

Department of Social Services

**Evaluation of the National Framework for Protecting
Australia's Children 2009-2020**

June 2020



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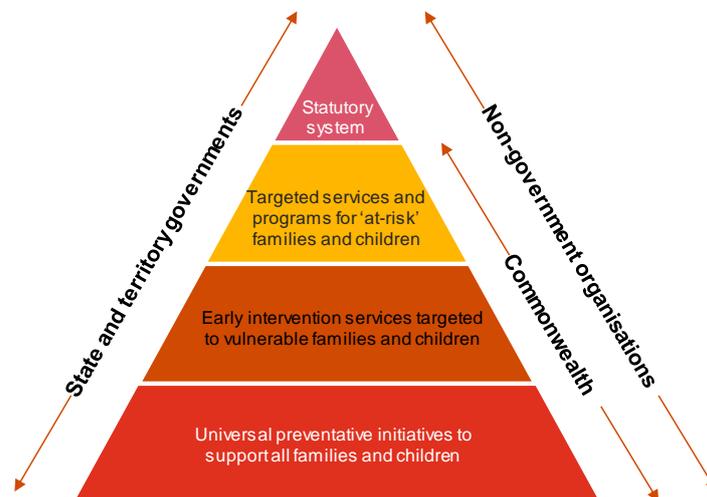
Executive summary

Background and context

In 2009, governments and non-government organisations came together to develop the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 (the National Framework or the Framework) which was endorsed by Council of Australian Government (COAG) in April 2009. The National Framework was unique in its design in being governed by a tripartite arrangement between Commonwealth, and state and territory governments, as well as the non-government and research sectors through the National Forum for Protecting Australia's Children (the National Forum).

A key feature of the National Framework was a shift in emphasis from protecting children from abuse and neglect to promoting children's safety and wellbeing. To effect this shift, the National Framework sought to apply a public health model which places a significant focus on primary or universal initiatives and programs (aimed at all children and families), intensifying the focus on secondary services (focusing on early intervention) with the tertiary (statutory) system being a last resort as outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Application of the primary health model to child protection – a system for protecting children¹



Ultimately, the aim of a public health approach is to reduce the occurrence of child abuse and neglect and to provide the most appropriate response to vulnerable families and those in which abuse or neglect has already occurred.² To this end, the National Framework had a core high level outcome that 'Australia's children and young people are safe and well' measured by a target of 'a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect in Australia over time'.³

To support delivery of its high-level outcome, the Framework included six supporting outcomes:

- 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.

¹ Commonwealth of Australia, *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, 2009, page 8.

² Commonwealth of Australia, *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, 2009, page 8.

³ Commonwealth of Australia, *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, 2009, page 11.

Executive summary

- 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.⁴

The National Framework has been implemented through four, three-year action plans which were developed and implemented sequentially over the Framework's twelve-year timeframe. Each action plan outlines key priorities or strategic focus areas and actions to be progressed over the three-year period.

Monitoring of the Framework's progress is supported by the development of a set of 32 data indicators that are reported on annually by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). Annual reports on the National Framework and its Action Plans are also available up until 2015-16. In addition, an earlier evaluation of the progress of the National Framework was completed in 2015, which included the First and Second Action Plans.⁵

Now entering its final year of operation, it is timely to consider the effectiveness and appropriateness of the National Framework in order to inform its next phase. It is in this context that the Department of Social Services (DSS) commissioned PwC and PwC's Indigenous Consulting (PIC) to evaluate the National Framework and its Third and Fourth Action Plans. The objectives of this evaluation were to:

- assess the National Framework in terms of implementation and outcomes achieved, taking a particular focus on the actions and outcomes achieved under the Third and Fourth Action Plans of the National Framework
- assess the effectiveness of the overarching framework, including its governance arrangements and the broad implementation of the action plans
- in particular, assess how the National Framework has coordinated effort across governments and the non-government sector and reduced the prevalence of child abuse and neglect.

A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods were used to gather evidence to undertake this evaluation, including a comprehensive consultation program with 49 semi-structured interviews and focus groups, and analysis of publicly available and internal reports.

While best efforts were made to solicit feedback and evidence evaluation questions, a number of limitations exist, including that:

- the nature of outcomes and specific actions makes it challenging to attribute outcomes specifically to the National Framework.
- the National Framework was not supported by a robust logic model or evaluation framework which limited its ability to measure its effectiveness.
- significant time has elapsed since the early activities of the National Framework, which limited stakeholder input and commentary
- the lack of a prevalence study of child abuse and neglect impacted the ability to make conclusive evaluation findings.

Key evaluation findings

A number of key evaluation findings have been identified based on the evidence collected and analysed through this evaluation.

⁴ Commonwealth of Australia, *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, 2009, page 11.

⁵ ACIL Allen Consulting, *Measuring Progress under the National Framework: Evaluation of progress under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*, June 2015.

The National Framework has been an important mechanism for national collaboration on protecting Australia's children and reducing child abuse and neglect

The National Framework recognised that significant reform was needed to reduce the growing rates of child abuse and neglect in Australia. At the time of its conception, there was an almost universal view that the scale of the challenge to reduce child abuse and neglect required a long-term, strategic approach that coordinated the activities of government, non-government and research sectors. The Framework has successfully delivered a national strategy that has enabled a national conversation to be had, an elevated the priority of children's safety and wellbeing among governments. Its tripartite governance structure has fostered collaboration and built trust among jurisdictions, peak bodies and the service sector.

Key initiatives by the National Framework include:

- the implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations which were recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional responses to Child Sexual Abuse and developed through the Third Action Plan.
- the support that the National Forum and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group (ATSI WG) has provided for more comprehensive implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles (ATSICPP) through the Fourth Action Plan.

In 2009, the National Framework's outcome of achieving a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect represented a significant challenge for the National Framework. In 2020, twelve years on, this outcome remains a significant challenge for Australia.

The National Framework itself highlighted that 'measuring a reduction in child abuse and neglect is difficult, as Australia does not have robust data on incidence/prevalence'.⁶ The absence of a robust, national prevalence/incidence study in 2009 at the inception of the National Framework prevented measurement of progress against this outcome. However, the Framework's 32 data indicators (reported on by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare⁷) provide an indication of progress; Eight of the 32 indicators relate to the high-level outcome of a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect, and of these, three have worsened, two have remained steady and two have improved over the life of the Framework. One does not have sufficient time series data to report on.

Significant gaps exist in the reporting of data meaning that the National Framework's high-level objective to reduce child abuse and neglect cannot be tracked or measured meaningfully.

The governance arrangements of the National Framework and the Third and Fourth Action Plans evolved over time in response to feedback from stakeholders and Coalition of Australian Governments (COAG) committee changes.

While the intent of the National Framework was broad reaching, over its twelve-year timeframe, its implementation of action plans became more narrowly focused on statutory child protection systems. This occurred due to the evolution of the governance arrangements over the twelve-year term to support the delivery of each action plan. Concurrently, its governance structures evolved in response to COAG committee changes and changed representation of working groups. This had the effect of narrowing the focus of activities and discussion to those of child protection. Additionally, activities delivered by jurisdictions, were largely driven by reforms and programs that were interrelated to the ambition of the National Framework but were not conceived by it.

The National Framework and accompanying action plans were largely developed in consultation and lessons learned were often incorporated to improve the effectiveness of later plans. However, consultation could have been more targeted to specific groups.

Over time, the Third and Fourth action plans increasingly focused on statutory child protection systems and smaller initiatives and trials, building on lessons to focus effort rather than trying to deliver upon too broad a mandate. This also reflected that activities were not supported by a sound investment and resourcing model that would enable achievement of

⁶ Commonwealth of Australia, *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, 2009, page 11.

⁷ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *National framework for protecting Australia's children indicators*, June 2019.

outcomes and implementation of actions. Opportunities exist to consider joint funding and investment matching opportunities to provide a more sustainable investment model that could have greater impact and deliver upon the ambition set.

The National Framework was not able to fully embed a public health approach and coordinate the policy agenda for children and young people

Challenges to fully embed a public health approach that balances the needs of the child protection system with primary prevention and early intervention activities were cited by many stakeholders to this evaluation. While many concurrent strategies and policies that touch upon these service systems have been delivered by jurisdictions over the life of the National Framework, these have not been integrated and coordinated with the policy agenda for children and young people.

Opportunities for the successor plan to the National Framework

Five key opportunities have been identified to inform the development of the successor plan to the National Framework. These opportunities seek to leverage the valuable contribution made by the National Framework in bringing together governments and the non-government and research sectors to focus on protecting Australia's children. Importantly, these opportunities incorporate lessons learned which could strengthen any future framework.

Target the successor plan for the National Framework towards improving the services system to better support a specific group, vulnerable children and their families.

Narrowing the focus of the National Framework on a defined cohort of children and families would enable governments and non-government bodies to dedicate resources towards improving outcomes for these children and families. All sectors within the service system – which include government and non-government services that address the social determinants of health and wellbeing - in order to improve their wellbeing and reduce their risk of contact with the statutory child protection system, as well as supporting children and families already in the child protection system.

Having the Commonwealth, state and territory governments working together under the National Framework presents a significant opportunity to better coordinate and integrate, ensure the effectiveness of and identify improvements to services delivered to these children and families across all relevant portfolios, including for example child maternal health, early childhood, school education, housing, justice and family and parenting services.

Taking a service system approach and focusing on policy and system levers is where the National Framework can have the greatest impact, rather than focusing on the operational detail of how child protection related services are delivered which will continue to vary across different state and territory jurisdictions. Further, focusing at a service system level will allow for greater alignment and integration with other strategies and frameworks that emerge in areas that impact on children and families. A system focus is also likely to be more impactful in the long term rather than investing in shorter-term initiatives and research trials.

The exact target cohort would be for the parties to the successor plan to the National Framework to define. A number of organisations consulted as part of the evaluation suggested the focus should be on vulnerable children and their families. This would allow for a more targeted approach for the Framework rather than focusing on all children, while also acknowledging that families are important to improving outcomes for vulnerable children.

Within this cohort there are groups with specific needs and attention would need to be paid to ensuring that the service system is fit for purpose for these groups, for example children and families with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families and culturally and linguistically diverse children and families.

Establish a governance structure for the successor plan to the National Framework that enables greater involvement of other relevant portfolio areas

There is an opportunity to ensure the governance structure supports the delivery of the successor plan to National Framework. Improving outcomes for vulnerable children and their families requires collaboration across the whole service system, from services that have early contact with families and children and can intervene early to provide support through to the statutory child protection system.

Executive summary

To achieve the greatest impact, the National Framework governance structure could consider a broader membership, not restricted to representatives from child protection and family services agencies. In line with the first opportunity outlined above, the governance group would include a focus on the service system and policy levers rather than on the delivery of specific services, programs or initiatives.

Adopt an outcomes framework to guide and measure efforts and commission a national prevalence study on child abuse and neglect

There is an opportunity to adopt an outcomes framework to ensure a sustained focus on and alignment to the high-level objectives of the successor plan to the National Framework, over the life of the Framework. The key features of an outcomes framework are:

- a shared vision of what success would look like for the target cohort of children and families
- articulation of short, medium and long term outcomes/goals to support achievement of the shared vision
- an outcomes framework would be supported by a measurement framework, which sets out how and when progress towards achieving the outcomes will be measured.

An implementation plan or roadmap could provide the detail on the work that will be undertaken by all parties to the National Framework to achieve the short, medium and long term outcomes, which could be reviewed at regular intervals. This would replace three-year action plans.

Iterative evaluation could also be undertaken for the duration of the successor plan to the National Framework to assist in early identification of any issues with the implementation.

Further, a national prevalence study on child abuse and neglect to set an accurate baseline at the beginning of the successor plan to the Framework and then at regular intervals will help to accurately measure whether there is a significant shift in the prevalence of child abuse and neglect during the next term of the Framework.

Implement an independent monitoring and reporting mechanism to ensure accountability

There is an opportunity to implement independent reporting on the progress of the successor plan to the National Framework. This could include reporting against the outcome and measurement framework as set out in the third opportunity (outlined above).

Independent monitoring and reporting would ensure accountability and measurement of progress in a timely manner. A number of organisations consulted as part of this evaluation referenced the Family Matters reporting on the over-representation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care as a good example of timely and informative reporting that informs action in this area.

Establishing a monitoring and reporting independent function could include producing publicly available progress reporting, but also working directly and proactively with parties to the National Framework to assist in identifying areas for improvement.

Ensure children, families and communities have an opportunity to inform the of the successor plan to the National Framework

There is an opportunity to involve children, families and communities in informing the priorities of the successor plan to the National Framework, and in better understanding their experiences of the service system and areas for improvement. This would ensure the successor plan is designed from the perspective of children, families and communities and would help in identifying what would really make a difference to the cohort of people whom the Framework is targeted at.

Organisations consulted as part of the evaluation provided a number of examples of children and young people who had poor experiences navigating the current service system. They also spoke of the power of hearing the voices and perspective of service users in identifying areas for improvement.

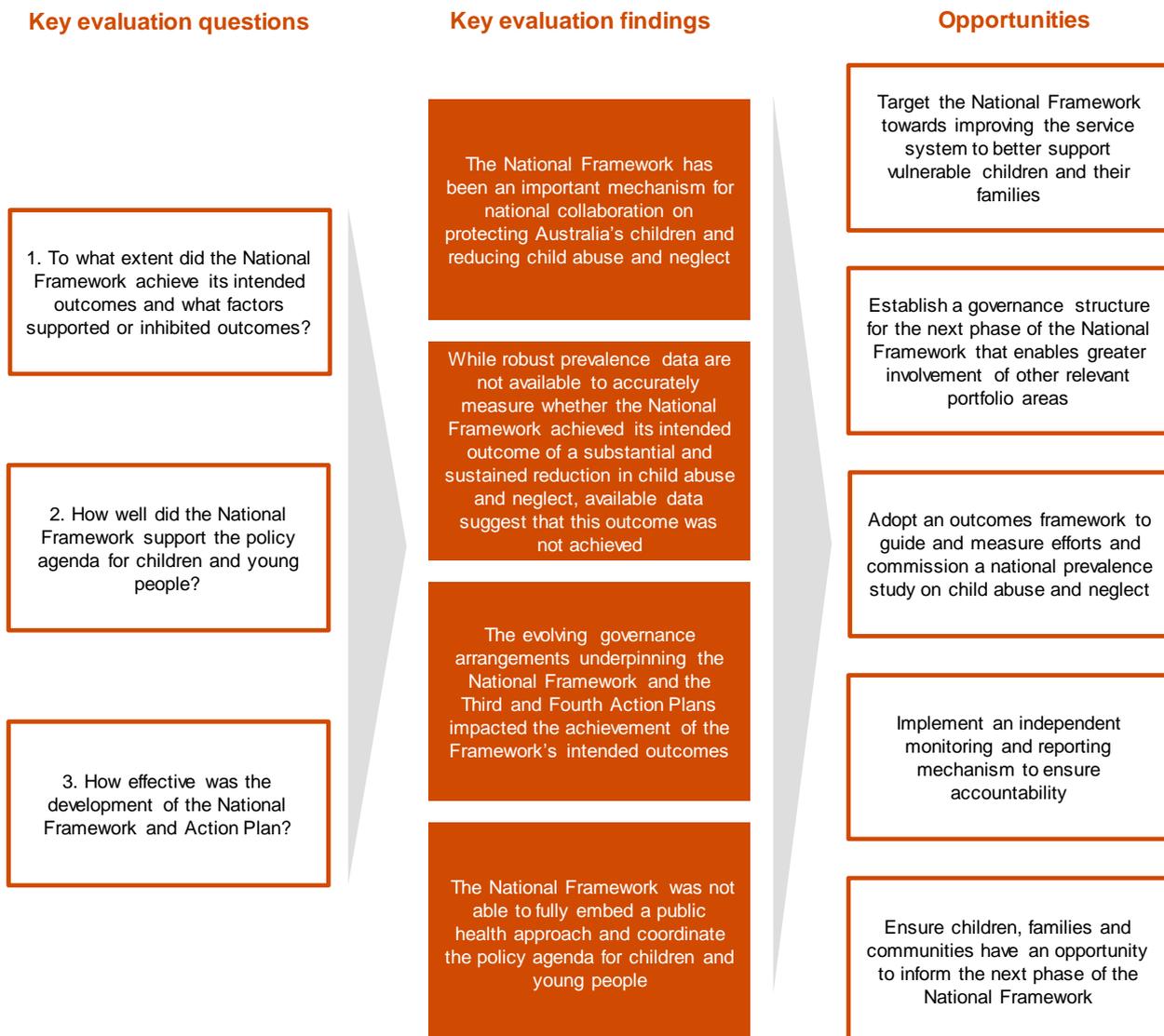
Further, supporting communities to have a voice in how services are designed and delivered in their community and how these services are integrated and coordinated is also critical in improving the effectiveness of service system. This could be adopted as a key principle of the successor plan to the National Framework.

This would also enable greater alignment with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Conclusion

Reducing child abuse and neglect is a complex issue, requiring a long-term national approach involving governments, non-government and research organisations, the social services sector and families and communities. The National Framework has provided a strong platform to date for national leadership and collaboration on the issue and this can be harnessed going forward in the successor plan to the Framework. This evaluation has produced a number of findings and opportunities to strengthen the Framework in its next phase, including on the Framework’s scope and purpose, its supporting governance arrangements and data collection and monitoring. These findings and opportunities and how they relate back to the key evaluation questions is summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Connection between key evaluation questions, findings and opportunities



Terms and acronyms

Table 1: Terms and acronyms

Term or acronym	Definition
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
AIFS	Australian Institute of Family Studies
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
ATSICPP	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle
ATSIWG	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group
BCAP	Building Capacity in Australian Parents
CAA	Child Aware Approaches
CAFDaN	Children and Families Data Network
CAFS	Children and Families Secretaries group
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CDSMAC	Community and Disability Services Ministers' Advisory Committee
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CSM	Community Services Ministers
DCP	Department for Child Protection
SA	Services Australia
DoH	Department of Health (Commonwealth)
DPMC	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (Commonwealth)
DSS	Department of Social Services
Indigenous	The term 'Indigenous' has been used throughout this report when referring to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Where quoting source material, Aboriginal, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or Indigenous may be used as per the relevant source.
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	<i>National Standards for out-of-home care</i>
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NGO	non-government organisation
NOCS	National Office for Child Safety
OOHC	out-of-home care
RoGS	Report on Government Services
SIG	Strategic Information Group
TIA	Towards Independent Adulthood
TILA	Transition to Independent Living Allowance
UNCRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Contents

Executive summary	ii
Terms and acronyms	viii
Contents	i
2 This evaluation	3
2.1 Evaluation of the National Framework	4
2.2 Evaluation approach	4
3 Background	7
3.1 Overview of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020	8
3.2 Prevalence of child abuse and neglect over the course of the Framework	11
4 Evaluation question 1: To what extent did the National Framework achieve its intended outcomes and what factors supported or inhibited outcomes?	19
4.1 Achievements of the National Framework and Action Plans	20
4.2 Supporting factors, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement	22
4.3 Effectiveness of informing the agenda for Indigenous priorities and actions	29
5 Evaluation question 2: How well did the National Framework support the policy agenda for children and young people?	32
5.1 Alignment with broader policy areas	33
6 Evaluation question 3: How effective was the development of the National Framework and Action Plans?	41
6.1 Consultation process used to develop priorities and actions	42
6.2 The extent to which Action Plans drew on lessons learnt	43
6.3 The alignment of actions to the National Framework outcomes	45
6.4 Appropriateness of the duration and structure of the National Framework and its Action Plans	47

This evaluation

6.5	Alignment of the National Framework with the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)	49
6.6	Alignment of activities with a public health model	51
7	Findings and opportunities	54
7.1	Key findings of this evaluation	55
7.2	Opportunities	62
	Appendices	63
Appendix A	Evaluation Approach	64
Appendix B	Summary of governance: terms of reference	73
Appendix C	Background analysis	77
Appendix D	Consulted stakeholders	93

2 This evaluation

This chapter covers...

- the focus of this evaluation
- the evaluation approach employed
- data collection approach.

2.1 Evaluation of the National Framework

The National Framework was established in 2009, presenting a national strategy for addressing child abuse and neglect. It was designed to operate over a twelve-year timeframe to 2020, with rolling three-year action plans that specified the priorities and actions for each three-year period.

2.1.1 Mid-way evaluation of the National Framework

In 2015, DSS commissioned a mid-way evaluation of the National Framework and its two initial action plans.⁸ That evaluation found, among other things, that:

- a lack of clarity over the Framework's governance and implementation arrangements between 2013 and 2015 created uncertainty and meant that the development of the Second Action Plan was 'widely regarded as flawed'
- the implementation of a number of initiatives were viewed as successful, including: Communities for Children and Child Aware Approaches; Building Bridges; National Standards for Out of Home Care; and, the establishment of a National Children's Commissioner
- the National Research Agenda, under the Framework had progressed the translation of research to practice
- the development of the Child Protection National Minimum Dataset was a key achievement.

Key implementation challenges identified through the 2015 mid-way evaluation included:

- the use of time-limited funding
- discrete site-based trialling of initiatives (limiting the evidence base/scaleability of activities)
- constraints associated with government procurement processes and contractual obligations which limited the ability of service organisations to implement early intervention approaches
- limited research funding to achieve the scale and evidence needed for governments and organisations to implement new evidence-informed approaches
- the need for a shift from tertiary services to universal and preventative services.

The evaluation concluded that systemic change – particularly in the governance arrangements needed to underpin a public health model - was required to progress the ambitions of the Framework.

