has supported the establishment of the program through the provision of training and practice support to ensure families receive assistance from highly skilled practitioners.

This initiative represents a doubling of the investment in family support delivered by community-controlled organisations, and recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies are more likely to be accessed by, and be successful with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Service – case study

In 2015–16 the Queensland Government committed \$150 million over five years to establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. The services were rolled out progressively across the state from December 2016 to April 2018.

The following case study is an example of how the services are making it easier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to access culturally responsive support to improve their social, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing, and build their capacity to safely care for their children.

Two boys were in a family where both parents were using ice and perpetrating domestic violence against each other. The mother, who was pregnant, was sentenced and gave birth in jail. Child Safety intervention was required and the boys were placed with their grandmother.

The Family Wellbeing Service supported the mother to address her drug usage while she was in jail and she was able to look after her new baby and plan for their return home.

The Family Wellbeing Service support continued after she was released from jail so she could be reunited with her two boys. After six months the boys returned home to live with their mother and the new baby.

The Family Wellbeing Service continues to be involved, along with the foster and kinship care staff.

South Australia — Yunga Nungas:

Future Leaders pilot program: In 2017–18, the South Australian Government Yunga Nungas: Future Leaders pilot program was delivered as an intensive place-based response for Aboriginal young people with complex needs involved in the youth justice system. The program was co-designed and developed with Aboriginal young people, focusing on a particular cohort of young people aged 14–18 years from the Northern Adelaide region.

This culturally appropriate intervention program adopted a strengths-based approach by investing in the young people's interests, capabilities and leadership. The intensive response provided wrap-around case management to the young people and their families, support with legal matters and justice requirements, and a structured program to build their confidence and work-readiness skills. The structured program included a range of accredited and non-accredited learning opportunities to strengthen the young person's connection to their culture and family, improve their health and fitness, and increase their numeracy, literacy and work readiness skills.

Positive outcomes for participants included program attendance, increased educational engagement and attainment, and reduced police and youth justice contact. Learnings from this pilot will inform future program implementation.

South Australia — Aboriginal workforce participation:

The South Australian Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment is working across the South Australian public sector to increase the employment of Aboriginal people. All agencies have committed to at least 2 per cent Aboriginal employment, with many agencies setting higher targets. The South Australian Department for Child Protection is currently at 4.9 per cent with a target of 10 per cent. Initiatives include the Aboriginal Employment Register, a mentoring program and the Aboriginal Employment Public Sector Industry Clusters Program. For more information go to www.publicsector.sa.gov.au

The Department for Child Protection has also developed a strategy to assist with the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff. The strategy supports growing career pathways and increased professional development opportunities. It focuses on increasing the numbers of Aboriginal staff in the department, ensuring the adequate representation of Aboriginal staff across all business units, and working to enhance cultural competence.

South Australia — child and adolescent mental health services to the Anangu Pitjantjatjara

Yankunytjatjara lands, known as Kunpungku Atunymankunytjaku Tjitji

Uwarkara: Kunpungku Atunymankunytjaku Tjitji Uwarkara (KATU) provides direct therapeutic work to traumatised children and is supported by protective parenting and community practices developed through capacity-building with the local Anangu community. The program is based on long-term partnerships and the development of the Anangu community to respond to and work with mental health issues within their communities.

In recognition of the specific needs and circumstances of the communities on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands and South Australian Government priorities, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provides an APY Lands-based and visiting clinical and consultancy service.

Therapy services are provided, often working in partnership with the Department for Education, Department for Child Protection and the Women's and Children's Health Network Child Protection Service. CAMHS also works closely with the APY community groups to develop and improve safety for children and families.

The CAMHS approach to service delivery in the APY Lands has involved training, capacity building and employment of local Anangu people to support community understanding and change with respect to protective behaviours towards children. There are approximately 600 children of school age living in APY Lands communities. CAMHS clinicians work with around one third of the children and deliver supports for a range of health and behavioural issues, including targeted supports for children displaying harmful sexual behaviour and who have experienced abuse or neglect. Training to increase community awareness and understanding of children's social and emotional development and the impact of trauma is an ongoing part of service provision.