2.1.2 Focus of this evaluation

Given the mid-way evaluation focused on the First and Second Action Plans, this evaluation has focused on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the National Framework and its Third and Fourth Action Plans. This evaluation sought to:

- assess the National Framework in terms of implementation and outcomes achieved, taking a particular focus on the actions and outcomes achieved under the Third and Fourth Action Plans of the Framework
- assess the effectiveness of the overarching framework, including its governance arrangements and the broad implementation of the action plans
- in particular, assess how the National Framework has coordinated effort across governments and the non-government sector and reduced the prevalence of child abuse and neglect.

2.2 Evaluation approach

PwC and PIC undertook this evaluation in line with a set of evaluation questions shown in Table 2. These evaluation questions incorporate different evaluation types, including:

- **formative evaluation:** an adaptive approach which enables refinement as the framework is being implemented
- **process evaluation:** determines whether the framework was implemented as intended

⁸ ACIL Allen Consulting 2015, Measuring Progress Under the National Framework: An evaluation of progress under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, Melbourne

This evaluation

- **outcomes evaluation:** measures the progress of the framework in achieving its intended outcomes.

Table 2 sets out the evaluation questions and sub-questions mapped against the evaluation objectives (question domains).

Table 2: Evaluation domains mapped to key evaluation questions and sub-questions

Question domain	Key Evaluation Questions	Evaluation sub-questions
 <p>1: Outcomes: achievement of intended outcomes (barriers and enablers)</p>	<p>1. To what extent did the National Framework achieve its intended outcomes and what factors supported or inhibited outcomes?</p>	<p>a. What were the major achievements of the National Framework?</p> <p>b. What supported and/or inhibited the implementation of the actions listed in the National Framework and Action Plans? What could be improved?</p> <p>c. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the National Framework, including the effectiveness of its governance structure?</p> <p>d. What supported and/or inhibited achievement of outcomes listed in the National Framework and Action Plans?</p> <p>e. How well did the National Framework and the Action Plans work together to achieve outcomes?</p> <p>f. How effective was the National Framework in informing the agenda for Indigenous priorities, actions and cultural appropriateness?</p> <p>g. How effective were the National Framework and Action Plans in achieving broader outcomes particularly coordinating effort across governments and the non-government sector and reducing the prevalence of child abuse and neglect?</p>
 <p>2: Effectiveness: supporting the policy agenda for children and young people</p>	<p>2. How well did the National Framework support the policy agenda for children and young people?</p>	<p>a. How well does the National Framework connect other elements of the broader policy agenda for children and young people at both a Commonwealth and state and territory level?</p> <p>b. Were there any gaps or was there areas of duplication with other key policy areas, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family and domestic violence • education • housing • justice • health • disability • culturally and linguistically diverse families • Closing the Gap?
 <p>3: Effectiveness and appropriateness: development processes</p>	<p>3. How effective was the development of the National Framework and Action Plan?</p>	<p>a. How effective and appropriate were the consultations leading up to, and the resulting priorities and actions in the Third and Fourth Action Plans?</p> <p>i. Did the development of the priorities and actions in the Third and Fourth Action Plans incorporate lessons learnt from previous action plans?</p> <p>ii. Did the priorities and actions in the Third and Fourth Action Plans clearly align with the high-level outcomes of the National Framework?</p> <p>b. To what extent were the duration and structure of the National Framework and its Action Plans appropriate?</p> <p>c. How well did the National Framework respond to the Convention on the Rights of the Child?</p> <p>d. To what extent did the National Framework engage with the public health model and primary prevention activities?</p>

An evaluation framework was developed to build out each of the evaluation sub-questions and methods by which this evaluation has sought to address the key questions. It is outlined in Appendix A.

This evaluation

2.2.1 Key methods adopted

This evaluation was undertaken between late 2019 and early 2020. It has comprised:

- a comprehensive nation-wide and tripartite (Commonwealth Government, state and territory government and non-government) consultation program
- quantitative and qualitative analysis, leveraging a range of existing data and resources.

DSS selected the stakeholders to be consulted as part of this evaluation, including stakeholders representing a range of different jurisdictional, sector and issue-based perspectives. A full list of organisations consulted through this evaluation is provided in Appendix D.

2.2.2 Limitations encountered

Limitations were encountered throughout the evaluation, that impacted the ability to gather comprehensive evidence and validate findings on particular evaluation questions and sub-questions. These include:

Evaluating a high-level framework: The National Framework is a collection of action plans, strategic focus areas, priorities and activities spanning a twelve-year period. Rather than being a single program or a discrete policy, a range of different parties delivered actions broadly aligning to the Framework in a variety of different contexts over time. The individualised nature of these outcomes makes it challenging to attribute outcomes specifically to the National Framework.

Absence of an outcomes measurement framework and a logic model: While the National Framework identified the high-level outcomes that the parties to the Framework were seeking to achieve, the absence of an evaluation framework affected the ability to measure its effectiveness. A program logic would have outlined how the action plans, strategic focus areas, priorities and actions would collectively deliver on the outcomes.

Undertaking elements of a process evaluation after significant time had passed: Undertaking an evaluation of the Third and Fourth Action Plans became difficult, as many of the stakeholders consulted were not able to provide detailed commentary due to the time that had elapsed. They had either commenced in their roles after the action plans were developed or were not able to recall specific details.

Lack of available data and evidence: While there have been significant efforts over the life of the Framework to improve data collection on the safety and wellbeing of Australia's children, challenges exist preventing the comparability of data across jurisdictions. The lack of a prevalence study of child abuse and neglect resulted in an inability to make conclusive findings on whether the National Framework achieved its intended outcomes.

Stakeholders were contacted by PwC and PIC to seek their engagement and were provided with an information sheet ahead of interviews that outlined the scope of this evaluation and the key questions to be raised through consultations. Consultations were run as semi-structured interviews against key questions and sub-questions in the evaluation framework and were led by a senior member of the PwC and PIC team.

Capture and analysis of data

To support the capture and consistent analysis of information collected through this evaluation, a data tool was developed to input stakeholder responses (representing organisations) to evaluation questions and develop common themes. Categorisation was undertaken in two stages; first, an initial categorisation to understand emerging themes, and a second categorisation to refine themes and develop findings.

Perspectives presented in this report have been validated by cross-referencing this data tool against other organisation's perspectives and to assess the extent to which organisations expressed the same or similar viewpoints. The data tools used as part of this analysis are shown in Appendix A of this report.

Limitations associated with the stakeholder consultations are noted in the Executive Summary.

3 Background

This chapter covers...

- contextual background to this evaluation including
 - the purpose of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020
 - as well as its structure including its governance and action plans
 - expenditure and statistics on children's safety and wellbeing over the operation of the Framework.

3.1 Overview of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020

The National Framework is an initiative of COAG. Endorsed in 2009, the National Framework sets out a vision for an integrated approach to protecting the safety and well-being of Australia's children. It brings together the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the non-government sector who share responsibility for delivering safety and well-being services.

The Framework is structured around the singular high-level outcome that 'Australia's children and young people are safe and well', delivered through the 'substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect in Australia over time'.

The high-level outcome is recognised as an ambitious target. A target that sought to engage stakeholders across the sector, jurisdictions and policy areas to address the intractable challenges associated with reducing child abuse and neglect.⁹ The Framework was developed as a mechanism to deliver a collaborative environment and with an ambitious goal to influence system-level change and reduce child abuse and neglect.

To support delivery against the target, the Framework comprises of six supporting outcomes, which are in turn measured through progress indicators that have evolved over the life of the Framework.

The six supporting outcomes 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.

3.1.2 Design and operation of the Framework

The National Framework extends over a 12-year time frame, supported by rolling 3-year action plans. Each action plan outlines key priorities or strategic focus areas and actions to be progressed over each 3-year period. Action plans are developed and agreed in consultation with sector stakeholders and the advice of the National Forum (discussed below under Governance). The two action plans considered as part of this evaluation are the Third and Fourth Action Plan. Their priorities are shown in Table 3. The 2015 mid-way evaluation considered previous action plans (the First and Second Action Plans) and are not in scope of this evaluation.

Table 3: Third and Fourth Action Plan focus areas

Action Plan	Key focus areas/strategies
Third Action Plan (2015-2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross cutting focus area: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children and families • Strategy 1: Early intervention with a focus on the early years, particularly the first 1000 days for a child • Strategy 2: Helping young people in out-of-home care to thrive into adulthood • Strategy 3: Organisations responding better to children and young people to keep them safe
Fourth Action Plan (2018-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority 1: Improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at risk of entering, or in contact with, child protection systems • Priority 2: Improving prevention and early intervention through joint service planning and investment

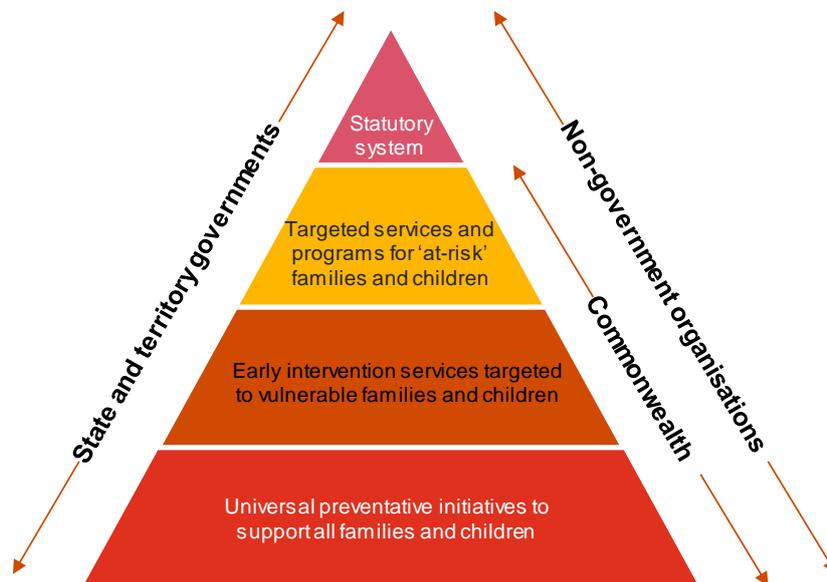
⁹ Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (2008) Inverting the pyramid: Enhancing systems for protecting children, accessed: https://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download_file/id/107/filename/Inverting_the_pyramid_-_Enhancing_systems_for_protecting_children.pdf, 28/01/2020

Action Plan	Key focus areas/strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority 3: Improving outcomes for children in out-of-home care by enhancing placement stability through reunification and other permanent care options • Priority 4: Improving organisations' and governments' ability to keep children and young people safe from abuse.

3.1.3 A shift to a public health model

In 2009, the National Framework identified that a shift in emphasis was needed in Australia from protecting children from abuse and neglect to include promoting children's safety and wellbeing. This is the vision of a 'public health model' of child protection where greater emphasis (including resources) is placed on universal or preventative interventions reducing the overall need for statutory interventions, as outlined in Figure 3. The size of each component of the pyramid is intended to reflect the relative resource/effort envisaged by the public health model, with the largest investment in the bottom of the pyramid (universal services), and the smallest investment at the top of the pyramid (statutory system).

Figure 3: Application of the primary health model to child protection – a system for protecting children



The outcomes of the Framework were more closely aligned to an “hourglass” than a pyramid due to the significant demands on child protection services that had accumulated over previous years. The public health model was considered a key point of reference for the activities undertaken under the Framework and part of the broader vision of what a future system might look like to achieve the outcomes of the Framework. While public health elements were referenced in concept, the supporting outcomes and indicators against which the National Framework was progressed maintained a child protection focus. Chapter 6 explores the alignment of the Framework to the public health model.

3.1.4 Governance of the National Framework

The governance structure underpinning the National Framework has evolved over time in response to COAG committee changes and feedback over the framework. These changes provide important context for many of the perspectives shared by stakeholders through this evaluation. These aspects are described in detail in Chapter 3 of this report. At a high-level the common stakeholders involved in governance were:

- Community Services Ministers (CSM) – mechanism where state/territory and Commonwealth Ministers responsible for a variety of community services including child protection meet and discuss issues
- Children and Families Secretaries Groups (CAFS) – formal group state/territory and Commonwealth Secretaries with responsibility for children and families

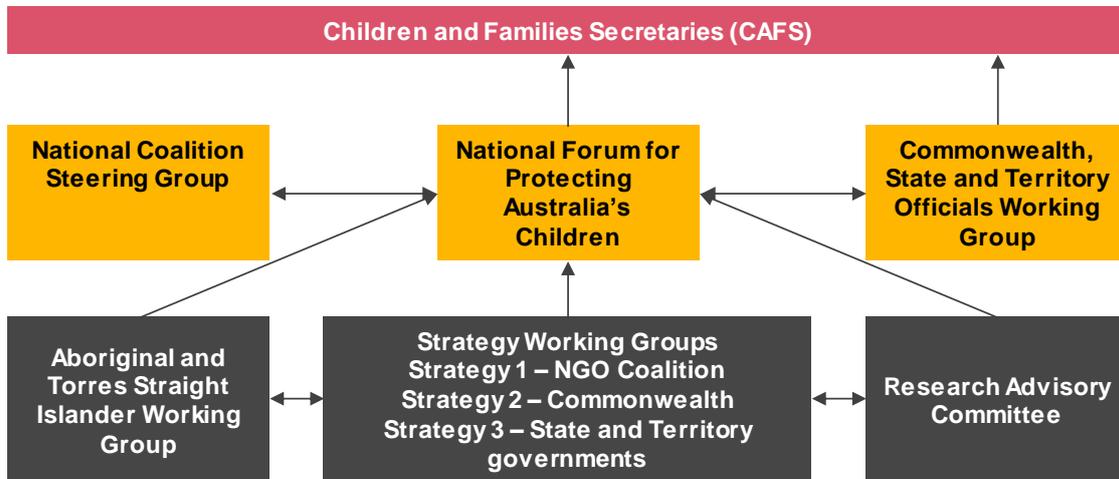
Background

- National Forum for Protecting Australia's Children – tripartite group encompassing representatives from Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the non-government sector appointed by the National Coalition for Child Safety and Well-being
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group – advisory group of Indigenous experts and representatives
- Members of various working groups.

An overview of the governance structure for the Third and Fourth Action Plan is outlined in Figure 4 and

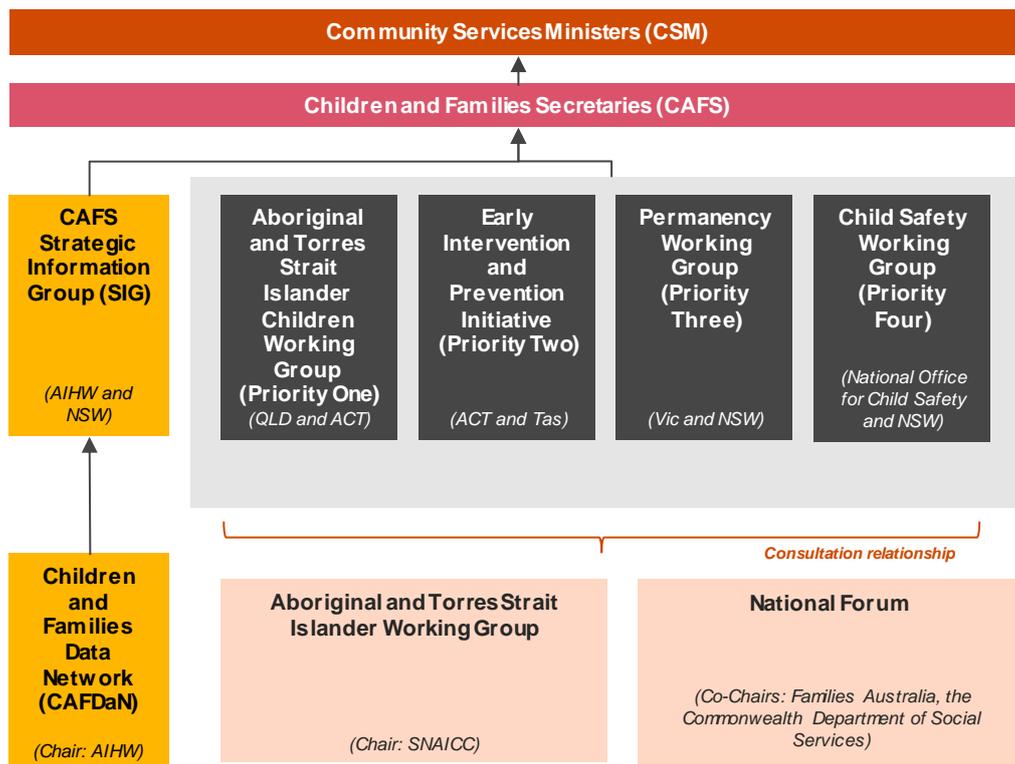
Figure 5 below.¹⁰

Figure 4 - Third Action Plan: Governance Structure



¹⁰ Department of Social Services, 'Third Action Plan 2015-2018 Governance Structure', emailed on 2 December 2019, p1, Department of Social Services, 'Fourth Action Plan Governance structure – draft' emailed 2 December 2019, p. 1.

Figure 5: Fourth Action Plan: Governance Structure



3.2 Prevalence of child abuse and neglect over the course of the Framework

The National Framework’s target to achieve ‘substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect in Australia over time’ must be contextualised by the changes that have occurred over the operation of the National Framework. Since inception:

- spending on child protection and family support services has grown, indicating the growing need for these services
- the rates of children in care has increased, and substantially so among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- there have been changes in jurisdictional approaches to notifications, investigations and substantiations, which means that it is difficult to draw conclusions as to whether there has been impact on these indicators
- at the same time, the increasing rate of children receiving intensive family support services suggests that there is a growing need for these supports.

Changes in practices, reporting and prevalence make comparison of the impact of the National Framework on its target difficult. Recognising that it would be challenging to track the progress of the National Framework in achieving its primary target of ‘a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect in Australia over time’ without a prevalence study of child abuse and neglect, a set of 32 data indicators were established. In addition to these indicators, annual data is compiled within the Productivity Commission’s Report on Government Services (RoGS) on child protection and family support services provided and government spending.

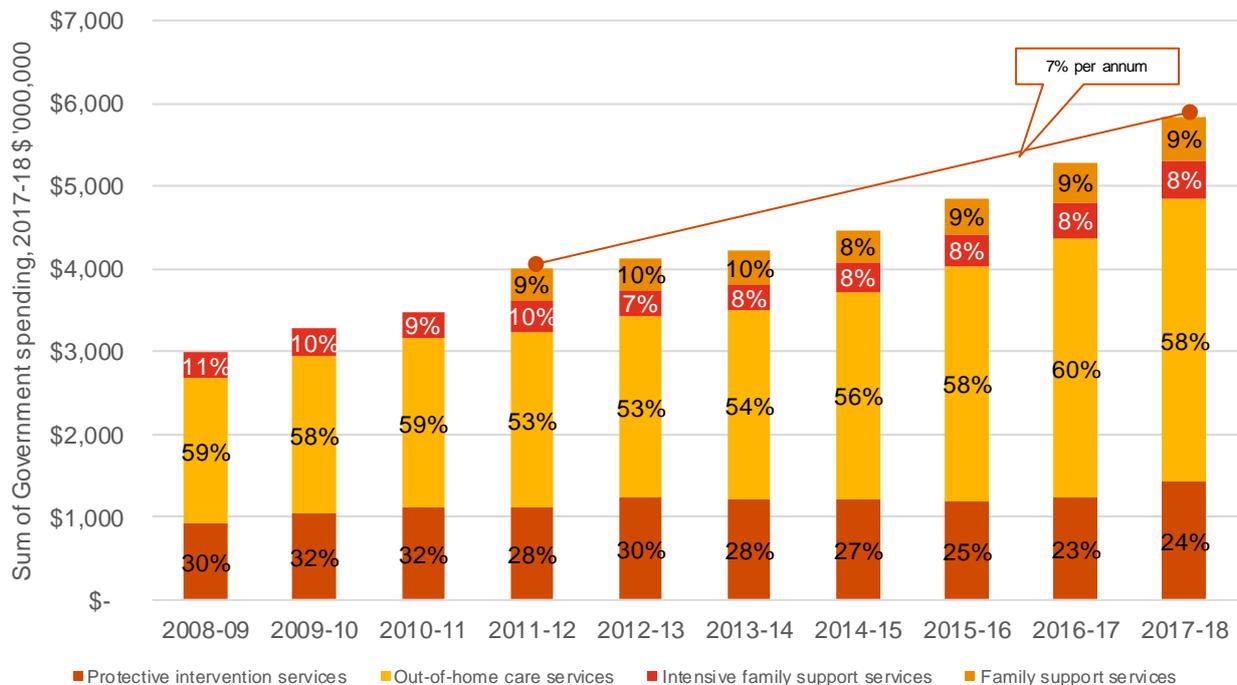
These indicators and RoGS data provide a high-level overview of how child protection and related data points have changed in the decade between 2009 and now. These provide context to the findings presented in this report.

3.2.1 Spending on child protection and family support services continues to grow

Figure 6 shows total government funding on protective intervention services, out of home care, intensive family support and general family support services between 2008-09 and 2017-18 (in 2017-18 dollars) across Australia. Reporting of spending

on general family support services was included in 2011-12, prior to then, spending estimates exclude family support services. Spending on child protection and family support services has increased by 7 per cent per annum between 2011-12 and 2017-18. Across the same time points, total government spending was reported as \$3.99 billion (2011-12), increasing to \$5.84 billion by 2017-18.

Figure 6: Government spending on child protection and family support services between 2008-09 and 2017-18¹¹



The proportion of spending on child protection and family support service types has remained relatively constant between 2011-12 and 2017-18 with a small decrease in spending on protective intervention services being offset by an increase in out-of-home care services. Approximately 17% of spending is dedicated to family support services.