Tasmania — Appointment of Aboriginal Family Safety Workers:

The Aboriginal Family Safety Worker (AFSW) Initiative was announced by the Tasmanian Government in March 2017, under *Safe Homes, Safe Families: Tasmania's Family Violence Action Plan 2015–2020*, with the objective of improving the quality and accessibility of culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal women and children affected by family violence.

Exposure to family violence has been identified as a serious risk factor to children's development, and the wellbeing outcomes for both mothers and children. The AFSW Initiative responds to this evidence and to feedback from the community for enhanced frontline service responses led by Aboriginal family violence workers.

In September 2017, three Aboriginal Family Safety Workers commenced work in Child and Family Centres (CFCs) located in Ravenswood (North), in Burnie (North West) and at Tagari Lia in Bridgewater (South). Aboriginal Family Safety Workers work with families and children from birth to four years (and older children within the family). They provide a protective factor for families in the CFC community, supporting and promoting family safety while addressing the impacts of family violence on children.

Aboriginal Family Safety Workers facilitate referral pathways between Aboriginal community organisations and CFCs, to ensure that Aboriginal families experiencing or affected by family violence are supported as they navigate the service system (including Child Safety Services).

Victoria's Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care: Victoria's commitment to self-determination by authorising Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to care for Aboriginal children:

The Victorian Government has committed, through the Roadmap to Reform and more recently the *Wungurilwil Gapgapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement*, to prioritise efforts to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children involved in child protection and out-of-home care. The principles of self-determination and

self-management underpin these efforts — with more funding and a stronger role for ACCOs in the design and delivery of local services and supports, and services that are culturally responsive and safe.

New nation-leading initiatives have been developed to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in care and keep children who cannot live safely at home connected to their extended family, culture and community. Under the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care initiative, two ACCOs have been authorised under section 18 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* to assume full responsibility of specified children on Children's Court protection orders.

The first authorisations under section 18, to the Victorian Aboriginal Children Care Agency, were made on 23 November 2017. The second ACCO to be authorised was the Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative. This will increase to four ACCOs by 2021.

Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care provides important decision-making ability to Aboriginal organisations for Aboriginal children involved in child protection. The 2017 data suggests that the rapid growth of Aboriginal children in care in Victoria is now slowing.

Victoria’s transitioning Aboriginal children to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations:

The Victorian Government, in partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and non-Aboriginal community service organisations, is working to transition to ACCOs the case management of all Aboriginal children and young people on contractible orders in care by 2021.

The principles of self-determination and self-management underpin these efforts — with more funding and a stronger role for ACCOs in the design and delivery of local services and supports to offer services that are culturally responsive and safe.

At the end of February 2019, 41 per cent of Aboriginal children in care on contractible orders were case managed by ACCOs. This represents an increase of 250 per cent over the previous 18 months. The initiative provides additional kinship care targets and Victorian Government funding to ACCOs to enable additional case management to occur.

Victoria’s Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Service:

The *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* provides additional decision-making principles in respect of Aboriginal children, including that Child Protection is required to consult an Aboriginal agency in certain circumstances.

The Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Service (ACSASS) provides specialist advice and case consultation to Child Protection to ensure that a culturally

appropriate and effective response is provided in the protection of Aboriginal children from harm. Child protection practitioners are required to consult with ACSASS at the point a report is received regarding an Aboriginal child and on all significant case decisions thereafter, across all phases of Child Protection involvement.

The service is based on a culturally informed, intensive and holistic response to Aboriginal family difficulties, to ensure the ongoing safety, wellbeing and protection of Aboriginal children and young people.

The 2018 Victorian Budget provided \$3.6 million over two years to expand ACSASS to meet increased demand. These services are now delivered by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Mallee District Aboriginal Services and Njernda Aboriginal Corporation, in partnership with Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative.

Western Australia’s Aboriginal In-Home Support Service (Wungening Moort):

Wungening Moort is a Consortium of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations that was established to deliver in-home support services for Aboriginal families in the Perth metropolitan area. The Aboriginal In-Home Support service provides intensive in-home practical support to Aboriginal families who are at high risk of their children entering the care system. It is a culturally responsive and integrated service that works to empower Aboriginal families so that they can make the changes that will keep their children safe at home.