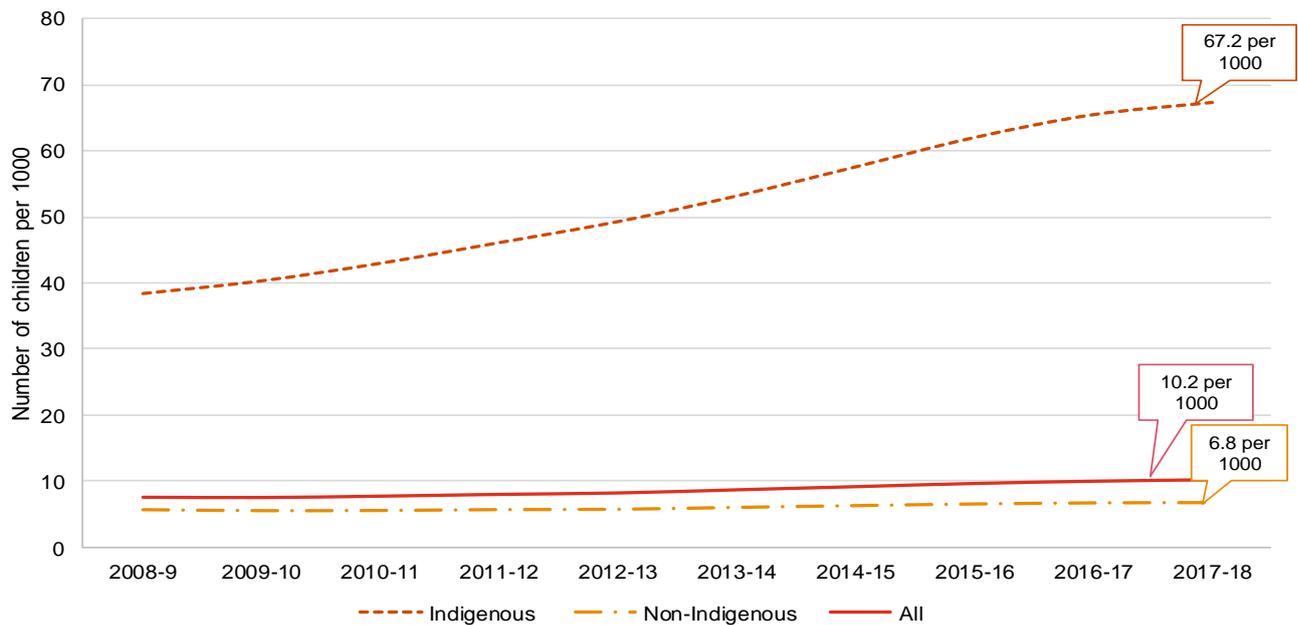
3.2.2 Rates of children and young people in child protection continues to increase, especially among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Figure 7 depicts the rate of Indigenous, non-Indigenous and all children on care and protection orders in Australia over the period between 2008-09 and 2017-18. The number of children on a care and protection order in Australia has increased from 35,409 (7.5 children per 1000) to 56,412 (10.2 children per 1000), representing a compound annual growth rate of 3 per cent per annum. Over the same period the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on care and protection orders has increased significantly from 10,271 (38.4 children per 1000) in 2008-09 to 20,484 (67.2 children per 1000) as at 2017-18,¹² representing a compound annual growth rate of 6 per cent per annum. In 2017-18 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 10 times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be on a care and protection order.¹³ Some of the underpinning factors influencing these trends are explored in Chapter 3.

¹² RoGS 2019, Chapter 16 Child Protection, Table 16A.7.

¹³ RoGS 2019, Chapter 16 Child Protection. Table 16A.1, Non-Indigenous children on a care and protection order is 6.8 per 1000 compared to Indigenous children 67.2 per 1000.

Figure 7: Change in the rate of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children on care and protection orders in Australia, 2008-09 to 2017-18

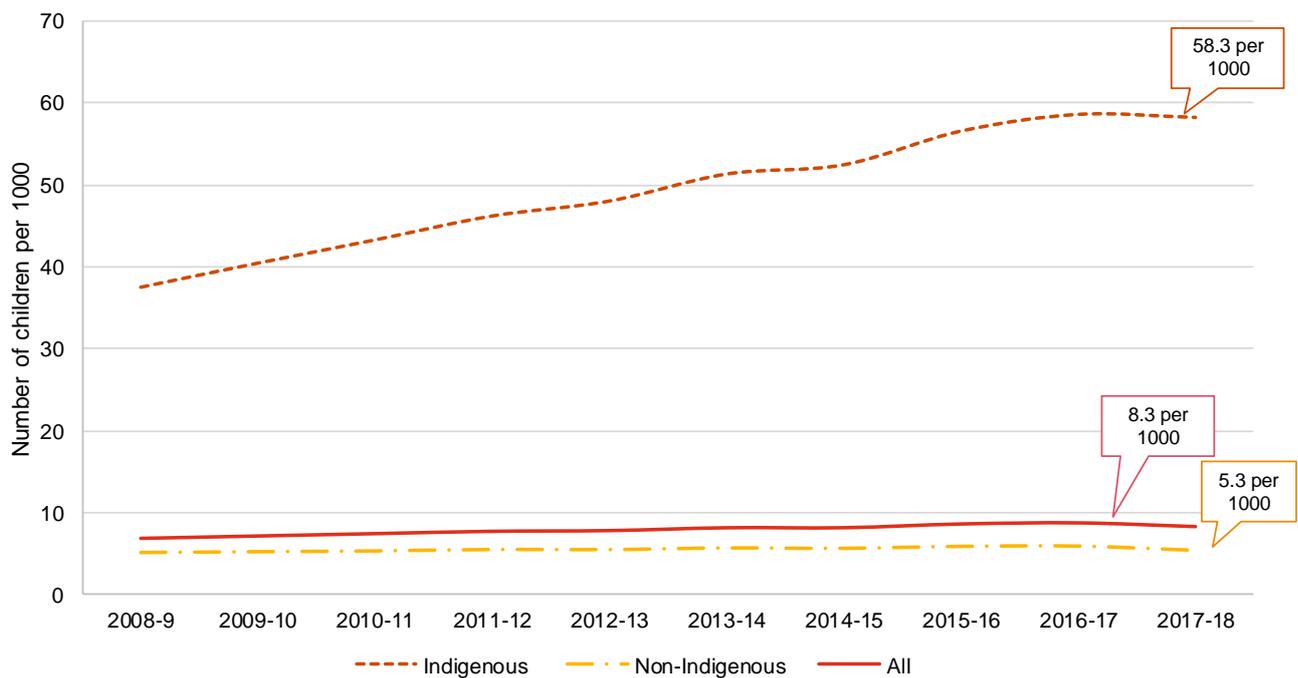


Over the same period of time the number of children in out of home care has also increased. Figure 8 depicts the rate of Indigenous, non-Indigenous and all children who were in out-of-home care in Australia on 30 June of each year, over the period between 2008-09 and 2017-18. The number of children in out-of-home care in Australia has increased from 34,069 (6.8 children per 1000) to 45,756 (8.3 children per 1000), representing a compound annual growth rate of 2 per cent per annum. Over the same period the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care has also increased significantly from 10,512 (37.5 children per 1000) in 2008-09 to 17,787 (58.3 children per 1000) as at 2017-18,¹⁴ representing a compound annual growth rate of 5 per cent per annum. In 2008-09 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children made up 31 percent of all children in out-of-home care, this proportion has grown and in 2017-18 they made up 60 percent of all children in out-of-home care. In 2017-18 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 11 times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be in out-of-home care.¹⁵

¹⁴ RoGS 2019, Chapter 16 Child Protection, Table 16A.7.

¹⁵ RoGS 2019, Chapter 16 Child Protection. Table 16A.1, Non-Indigenous children on a care and protection order is 6.8 per 1000 compared to Indigenous children 67.2 per 1000.

Figure 8: Change in the rate of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in out of home care Australia, 2008-09 to 2017-18



There is no consistent trend in the rate of children in notifications, investigations and substantiations across Australia. This is because it is challenging to draw conclusions across and within jurisdictions as practices and processes have changed over the timeframes considered. While at a national level there has been an increase in notifications from 43.5 per 1000 to 44.7 per 1000 between 2008-09 and 2017-18 and an increase in substantiations from 6.9 per 1000 to 8.5 per 1000 between 2008-09 and 2017-18. There has been a national decrease in investigations over the same period from 21.5 per 1000 to 17.5 per 1000.

Additionally, the national average masks significant jurisdictional differences. Table 4 shows that the rate of notifications increased over the period in four jurisdictions and decreased in four jurisdictions. A similar pattern is also observable in investigations which increased in three jurisdictions and decreased in five jurisdictions and substantiations which increased in three jurisdictions while decreasing in five jurisdictions.

Jurisdictional differences may also be driven by a large number of reporting and policy/legislative changes over the period which have influenced the comparability of data (these are summarised in Table 4). For example, in Queensland, amendments to the *Child Protection Act 1999*, changed mandatory reporting requirements and significantly influenced the number of notifications made in that jurisdiction.

Table 4: Rate of change per 1,000 children between 2008-9 and 2017-18 for notifications, investigations and substantiations¹⁶

Jurisdiction	Notifications		Investigations		Substantiations		Factors influencing comparability
	Difference	CAGR	Difference	CAGR	Difference	CAGR	
Tasmania	↓ 10.8	-2%	↓ 8.3	-8%	↓ 3.5	-5%	Changes to the definition of a notification were introduced as of 2015-16 making data from previous years incomparable with data from 2015-16 onwards. 2015-16 data is now consistent with other jurisdictions.
Victoria	↑ 26.2	7%	↑ 12.9	11%	↑ 7.2	10%	None.
Northern Territory	↑ 115.6	11%	↑ 49.9	11%	↑ 14.4	9%	None.
New South Wales	↓ 19.3	-3%		NA		NA	NSW implemented a new client management system in 2017-18 to improve data quality for future periods. Limited data was provided for 2017-18.
Queensland	↓ 3.1	-2%	↓ 1.5	-1%	↓ 1.6	-3%	From 2014-15 Qld made a suite of changes including; requiring all notifications to be investigated, the consolidation of mandatory reporting legislation and 'child concern reports'. Data from 2014-15 onwards is not comparable with earlier periods.
Western Australia	↑ 7.2	4%	↑ 7.4	8%	↑ 4.5	11%	None.
South Australia	↓ 4.3	-1%	↓ 5.9	-6%	↓ 1.2	-3%	SA only counts notifications as those reports which meet the criteria for a reasonable suspicions of child abuse and neglect.
Australian Capital Territory	↑ 11.2	2%	↓ 2.2	-2%	↓ 5.2	-11%	ACT includes notifications as all intakes that meet the definition of both a child concern report and a child protection report.
Commonwealth	↑ 1.2	2%	↓ 4	-2%	↑ 1.6	2%	

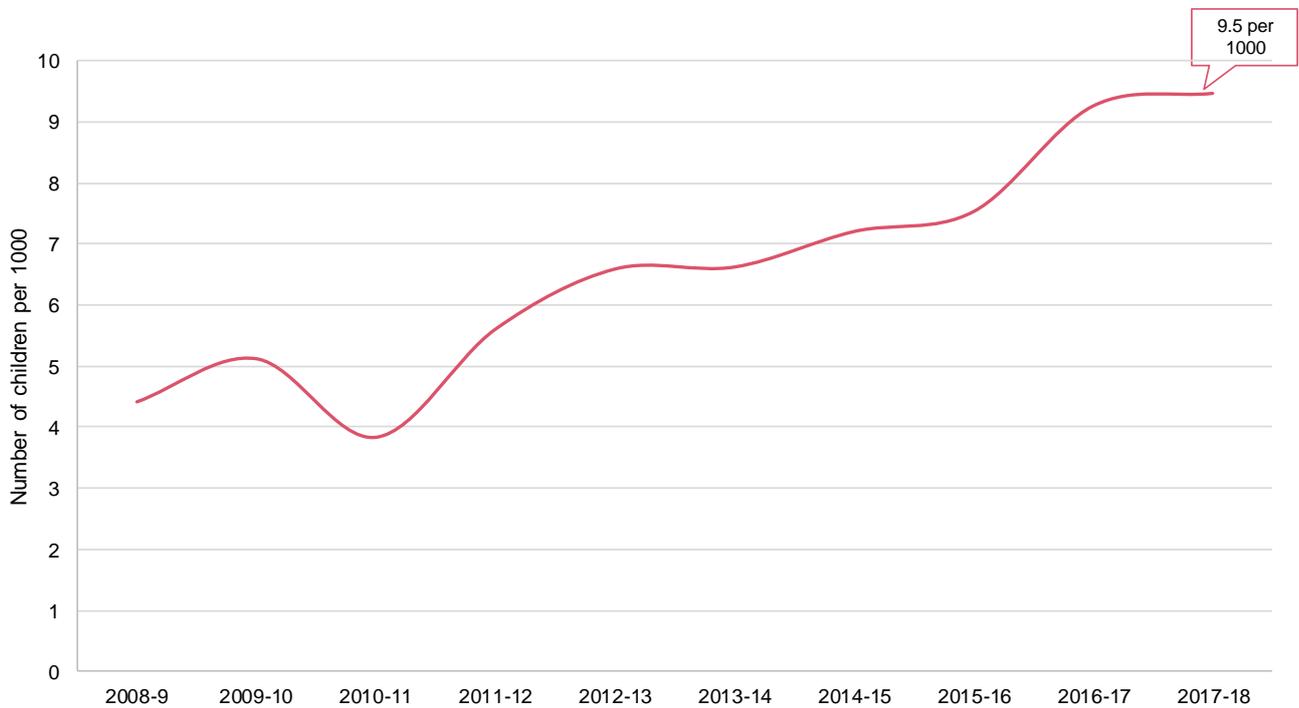
While the total proportion of spending on family support services has remained relatively constant since 2012-13, the total number of children receiving family support services has increased.

Figure 9 shows the rate of children receiving intensive family support services in Australia growing at a rate of 10 per cent per annum, with approximately 9.5 children per 1,000 accessing intensive family support in 2017-18. The number of children receiving intensive family support services has increased from 21,976 in 2008-09 to 52,028 in 2017-18 (a compound annual growth rate of 10%). By comparison, total funding for family support services has grown at a rate of 5 per cent per annum between 2012-13 and 2017-18. The result has been a decrease in the average recurrent expenditure per child receiving support of 11 per cent. This decrease may represent greater efficiency in service provision or could signal a

¹⁶ RoGS 2019, Chapter 16 Child Protection, Table 16A.1.

reduction in the level or intensity of support provided, it is not possible to determine the cause of this change with currently available data.

Figure 9: Rate per 1000 of children receiving intensive family support services in Australia, 2008-09 to 2017-18¹⁷



3.2.3 National Framework data indicators

Thirty-two data indicators¹⁸ are compiled to report the progress of the Framework’s high-level target and supporting outcomes. Of these indicators, based on Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) data and reporting, three are not reported on as no data is available and ten have insufficient time series data to make a reliable assessment of trends. Challenges with data are explored further in Chapter 3. A summary of the 19 indicators with reliable time series data is provided in Table 5 below. At a high level, four indicators have shown improvement over the life of the framework, 12 indicators have remained steady or show no clear trend, and three indicators have worsened as reported by AIHW. Note that due to year-to-year variability in data points, a linear trend cannot always be derived. Trend directions represented here are extracted from AIHW reporting which have analysed trends in each dataset.

Table 5: Summary of National Framework data indicators with reliable time series data¹⁹

Domain	Indicator	Baseline year*	Baseline year value	Current year	Value (current)	Trend
High level outcome: Australia’s children and young people are safe and well						
Child protection substantiations	Rate of children aged 0–17 years who were the subject	2009–10	6.2 (per 1,000)	2017–18	8.5 (per 1,000)	↑ (increase)

¹⁷ RoGS 2019, Chapter 16 Child Protection, Table 16A.1.

¹⁸ Please refer to <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/nfpac/contents/national-framework-indicators-data-visualisations> for the full list of data indicators.

¹⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019, National Framework Indicators, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/nfpac/contents/national-framework-indicators>, accessed: 21/01/2020

Background

	of child protection substantiation					
Out-of-home care	Rate of children aged 0–17 years who are in out-of-home care	2010	7.1 (per 1,000)	2018	8.2 (per 1,000)	↑ (increase)
Teenage births	Age-specific birth rate for women aged 15–19 years	2009	16.4 (per 1,000)	2016	10.2 (per 1,000)	↓ (decrease)
Low birthweight	Proportion of live born infants of low birthweight	2009	6.2%	2016	6.5%	↑ (increase)
Child homicide	Assault (homicide) death rate for children aged 0–17 years	2008–10	0.5 (per 100,000)	2012–14	0.4 (per 100,000)	~ (steady/no clear trend)
Early childhood development	Proportion of children who are developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains of the AEDC	2009	23.6%	2015	22.0%	~ (steady/no clear trend)
Family economic situation	Proportion of households with children aged 0–14 years where at least 50% of gross household income is from government pensions and allowances	2009–10	17.1%	2015–16	13.2%	↓ (decrease)
Supporting Outcome 1: Children live in safe and supportive families and communities						
Family functioning	Proportion of families who report 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent' family cohesion					
	(a) birth cohort	2010–11	89.5%	2015–16	88.4%	~ (steady/no clear trend)
	(b) kinder cohort	2010–11	87.7%	2015–16	87.3%	~ (steady/no clear trend)
Supporting outcome 2: Children and families access adequate support to promote safety and intervene early						
Early childhood education	Attendance rate of children aged 4–5 years at preschool programs	2012	86.1%	2017	87.3%	↑ (increase)
Antenatal care	Proportion of women who had at least five antenatal visits during pregnancy	2010	94.3%	2016	93.6%	~ (steady/no clear trend)
Supporting Outcome 3: Risk factors for abuse and neglect are addressed						
Parental substance use (alcohol)	Proportion of parents with children aged 0–14 years who drank alcohol at risky levels	2010	48.1%	2016	43.5%	↓ (decrease)
Parental mental health	Proportion of parents with children aged 0–14 years who have a mental health problem	2009	16.9%	2017	16.3%	~ (steady/no clear trend)
Homelessness	Rate of children aged 0–17 years who receive assistance through homelessness services (accompanied and unaccompanied)	2011–12	13.3 (per 1,000)	2017–18	16.3 (per 1,000)	~ (steady/no clear trend)
Supporting Outcome 4: Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing						

Background

Child protection resubstantiations	Rate of children aged 0–17 years who were the subject of a child protection resubstantiation in a given year	2008–09	17.3%	2016–17	17.6%	~ (steady/no clear trend)
Placement stability	Proportion of children aged 0–17 years exiting out-of-home care during the year who had 1 or 2 placements	2009–10	63.3%	2017–18	65.6%	~ (steady/no clear trend)
Leaving care plans	Proportion of young people aged 15–17 years who have a leaving care plan	2012	77.0%	2018	58.8%	~ (steady/no clear trend)
Supporting Outcome 5: Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities						
Placement of Indigenous children (relatives/kin)	Proportion of Indigenous children aged 0–17 years in out-of-home care placed with extended family or other Indigenous caregivers	2010	70.5%	2018	65.2%	~ (steady/no clear trend)
Supporting Outcome 6: Child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented and survivors receive adequate support						
Sexual abuse substantiations	Rate of children aged 0–17 years who were the subject of a child protection substantiation for sexual abuse	2012–13	0.8 (per 1,000)	2017–18	0.9 (per 1,000)	~ (steady/no clear trend)
Child sexual assault	Rate of children aged 0–14 years who have been the victim of sexual assault	2010	210.3 (per 100,000)	2017	202.8 (per 100,000)	~ (steady/no clear trend)

*Note: baseline years vary between data indicators due to differences in data collection and baselining methods.

4 Evaluation question 1: To what extent did the National Framework achieve its intended outcomes and what factors supported or inhibited outcomes?

This chapter covers...

- the outcomes of the National Framework and its Third and Fourth Action Plans. Aspects of the Framework's strengths and weaknesses and factors that supported or inhibited the achievement of outcomes are also explored. It comprises three sections:
 - Section 4.1 explores the major achievements of the Framework.
 - Section 4.2 explores four key areas that organisations identified as important strengths, weaknesses, supports or inhibitors of achieving the outcomes of the Framework and action plans.
 - Section 4.3 explores the effectiveness of the National Framework in impacting the priorities and actions for Indigenous children.

Evaluation question 1: To what extent did the National Framework achieve its intended outcomes and what factors supported or inhibited outcomes?

4.1 Achievements of the National Framework and Action Plans

Key finding

Organisations reported that a major achievement of the Framework has been keeping the welfare of children on the national 'agenda.' The implementation of a number of key initiatives, including the National Children's Commissioner and National Standards for Out-of-Home Care, are major achievements of the Framework. Although the Framework implemented a number of key initiatives, it appears that the Framework did not achieve the high-level goal of a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect,

The majority of stakeholders reported that there were achievements that they believed could be clearly attributed to the Framework.

The most frequently cited achievement was that by providing a clear, published and endorsed position on the need to reduce the prevalence of child abuse and neglect in Australia, the needs of the most vulnerable children and families were 'on the agenda.' Organisations reported:

- the longevity of the Framework enabled it to transcend changing ministerial priorities, maintain bipartisan support and create focus on a well-meaning national conversation that aimed to achieve coordination
- there is an inherent value in having the National Framework and convening the National Forum as it communicates a level of importance placed on the needs of Australian children and young people.

Some organisations indicated that having the National Framework and Forum, whilst probably not the catalyst for change, may have contributed to the broader environment that has seen other reforms and changes that have improved the wellbeing of children. Organisations provided the following examples:

- the implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations which were recommended by the *Royal Commission into Institutional responses to Child Sexual Abuse* and developed through the Third Action Plan.
- broader campaigns including *Family Matters* and *Every Child* were supported by the relationships and conversations facilitated by the Framework and Forum.

A large number of organisations who were closely involved with the development and delivery of the action plans reported that the National Framework enabled the generation of cross-jurisdictional relationships between the National Forum members and these relationships have resulted in trust, coordination and collaboration, which was not present prior to the Framework. Stakeholders commented favourably on the inclusion of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as part of the National Forum and particularly identified building greater understanding and relationships with the SNAICC – National Voice for our Children as an achievement. An example that was provided was the workshops facilitated by SNAICC in each jurisdiction in relation to the implementation of the ATSICPP, resulted in greater ongoing engagement with SNAICC by the jurisdictions.²⁰

Organisations identified a range of specific initiatives delivered by the Framework over successive action plans as major achievements. The top four most commonly reported initiatives were:

- the agreement of the National Standards for Out-Of-Home-Care
- the establishment of the National Children's Commissioner
- the development of the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set
- the support that the National Forum (as a regular convening of government and non-government stakeholders) and the ATSI Working Group provided for more comprehensive implementation of the ATSICPP.

Desktop review of the reported achievements of the action plans identified these achievements along with others, largely delivered through trials and specific initiatives. These are outlined in Table 6.

²⁰ The ATSICPP seeks to prioritise the placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with their family, community or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. It also requires consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and organisations regarding child protection interventions, placement and care, in addition to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are supported to maintain their connection to family, community and culture. Further information can be found at: <https://www.snaicc.org.au/understanding-applying-aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-child-placement-principle/>

Evaluation question 1: To what extent did the National Framework achieve its intended outcomes and what factors supported or inhibited outcomes?

Table 6: Selection of key projects from National Framework Action Plans

Action Plan	Selection of key projects
Action Plan 1 2009 – 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of a National Children's Commissioner Agreement of the National Standards for Out-of-Home-Care
Action Plan 2 2012 – 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trialling of the Child Aware Approaches (CAA) initiative that builds on partnerships between Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the community sector; Development of the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set; Reforming the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA); and National Research Agenda for Protecting Children 2011-2014 - Three research projects selected through an open tender process and jointly funded by the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments, comprised key components of the National Research Agenda.
Action Plan 3 2015 – 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Building Capacity in Australian Parents (BCAP) trial (branded 'Parent Link') which aims to build parenting skills and strengths-based parenting behaviours. The National Community Awareness Raising Strategy (NCAR) aims to raise community awareness about the importance of the first 1,000 days of a child's life. Towards Independent Adulthood (TIA) is an initiative that aims to help young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) to thrive into adulthood. SNAICC – National Voice for our Children has developed a Guide to Support Implementation of the ATSI CPP. Connect4Safety - the Inter-jurisdictional Child Protection Data Sharing Project. Development of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
Action Plan 4 2018 – 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing implementation of the ATSI CPP Announcement of seven out of 10 sites for Stronger Places, Stronger People Research project on Guide for decision making on permanency in a timely manner

Source: DSS website.

At a broader level, the majority of organisations consulted valued the National Framework for its role in driving the children's agenda and creating an environment for collaboration and engagement across the sector and jurisdictions. However, there was not universal awareness of the National Framework's achievements among organisations; some reported that they were either unaware or considered that there were limited achievements attributable to the Framework.

These views were almost always expressed in relation to the high-level objective of the Framework which was to achieve "a *substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect in Australia over time.*" In many cases stakeholders also acknowledged that it may not have been possible to achieve the high-level objective within a 12-year Framework but they were still frustrated at what appeared to be a lack of progress on 'turning the tide.'

A review of data indicates that the number of children in Australia who receive child protection and/or family support services has increased over the life of the Framework (see Chapter 3 for an overview of data). A number of potentially competing factors could explain this increase including;

- there is evidence that in developed countries around the world rates of children experiencing poverty, disadvantage and maltreatment are increasing. A 2019 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report estimates that one in seven children in developed countries are growing up in poverty today and over the last ten years childhood poverty has increased in two thirds of developed countries²¹
- emerging evidence from the BetterStart initiative, based on a case file review in South Australia indicates that the prevalence of children experiencing abuse and neglect could be in the order of one in four children, which is significantly higher than previous estimates²²

²¹ OECD, 2019, Children paying a high price for inequality, accessed: <http://www.oecd.org/social/children-paying-a-high-price-for-inequality.htm>, 21/01/2020

²² BetterStart, 2017, Child Protection in South Australia, <https://health.adelaide.edu.au/betterstart/publications/reports/child-protection-in-south-australia.pdf>, accessed: 21/01/2020

Evaluation question 1: To what extent did the National Framework achieve its intended outcomes and what factors supported or inhibited outcomes?

- levels of notifications, investigations and substantiations have varied considerably across jurisdictions over the last ten years and have been influenced by policy and legislative changes which effect the rate of reporting of child abuse and neglect and the threshold that is determined as abuse and neglect. (See Chapter 3 for additional detail)

Noting that the broader objective of the National Framework mightn't have been achieved, the National Framework was successful in bringing and sustaining the policy priorities of children and young people to the national 'agenda'. It delivered a range of initiatives as well as cornerstone outcomes in the establishment of the National Children's Commissioner and National Standards for Out-of-Home care. The lack of a prevalence study meant that the baseline against which the Framework could progress was not established. A robust baseline would assist future benchmarking to inform policy making.

4.2 Supporting factors, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement

All organisations consulted provided views on the supporting factors, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement of the Framework and Action Plans.

As discussed in section 4.1, many organisations referenced the role of the National Forum in fostering collaboration across governments and the non-government sector as a major strength of the Framework's design. The longer-term view of the Framework also elevated the policy needs of children and 'kept it on the agenda'.

Almost all organisations made statements that indicated that governance of the National Framework and the Third and Fourth Action Plans was an inhibitor of the achievement of outcomes and implementation of actions. In referring to governance there were two broad challenges identified by organisations;

- 1 the ability of the Framework's governance arrangements to provide broader leadership and strategic direction that influenced priorities across government and service sectors to drive outcomes for children (outlined in section 3.2.2)
- 2 the ability of the Framework and Action Plans' governance to adequately support internal decision making that was aligned to the Framework's objectives or to drive accountability for actions and outcomes (outlined in section 3.2.3)

In addition to these challenges, organisations identified challenges related to investment and resourcing, the use of data and evidence and coordination across government. Evidence of these themes are outlined in sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4.

4.2.2 Governance and decision making

Across all organisations there were differences regarding the aspects of the Framework's governance models that either supported or inhibited it. Many organisations indicated that governance in the earlier years of the Framework was stronger; several indicating that governance has been a consistent challenge throughout the Framework and a few indicating that the governance has improved in the Fourth Action Plan. Overall, as with many cross-governmental and large-scale initiatives, the governance has been impacted by numerous changes that are outside the control of the Framework including COAG restructures and mode of government changes.

As outlined in the summary in Box 1 (below), successive iterations of governance have resulted in the National Framework no longer reporting to a standing COAG committee and instead formally reporting to the Children and Families Secretaries (CAFS) and Community Services Ministers (CSM). A number of impacts of this change were reported by organisations including:

- several organisations reported that CAFS was not able to influence governmental priorities to the extent of COAG. These organisations reported that they observed that the National Framework gradually became less of a priority for governments over the life of the Framework and this coincided with movements of the Framework's governance structure away from the oversight, leadership and accountability of COAG. Some stakeholders reported that earlier governance models that reported through to COAG provided for a greater 'authorising environment' which led to the establishment of some signature initiatives such as the National Standards for OOHC and the National Children's Commissioner. One focus group also reported that challenges to gaining authorisation had arisen but felt that the authorising environment had improved in later action plans as DSS took on a bigger role in seeking approvals from CAFS and CSM out of session.
- focus group discussion suggested that the evolution of the processing of reporting to the Community Services Ministers meetings (following the changes from the COAG Standing Committee of Community and Disability Services Ministers) had lessened the priority of the National Framework among governments.

Evaluation question 1: To what extent did the National Framework achieve its intended outcomes and what factors supported or inhibited outcomes?

Box 1 Summary of the evolution of governance

Governance arrangements of the Framework and Action Plans have evolved over time both in response to external changes such as COAG reviews and through internal processes to develop governance arrangements that best meet the needs of the Framework and its action plans. This section summarises some key changes to governance arrangements that give context to the operation of the Third and Fourth Action Plans (which were delivered between 2015 and 2020) as compared to earlier action plans. The evolution covers the period from 2009 to 2020.

At inception (2009), the National Framework set out an ambition for arrangements that ensured it was supported by integrated governance that cut across government and the non-government sector in order to plan and implement actions. The governance structure was as follows.

- the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference was responsible for the implementation of the National Framework, reporting annually to COAG
- a Ministerial Forum on Protecting Australia's Children was convened to bring together Ministers with responsibilities under the National Framework. The Forum invited contribution from non-government representatives, such as State and Territory Children's Commissioners and children and young people
- the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Advisory Committee (CDSMAC) to support CDSM to manage the National Framework
- a tripartite National Framework Advisory Committee to advise on the operation of the National Framework, comprising CDSMAC officials with nominees from other sectors (such as health, education and justice) and non-government representatives (such as leading academics, practitioners and peak organisations)
- supporting the formal governance mechanisms were a series of working groups, with members drawn from government and non-government organisations as appropriate.

In March 2011 a significant reform of Ministerial Councils was announced which resulted in the dissolution of the Community and Disability Services Ministers Conference and supporting structures (CDSMAC).²³ Between 2011 and 2014 the National Framework reported to the Standing Council on Community, Housing and Disability Services and was supported by the Standing Council on Community and Disability Services Advisory Council.

Further changes resulted in the dissolution of the Standing Council on Community, Housing and Disability Services in 2014. It was replaced by the Children and Families Secretaries Group (CAFS) and an informal structure referred to as the Community Services Ministers (CSM) meeting, which the National Framework reported to from 2014 onwards. As such the National Framework is no longer sponsored as an initiative of COAG and current COAG performance reporting does not include indicators related to child safety or wellbeing.²⁴

Chapter 2 outlines the governance structure and working groups of the National Framework, as per the Third and Fourth Action Plans. The governance arrangements for the Fourth Action Plan had not been finalised prior to consultation undertaken as part of this evaluation. The draft governance structure supporting the Fourth Action Plan demonstrates a number of key changes from the structure under the Third Action Plan including that;

- CSM meeting is included within the governance structure diagram. CSM meetings took place during the period of the Third Action Plan and the CSM was designated ultimate responsibility for the Third Action Plan but this group was not included in the governance diagram.
- Priority Working Groups report directly to CAFS. The Commonwealth, State and Territory Officials Working Group is no longer included in the structure.
- The National Forum provides input and guidance to working groups but working groups no longer report through the National Forum to CAFS.
- Alignment of the Working Groups to the four priorities outlined in the Fourth Action Plan plus the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group. Working groups are co-chaired by States/Territories and NOCS instead of being aligned to the three parties of the tripartite arrangement. The National Coalition no longer chair a working group and do not maintain membership on any of the Priority Working Groups.
- There are two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Groups representing Priority One of the Fourth Action Plan and a separate advisory group who have input into all Priority Working Groups, the Strategic Information Group and the National Forum.
- Outside of this governance structure there was an Inter-jurisdictional Child Protection Information Sharing working group which was convened in 2016 in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. This group reported to CAFS. The work of this group was closely linked to the Priority 4, Child Safety Working Group who are progressing the response to Royal Commission recommendations through the Fourth Action Plan. The group is no longer convened.
- The CAFS Strategic Information Group (SIG) and Children and Families Data Network (CAFDaN) have been convened as part of the Fourth Action Plan.
- The Research Advisory Committee is no longer convened.

Evaluation question 1: To what extent did the National Framework achieve its intended outcomes and what factors supported or inhibited outcomes?

Governance membership and representation

In addition to the changes related to COAG structures, membership of the National Forum and Working Groups was heavily focussed on both government and non-government representatives from the child protection space which limited the Framework's ability to have broader influence. Views provided included that:

- a few organisations and a couple of focus groups reported that despite the broad membership of the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing (convened by Families Australia), the representative organisations on the Forum were mostly focussed on the statutory child protection space. It was reported that this led to a narrowing of the priorities discussed for action in the Third and Fourth Action Plans.
- a few organisations also reported that government representation on the National Forum and Working Groups was also focussed heavily on child protection departments (state/territory) and DSS (Commonwealth). Organisations indicated that although Commonwealth Departments of Education and Health have been involved throughout, there were opportunities to better enhance representation. Enhanced representation occurred after the establishment of the National Office for Child Safety and the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA). In addition, organisations referenced that the state/territory government representation has almost exclusively included child protection departments except in case where child protection is delivered as part of a broader portfolio in a jurisdiction. This has resulted in the exclusion of broader state representation among related portfolios such as disability, justice, community services and housing.

Further impacts related to coordination and influence of the broader policy agenda are outlined in detailed in Chapter 5.

Strategic direction and decision-making

The Third Action Plan was seen as the most effective through implementation, largely driven by its rationalisation of actions and focus on the child protection system where National Forum members had greater leverage to influence activity.

The Framework and its governance mechanisms were unable to influence the broad strategic direction of governments and service sectors outside of child protection. This inability was influenced by successive changes to the governance structure which removed it from COAG oversight and the narrow membership of the National Forum which resulted in the Forum having limited networks and influence in broader service sectors.

The governance structure did not drive consensus in decision-making within the National Forum and was ineffective in holding members accountable for outcomes of the Framework.

Stakeholders familiar with the governance structure that underpinned the National Framework reported positively on some aspects of the governance structure but generally agreed that challenges in reaching agreement and/or decisions outweighed the positives.

A few stakeholders highlighted that the current governance structure for the Fourth Action Plan has not been agreed or finalised. A greater number of organisations indicated that this challenge was broader than just the Fourth Action Plan and reported that the roles and responsibilities of tripartite members has never been well defined. This is supported by the desktop analysis of the terms of reference documents which is provided in Appendix B and shows that there were inconsistent approaches to what information is included, how terms of reference are generated and signed off.

Organisations reported that inter-jurisdictional collaboration was a key strength of the governance arrangements, particularly in relation to convening the National Forum and the working groups, including that:

- the National Forum enforced a level of collaboration between members and that the inclusion of NGOs on the National Forum helped to bridge jurisdictional boundaries and share lessons from around Australia

²³ Australian Parliament House, Reform of Ministerial Councils, https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2011/March/Reform_of_Ministerial_Councils, accessed: 13 January 2020

²⁴ Productivity Commission, Performance Reporting Dashboard, <https://performancedashboard.d61.io/aus>, accessed: 13 January 2020

Evaluation question 1: To what extent did the National Framework achieve its intended outcomes and what factors supported or inhibited outcomes?

- a key issue regarding the governance was a lack of senior government attendance to the National Forum and working groups which meant delegates were not authorised to commit to implementing actions. These organisations highlighted that the seniority of government attendees reduced over time and stymied momentum for implementation and collaboration.

Tripartite governance structure

Some organisations reported that the tripartite nature of the governance was a key strength and something that set it apart from other national frameworks and policies in the beginning however over time the tripartite nature evolved and became less productive. Views in relation to the tripartite nature of the governance included:

- that the draft governance structure for the Fourth Action Plan effectively dissolves the tripartite nature of the governance by removing the National Coalition from all decision-making bodies and working groups. Desktop analysis of the Fourth Action Plan governance structure identifies that membership of the priority working groups has been limited to the state/territory and Commonwealth governments. As the working groups have shifted to report directly to CAFS under this structure, stakeholders perceived that these changes risk that the National Coalition is not appropriately consulted as part of decision-making processes
- that representatives of the National Coalition on the National Forum were organisations that were focussed on the statutory child protection sector and reflected that this group heavily influenced conversation and focus towards the child protection space. This focus sometimes hampered conversation and effort to discuss a broader early intervention and prevention agenda. Some organisations reported that the rationalisation of working groups under the Fourth Action Plan enables greater focus on the delivery of planned early intervention and prevention initiatives.

Role of the working groups

A few organisations reported that in the Third and Fourth Action Plan working groups there has been increasing pressure to use the working groups to address or respond to the recommendations of inquiries, reviews and Royal Commissions. This was also supported in focus group discussions which indicated that as CAFS took on responsibility for ensuring the full implementation of Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse recommendations, the National Forum and Working Groups became a natural mechanism to drive this work forward. This is supported by desktop analysis which found that:

- the Terms of Reference for working groups in the Fourth Action Plan includes a broader mandate to respond to the priorities of CAFS and the CSM. This appears to be in line with a decision which was reached at the November 2017 National Forum and referenced at the August 2018 National Forum to move away from an implementation focus for the working groups (in reference to the working groups under the Third Action Plan) to a more 'strategic approach' and to streamline the membership of the working groups
- the inclusion of CAFS Strategic Information Group (CAFS SIG) and Children and Families Data Network (CAFDaN) in the governance structure appeared to be a mechanism for responding to and aligning with the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* and the *Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory*.²⁵

The impact of using the governance structures of the National Framework for a purpose other than that specified in its Terms of Reference and planned priorities is that it risks distracting from the agenda of the National Framework. It also risks cementing that the National Framework has a role in 'advising' or to function as a discussion forum for jurisdictions, but not an implementation arm. Revisions to the governance arrangements would be required if this structure is to be retained to be sure to quarantine or dedicate working groups focused on the agreed activities of the Framework.

On balance, the governance structure support ongoing engagement between the jurisdictions and sector, but considering the specific aspects, the Third Action Plan was most effective given its narrower focus. Its focus on child protection reflected the strength of the governance structure which enabled it to influence those within the sector, however broader influence was more difficult to achieve. The lack of accountability or levers to drive consensus within the structure could be reviewed to enhance the delivery of outcomes.

²⁵ Fourth Action Plan 2018-2020, Supporting families, communities and organisations to keep children safe.

Evaluation question 1: To what extent did the National Framework achieve its intended outcomes and what factors supported or inhibited outcomes?

4.2.3 Investment and resourcing of the National Framework

Key finding

Available investment for the Framework limited the scale of initiatives pursued and in turn limited the achievement of outcomes. Joint funding opportunities were not sufficiently explored or implemented.

Almost all organisations made statements that indicated that investment and resourcing of the National Framework and action plans inhibited the achievement of outcomes and implementation of actions. Several organisations agreed that funding committed was important to deliver specific actions of the action plans but identified that funding was not always prioritised and/or was directed to deliver specific initiatives, without ability to consider where it might best be invested.

Investment approaches

Almost all organisations who identified investment as an inhibitor reported that there was a lack of resourcing for the Framework. Stakeholders who expressed this view commented:

- that jurisdictions often look to the Commonwealth to provide leadership by investing in key initiatives under the Framework but it is not clear that this is the best or only investment model. Joint funding and investment matching opportunities could provide the most sustainable investment model for the Framework. Stakeholders, particularly from the broader service sector, reported that these opportunities have not been appropriately explored under the Framework which may be connected to challenges faced with the governance model (outlined above). This was supported through desktop analysis of Strategy Workplans under the Third Action Plan which could not identify any documented joint funding/investment arrangements
- that the funding under the National Framework compared to other national plans and commitments by the Commonwealth has been relatively less than for other plans given the broad and complex scope of the Framework. Stakeholders perceived that this resulted in action plans not being implemented successfully and also signalling the lesser priority of the Framework. A comparison was often drawn with the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, for which \$328 million was committed for the implementation of the Fourth Action Plan (2019-2022)²⁶ compared to \$48.06 million which has been provided for the Fourth Action Plan of the Framework (see Appendix C for additional detail on the funding provided under the Third and Fourth Action Plans).

A few organisations who identified investment as a key inhibitor reported that there was a lack of investment in early intervention and prevention activities by jurisdictions. These stakeholders reported that:

- jurisdictions face challenges in redirecting funding to early intervention and prevention in the short term while the population of children in the child protection system is still high and growing
- Commonwealth funding may be required in the short to medium term to enable simultaneous investment across the three tiers of the public health model, until a reduction and/or slowing of the number of children in the system is achieved.

Design and funding of trials

Several organisations identified that the short term or trial nature of the actions that were implemented, limited impact. The lack of ongoing and national implementation was generally seen as a result of a lack of secured funding or opportunity for long term investment of projects that showed promising results. Examples provided by organisations included:

- personal advisor models similar to that trialled under the Transition to Independent Adulthood initiative of the Third Action Plan have been in operation in the United Kingdom for a number of years and have been trialled and evaluated in Victoria through Berry Street's Stand By Me initiative.²⁷ This organisation reported that given the evidence already exists for the effectiveness of this approach, it is not useful to implement further small scale trials of this program

²⁶ Department of Social Services, 5 March 2019, Our Investment in Women's Safety, https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/03_2019/our-investment-womens-safety-5-march-2019.pdf, accessed: 29/01/2019

²⁷ Berry Street, Stand By Me article, <https://www.berrystreet.org.au/news/2017/stand-me>

Evaluation question 1: To what extent did the National Framework achieve its intended outcomes and what factors supported or inhibited outcomes?

- most organisations reported frustration at the lack of scale of trials, demonstrations and initiatives that are funded, and often reported that given the small scale they were unsurprised that there had been minimal achievement of the Framework's outcomes which are broad and ambitious compared to the funding and implementation that has been observed.

Funding for the Framework

The desktop analysis of funding attached to the Framework and its action plans found that there is no dedicated investment plan attached to the Framework. Information on the funding provided for the Framework was provided by DSS. An overview of total funding provided by the Commonwealth identified that over \$184 million has been committed to the National Framework and associated initiatives as shown in Table 7.