The Aboriginal In-Home Support service uses culturally appropriate assessment methods, tools and supports to:

- improve parenting skills and break cycles of intergenerational trauma
- increase parenting capacity to get children in school
- rebuild functional family support structures
- improve and develop culturally safe support networks.

The service also works closely with the Department of Communities to address crisis issues facing families and impacting on the immediate safety of children.

Kununurra Empowering Youth Program

In an effort to reduce anti-social behaviour and rates of incarceration of young people and to connect all children and young people with their community, the East Kimberley District Leadership Group (comprising representatives from state and Commonwealth governments, local governments, the community services sector, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and industry) established the Kununurra Empowering Youth Program in December 2016.

The Kununurra Empowering Youth Program is open to all families and members of the community and offers a range of activities during the school holidays. These activities are planned and reviewed with advice and input from local Aboriginal leadership, service providers and local children and teenagers.

The collaborative approach is achieving significant and lasting social change. After the Kununurra Empowering Youth Programs first summer program, the town recorded a 20 per cent drop in juvenile offences during the school holiday period. The 2017–18 summer holiday period saw the number of youths sent to Banksia Hill Detention Centre in Perth decrease from 15 to two. Attendance at activities is on the rise, with a total of 2,764 people participating — an increase of 46 per cent from the previous year.

These collaborative approaches where services and community are committed to tackling complex social challenges are fundamental to bringing about good outcomes for the wellbeing of children and families within this community.

While the Kununurra Empowering Youth Program is not the solution to the myriad symptoms stemming from social disadvantage, it is an example of how community-driven events can change attitudes and behaviours, through a shared-responsibilities approach.

SUPPORTING OUTCOME 6:

Is child sexual abuse
and exploitation being
prevented and are
survivors receiving
adequate support?

What is being done to prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation and to ensure survivors receive adequate support?

The National Framework recognises that child sexual abuse and exploitation should be prevented and survivors of abuse and exploitation must receive adequate support. To help achieve this outcome, the National Framework has identified the following strategies:

- raising awareness of child sexual exploitation and abuse
- enhancing prevention strategies for child sexual abuse
- strengthening law enforcement and judicial processes in response to child sexual abuse and exploitation
- ensuring survivors of sexual abuse have access to effective treatment and appropriate support.

To help progress against the performance indicators and towards the high-level outcome, the Second Action Plan outlined the following National Priorities against Supporting Outcome 6:

- **Working with children checks** — aiming to continue improving these checks across jurisdictions
- **Responding to sexual abuse** — exploring options to prevent childhood sexual abuse and provide trauma-informed support to assist children, young people and adults who are survivors of child abuse and neglect.

Key activities under National Priorities in 2016–17 and 2017–18

Working with Children Checks

Queensland — Development of culturally appropriate resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people:

Blue Card Services partnered with Gilimbaa, an Indigenous creative agency, to develop communication resources to promote key messages about the blue card system to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These messages focused on breaking down common misconceptions and promoting engagement by applicants with the blue card process. For example, people often think that if they have a criminal history they cannot get a blue card, or if they do not have the right identification they will not be able to complete a form.

Considerable negotiations took place to identify the most effective and appropriate mechanisms for developing the resources, including community consultations in Wujal Wujal and Napranum to ensure the resources were produced in a culturally sensitive format. This was important as it involved real people identifying real issues in remote communities, which included a number of important considerations to incorporate in both the film and radio resources to ensure the messaging held weight within community and could be easily understood.

Development took a more traditional story-telling approach using Indigenous actors. Research has indicated that short videos are a valuable vehicle for promoting messages in remote Indigenous communities, which is why the resources have been well received. The radio plays were distributed to all remote community radio stations and have proven to be an effective means of promoting these key messages. Complementary posters have also been created to reinforce the messaging.

Queensland — Review of blue card system:

In 2016, the Queensland Government asked the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) to undertake a whole-of-system review of the operation of the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*.

The QFCC issued its findings in September 2017 making a range of recommendations to ensure that Queensland's most vulnerable children are provided with safe and supportive homes and a system that works together to give children the best possible future.

The *Review of the blue card system report* makes 81 recommendations that propose significant changes to the blue card system. The recommendations are designed to strengthen and streamline the blue card system and build the capacity of, and support for, organisations and people involved in it.

South Australia's Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016:

In November 2016, the Parliament of South Australia passed the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016*. The Act defines a new working-with-children system for people working or volunteering with children in South Australia. Key parts include an ongoing monitoring system and moving from three-yearly to five-yearly checks. Importantly, Working with Children Checks (WWCC) will be transferable across different jobs and volunteer positions.

A WWCC is an assessment of information relating to a person's prior conduct to determine whether the person should be prohibited from working with children. The Act strengthens background checks for people wanting to work or volunteer with children and young people. It creates a stronger legislative scheme, ensuring that a person who is assessed as being of high risk to the safety of children will be prohibited from working or volunteering with them, and that it will be an offence for an organisation to engage a person in a work role in these circumstances. The Act has been passed by Parliament but has not yet commenced operation.

The *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016* and *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Regulations 2019* will commence on 1 July 2019, establishing a Working with Children Check regime in South Australia. In 2017–18, the Department for Human Services (DHS) Screening Unit developed the necessary business, operational and

system requirements to implement the Act and Regulations. South Australia is working with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions on nationally consistent standards for working with children checks.

South Australia – continuous monitoring of screening:

Continuous monitoring of screening commenced in South Australia on 1 July 2017, enabling new relevant South Australian criminal history and child protection matters to be identified on a regular basis. This contrasts with the previous system, which provided a snapshot of a person's history at the start of the three-year lifespan of the check when the initial assessment took place. South Australia is the only jurisdiction that monitors child protection information on a regular basis as part of the child-related employment-screening regime. Since these screenings commenced, more than 150 child-related employment-screenings have been revoked. For more information, go to www.screening.sa.gov.au

Victoria – Kinship care and child safety screening:

To enhance the safety of children in care, Victoria introduced Working with Children Checks for kinship carers. From 1 May 2017 new kinship carers were required to apply for a Working with Children Check within 21 days of being approved as a carer. Existing carers were also required to apply for a Working with Children Check by 22 August 2017. More than 5,000 kinship carers were supported to successfully apply for a Working with Children Check.

Responding to sexual abuse

The Australian Government's response to the Royal Commission's recommendations was published on 13 June 2018. In this response, the Australian Government committed to the creation of the National Redress Scheme for people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse.

The Child Abuse Royal Commission Senior Officials Working Group was established by Education Council (a Ministerial Council established by the Council of Australian Governments, COAG) in 2018, to address the 12 education-related recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Australian Government Department of Education is the lead agency for the Working Group, which has representation from all state and territory governments, and is engaging with the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, the eSafety Commissioner and the National Office for Child Safety to implement the recommendations. The final report will be provided at the end of 2019.

ACT Government Response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse:

The ACT Government released its response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in June 2018 and its first annual progress report against the recommendations in December 2018.

Of the 307 recommendations for the ACT Government in the Royal Commission's Final Report, the ACT Government accepted or accepted in principle 290 recommendations and noted or identified for further consideration the remaining 17.

The ACT Government is working closely with other jurisdictions, the Australian Government and community sector partners to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission.

Theme 1: making institutions child-safe

— The ACT Government worked with stakeholders to ensure that children's services organisations meet existing and proposed Child Safe Standards. In October 2018, the ACT Government partnered with the ACT Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner to conduct stakeholder forums involving a range of organisations that provide services to children and young people. These forums informed the ACT Government about what supports organisations need in order to strengthen their approaches to protecting children and young people.

Theme 2: An oversight system that responds to child safety — The ACT Government worked with stakeholders to identify options for an independent oversight body to monitor and enforce the Child Safe Standards. It will consider how to incorporate an independent oversight body with the appropriate visitation, complaint-handling and reporting powers to provide oversight of youth detention within existing legislation and operational arrangements.

The ACT has a mandatory reporting scheme in place that mandates certain people to report situations where they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person has experienced sexual or physical abuse or neglect.

On 1 July 2017, the ACT Reportable Conduct Scheme commenced. The ACT Reportable Conduct Scheme provides independent oversight (through the ACT Ombudsman) of the way workplaces report, investigate and handle allegations of misconduct involving children. From 1 July 2018, the ACT's Reportable Conduct Scheme was expanded to include religious institutions providing pastoral care and religious instruction.