A review of work plans for the three Strategy Working Groups under the Third Action Plan identified that outside of key initiatives funded by DSS and Department of Education, actions included do not have an identified source of funding or resourcing plan attached. Some initiatives appear to secure funding through the Base National Initiatives appropriation however documentation of the amount or duration of funding was not provided. An outline of specific funding for the Third and Fourth Action Plans is shown in Table 8 with further detail provided in Appendix C.

Table 7: Summary of funding provided by the Commonwealth for the delivery of the action plans

Action Plan	Total amount ²⁸
1	\$63 million (2009 to 2012)
2	Not captured in 2015 evaluation
3	\$13.75 million (2015-2020) – Department of Social Services \$60 million (2015-2020) – Department of Education
4	\$48.06 million (2018-2023) – Department of Social Services

Source: 2015 Evaluation and DSS data

Table 8: Breakdown of major funding streams for the Third and Fourth Action Plans

Action Plan	Funding	Amount ²⁹
3	Base National Initiatives appropriation	\$7.8 million (\$2.6 million per annum, 2015-16 to 2017-18)
3	Building Capacity in Australia's Parents trial	\$2.08 million (2016-17 to 2019-20)
3	Transition to Independent Adulthood Trial	\$3.87 million (2016-17 to 2019-20)
3	Connected Beginnings	Approximately \$12 million per annum provided by Department of Education
3	TOTAL	\$13.75 million (2015-2020) – Department of Social Services \$60 million (2015-2020) – Department of Education
4	Base National Initiatives appropriation	\$7.8 million (\$2.6 million per annum, 2018-19 to 2020-21)
4	Departmental reallocation to National Initiatives	\$1.5 million (2018-19)
4	Stronger Places, Stronger People	\$35 million (2019-2023)
4	National Child Protection Information Sharing System	\$3.867 million (2018-19)
4	TOTAL	\$48.06 million (2018-2023) – Department of Social Services

²⁸ Funding for the First Action Plan reported in ACIL Allen Consulting – Evaluation of Progress under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2015. Funding and activity information provided by DSS for the Third and Fourth Action Plan in emails dated; 9 December 2019 and 21 January 2020.

²⁹ Funding and activity information provided by DSS in emails dated; 9 December 2019 and 21 January 2020

Evaluation question 1: To what extent did the National Framework achieve its intended outcomes and what factors supported or inhibited outcomes?

Considering the investment made and initiatives pursued, the National Framework was constrained in the impact it could have. There are opportunities to explore joint funding or other funding models that leverage investment of jurisdictions to amplify the reach of initiatives delivered through the National Framework.

4.2.4 Use of data and evidence to inform decision making

Key finding

The Framework contributed to the evidence base through funding research activities, but decision-making processes were not sufficiently robust to ensure that evidence was embedded which occasionally resulted in key initiatives and trials that were not evidence-based.

Data indicators were focussed on child protection and as the primary mechanism for reporting on outcomes, many do not have sufficient data. The indicators contributed to a focus on the child protection system which failed to engage broader sectors and portfolios and failed to result in accountability for the outcomes being achieved.

More than half of organisations indicated that evidence and data could have been better used to inform decision making and prioritisation of effort. Organisations reported that a number of factors impacted on the effective use of evidence in decision making including:

- that the use of evidence and data to inform priorities and action such as the establishment of the Research Advisory Committee under the Third Action Plan was positive but reported that the use of evidence was not embedded consistently.
- processes and decisions made regarding the priorities of the action plans and the parameters of projects and initiatives undertaken were not always based on evidence. A handful of stakeholders and one focus group referred to the establishment of the BCAP trial as an example of where evidence was not used to inform the parameters and design of the trial. Stakeholders reported that at least one jurisdiction chose not to be a part of the trial due to the lack of evidence-informed design.

Several organisations referenced that the data indicators used to report on the National Framework were largely focussed on children in child protection and there were insufficient indicators that reported on risk factors or leading indicators such as repeat hospital admissions. Desktop review of the National Framework indicators revealed that of the 32 indicators, 17 indicators report on children and families who are already known to child protection or other frontline services (homelessness). Of the 18 indicators that have sufficient time series data to report on trend, 10 are related to children and families who are already known to child protection.³⁰

While some of the funded activities under the National Framework built the evidence base through research, it was suggested that decision-making processes were not sufficiently evidence-based. A strong focus on child protection – as reflected in the Framework’s data indicators – focused activities on those that influence these metrics.

4.2.5 Coordination across government and prioritisation of effort

Key finding

While the intent to bridge cross-portfolio issues that underpin child abuse and neglect was evident in discussions throughout the development of the National Framework and the Action Plans, the challenges of doing so were not overcome. Broad system and cross-jurisdictional changes were not achieved to address the underlying causes of child abuse and neglect.

A significant number of organisations consulted with made statements that indicated that coordination of national effort under the National Framework and action plans was weak and this impacted on the achievement of outcomes.

The most commonly reported inhibitor was a lack of coordinated and consistent implementation of initiatives across jurisdictions and over time (reported by more than half of organisations who identified this challenge). Organisations who reported this inhibitor indicated that the lack of consistent implementation was a symptom of a lack of investment and resourcing, and an inability of the National Framework to lead broad service system improvements and cross-governmental

³⁰ PwC analysis of Australian institute of Health and Welfare, National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children: Indicator quick reference guide. Accessed: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/nfpac/contents/national-framework-indicators>

Evaluation question 1: To what extent did the National Framework achieve its intended outcomes and what factors supported or inhibited outcomes?

changes to connect services and overcome disjointed referral pathways. Several organisations reported that the current services system is disconnected/disjointed and results in inefficient allocation of support services such as some clients falling through the cracks and others being over-served.

A handful of organisations identified that a strength of both the Third and Fourth Action Plans was that, to overcome the challenges experienced in coordinating effort, the Forum focussed on a smaller number of achievable actions that had greater success in being implemented. However, some stakeholders suggested that this focus became possible because the activities that were prioritised were within the child protection space where the majority of the members of the National Forum and Working Groups had jurisdiction or influence. Organisations reported that:

- it was positive to achieve more of the initiatives included within the Third Action Plan and to see any outstanding initiatives included within the Fourth Action Plan
- however, the focus on achievable actions resulted in the actions being pursued and being selected based on what could be achieved as a first priority
- this approach resulted in effort being directed back to the statutory, child protection system and failed to progress a push towards greater early intervention and prevention.

While the intent to bridge cross-portfolio issues that underpin child abuse and neglect was evident in discussions of the National Framework's governance structure, the challenges of doing so were not surmounted. The broad system and cross-jurisdictional changes envisaged were not implemented over the operation of the National Framework. Further, the lack of data on the prevalence of child abuse and neglect, and other measures of health and wellbeing indicators - which was cited by a number of stakeholders - is a challenge in embedding appropriate measurement and accountability frameworks against which progress could be tracked at a national level.

4.3 Effectiveness of informing the agenda for Indigenous priorities and actions

Key finding

The over-representation of Indigenous children in child protection has deteriorated over the life of the Framework. Organisations identified that positive work had commenced to embed the ATSI CPP but cautioned that full implementation (not just as a placement hierarchy) is required to fully pursue Indigenous children's rights. Indigenous stakeholders identified an opportunity for the Framework to ensure that Indigenous communities are adequately consulted in all stages of development and implementation. Focus would also be better supported if prevalence data enabled the National Framework to monitor its progress.

Almost all organisations consulted provided views on the effectiveness of the National Framework and action plans in informing the agenda for Indigenous priorities. Of those organisations almost half made statements that indicated that the Framework has not resulted in any reduction in the over-representation of Indigenous children in child protection and out of home care.

Indicators of progress for Indigenous children

Desktop analysis of data indicators (outlined in Chapter 3) supports this view as over-representation appears to have worsened from 6.8 times more likely to 9.9 times between 2008-09 to 2018-19. In addition, the proportion of all children on a care and protection order who identify as Indigenous has increased from 29% in 2008-09 to 36% in 2017-18. As Indigenous children currently make up a significant cohort within the child protection system, the supporting factors, strengths, weaknesses and inhibitors of achieving the actions and outcomes of the Framework also apply closely to the effectiveness of informing Indigenous priorities and actions. This was supported by more than half of organisations who referenced that the challenges experienced in relation to the high-level factors outlined above, also impacted on the ability of the Framework to impact on outcomes for Indigenous children.

Extent to which the Framework progressed the Indigenous agenda

Three Indigenous organisations were consulted with as part of this evaluation and provided their views on the key factors that have inhibited progress for Indigenous children. All Indigenous organisations were aligned on two key factors:

Evaluation question 1: To what extent did the National Framework achieve its intended outcomes and what factors supported or inhibited outcomes?

- 1 The National Framework has not embedded the key principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) including the right to self-determination and free, prior and informed consent.³¹

Indigenous organisations provided the following specific examples:

- The consultation processes to develop the action plans had not adequately consulted with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and peak bodies in the formative stages of developing actions and initiatives. An example provided was that when consultation was undertaken it was often conducted 'tokenistically' once key parameters and priorities had been settled which did not enable organisations to truly influence the outcome (see also Chapter 6 of this report)
- consultation was often limited to members of the National Forum, of which there was only one representative for the majority of the Framework, and so did not enable broad consultation with community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- the action plans and supporting governance structures of the Framework didn't provide the leadership or prioritise work to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's child protection services are delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations

It is noted that Australia endorsed UNDRIP in April 2009, the same month that the National Framework was released. The timing of this is likely to have contributed to the National Framework not embedding principles of the UNDRIP at its inception. A high-level analysis of the alignment of the Framework's outcomes with the UNDRIP is outlined in Appendix C. The analysis showed that, the Framework's supporting outcome 5 "*Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities*" is consistent with article 22 of the UNDRIP "*special attention shall be paid to the needs of Aboriginal youth and children*" and the majority of articles which reference Indigenous children are at least partly addressed by the Framework. More broadly none of the supporting outcomes of the Framework directly contravene the rights outlined in the UNDRIP, however as the UNDRIP outlines the rights of all Indigenous people, it is not expected that the Framework, which focusses on children, would respond to all rights.

Regardless of this, comments from Indigenous organisations reveal that the Framework could have more fully incorporated overarching principles of the UNDRIP including self-determination and free, prior and informed consent when programs and policy that effect Indigenous people were developed, implemented, reviewed and evaluated.

- 2 Monitoring of the ATSI CPP is required to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's culture is respected and supported.

Several organisations reported that a key achievement of the Framework in informing the agenda for Indigenous children has been the agreement and implementation of the ATSI CPP. The ATSI CPP is a set of five elements that have been endorsed or legislated in some way in all states/territories and provide guidance to ensure that Indigenous children's culture and identity are supported and respected, including when they are in the child protection system.³² The ATSI CPP is a key way in which jurisdictions are responding both to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. However, there is a need for jurisdictions to ensure the full and consistent implementation of the ATSI CPP in order to actively pursue the rights of Indigenous children.

Despite many organisations reporting that the implementation of the ATSI CPP has been a key achievement, there remains debate around the extent to which these principles have been fully implemented in each jurisdiction. For the first time in 2019 SNAICC completed a baseline analysis of the Child Placement Principle in all jurisdictions. This

³¹ UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007, accessed: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>, 29/01/2020

³² SNAICC, 2019, Baseline analyses of Child Placement Principle, <https://www.snaicc.org.au/policy-and-research/child-safety-and-wellbeing/baseline-analyses-of-child-placement-principle/>

Evaluation question 1: To what extent did the National Framework achieve its intended outcomes and what factors supported or inhibited outcomes?

analysis found that “significant progress is needed to ensure full and holistic implementation of the principle.”³³ The completion of the baseline analysis is evidence of progress, as a previous study undertaken by the Australian Institute of Family Studies recommended investment into monitoring to ensure that full implementation of the ATSI CPP was achieved.³⁴ The Fourth Action Plan included a specific action to “Develop a nationally consistent approach to measuring the application of the five elements” of the ATSI CPP the initial outputs of which have been used to deliver the baseline analysis.

During consultation, organisations indicated that whilst a full set of ATSI CPP indicators had been agreed, none of the indicators were currently able to be reported on consistently, due to insufficient data. Work to develop and collate data sets is underway however some challenges highlighted included:

- complexity of compiling data from diverse data bases and client management systems across the states/territories
- much of the data has not been recorded in a data base and will require case file review to compile, no funding to complete a full case file review has been allocated
- some of the data may never be able to be reported on systematically because of the nature of the indicators.

Activities of the National Framework

The Third Action Plan is the first action plan under the National Framework to include a specific focus area and a working group to further work on improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Organisations commented favourably on the establishment of this working group, with some stakeholders reporting that the Fourth Action Plan seems to have ‘got it right’. Section 6.2 explores the views organisations provided in regard to ‘lessons learned’ in developing priorities for Indigenous children. Organisations reported the following aspects that have influenced the operation of the National Forum in developing this approach:

- the involvement of SNAICC in the Framework governance and implementation processes was viewed favourably. Some stakeholders also reported that SNAICC’s involvement in the Forum has resulted in their jurisdictions being more engaged with SNAICC when implementing initiatives and activities outside of the Framework and this has resulted in greater cultural competency in their child protection services
- that as SNAICC has been the only Indigenous organisation on the National Forum for most of the National Framework, that the priorities for Indigenous children championed by SNAICC have occasionally been competed out by other priorities put forward by a greater majority of Forum members
- the National Forum has struggled to come to consensus about what the best practice is to respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This was referenced in relation to the best way to ensure a focus on improving outcomes (including whether establishing a separate priority or embedding the priority throughout all work was the best model) and within that, disagreement in relation to the best initiatives to implement.

Over the operation of the Framework, the over-representation of Indigenous children has deteriorated. Some positive progress has been made through the introduction of the ATSI CPP and representation of Indigenous organisations on the National Forum which has given greater focus to the priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Opportunities exist to enhance the evidence base, through a prevalence study, to enable future policy work to monitor progress. In addition, greater engagement of Indigenous communities would support the delivery of the UNDRIP principles.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2015, Enhancing the implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, accessed: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/enhancing-implementation-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-child/export>, 20/01/2020

5 Evaluation question 2: How well did the National Framework support the policy agenda for children and young people?

This chapter covers...

- the extent to which the National Framework supports the policy agenda for children and young people. It includes:
 - Section 5.1.1 considers the connectivity of recent jurisdictional activity in the child protection sector to the National Framework
 - Section 5.1.2 reviews the alignment of government investment (in reported policies and programs) to the National Framework
 - Section 5.1.3 explores recent activity within intersecting policy areas

5.1 Alignment with broader policy areas

5.1.1 Connectivity of jurisdictional activity in the child protection sector

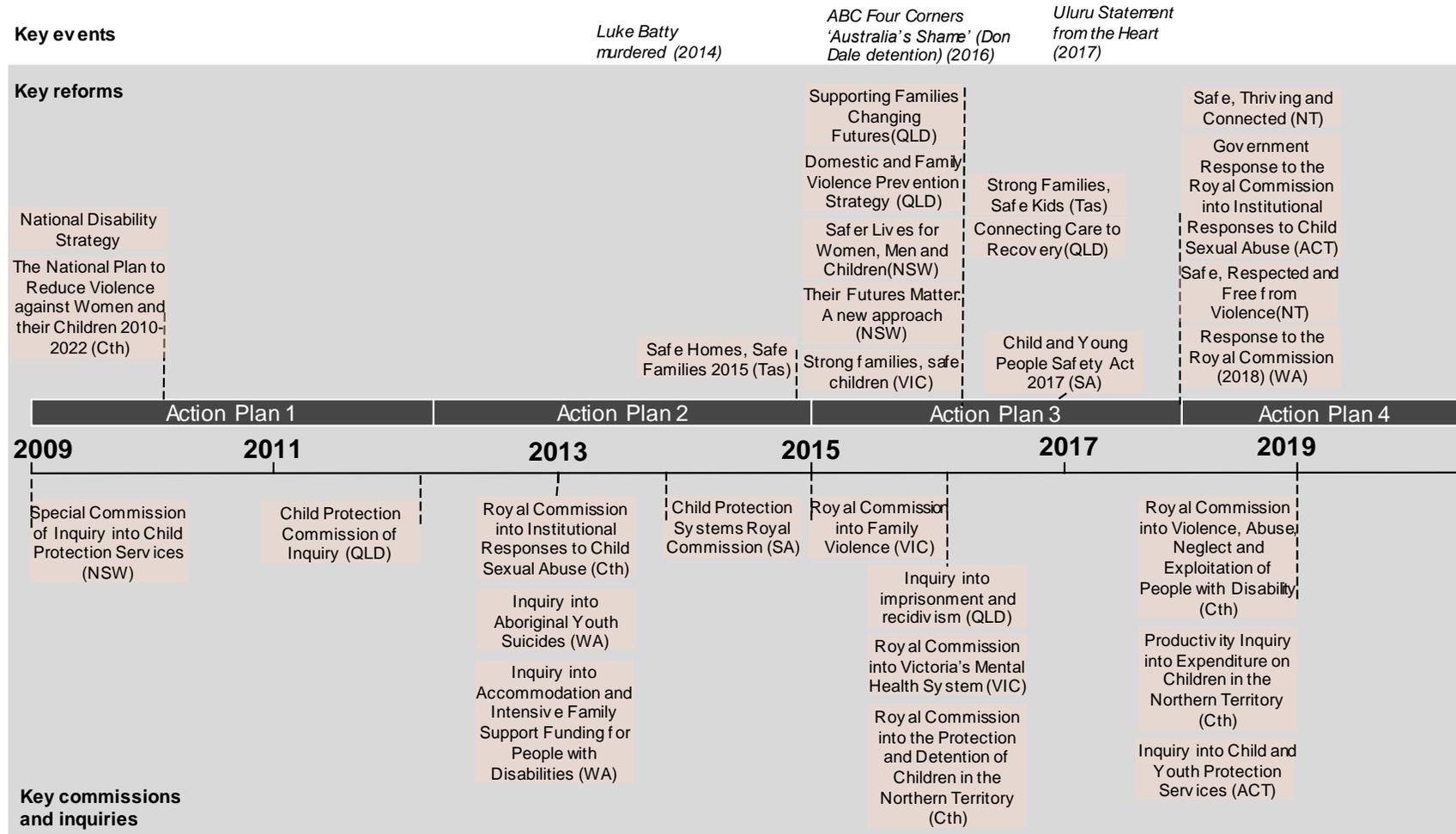
Key finding

There is evidence of a significant amount of government investment and reform among policy domains that are connected to the National Framework. These policy domains deliver against various priorities of government (for example, in child sexual abuse and universal service design and provision). While aligned, activities are difficult to directly attribute to the National Framework.

Over the operation of the National Framework, a number of interrelated inquiries, Royal Commissions and reforms have taken place. These have led to a wide range of government responses that correspond to the outcomes sought by the National Framework. With the exception of the Commonwealth Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the National Framework governance does not appear to have had any role in facilitating jurisdictional responses to these inquiries, Commissions or reforms.

Figure 10 outlines a number of key reform activities that have taken place over the life of the National Framework. It shows that much government focus has been centred on inquiries (including responses to the Royal Commissions and state-based inquiries). Not represented here are the numerous coronial inquiries which have also been delivered across jurisdictions and stimulated much policy activities in interrelated policy areas.

Figure 10: Key inquiries and reforms during the National Framework³⁵



³⁵ Note: rapid review of jurisdictional inquiries and reforms relating to child protection, based on desktop research.

Figure 10 shows that over the past five years, governments have directed significant reform and funding towards child protection, domestic and family violence, and, youth justice policy domains. Among these are:

- a number of substantial child protection reforms, including in Tasmania, South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland have also been implemented within the past five years. These reforms have led, in most cases, to service model design changes across the child protection sector.
- government responses to the federal Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse³⁶ and the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence which have led to significant government investment into domestic and family violence plans which were introduced between 2015 and 2018.
- the 2017 Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory³⁷ which led to significant reforms in the Northern Territory. Similar youth justice policy challenges are reflected in commissions, reviews and inquiries in other states. For example, Queensland, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, have, or are developing responses to address systemic youth justice policy challenges.

Many of these reforms have influenced and directed jurisdictional priorities and funding since 2015.

In many cases, reform activity can be linked to external events which have highlighted systemic sector issues, triggering government response. For example, the ABC's Four Corners report of the Don Dale Detention Centre has garnered public interest and demand for government response to these issues.

These activities make it difficult to draw direct attribution between policy activity and the National Framework. However, there are clear linkages between the policy objectives arising from these reviews and those in the National Framework. Organisations who thought that activities were not directly attributable, qualified that jurisdictional activity and the extent to which they can be linked to the National Framework, must take account of:

- that many activities were focused on women and families and are not oriented to the child. Due to this, they don't properly align to National Framework outcomes
- jurisdictions were often able to cite their activities as being aligned given how broad the National Framework's outcomes were, although organisations perceived that many of their initiatives were established as a result of other drivers
- a busy five-year window in which reforms in child protection (and related policies) have been undertaken in the jurisdictions. These had driven much jurisdictional attention over the National Framework.

5.1.2 Alignment of government effort to the National Framework

Across the operation of the National Framework, governments have led significant action addressing issues relating to children's safety and wellbeing.

A set of broader initiatives delivered between 2015 and 2019 that appear to be aligned to the priorities outlined in the Third and Fourth Action Plans are reported on in the Draft Annual Report 2016-17 and 2017-18 and are summarised in Table 9 below.³⁸ Initiatives reported by jurisdictions vary significantly in terms of their ambition and reach. It is difficult to therefore draw conclusions over the impact of these initiatives on the outcomes. Further detail is provided in Appendix C.