In November 2017, the ACT Government introduced legislation to improve information sharing within the ACT, to ensure that child protection, law enforcement and oversight bodies have access to the information they need to effectively deal with child welfare and safety concerns.

Theme 3: Services for children and young people — Since the commencement of the ACT Government's *A Step Up for Our Kids: Out of Home Care Strategy 2015–2020*, work continues to develop and mature the service system to achieve tangible outcomes. The strategy is premised on the development of a new therapeutic, trauma-informed system of care.

The Baseline Report established a working benchmark of services and highlighted what had been achieved at June 2017. The report found that the stability of placements was improving, with children and young people experiencing fewer placement changes and participation rates rising. This indicates that children and young people are having a greater say in decisions and feel they are being heard.

In 2017, the *Inspector of Correctional Services Act 2017* established a new oversight mechanism and independent statutory authority called the Inspector of Correctional Services to oversee and critically examine the operations of the adult and youth detention systems in the ACT. A phased inclusion bringing the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre within the scope of the Inspectorate was finalised in December 2019. The phased implementation enables the Inspector to accommodate and understand the needs of young people, including the need to understand trauma-informed practice and the operation of a human rights compliant youth justice facility.

Theme 4: Tailored support through specialist services — The ACT

Government has been progressing work since June 2018 to ensure that services for children and young people in the child protection and out-of-home care systems in the ACT are trauma-informed and therapeutic. Under *A Step Up for Our Kids*, the ACT supports programs and service delivery that practise a therapeutic approach that is child-centred and family focused. These programs and services are evidence-based and provide developmentally appropriate interventions to children, young people and their families to strengthen connection to community and culture for children and young people.

New South Wales — National Redress Scheme for survivors of child sexual abuse:

On 9 March 2018 the NSW Government announced that it will opt in to the National Redress Scheme for survivors of child sexual abuse and in May 2018 NSW was the first state to pass legislation referring powers to the Commonwealth to establish the scheme. The Redress Scheme will ensure that redress is provided to survivors in a consistent way, no matter where they live in Australia.

The Redress Scheme commenced operation on 1 July 2018 and seeks to acknowledge the life-long impact of institutional child sexual abuse. These laws enable non-government institutions in NSW, including

churches, charities, independent schools and other organisations, to participate.

The scheme will run for 10 years and includes a monetary payment of up to \$150,000, access to counselling and psychological support and a direct personal response from the participating institution or institutions responsible. For more information about the Redress Scheme, go to the Australian Government's Department of Social Services website — www.dss.gov.au

New South Wales — See, understand and respond to child sexual abuse practice kit

is an innovative child protection resource honouring the experiences of children and families and holding offenders accountable for their abuse. It was released in January 2017 and received a NSW Premier's Award for Public Service in November 2018 in the category 'Protecting our kids'.

The kit is a critical step in meeting the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the promise the former FACS (now DCJ) made to listen to children not only with empathy but also with knowledge and skills. The combination of evidence-based practical advice, conversation ideas and resources based on the latest evidence and practice wisdom makes the kit unlike any other tool available to practitioners today.

The kit leads the charge in a new wave of tools being developed in NSW to provide caseworkers with practical advice on how to have conversations that build relationships, see the bigger picture of both risks and strengths in a child's life, and put dignity at the heart of everything practitioners do. Knowing what to do, what to say and how to work with ambiguity in the face of child sexual abuse is complex. The kit helps practitioners do that in ways that 'move towards healing' for children and their families and supports dignity-driven practice.

Shared with non-government agencies and the NSW Department of Education, and available online, the kit has also transformed the ways agencies beyond the former FACS (now DCJ) are responding to harmful sexual behaviours and child sexual abuse. For more information go to www.facs.nsw.gov.au

The NSW Intensive Therapeutic Care system (ITC) is a service system that helps children and young people who are recovering from the most severe forms of trauma, neglect, abuse or adversity. ITC replaces residential out-of-home care for children and young people over 12 years with complex needs who are either unable to be supported in foster care or require specialised and intensive supports to maintain stability in their care arrangements.

The ITC system will decrease the time children and young people spend in intensive out-of-home care services and help provide clear pathways to permanency. ITC will better meet the high and complex needs of children and young people through:

- the provision of consistent therapeutic care and recovery from trauma
- the introduction of 'Ten Essential Elements' of therapeutic care to operationalise therapeutic care principles and achieve consistency in service delivery
- an ITC Intermediary Organisation to support implementation and guide service delivery
- the achievement of outcomes such as permanency and least-intensive placement types wherever possible
- centralised oversight and governance through a Central Access Unit
- minimum staff qualifications and mandatory therapeutic care training
- Therapeutic Specialists and multidisciplinary Care Teams
- the introduction of data collection and reporting to support planning and achieve outcomes.

Following extensive consultation and development, the service commenced on 1 July 2018 with full transition to occur over a two-year period. ITC is currently being delivered in eight locations across NSW. For more information about ITC, go to www.facs.nsw.gov.au

Northern Territory's Top End Health

Service: The Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) Top End maintains a highly prescriptive and intensive response to any suspicious indicators of sexual assault/abuse in any child under 18 years, often marked by unexpected diagnosis of a sexually transmitted infection. SARC coordinates a 24-hour very active response collaborating with police and Territory Families (usually through the Child Abuse Taskforce [CAT]). SARC provides free, confidential forensic/medical and therapeutic counselling services to victims of sexual assault or harm and their significant others, whether it is acute or historical. SARC endeavours to provide post-sexual assault or abuse counselling in Darwin and communities where possible.

In response to increasing instances of child-on-child sexual abuse or harm, SARC has increased the number of schools it attends to present respectful relationship programs and protective behaviours and prevention education. This has been coordinated with the National Association for Prevention of Child abuse and Neglect and programs have been tailored to suit the individual needs of each group of students, in government schools and for youth groups. In 2017, this included children with special needs. These programs were integrated into the curriculum and presented over several weeks. The children then completed specified projects at the end of each session. This program culminated in a campaign displaying messages they had learned, including artwork, posters, rap songs, written work and pottery pieces. This program is set to continue each year.

SARC has increased its outreach work since 2017 in response to highly sexualised and harmful behaviours in remote communities. SARC specialist paediatricians, counsellors and nurses work closely with the clinic staff and community members to review as many children as possible during the visit. The children are given sexual health education and protective behaviours where appropriate. Clinic staff and community members are given information about prevention and where to seek further assistance if required. This outreach work has incorporated staff from Aboriginal-led services in these areas to ensure there is continuity and ongoing support for these children.

Resilience building continues, with six of the remote communities in the Katherine region. This includes raising community awareness and engagement in prevention strategies. SARC engages with community members and other key stakeholders to ensure that initiatives are focused on supporting the community to be involved and take the lead in any prevention strategies.

SARC runs two workshops a year called Forensic Medical Evaluation of Child Sexual Abuse, a Primary Health Network accredited two-day workshop presented by Dr Anne Smith, Director of the Victorian Forensic Paediatric Medical Service. This workshop helps to raise awareness among urban, rural and remote practitioners and improve their responsiveness to child sexual assault. Workshops are also undertaken throughout the year with government and non-government organisations to increase awareness of prevention strategies and trauma-informed responses to victims of sexual assault or abuse.

Northern Territory's Central Australia

Health Service: In Central Australia, the Northern Territory's SARC, through the Central Australia Health Service, provides acute medical and forensic care for all children throughout the region where there are concerns of recent or historic sexual abuse, assault or exploitation. Remote children receive support to travel for forensic medical assessments through the Patient Assistance Travel Scheme.

All referrals of abuse are reviewed through a collaborative approach at Child Intake Team meetings involving the Child Abuse Taskforce, Territory Families and child abuse police teams. Notifications are thoroughly assessed and detailed support and care responses are formulated to ensure the best care and support of the child and their support family or carer.

Children receive access to trauma-informed therapeutic counselling by a specifically trained child psychologist and, where required, additional support is provided by an Aboriginal Sexual Assault Support Worker. Access to traditional healers can also be arranged. Protective behaviour education is provided to children, families and significant others affected, as well as those at risk of sexual assault. Counselling is made available to families and carers who support the children to prevent ongoing abuse, assault or exploitation.

Queensland — responding to sexual

abuse: The Queensland Government strongly believes that all children and young people, particularly the most vulnerable, have the right to a life that is safe, secure, and free from violence. In 2017–18 the Queensland Government funded nine child sexual abuse support organisations and 29 sexual assault support service outlets.