ATSICPP was reported to be one activity that was specifically coordinated or implemented as a result of the National Framework. These principles have been brought back to jurisdictions and are now incorporated within broader community services strategies outside of child protection and it cited to be a direct result of SNAICC's role and influence as part of the National Forum. ATSICPP appears to have provided the mechanism for the broader application of priorities outlined in the National Framework and action plans. In addition, the existence of the National Forum has facilitated enhanced

³⁶ Parliament of Australia, 'Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse', accessed at: <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/preface-and-executive-summary>, 2 December 2019.

³⁷ Parliament of Australia, 'Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory', accessed at: <https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-01/rcnt-royal-commission-nt-report-overview.pdf>, 2 December 2019

³⁸ Department of Social Services, 'DRAFT – NFPAC Annual Report 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.DOCX', emailed 2 December 2019.

collaboration and information sharing. Elements of how governments have better collaborated are outlined in Chapter 4 of this report.

Table 9: Alignment of reported jurisdictional actions against National Framework outcomes³⁹

Supporting outcomes	C'wealth	ACT	Vic	NSW	Qld	NT	SA	WA	Tas	Total
Outcome 1	3	3	0	1	2	3	3	2	3	20
Outcome 2	1	3	4	4	4	8	5	2	3	34
Outcome 3	3	2	3	3	3	5	3	1	4	27
Outcome 4	5	2	4	5	4	2	3	4	4	33
Outcome 5	2	2	3	1	3	3	3	1	1	19
Outcome 6	1	1	2	3	3	2	4	3	0	19

Reported actions demonstrate a wide range of activities across both jurisdictions and outcome areas. However, the specific actions reported vary in their scale and type. Key observations include that:

- Many actions reported relate to other policies and priorities which link to the National Framework outcomes. For example:
 - A number of activities reported by the Commonwealth against Outcome 5 (indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities) were Closing the Gap activities
 - Working with Children Checks and its associated activities largely comprise activity reported against Outcome 6 (child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented and survivors receive adequate support)
 - Actions reported against Outcome 4 (children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for this safety and wellbeing) were largely comprised of research items and service delivery frameworks that support children in care.
- while there are a large number of actions reported, many are of component parts of overarching jurisdictional strategies or part of a suite of complementary programs
- responding to sexual abuse, in government responses to relevant Royal Commissions and inquiries also comprised a large number of actions pursued.

While no direct attribution can be drawn between the conception of these actions to the National Framework, their operation and reported links demonstrate intersection between objectives. The challenge of attribution not only lies in the complexity of long-term policy design and planning (which is typically a confluence of political mandate, currency, funding and public awareness), but also in the underlying policy logic. With the design of the National Framework being high-level in nature, activities can be easily mapped to the outcomes sought. However, it is difficult to assign the evolution of policies and programs against the National Framework, considering that it does not prescribe the activities to be delivered to meet its own outcomes.

³⁹ DRAFT- NFPAC Annual Report 2016-17 and 2017-18.

5.1.3 Activity within intersecting policy areas

Key finding

Over the past five years, governments have implemented a wide array of reforms across connected policy domains. Many of these reforms have been led by inquiries and Royal Commissions which have focused government action. Intersecting activity in jurisdictions appears to be driven mostly by reforms in the areas of family violence, education, child protection and youth justice policy domains. Relatively less effort appears to have been directed through the National Framework to disability and CALD policy priorities.

This evaluation seeks to establish how well the Framework connects with and informs the broader policy agenda for children and young people. It specifically seeks to consider areas such as family and domestic violence, education, housing, justice, health, disability, culturally and linguistically diverse families and Closing the Gap.

The need for connectivity with these policy domains recognises that a preventative approach to keep children safe and well, considers associated services to work together to achieve these aims. While a policy can embed a preventative approach without engaging associated services, its reach can be less impactful. The National Framework identifies, among its stakeholders, that key responsibilities and levers include:⁴⁰

State and territory governments in their role delivering:

- *statutory child protection systems, including the support provided to children and young people in out-of-home care*
- *therapeutic and support services for families, children and young people at-risk of abuse or neglect*
- *conducting research into child protection*
- *health and education services, including maternal and child health services, schools, and specialist services for at-risk children and young people and their families*
- *police and justice systems, including court services to hear child/youth care and protection matters.*

Commonwealth Government in their role delivering universal support and services, including:

- *provision of income and family support payments to provide both a broad social safety net and specifically support families in their parenting role (pensions, family payments, childcare benefit and tax rebates)*
- *services such as Medicare, employment services, child and parenting support services, family relationship services and the family law system*
- *support to states and territories for key services such as hospitals, schools, housing and disability services*
- *targeted programs for vulnerable individuals and families, including mental health, substance abuse, intensive parenting services, intensive employment assistance, and allowances for young people leaving care to help with the transition to independent living*
- *services for families at higher risk of disadvantage including those in Indigenous communities.*

Box 2 outlines the breadth of intersecting policy areas that influence the health and wellbeing of children and young people. This shows that the reach of policy influence is much broader than those represented here.

⁴⁰ Paraphrased from the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020

Box 2 Overview of protective factors and intersecting policy areas

Much research has been directed to the underlying causes of and ongoing sources of disadvantage that increase the risk of interaction with the child protection system.^{41,42} These have explored the dimensions of family life and protective factors which have negative influence on children’s outcomes. They are considered to be domains which require a system-wide policy response that coordinate and support improvement in child abuse and neglect rates. Many of these intersect with the public health approach (and other approaches) which are the basis of preventative intervention models. Among these are:

- welfare (including family benefits and support, Medicare, social safety net, other financial support)
- employment
- early education
- education and schooling
- housing
- health (mental, physical, substance use, social, emotional)
- justice (including access to justice, youth and family justice frameworks)
- disability
- family and domestic violence
- culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- migrant communities
- leisure, recreation, environment and communities
- Indigenous communities (connection to country, culture and identity)

Acknowledging that the National Framework outlined a bold and broad scope in approach and reform, the policy interactions are also broad in nature. Given this, it is not possible to comprehensively assess all policies of all jurisdictions to consider the extent to which each contribute/or are based on the National Framework.

Table 10 outlines a snapshot of key reforms that have been undertaken since 2016 which demonstrates the breadth of activity and intersection of government priorities to that of the National Framework.

Table 10: Examples of key reforms in related policy domains⁴³

Related policy domains (defined by the evaluation framework)	Examples of major reforms (primary policy target)
Family and domestic violence	The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (Cwth) Family and domestic violence plans and government responses (every jurisdiction)
Education	2016-17 Supporting Families Changing Futures (continued 10-year reform program to strengthen families) (QLD)

⁴¹ Parkinson S, Bromfield L, McDougall S, Salveron M (2017) Child Neglect: Key Concept and Risk Factors, A report to the NSW Department of Family and Community Services Office of the Senior Practitioner, Australian Centre for Child Protection

⁴² Cumulative harm: Best interests case practice model (2012) Specialist practice resource, Department of Health and Human Services Victoria

⁴³ DRAFT- NFPAC Annual Report 2016-17 and 2017-18 and rapid scan of government websites. Note, child protection reforms not represented here

Related policy domains (defined by the evaluation framework)	Examples of major reforms (primary policy target)
Housing	2018 Early support by design program (10-year program joint initiative to reform human services systems) (ACT) National Partnership Agreements on Remote Housing and Affordable Housing (Cwth, QLD, WA, SA, NT)
Justice	<i>Embedded within policy frameworks, but no targeted reform activity identified</i>
Health	2018 Early Years Initiative (10-year partnership to deliver placed-based approaches for early years) (WA)
Disability	National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 and National Disability Insurance Scheme (all governments)
Culturally and linguistically diverse communities	<i>Embedded within policy frameworks, but no targeted reform activity identified</i>

There have been a wide range of child protection reforms implemented by jurisdictions over the operation of the Framework. A number of these examples demonstrate whole-of-system approaches to child protection and youth justice which don't neatly align to one policy domain. For example, NSW's Their Futures Matter: A new approach (long term reform strategy addressing service design and delivery) (2016) and NT's Safe, Thriving and Connected (systemic reforms to support children, young people and families) (2018).

There are also a number of major policies, such as Closing the Gap, which intersect across multiple policy domains (as do many of the reforms identified below). These have not been outlined but are illustrative of the busy policy landscape in which the National Framework is operating.

Further, it is widely recognised that the root causes of child abuse and neglect transcend many related policy domains. This implies that a coordinated policy response must take account of the distributed responsibilities for these policies across Commonwealth and state and territory governments.

For example, how welfare and child care funding, and the delivery of maternal and child health services is distributed between tiers of governments. To truly address these root causes would require reforms that take a whole-of-system approach. While the extent to which these connections have been made or achieved have not been analysed, it is worth noting that these whole-of-system perspectives are required if the National Framework is to design for its ambition of a sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect. It is not evident that this was achieved in practice. Organisations that were consulted as part of this evaluation stated that:

- while the National Framework has raised awareness of the public health model across the sector, activity has fallen short of achieving coordination outside of the child protection sector due to competing priorities of broader government and departments and a lack of buy in outside of child protection (Chapter 6 explores this further)
- activity was primarily influenced by the ministerial priorities across different portfolios and jurisdictions. This was due to a lack of influence beyond child protection portfolios and/or representation from those policy areas within the National Framework governance, with the exception of inter-departmental committees and other informal means.
- the broad ranging policy mandate of the National Framework was challenged by federalism barriers and other structural barriers (for example, the long-term effects of colonisation and intergenerational trauma experienced by Aboriginal people, families and communities experiencing poverty and the standing of/ respect for children within Australian society).
- that there are some examples of broader connection across other policy domains, such as family and domestic violence, and education initiatives (e.g. First 1000 days)
- most government stakeholders consulted reported that they have many frameworks and strategies that contribute to or impact on the wellbeing of children and these have not been generated with the National Framework in mind. Sometimes these are conflicting and sometimes they are duplicative

Evaluation domain 2: How well did the National Framework support the policy agenda for children and young people?

- an example of family violence was provided where there may be an inherent conflict between the needs of children and families.
- another example of the Commonwealth developing/maintaining three separate, but interconnected policies (National Framework, Family Violence Policy and the National Child Safe Policy)
- there is scope for governments to reconsider policy and service delivery approaches to enable achievement of the outcomes. For example, that the role for the Commonwealth could be expanded in providing leadership, funding and alignment of levers available to it (for example, welfare) to address the underlying causes of disadvantage
- in parallel to the National Framework, Governments have implemented a wide range of reforms in connected policy areas, but these have been predominantly led by inquiries or Royal Commissions and not necessarily coordinated with the National Framework.

The vision of an interconnected policy agenda to achieve outcomes for children and young people through the National Framework was not achieved in practice. Barriers include the inability to engage with responsible departments (across and within jurisdictions) in a meaningful way given the focus of activities on child protection, as well as the authorising environment that was established by the membership and accountability embedded by the National Framework's governance structure. Challenges associated with Commonwealth-state/territory roles and responsibilities also hindered the National Framework's ambit to address the underlying drivers of and levers to address child abuse and neglect reflected in Australia's service systems. Additionally, the changing priorities of jurisdictions made it difficult for the National Framework to coordinate and align activities to deliver upon its objectives.

6 Evaluation question 3: How effective was the development of the National Framework and Action Plans?

This chapter covers...

- the development of priorities and actions for the Third and Fourth Action Plans, and the alignment of the priorities and actions with the National Framework, international rights-based treaties and the public health model.
- It comprises of six key sections:
 - Section 6.1 and 6.2 explores the consultation process used to develop priorities and actions, including lessons learnt
 - Section 6.3 explores the relationship between the and the priorities and actions and the National Framework outcomes
 - Section 6.4 explores the appropriateness of the duration and structure of the National Framework and Action Plans
 - Section 6.5 explores the relationship between the priorities and actions and relevant international rights treaties
 - Section 6.6 explores the relationship between the priorities and actions and the public health model

6.1 Consultation process used to develop priorities and actions

Key finding

There were clear consultation processes that supported the development of the Third and Fourth Action Plans, but there were some challenges engaging with portfolios outside of child protection. As a result, the priorities and actions included in the Third and Fourth Action Plan were narrowly focussed on child protection. In addition, some key groups were not adequately consulted with including children and young people, Indigenous and CALD stakeholders.

Consultation was a key process feature discussed by organisations in this evaluation. Observations tended to fall into two key themes; how the consultation process affected the development of priorities and actions, and how organisations engaged in consultation influenced the development of priorities and actions agreed in action plans.

Impact of consultations on priorities and actions agreed in action plans

Organisations considered that the consultation processes were professional and led to meaningful discussions. However, some organisations considered that there was either no clear relationship between the consultation process and the actions and priorities that arose, or that consultation was not sufficient, which potentially diminished their impact on priorities and actions agreed in action plans.

Specifically, many organisations highlighted that there was a marked difference in the use of consultation to inform priorities and actions in the Fourth Action Plan relative to the Third Action Plan, where the consultation for the Fourth Action Plan was perceived to be less meaningful and informing of final priorities and actions.

For example, in the Third Action Plan the consultation process appears to have involved specific, cross-jurisdictional, face to face consultation, supplemented by written feedback and supported by a discussion guide. Desktop review identifies that 14 round-table discussions were delivered at a mix of regional and metropolitan locations, supplemented by a written feedback process.

In contrast, there was no face to face consultation held specifically for the Fourth Action Plan. Prior to the development of the Fourth Action Plan Families Australia convened 10 forums across Australia to discuss how to progress the child well-being agenda however, there is no evidence to indicate that these were specific to the Fourth Action Plan. Rather, a discussion guide was prepared and provided to select organisations to provide written feedback. Desktop analysis of available material highlights that the action plan-specific consultation was in written format (email submissions). After the priorities of the action plan were finalised by governments, proposed actions were presented to the National Coalition for feedback.

As such many organisations consulted as part of this evaluation described the Fourth Action Plan consultation process as relatively less effective for developing priorities and actions as the format did not support them to be developed collaboratively. Instead the priorities appeared to be 'pre-formulated'. Focus groups to this evaluation identified that consultation processes reflected the limited amount of time to develop and implement the action plan, given it was the final action plan of the Framework, and was viewed as necessary to meet key milestones.

Influence of stakeholders consulted on priorities and actions in the action plans

Organisations expressed mixed views regarding the appropriateness of stakeholders engaged to develop priorities and actions. While many organisations regarded the volume and diversity of stakeholders engaged as a valued feature of the consultation process, some noted that the range of stakeholders consulted was unhelpful to narrowing down priorities due to their broad and often-competing agendas. A broader strategic direction would be best served by a consultation process that engages with a wide range of stakeholders.

Many organisations indicated that the consultation process inadequately engaged key cohorts of the National Framework. It was perceived that this undermined the development of priorities and actions as it omitted potentially important sources of feedback. Cohorts identified included:

- state/territory and Commonwealth government departments not involved in child protection. Organisations highlighted that although there was some cross-portfolio engagement it was generally ad hoc rather than embedded

Evaluation question 3: How effective was the development of the National Framework and Action Plans?

- Guardians and Commissioners at the state/territory level, noting that many Commissioner roles were established following the development of the National Framework and its governance processes
- children, noting that some consultation occurred but that it was not systematic or embedded. Feedback also noted that there are inherent difficulties in consulting with children directly impacted by the National Framework
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people, noting that some consultation did occur but that it was insufficient, given the disproportionate number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people impacted by the child protection system
- CALD communities, who, some organisations suggested, were not sufficiently considered in the development processes
- regional stakeholders, that may experience acute challenges in supporting delivery of the National Framework outcomes. Resource constraints impacted the ability to conduct more regional consultations.

Some organisations also commented that National Coalition stakeholders with “the loudest voice” may have also impacted the effectiveness of consultations as it meant the same feedback was received during different rounds of consultations, limiting the development of new ideas. It is not clear how impactful this was on the development of action plans.

Stakeholders consulted in the development of action plans

A comprehensive list of stakeholders consulted is not available to be compared across action plans. At a high-level the desktop analysis validates that consultations with a broad group of stakeholders did occur and, for the Third Action Plan, some of the cohorts that organisations suggested were not sufficiently engaged were, in some way, consulted. For example:

- for the Third Action Plan consultations included specific engagement with children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people, and CALD communities, in addition to regional and metropolitan consultation held with government and non-government stakeholders. One focus group specifically identified that the process reached a cross-section of government.
- for the Fourth Action Plan it appears that the targeted consultation process resulted in feedback from a mix of state/territory government, NGOs, Guardians/Commissioners, academics and research organisations. Additionally, the Annual Meeting of the National Coalition where the Fourth Action Plan actions were discussed was attended by over 100 delegates comprising of NGOs, Commonwealth agencies (DSS, DoH and DPMC) and state/territory government officials from NSW, NT and SA.
- across both action plans there is some indication that consultation did occur with similar groups of stakeholders.

Considering the evidence available, it is apparent that clear consultation processes did exist to support the development of the Third and Fourth Action Plans. However, challenges to engage other portfolios and some stakeholder groups may have impacted how representative the views gathered were.

6.2 The extent to which Action Plans drew on lessons learnt

Key finding

There is evidence that the action plans incorporated some lessons learned, including to contain fewer priorities and actions, and to give greater focus to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children actions. A formal process for monitoring progress on achieving outcomes through the action plans may have resulted in earlier or more comprehensive identification of lessons learned and more opportunity to embed these in future action plans.

In addition to the consultation process itself, the evaluation also considers whether the action plans incorporated lessons learnt over time. The feedback gathered in this evaluation was limited on this point as many of the organisations were not sufficiently involved across the timeframe of the National Framework to make an informed comment.

These organisations generally provided evidence that the action plans did incorporate lessons learnt to an extent, with two key examples emerging in relation to the refinement of actions and priorities, and an increased focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in later action plans.

Refinement of the number of priorities and actions in action plans

Many organisations commented that a key lesson from the initial action plans, particularly the Second Action Plan, was that the number of priorities and actions was impractical and too ambitious given the time and resources available to implement. The number of priorities and areas was reduced in the later action plans, with a view to make them more practical and achievable.

Table 11 below shows that relative to the First and Second Action Plan fewer priorities were included in the Third and Fourth Action Plans. Additionally, the number of actions falls from 70 in the Second Action Plan to 17 and 13 in the Third and Fourth Action Plan, respectively.

Table 11: Comparison of the number of national priorities and actions included in each action plan

	First Action Plan	Second Action Plan	Third Action Plan	Fourth Action Plan
Number of national priorities	12	20	5	4
Number of actions	13	70	17	13

Focus on Indigenous children

Both organisations and focus groups consulted through this evaluation identified that a key lesson from the Third Action Plan was a need to increase focus on actions related to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

There is evidence that this lesson was incorporated in the Fourth Action Plan. A high-level comparison of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander related priorities and actions in both the Third and Fourth Action Plan is outlined in Table 12. It shows that, relative to the Third Action Plan, the Fourth Action Plan includes more targeted actions to build on the actions and achievements in the Third Action Plan.

Table 12: Comparison of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander related priorities and actions in the Third and Fourth Action Plan

	Third Action Plan	Fourth Action Plan
National priority	Cross-cutting focus area –Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families Sustained attention will be given to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to reduce the number needing child protection services.	Priority Area 1: Improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at risk of entering, or in contact with, child protection systems
Actions	<p>Action: All parties agree to ensure the five domains of the ATSCPP (prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection) are applied to the implementation of strategies and actions identified in the Third Action Plan.</p> <p>Action: A new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander working group will be established to provide advice and expertise on the implementation of actions and strategies, and report to the National Forum for Protecting Australia’s Children on progress and outcomes, to ensure a sustained focus on results.</p>	<p>Action: Actively implement legislation, policy and/or practice to ensure compliance with the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.</p> <p>Action: Identify and share models that have been shown to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in decision-making processes for children and families at risk of entering, or in contact with, child protection systems.</p> <p>Action: Develop a nationally consistent approach to measuring the application of the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.</p> <p>Action: Develop a nationally consistent and comparable approach to report on state and territory government support for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander managed services to deliver family support and child protection services.</p>

Mechanism for evaluating action plans and incorporating lessons learnt

One organisation noted that there was no formal process which evaluated the action plans, which meant that lessons learnt have not been captured in a systematic way. This makes it difficult to both identify lessons learnt, as well as areas where lessons were learnt but not necessarily incorporated in future action plans.

Based on the desktop material available to this evaluation there is evidence that the consultation process for the Third and Fourth Action Plan contained questions that encouraged reflection on the performance of previous action plans however, no specific evaluation framework was used.

For example, the Third Action Plan discussion paper contains the following discussion question '*Are there any particular achievements and/or challenges with working together to deliver the Second Action Plan that you would like to highlight? How do you think we can learn from what worked or what didn't work?*'. Similarly, the Fourth Action Plan discussion paper contains this discussion question '*Are there any particular lessons learnt from the Third Action Plan that you would like to highlight in the Fourth Action Plan? What do we need to do differently?*'.

While feedback on the National Framework was sought, no formal framework was used to ensure lessons were learnt from each action plan and systematically reflected in future action plans.

The evidence provided by organisations and through the desktop review suggests that the action plans did learn from previous action plans. This was reflected in fewer priorities and actions, and a greater focus to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children actions in the Third and Fourth Plans. While efforts were made to reflect on previous action plans, a formalised process to monitor and evaluate the plans may have resulted in a greater opportunity to learn and adapt future action plans.

6.3 The alignment of actions to the National Framework outcomes

Key finding

The Framework's high-level outcomes are sufficiently broad to enable alignment of all actions and priorities under the Third and Fourth Action Plans. However, a lack of a defined program logic which links actions, outputs and outcomes meant it was difficult to establish how sufficient actions and priorities were to achieve the intended outcomes. Organisations generally agreed that the actions and priorities, while aligned with the intent of outcomes, were not aligned with the ambition of a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect.