Queensland also committed to opt in to the National Redress Scheme, announcing \$500 million for eligible applicants who experienced institutional child sexual abuse. This will provide support through a monetary payment, access to counselling and psychological care, and the option to receive a direct personal response from the institution responsible.

On 15 June 2018 the Queensland Government accepted or supported in principle more than 240 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and allocated \$10.1 million for sexual assault services in the 2018–19 State Budget.

South Australia – criminalising dishonest communication with children:

The Criminal Law Consolidation (Dishonest Communication with Children) Amendment Bill 2018 was introduced in South Australia on 10 May 2018. The Bill was prompted by the tragic death of Carly Ryan in 2007.

In South Australia it is already an offence under section 63B of the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935* (SA) to procure a child to commit an indecent act. The Bill expands this provision to make it an offence to knowingly communicate with, make false representations to or arrange to meet a child (under the age of 17 years) with the intent to commit a grooming offence.

The Bill creates two new offences targeting adults who lie about their age to get a child under 17 years to meet with them. The Bill will make it an offence punishable by a maximum of five years' imprisonment for a person to knowingly communicate with a child and to make a false representation that the person is younger than they are or someone other than who they are in such communications and meet or arrange to meet a child.

The Bill will also create an offence punishable by a maximum of 10 years' imprisonment for a person with the intention of committing an offence against the child to knowingly communicate with a child and to make a false representation that the person is younger than they are or someone other than who they are in such communications.

Note: The South Australian *Criminal Law Consolidation (Dishonest Communication with Children) Amendment Act 2018* was assented to on 12 July 2018.

South Australia – restricting the 'release on licence' option for sex offenders:

The South Australian Parliament passed the Sentencing (Release on Licence) Amendment Bill in June 2018. The Bill amends the *Sentencing Act 2017* (SA) to restrict the 'release on licence' option whereby a person convicted of sexual offences who has been detained indefinitely may apply to live in the community under strict supervision and conditions. The new laws will contribute to the increased safety of the community, including children, and provide victims with greater security by minimising the risk of a sexual offender being released into the community and then reoffending.

Victoria – Strengthening treatment services for children and young people who display sexually abusive or concerning behaviours:

The Sexually Abusive Behaviour Treatment Services (SABTS) programs work with young people who are using problematic sexual behaviours, or sexually abusive behaviours, and their families. They work with each young person individually to help them understand why they are using these behaviours, to acknowledge and address the harm caused and to help them change.

The eligibility criteria for SABTS programs have been expanded to allow access by young people aged 15 to 17 years (previously the age cut-off for the program was 15 years). This expansion of age eligibility for the program was a recommendation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. Funding boosts were provided to SABTS providers, including

\$2.7 million over two years to help services respond to increasing demand and to support agencies to deliver services to young people aged 15 to 17 years, and \$2.9 million over three years to respond to overall demand pressure for programs. Additional clinical supervision was also provided to the sector over 2017–18 to increase practitioners' capability to respond to the 15 to 17-year-old cohort.

Western Australia – mandatory reporting reform:

On 1 January 2016, the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* was amended to introduce a new category of persons mandated to report child sexual abuse — boarding supervisors of school boarding facilities in the government and non-government schools sector. 'Boarding supervisors' working at these facilities include boarding house managers and supervisors whose duties include the supervision of the children living at the facility rather than ancillary staff such as gardeners and kitchen staff.

Western Australia – Response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse:

In June 2018 Premier Mark McGowan offered a formal apology to survivors of institutional child sexual abuse along with the Western Australian Government's response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The WA Government developed an implementation framework that organises the recommendations applicable to the WA Government into targeted work streams and identifies the priority areas

for progressing work in 2019–20. The framework provides the foundation to implement the Royal Commission recommendations in a considered, integrated and cross-government approach over the next 10 years.

The framework is underpinned by the Government's goal of 'A Safer WA for Children', and focuses on three action areas:

- preventing child sexual abuse from happening in the future
- responding swiftly and effectively to abuse should it happen
- addressing abuse that has happened in the past.

Improving advocacy, treatment and support for survivors of child sexual abuse:

The WA Government is progressing with the expansion of sexual assault counselling and outreach services in the northern suburbs. This will enable the Sexual Assault Resource Centre to increase the number of counselling appointments offered and assist with reducing the waiting times experienced by patients. An additional 80 patients per year are anticipated to benefit from this service.

Children in care who have experienced significant trauma through abuse are able to access Rapid Response, which is a Cabinet-endorsed, across-government framework to provide prioritised service responses to meet the complex needs of children and young people in care, and care leavers up to the age of 25 years. Consultation is underway in relation to recommendation 47 of the statutory review of the *Children and Community Services*

Act 2004, aimed at strengthening the shared responsibility across government agencies for children in care and those who are eligible for leaving care services.

Since its inception, Rapid Response has introduced a number of initiatives, including health assessments and health and educational plans for all children in care; waiver of fees by state training providers to reduce barriers to training; and the inclusion of care leavers on the housing priority waiting list from 16 years of age.

Rapid Response also has the potential for significant long-term savings across government, as disadvantaged young people who are supported early may be prevented from entering and becoming entrenched in other systems or services, such as the adult justice and mental health systems, unemployment and homelessness.

Abbreviations

ACCOs	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
ACSASS	Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Service
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
AFSW	Aboriginal Family Safety Worker
AFVP	Adolescent Family Violence Program
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
APONT	Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory
APY	Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
ATODA	Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Association of the ACT
ATSICPP	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle
BCAP	Building Capacity in Australian Parents
BRII	Department of Industry, Innovation and Science Business Research and Innovation Initiative
C2K	Cradle to Kinder
CAA	Child Aware Approaches
CaFHS	Child and Family Health Service
CAFS	Children and Families Secretaries group
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
Carer KaFE program	Kinship and Foster Carer Education
CARL	Child Abuse Report Line
CDC	Child Development Council
CDS	Child Development Service
CFARNS	Child and Family Assessment and Referral Networks
CFC	Child and Family Centre
CFECFW	Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare
CHIA Vic	Community Housing Industry Association Victoria
COAG	Council of Australian Governments

CSCGs	Child Safety Coordination Groups
CSP	Children’s Services Program/Child Safety Pathway
CSSCs	Child Safety Service Centres
DCJ	Department of Communities and Justice
DCP	Department for Child Protection
DFV	domestic and family violence
DHS	Department for Human Services
DSS	Department of Social Services
e-CARL	electronic Child Abuse Report Line
EIRD	Early Intervention Research Directorate
EPC	Early Parenting Centre
FACES	Family and Children’s Enquiry and Support
FACS	Family and Community Services
FASD	Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
FFT-CW[®]	Functional Family Therapy through Child Welfare
FGC	family group conferencing
FSF	Family Safety Framework
GHF	Growing Healthy Families
IFES	Intensive Family Engagement Service
ITC	Intensive Therapeutic Care
ITNP	Interagency Therapeutic Needs Panel
KATU	Kunpungku Atunymankunytjaku Tjitji Uwarkara
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or questioning
LSCS	Lead Support Coordination Service

MBCP	Men's Behaviour Change Program
MHCT	Mental Health Council of Tasmania
MST-CAN®	Multisystemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect
MYHYPP	Metropolitan Youth Health Young Parents Program
NAPCAN	National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
National Coalition	National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing
National Forum	National Forum for Protecting Australia's Children
National Principles	National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
National Standards	National Standards for out-of-home care
NCAT	NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NEI	National Education Initiative
NGO	non-government organisation
NSAC	Next Step After Care
NTCOSS	Northern Territory Council of Social Services
OOHC	out-of-home care
PIMH	perinatal and infant mental health
POC	proof of concept
PSP	Permanency Support Program
QAF	Quality Assurance Framework/Quality and Accountability Framework
QFCC	Queensland Family and Child Commission

RFSS	Remote Family Support Service
S&T	Safe and Together
SABTS	Sexually Abusive Behaviour Treatment Services
SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centre
SHS	specialist homelessness services
SHSF	Safe Homes, Safe Families
TIA	Towards Independent Adulthood
TILA	Transition to Independent Living Allowance
WWCC	Working with Children Checks
WWD	Walking With Dads
YOREO	Youth Outreach Re-Engagement Officer

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR
PROTECTING AUSTRALIA'S
CHILDREN 2009-2020