Almost half the organisations consulted through this evaluation commented on the alignment of actions and priorities to the National Framework outcomes. While some indicated that the documents were broadly aligned, many disagreed suggesting that the relationship was not clear, and in some cases not apparent. This was generally related to how the action plans and Framework appeared to be very different documents; the Framework containing wide-reaching, high-level supporting outcomes, relative to the action plans that contain discrete, narrow, targeted actions. This is explored in more detail below.

Drawing a connection between the 'broad' framework and 'narrow' action plans

The broad scope of the National Framework relative to the narrow nature of the actions was an area in which organisations disagreed. Some organisations suggested that because the National Framework is intentionally strategic, long term and broad, it was therefore possible for all actions to be aligned to it in some way. Other organisations suggested that the broad ambitions of the Framework required action plans to be narrower to ensure focus.

The explicit link between the actions in the action plans and the National Framework is not always clear. In the Third Action Plan, supporting outcomes are not mapped to each action. In the Fourth Action Plan each supporting outcome (or outcomes) has been identified against each action but the linking rationale is not provided.

This is consistent with the comments provided by many organisations that no program logic or theory of change was used to connect actions to outcomes. As such, organisations perceived that it was unclear if actions (and therefore priorities) were actually in line with the National Framework.

A program logic model or theory of change are schematic models that describe how a program or policy is intended to work. There are a variety of tools/resources available to convey a program's logic model. One example is a 'results chain' depicts

Evaluation question 3: How effective was the development of the National Framework and Action Plans?

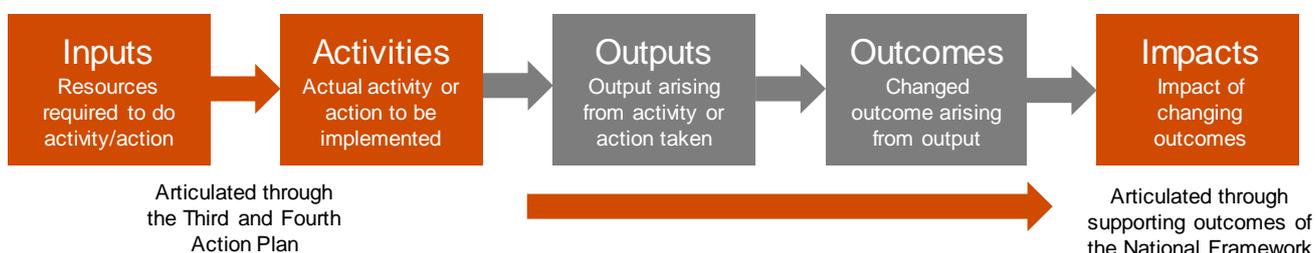
a program theory “as a linear process with inputs and activities at the front and long-term outcomes at the end”. A standard results chain is depicted in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Example program logic model (results chain)⁴⁴



At a high-level, as the Third and Fourth Action Plan at most draw a link between an action and supporting outcome it appears that, consistent with feedback from organisations, there are gaps in the overall program logic. This is schematically depicted in Figure 12 which shows that although the inputs, activities and impacts are articulated, the middle section of the chain that relates to outputs and outcomes is not articulated.

Figure 12: Apparent gap in program logic between action⁴⁵



To further the analysis around the relationship between actions and the National Framework, acknowledging gaps in the articulated program logic, a high-level mapping of the signature actions contained in the Third and Fourth Action Plan against the supporting outcomes of the Framework is outlined in Appendix C. This mapping is based on a program logic approach; each action is linked (broadly) to a strategy from the Framework. As each strategy is linked to a supporting outcome the mapping attempts to fill in the gap between activities (actions) and impacts (supporting outcomes).

An analysis of the actions articulated in the action plans has been undertaken to identify which align to, and which deliver upon the supporting outcomes of the National Framework.

For the Third Action Plan:

- five out of 17 actions align to supporting outcomes under the Framework through the creation of research, standardisation and governance arrangements to enable the Framework to target activities and measure progress.
- the remaining actions can generally be linked to one or more strategies associated with the supporting outcomes under the Framework, noting that supporting outcome 6 does not appear to be addressed by any action.

For the Fourth Action Plan:

- all actions can generally be linked to one or more strategies associated with the supporting outcomes under the Framework
- actions appear to be focused on implementation rather than enabling functions to deliver the supporting outcomes.

⁴⁴ Lawton, B., Brandon, P.R., Cicchinelli, L., and Kekahio, W. (2014). Logic models: A tool for designing and monitoring program evaluations. (REL 2014–007). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

⁴⁵ PwC analysis

Evaluation question 3: How effective was the development of the National Framework and Action Plans?

This analysis demonstrates the wide-ranging activities captured by the action plans and their broad alignment with the supporting outcomes articulated by the National Framework.

Child protection, child well-being and the public health model

Additionally, some organisations commented that the action plans were disproportionately aligned to statutory child protection needs and system issues. These organisations reflected that the Framework was intended to have a holistic focus on all the factors that might impact a child's safety and well-being, yet the actions were most often about issues within tertiary child protection and out of home care services. The focus on child protection and out of home care is explored in some detail in Chapter 4. This is related to the focus, perceived by many organisations, that the action plans appear to have on tertiary interventions over primary interventions in the public health model.

The review of how the structure of the action plans and Framework demonstrates that the Framework's high-level outcomes are sufficiently broad to enable alignment of all actions and priorities under the Third and Fourth Action Plans, but lack the program logic mapping out how actions, outputs and outcomes work together to achieve the outcomes. This meant that while actions could largely be aligned, the strategic intent to achieve a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect could not be described by the sum of the actions.

6.4 Appropriateness of the duration and structure of the National Framework and its Action Plans

Key finding

The 12-year duration of the Framework was considered appropriate and an achievement of the Framework in that it facilitated and enabled a national conversation which elevated the priority of children's safety and wellbeing in Australia.

The rolling structure of three-year action plans was seen as appropriate as it allowed flexibility for the Framework to respond to changing policies and the political landscape. However, the requirement to renegotiate, develop and agree each new action plan resulted in significant loss of time for the implementation of the plans.

Only a small number of organisations consulted for this evaluation commented on the appropriateness of the duration and structure of the National Framework and its action plans. Many of the remaining organisations were not sufficiently involved over the life of the Framework to provide feedback on the duration and structure. In general, both advantages and disadvantages of the Framework were identified however, the broad theme was that duration/structure was just one factor among many that influenced the implementation of the Framework and its action plans.

Identified advantages and limitations of current structure and duration

Conflicting views were provided by stakeholders on the structure and duration of the Framework and its action plans. Some organisations indicated the duration and structure was conducive to the implementation of the Framework and its action plans. These organisations identified that three-year action plans supported momentum and allowed priorities to shift with the times. For example, the action plans were able to align focus with the Royal Commissions and other related reforms. The long timeframe was also considered appropriate to ensure the Framework could sustain real change. These organisations indicated a shorter length would have been prohibitive to change.

A number of organisations suggested that the longer duration of the Framework limited the adaptability of the Framework and was no longer a contemporary document. Additionally, the three-year time frame for the action plans were insufficient to enable actions to be properly implemented. For example, the Fourth Action Plan it was developed in 2018, launched in 2019 to be implemented in 2020, leaving a limited window for implementation.

It was noted that the three-year plans enabled better alignment to election cycles (and so, could support changing jurisdictional priorities), but was not conducive to a long-term, consistent approach to implementing the Framework. This is because it was perceived that each election cycle resulted in a change of personnel and policies that influenced how the action plans were developed, such that they did not appear closely linked. This was perceived as detrimental to having a consistent approach and agenda. As such some organisations indicated longer action plans (i.e. five-years) may be more effective for achieving outcomes.

Evaluation question 3: How effective was the development of the National Framework and Action Plans?

Based on desktop analysis of the action plans it appears that the shorter timeframes may have created opportunities for the action plans to align with the broader policy agenda around children and families. For example, the Third Action Plan explicitly identifies that the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and Senate Inquiries into Out-of-Home Care and Grandparents who take Primary Responsibility for Raising their Grandchildren informed the development of priorities and actions.

Duration and structure are not the only factors that contribute to implementation

Some organisations acknowledged that, although the duration and structure of the Framework and its action plans may have been improved, the implementation of the Framework was impacted by numerous factors (i.e. leadership, funding, changing policy priorities, changing stakeholders etc. discussed through this evaluation – refer to section 4) that in turn made the duration and structure unworkable.

As an example, one organisation suggested that the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, which has a very similar structure to the National Framework (12-year plan delivered through a series of four 3-year action plans), has been more effective in creating a long-term reform agenda.

Desktop analysis of the National Plan relative to the National Framework identified some marked differences between the two. For example, although both strategies utilise four 3-year action plans to support their implementation, in the National Plan the agenda for each action plan was set at inception. This appears to be a key mechanism to ensuring the action plans adhered to the vision of long-term reform reflected in the Plan. Additionally, each action plan in the National Plan is supported by national and jurisdictional implementation plans that explicitly outline the key initiatives and their funding, milestones, intended outcomes and connection to priority areas. This approach appears to increase the overall transparency and level of attribution that can be made between the Plan and the initiatives undertaken. Further differences between the characteristics of the National Framework and National Plan are discussed below.

National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22

The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22* was mentioned by several organisations as an example of a strategy that has different features to the National Framework, that cumulatively appear to support its overall implementation (see Chapter 4). Some of the key differences raised by organisations throughout this evaluation are outlined below:

- **Action Plans:** Although both strategies operate over a 12-year time-frame with rolling 3-year action plans, the theme of the action plans to support the National Plan are set out in the overarching strategy, and each is accompanied by both a national implementation plan and jurisdictional implementation plans.
- **Tripartite arrangements:** Both strategies set out to support collaboration between government and non-government organisations. In the National Framework this is reflected through the *tripartite National Framework Advisory Committee* (the National Forum) which was intended to advise on the operation of the National Framework. In the Fourth Action Plan they report to the various working groups. In the National Plan this was reflected through the *tripartite National Plan Implementation Panel* established to advise on the development and implementation of the National Plan. This panel reports directly to Ministers.
- **Ministerial involvement:** The National Framework was intended to be led by the (former) Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference who subsequently reported to COAG. As discussed in section 4, this Conference was dissolved and more recently the Framework has fallen to the purview of the Community Services Ministers meeting. The National Plan is led by Commonwealth and state/territory Women's Safety Ministers who are responsible for reporting to COAG.
- **Commonwealth funding:** Estimated Commonwealth funding specifically designated to support the Fourth Action Plan under the National Framework is \$48.6m. In comparison estimated Commonwealth funding in support of the Fourth Action Plan under the National Plan is \$328m.⁴⁶

The National Plan and its accompanying documents can be viewed in more detail at:

<https://www.dss.gov.au/women/programs-services/reducing-violence/the-national-plan-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-their-children-2010-2022>.

Overall, the ambition of the National Framework was supported as requiring a longer-timeframe for implementation. The structure of three-year rolling action plans was also appropriate in providing agility to shift with changing policy priorities of jurisdictions. However, the structure that supports the development of the action plans hindered progress by introducing delay to account for renegotiation of priorities. Opportunities were reflected in drawing comparisons to the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22, which set priorities of each plan upfront, providing greater focus for implementation.

6.5 Alignment of the National Framework with the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Key finding

Responsibility for delivering on the UNCRC does not rest wholly with the Framework. In the absence of an evaluation framework that defines the commitment of the Framework to delivering on the UNCRC, it is impossible to assess the degree to which the Framework has responded to, or is expected to respond, to the UNCRC. There is evidence that the Framework was guided by the principles of the UNCRC at its inception and in the activities that have been delivered (for example, the establishment of the National Children's Commissioner). However, delivery of the UNCRC principles in full would require governments to consider how all activities, including the Framework, respond to the UNCRC so that Australia's commitments can be identified and measured.

⁴⁶ Prime Minister of Australia (media release) Record Funding to Reduce Domestic Violence, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/record-funding-reduce-domestic-violence>

Evaluation question 3: How effective was the development of the National Framework and Action Plans?

In line with the commitment in the Framework to adhere to the principles set out in the UNCRC, this evaluation considers the extent to which the National Framework responds to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC)⁴⁷.

The majority of organisations consulted during the evaluation provided feedback on how the National Framework responded to the UNCRC. This feedback tended to fall into two key themes; to what extent the Framework was intended to respond to the UNCRC, and to what extent its implementation progressed the rights set out in the UNCRC. These are explored below.

Relationship between the National Framework and the UNCRC

Organisations acknowledged that the National Framework is not the only or the primary mechanism through which Australia responds to the UNCRC. There are separate organisations responsible for responding to the United Nations directly on how Australia is responding to the UNCRC. This includes the Children Commissioner's and Guardians (at both a national and state/territory level), and members of the Commonwealth and state/territory governments. It captures and must consider a broad range of government activity, beyond the remit of the National Framework. This is consistent with the language contained within the Framework itself which notes that it is underpinned by the *principles* of the UNCRC, rather than directly enabling it.

Organisations most familiar with the UNCRC reflected that the rights of children are not universally enshrined in Commonwealth and state/territory legislation, and where it is, it is not necessarily consistently embedded, meaning that different jurisdictions have responded in different ways. As a result, the National Framework is not the appropriate mechanisms to drive consistency and implementation of the UNCRC Australia-wide.

Desktop analysis of the alignment between the supporting outcomes of the Framework and the articles of the UNCRC suggests that the National Framework aligns to 16 out of the UNCRC's 54 articles. This alignment appears to be comprehensive given there are a large number of articles that do not fall directly within the Framework's remit. For example, the right to a name and nationality (article 7), the right to protection from international abduction (article 11), the right to mass media and free speech (article 13 and 14) and so forth. Additionally, there are a range of articles related to the governance of the Convention that are also limited and a responsibility of government more broadly to deliver. As such, at inception it appears that the Framework adhered to the principles of UNCRC as intended. Refer to Appendix C for detailed mapping of the articles against supporting outcomes.

Impact of the Framework's implementation on the rights set out in the UNCRC

There were conflicting views expressed by organisations on whether the National Framework progressed the rights set out in the UNCRC.

At a high-level several organisations commented that the rights-based approach was not central to the development of the National Framework, and the review and development of each action plan did not consider the UNCRC in a practical way. Additionally, an organisation noted that there was no mechanism embedded into the Framework and its action plans to reflect on the UNCRC, even if only in principle.

In terms of actual implementation, organisations noted that there is an inherent difficulty in commenting on progress against the UNCRC, particularly when there is broad interpretation of the articles themselves, and no objective way to assess 'how well' they may have progressed. This was particularly evident through conflicting views presented on the degree to which specific articles had been progressed.

For example:

⁴⁷ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international legal framework to protect the rights of every child. The Convention provides a universal set of standards to be adhered to by all countries in the treatment of all children. These are outlined in 54 articles, which are underpinned by a selection of guiding principles including: non-discrimination, adherence to the best interests of the child, the right to life, survival and development, and the right to participate. The Convention, its status and relevant reports can be accessed at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

Evaluation question 3: How effective was the development of the National Framework and Action Plans?

- Article 12 sets out that the right of a child who is capable of forming his or her own views has *‘to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child’*. Several organisations suggested that because the National Framework and action plans were developed with limited engagement with children and did not actively set out a role for the involvement of children it did not respond fully to the rights set out in article 12. In contrast a few organisations identified examples where the Framework sought to involve or engage children, such as the ChildAware conferences and establishment of the National Children’s Commissioner, as evidence in support of the rights set out in article 12.
- Article 3 set outs that *‘in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration’*. Although one organisation suggested the best interests of the child were not always reflected in the activity undertaken through the Framework, another organisation noted that *‘the best interests of the child’* is interpreted by different jurisdictions in different ways, and in some instances involves balancing some rights against others. There are limited instances where a set of criteria has been developed to articulate what ‘best interests’ means (i.e. Northern Territory) that would enable objective assessment of delivery against the article.

Desktop analysis of the activity taken under the Framework identifies that there is evidence that the rights of the UNCRC have been progressed to some extent. For example, in addition to the ChildAware Conferences and the establishment of the National Children’s Commissioner, further initiatives that appear to support/facilitate the voice of the child (article 12) include:

- specific consultations conducted with children in relation to the Third Action Plan’s development and implementation
- the allocation of a position at the National Forum to both the National Children’s Commissioner and the Victorian Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People.

As such, acknowledging the complexity of assessing the degree of progress against the Framework, there is evidence of it being consistent with it in principle.

On balance, it is important to consider that the National Framework is not itself responsible for delivering on Australia’s obligations set out in the UNCRC. It is also difficult to establish the extent to which the National Framework has responded to the UNCRC without a commitment having been set by governments of the expectations that it must deliver upon.

Having said this, there is evidence that the National Framework was guided by UNCRC principles and has delivered initiatives that respond to the UNCRC in part. To make clear what components of the UNCRC the National Framework should deliver upon, governments would need to consider the holistic view of how its activities respond to the UNCRC and which are best delivered through the National Framework to ensure activities align, and that together, they respond the UNCRC in full.

6.6 Alignment of activities with a public health model

Key finding

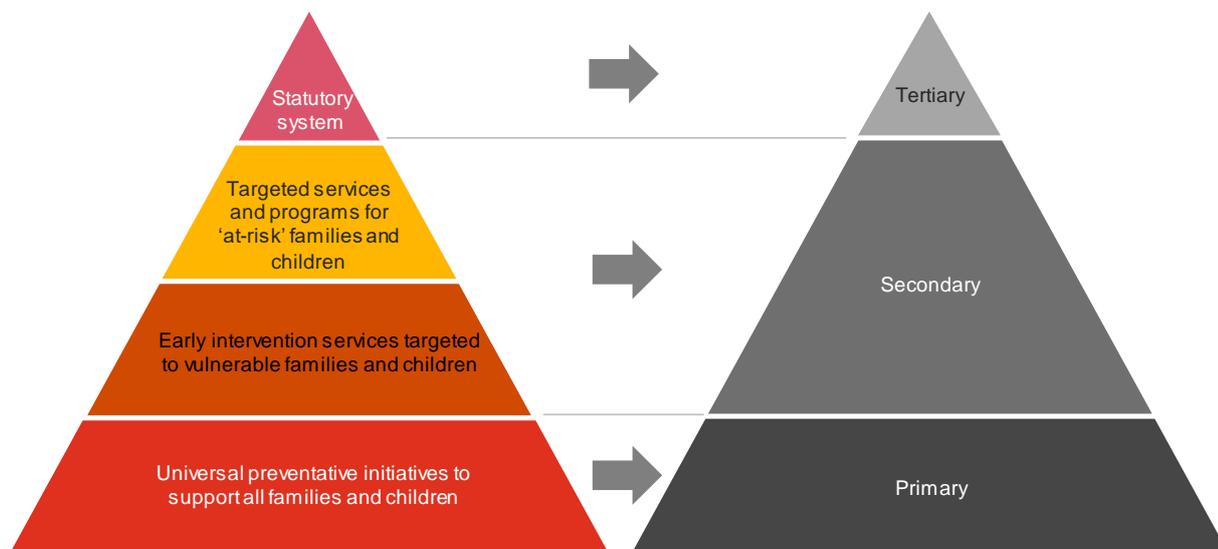
The extent to which the National Framework has engaged with the public health model appears limited. Challenges in generating cross-portfolio coordination and in continuing to respond to rising numbers of children in the child protection system has driven a focus on child protection. Both the Third and Fourth Action Plans were primarily focused on targeted and statutory interventions.

The National Framework highlighted a need to shift from ‘protecting children’ to ‘promoting the safety and wellbeing of children’ as per the principles of the public health model (for more detail on the public health model please refer to Chapter 3. This evaluation considers to what extent the National Framework engaged with public health model of child well-being.

Organisations who provided feedback on the public health model indicated that the implementation of the National Framework was not wholly consistent with the principles of the public health model based on the actions pursued. Several organisations pointed out that this was related to a number of factors, including the immense demand for child protection services in Australia already. These themes are explored in detail below.

Please note: the child protection public health model outlined in the National Framework comprises of four parts; universal, preventative, targeted and statutory interventions. The standard public health model comprises of three parts; primary, secondary and tertiary interventions. The relationship between the models is outlined in Figure 13. Throughout this section the terminology for equivalent components is used interchangeably (i.e. statutory and tertiary is used interchangeably).

Figure 13: Relationship between child protection public health model and standard public health model



Alignment between actions/priorities under the National Framework and the public health model

The majority of organisations indicated that the implementation of the Framework was not wholly consistent with the public health model due to the focus on statutory and targeted initiatives. This is supported through desktop analysis of the actions pursued through the Third and Fourth Action Plan which shows that the majority of actions appear to be targeted or statutory interventions (refer to Appendix C for the detailed mapping of actions against the four components).

Please note, in undertaking desktop analysis of the actions to understand how they adhere to the public health model the following considerations apply:

- While some initiatives may have a specific target cohort other may be overlapping. In particular the distinction between vulnerable and 'at-risk' families is not always clear. Where possible we have selected the alignment to the public health model based on the cohort most targeted by an intervention. For some actions the cohort is ambiguous and therefore they are categorised as both.
- Some actions seek to create an enabling environment (i.e. through research, standardisation, governance protocols) while others relate more directly to implementing policy or programs. Actions that are more enabling are categorised as 'N/A' as they do not directly address a cohort identified in the public health model.

For the Third Action Plan:

- Six out of 17 actions relate to governance, research and target development to enable stakeholders to progress concepts of the public health model.
- Of the remaining 11 actions, nine appear most consistent with targeted or statutory interventions, and five appear most aligned to universal or early interventions.

For the Fourth Action Plan:

- Three out of 13 actions relate to measurement and reporting in support of the public health model.
- Seven of the remaining ten actions appear most consistent with statutory interventions.

In both cases the weighting towards statutory and targeted intervention is not aligned with the proportions outlined in the public health model and is consistent with the feedback provided by stakeholders.

Primary challenges aligning actions/priorities to the public health model

Organisations with a strong understanding of the public health model identified two primary challenges that led the Framework to focus on targeted and statutory interventions. These were that:

Evaluation question 3: How effective was the development of the National Framework and Action Plans?

- There is an immediate and significant need for child protection services in Australia. This is supported by emerging research which estimates that as many as 25 percent of children in Australia will be the subject of at least one notification to the child protection system.⁴⁸ As such the resource allocation implied by the public health model is regarded by some organisations as not feasible.
- The funding re-allocation required to implement the public health model of child protection is significant and impacts whole of government systems and may ultimately require fundamental re-design of service delivery. A handful of organisations highlighted that this would likely require substantial cross-portfolio coordination within both state/territory governments and the Commonwealth. However, the Framework has typically experienced challenges achieving cross-portfolio coordination (discussed in Chapter 5) due to:
 - limited awareness across different portfolios regarding the role and intention of the Framework
 - limited time/resources built into the Framework to enable portfolios to be engaged to support a substantial reform agenda around the public health model

As such the transition to the public health model was not able to be substantially progressed.

Other factors considered relevant to the Framework's alignment to the public health model

Other factors identified as relevant to how the actions pursued linked to the public health model included that:

- the stakeholders most engaged with the Framework in the early stages were primarily focused on child protection issues (including, for example, establishing the National Standards for Out of Home Care) and this had an ongoing impact on the nature of actions pursued. For example, the membership of the National Coalition was predominantly child protection and out of home care focused organisations
- the language of the Framework around 'abuse and neglect' resulted in a natural focus on child protection services that was subsequently reflected through actions that were targeted or statutory in nature. The development of priorities and actions for the Third and Fourth Action Plans, and to explore the alignment of the priorities and actions with the National Framework, international rights-based treaties and the public health model.

It is also important to consider that the basis of a public health model is not embedded in the supporting outcomes of the National Framework. While the concept is outlined in the National Framework, its outcomes and indicators focus on statutory measures, which means that the National Framework was geared towards delivery against these objectives from the outset.

While the National Framework highlighted a need to pursue a public health model approach to deliver on its target, this intent was not reflected in its design. The language, supporting outcomes and actions were all oriented towards child protection activities which naturally led activity within the Framework towards a statutory focus, and meant that universal prevention and/or early intervention had lesser focus. If a public health model were pursued, the program logic should design to this. The Framework would also need to focus on how it can engage broadly across portfolios to generate a system-wide response that reflects the intent of a public health model.

⁴⁸ BetterStart, 2017, Child Protection in South Australia, <https://health.adelaide.edu.au/betterstart/publications/reports/child-protection-in-south-australia.pdf>, accessed: 21/01/2020

7 Findings and opportunities

This chapter covers...

- the findings and opportunities of this evaluation of the National Framework and its Third and Fourth Action Plans. It comprises two sections:
 - Section 7.1 provides a summary of the findings of the evaluation
 - Section 7.2 provides an overview of the key opportunities for consideration in the development of a future National Framework based on the key findings.

7.1 Key findings of this evaluation

Based on the evidence collected through this evaluation, a number of findings that relate to the key evaluation questions are identified below.

Key finding: The National Framework has been an important mechanism for national collaboration on protecting Australia's children and reducing child abuse and neglect

The National Framework was developed in recognition that significant reform was needed to reduce the growing rates of child abuse and neglect in Australia. At the time of its conception, there was an almost universal view that the scale of the challenge required a long-term, strategic approach that coordinated the activities of government, non-government and research sectors to achieve this aim.

Overwhelmingly, stakeholders consulted as part of this evaluation cited the Framework's delivery of a national strategy as a core achievement. Their view was that the existence of the Framework enabled a national conversation which has elevated the priority of children's safety and wellbeing on the agenda of governments. The creation of a National Forum, as the tripartite apparatus which supports the Framework, has also brokered collaboration and built trust between jurisdictions, peak bodies and the services sector which has enhanced knowledge sharing and facilitated the implementation of some important national initiatives.

While some national initiatives resulted from other reform activity and cannot be directly attributed to the National Framework, organisations consulted as part of this evaluation provided examples of initiatives that were able to be coordinated and implemented through the National Framework. Key examples associated with the Third and Fourth Action Plans include:

- the implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations which were recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional responses to Child Sexual Abuse and developed through the Third Action Plan.
- the support that the National Forum (as a regular convening of government and non-government stakeholders) and the ATSIWG have provided for more comprehensive implementation of the ATSI CPP through the Fourth Action Plan.

Key finding: While robust prevalence data are not available to accurately measure whether the National Framework achieved its intended outcome of a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect, available data suggest that this outcome was not achieved

The National Framework itself highlighted that 'measuring a reduction in child abuse and neglect is difficult, as Australia currently does not have robust data on incidence/prevalence'.⁴⁹ The Framework did not result in the implementation of a robust, national prevalence/incidence study which would be the only way to accurately track progress against this outcome.

The Framework's 32 data indicators (reported on periodically by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare⁵⁰) provide a proxy or leading evidence of trends in the underlying prevalence of child abuse and neglect but they do not conclusively track prevalence.

Eight of the 32 indicators relate to the high-level outcome of a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect. Of the eight indicators, three have worsened over the life of the Framework, two have remained steady, two have improved and one does not have sufficient time series data to report on. It is reasonable to suggest that given this mix of indicators, the Framework has not resulted in the achievement of its high-level outcome of a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect. This finding was supported by organisations consulted as part of this evaluation.

Indigenous children and young people are a significant cohort within the child protection system representing approximately 36 per cent of all children and young people on a care and protection order in 2017-18. Supporting outcome 5 of the

⁴⁹ Commonwealth of Australia, *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, 2009, page 11.

⁵⁰ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *National framework for protecting Australia's children indicators*, June 2019.

Framework is to ensure that 'Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities'. No prevalence study has been implemented to understand levels of child abuse and neglect experienced by Indigenous children but it is clear that this outcome has not been achieved with the over-representation of Indigenous children in the child protection system and out of home care worsening over the life of the Framework.

Overall, despite efforts to assemble the 32 data indicators to measure progress of achieving the Framework's outcomes, the lack of a robust prevalence study of child abuse and neglect in Australia coupled with significant gaps in the reporting of data to inform indicators result in an inability to comprehensively track and measure the National Framework's achievements.

Key finding: The evolving governance arrangements underpinning the National Framework and the Third and Fourth Action Plans impacted the achievement of the Framework's intended outcomes

The National Framework was ambitious in seeking to adopt a shared agenda across Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the non-government and research sectors aimed at preventing and reducing child abuse and neglect. The National Framework states 'we need a unified approach that recognises that the protection of children is not simply a matter for the statutory child protection systems'⁵¹ and that 'our separate efforts still fail many children and young people'.⁵²

A key finding of this evaluation is that while the intent of the National Framework was broad reaching, its implementation became more narrowly focused on statutory child protection systems over its twelve-year timeframe. A major reason for this narrow focus was the governance arrangements supporting the National Framework, which evolved over its twelve-year term and were re-set every three years to support the delivery of the action plans.

The National Framework's governance arrangements were set up from its inception in 2009 to support a whole of government response across jurisdictions, as well as engaging the non-government and research sectors in addressing child abuse and neglect. In order to ensure national leadership and attention, the National Framework would report and be accountable to a standing Coalition of Australian Governments (COAG) committee and the National Forum was also established.

However, the governance arrangements changed in 2014. The Third and Fourth Action Plans instead involved formally reporting to the Children and Families Secretaries (CAFS) and Community Services Ministers (CSM). This meant COAG no longer reported on nor was accountable for the Framework and its implementation throughout the duration of the Third and Fourth Action Plans.

Organisations consulted as part of this evaluation reported that the National Framework became less of a priority for governments as a result and that CAFS was not able to influence broader governmental priorities to the same extent as the COAG committee. The membership of the Working Groups under the Third and Fourth Action Plans was mostly constituted of state and territory child protection agency representatives which limited the Framework's ability to influence actions in other policy areas and commit to system wide reforms.

The result was that the activities delivered under the action plans increasingly became focused on statutory child protection systems and smaller initiatives and trials, and less on comprehensive, system-wide change to address the drivers of child abuse and neglect. While organisations consulted for this evaluation noted that there were some positive and concrete national initiatives committed to under the National Framework, overall the Third and Fourth Action Plans were narrow in their scope.

Analysis of available annual reporting on the National Framework shows that most activity reported as being delivered under action plans were state and territory-based reforms and programs rather than national initiatives that were established as a result of the Framework.

⁵¹ Commonwealth of Australia, *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, 2009, page 6.

⁵² Commonwealth of Australia, *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, 2009, page 6.

Key finding: The National Framework was not able to fully embed a public health approach and coordinate the policy agenda for children and young people

Throughout the duration of the Third and Fourth Action Plans there have been an increasing number of child protection-related inquiries and commissions in all jurisdictions, and reform programs resulting from these inquiries and commissions. A number of organisations consulted for this evaluation expressed that these reform programs have increasingly become the driver of most activity by jurisdictions, rather than the National Framework being the catalyst for action. State and territory government representatives also noted that the intensive focus on child protection systems and steady or growing child protection numbers and expenditure on child protection has also made it difficult to focus funding and policy efforts on primary prevention and early intervention activities, while at the same time maintaining efforts on addressing these policy and service challenges.

At the same time, there has also been a proliferation of other strategies, frameworks and reforms released by governments on policy areas that impact the drivers of child abuse and neglect. This includes policy areas such as mental health, domestic violence, housing, disability, health, education, early childhood and social security.

Organisations consulted for this evaluation noted that in order to fully embed the public health approach, policies and programs in these areas would need to be integrated. In addition, specific consideration needs to be given to how policies and programs impact on vulnerable children and their families, which has not been the case in all policy areas. This is supported by a range of different reviews undertaken during the term of the National Framework that have found that funding and services in policy areas impacting on vulnerable families and children are often delivered in siloes.⁵³

Finally, a number of organisations suggested that the National Framework and Third and Fourth Action Plans could have been better informed through consultation with children and young people and their families and communities.⁵⁴ This includes taking a “human-centred” approach to developing an understanding of how the service system and policies can be improved. This would ensure they are supporting the child or young person in the context of their whole family and community and developing their strengths and protective factors.

Evaluation sub-question findings

Sub-question findings are detailed throughout the body of the report and have informed the development of the key evaluation findings outlined above. Table 13 provides a summary of the findings to each evaluation sub-question.⁵⁵

⁵³ See for example Productivity Commission, *Expenditure on Children in the Northern Territory*, Draft Report, November 2019.

⁵⁴ We note that some research was commissioned under the Third Action Plan which involved discussions with young people: Alasdair Roy, *Talking with young people about the National Framework: Outcomes of conversations with young people about the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*, June 2017.

⁵⁵ Note that, for the purposes of presentation, evaluation question numbering has been reordered as compared to the original contract with DSS to improve readability

Table 13: Evaluation sub-question findings

Key Evaluation Question	Sub-questions	Finding
 <p>Outcomes: achievement of intended outcomes (barriers and enablers)</p> <p>1. To what extent did the National Framework achieve its intended outcomes and what factors supported or inhibited outcomes?</p>	<p>a. What were the major achievements of the National Framework?</p>	<p>Organisations reported that a major achievement of the Framework has been keeping the welfare of children on the national ‘agenda.’ The implementation of a number of key initiatives, including the National Children’s Commissioner and National Standards for Out-of-Home Care, are major achievements of the Framework. Although the Framework implemented a number of key initiatives, it appears that the Framework did not achieve the high-level goal of a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect,</p>
	<p>b. What supported and/or inhibited the implementation of the actions listed in the National Framework and Action Plans? What could be improved?</p>	<p>A number of key factors were identified as critical to the achievement of outcomes including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Third Action Plan was seen as the most effective through implementation, largely driven by its rationalisation of actions and focus on the child protection system where National Forum members had greater leverage to influence activity.
	<p>c. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the National Framework, including the effectiveness of its governance structure?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Framework and its governance mechanisms were unable to influence the broad strategic direction of governments and service sectors outside of child protection. This inability was influenced by successive changes to the governance structure which removed it from COAG oversight and the narrow membership of the National Forum which resulted in the Forum having limited networks and influence in broader service sectors.
	<p>d. What supported and/or inhibited achievement of outcomes listed in the National Framework and Action Plans?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the governance structure did not drive consensus in decision-making within the National Forum and was ineffective in holding members accountable for outcomes of the Framework.
	<p>e. How well did the National Framework and the Action Plans work together to achieve outcomes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> available investment for the Framework limited the scale of initiatives pursued and in turn limited the achievement of outcomes. Joint funding opportunities were not sufficiently explored or implemented. the Framework contributed to the evidence base through funding research activities, but decision-making processes were not sufficiently robust to ensure that evidence was embedded which occasionally resulted in key initiatives and trials that were not evidence-based. data indicators were focussed on child protection and as the primary mechanism for reporting on outcomes, many do not have sufficient data. The indicators contributed to a focus on the child protection system which failed to engage broader sectors and portfolios and failed to result in accountability for the outcomes being achieved

Key Evaluation Question	Sub-questions	Finding
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> while the intent to bridge cross-portfolio issues that underpin child abuse and neglect was evident in discussions throughout the development of the National Framework and the Action Plans, the challenges of doing so were not overcome. Broad system and cross-jurisdictional changes were not achieved to address the underlying causes of child abuse and neglect.
	<p>f. How effective was the National Framework in informing the agenda for Indigenous priorities, actions and cultural appropriateness?</p>	<p>The over-representation of Indigenous children in child protection has deteriorated over the life of the Framework. Organisations identified that positive work had commenced to embed the ATSI CPP but cautioned that full implementation (not just as a placement hierarchy) is required to fully pursue Indigenous children's rights. Indigenous stakeholders identified an opportunity for the Framework to ensure that Indigenous communities are adequately consulted in all stages of development and implementation. Focus would also be better supported if prevalence data enabled the National Framework to monitor its progress.</p>
	<p><i>Additional sub-question:</i> g. How effective were the National Framework and Action Plans in achieving broader outcomes particularly coordinating effort across governments and the non-government sector and reducing the prevalence of child abuse and neglect?</p>	<p>The National Framework has not resulted in comprehensive reporting against an outcomes framework or the development of a prevalence study of child abuse and neglect. In the absence of these measures, it is impossible to assess the effectiveness of the National Framework in achieving its broad outcomes. Available data suggests that a substantial and sustained reduction in abuse and neglect has not been achieved.</p>
<div data-bbox="241 1038 338 1134" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Effectiveness: supporting the policy agenda for children and young people</p> <p>2. How well did the National Framework</p>	<p>a. How well does the National Framework connect other elements of the broader policy agenda for children and young people at both a Commonwealth and state and territory level?</p> <p>b. Were there any gaps or was there areas of duplication with other key policy areas, including but not limited to:</p>	<p>There is evidence of a significant amount of government investment and reform among policy domains that are connected to the National Framework that have delivered against various priorities of government (for example, in child sexual abuse and universal service design and provision). While aligned, these activities are difficult to directly attribute to the National Framework.</p> <p>Over the past five years, governments have implemented a wide array of reforms across connected policy domains. Many of these reforms have been led by inquiries and Royal Commissions which have focused government action. Intersecting activity in jurisdictions appears to be driven mostly by reforms in the areas of</p>

Key Evaluation Question	Sub-questions	Finding
<p>support the policy agenda for children and young people?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family and domestic violence • education • housing • justice • health • disability • culturally and linguistically diverse families and/or • Closing the Gap 	<p>family violence, education, child protection and youth justice policy domains. Relatively less effort appears to have been directed through the National Framework to disability and CALD policy priorities.</p>
<div data-bbox="241 699 331 788" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Effectiveness and appropriateness: development processes</p> <p>3. How effective was the development of the National Framework and Action Plan?</p>	<p>a. How effective and appropriate were the consultations leading up to, and the resulting priorities and actions in the Third and Fourth Action Plans?</p> <hr/> <p>a i. Did the development of the priorities and actions in the Third and Fourth Action Plans incorporate lessons learnt from previous action plans?</p> <hr/> <p>a ii. Did the priorities and actions in the Third and Fourth Action Plans clearly align with the high-level outcomes of the National Framework?</p>	<p>There were clear consultation processes that supported the development of the Third and Fourth Action Plans, but there were some challenges engaging with portfolios outside of child protection. As a result, the priorities and actions included in the Third and Fourth Action Plan were narrowly focussed on child protection. In addition, some key groups were not adequately consulted with including children and young people, Indigenous and CALD stakeholders.</p> <hr/> <p>There is evidence that the action plans incorporated some lessons learned, including to contain fewer priorities and actions, and to give greater focus to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children actions. A formal process for monitoring progress on achieving outcomes through the action plans may have resulted in earlier or more comprehensive identification of lessons learned and more opportunity to embed these in future action plans.</p> <hr/> <p>The Framework’s high-level outcomes are sufficiently broad to enable alignment of all actions and priorities under the Third and Fourth Action Plans. However, a lack of a defined program logic which links actions, outputs and outcomes meant it was difficult to establish how sufficient actions and priorities were to achieve the intended outcomes. Organisations generally agreed that the actions and priorities, while aligned with the intent of outcomes, were not aligned with the ambition of a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect.</p>

Key Evaluation Question	Sub-questions	Finding
	<p>b. To what extent were the duration and structure of the National Framework and its Action Plans appropriate?</p>	<p>The 12-year duration of the Framework was considered appropriate and an achievement of the Framework in that it facilitated and enabled a national conversation which elevated the priority of children’s safety and wellbeing in Australia.</p> <p>The rolling structure of three-year action plans was seen as appropriate as it allowed flexibility for the Framework to respond to changing policies and the political landscape. However, the requirement to renegotiate, develop and agree each new action plan resulted in significant loss of time for the implementation of the plans.</p>
	<p>c. How well did the National Framework respond to the Convention on the Rights of the Child?</p>	<p>Responsibility for delivering on the UNCRC does not rest wholly with the Framework. In the absence of an evaluation framework that defines the commitment of the Framework to delivering on the UNCRC, it is impossible to assess the degree to which the Framework has responded to, or is expected to respond, to the UNCRC. There is evidence that the Framework was guided by the principles of the UNCRC at its inception and in the activities that have been delivered (for example, the establishment of the National Children’s Commissioner). However, delivery of the UNCRC principles in full would require governments to consider how all activities, including the Framework, respond to the UNCRC so that Australia’s commitments can be identified and measured.</p>
	<p>d. To what extent did the National Framework engage with the public health model and primary prevention activities?</p>	<p>The extent to which the National Framework has engaged with the public health model appears limited. Challenges in generating cross-portfolio coordination and in continuing to respond to rising numbers of children in the child protection system has driven a focus on child protection. Both the Third and Fourth Action Plans were primarily focused on targeted and statutory interventions.</p>

7.2 Opportunities

Based on the findings of this evaluation, there are a number of opportunities to enhance the National Framework (or the successor plan to the National Framework) building on lessons learnt through implementation.

The first opportunity exists to more narrowly define the cohort of children and families that are the focus of the successor plan to the National Framework. This would support the Department and its stakeholders to focus on children and families, and give broader consideration to their touch points with the service system, which includes government and non-government services that focus on the drivers of child abuse and neglect (early intervention, targeted and statutory services).

A second opportunity exists to enhance the governance structure of the successor plan to the National Framework) to better connect it with other relevant portfolio areas. In particular, this should support collaboration across the whole service system so as to address the broader needs and ambition to reduce child abuse and neglect.

Adoption of an outcomes framework, would enable a sustained focus on and alignment to the high-level objectives of the successor plan to the National Framework, over its life, given its longer-term design. It should be complemented by an implementation roadmap that details the activities of each party to meet short, medium and longer-term outcomes to drive accountability, but also allow for review. A national prevalence study on child abuse and neglect would set an accurate baseline against which progress can be measured over delivery of the successor plan to the National Framework.

A fourth opportunity exists to implement an independent monitoring and reporting mechanism to drive accountability and measurement of implementation and outcomes.

And finally, children, families and communities should be engaged to inform the priorities of the successor plan to the National Framework, to provide their lived experiences and understanding of the service system so that the successor plan to the National Framework) can be better tailored to their needs. Their voice is critical to ensuring a fit-for-purpose service system that delivers real, meaningful change to reduce the rates of child abuse and neglect in Australia.

Appendices

Appendix A	Evaluation Approach	64
Appendix B	Summary of governance: terms of reference	73
Appendix C	Background analysis	77
Appendix D	Consulted stakeholders	93

Appendix A Evaluation Approach

1 Evaluation purpose

The National Framework is to conclude at the end of 2020. It is timely to undertake this evaluation of the National Framework. Consistent with a continuous improvement approach the evaluation will be used to gather data and qualitative insights to shape the development of the strategy beyond 2020. In this context the purpose of the evaluation is to:

- assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of the National Framework and its associated action plans including:
 - governance arrangements
 - broad implementation of the Third and Fourth Action Plans
 - effectiveness in achieving broader outcomes including:
 - coordinating effort across governments and the non-government sector
 - reducing the prevalence of child abuse and neglect.
- inform future policy and planning work.

2 Evaluation audience

The primary audiences for the evaluation are:

- the Department of Social Services (the policy owner and commissioner of this evaluation)
- all states and territories' children and families agencies noting the National Framework is a COAG initiative
- non-government organisations and representatives including members of the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing

One of the stated aspirations of the National Framework is to, over time, rebalance effort and investment from a focus on preventing abuse and harm to promoting child safety and wellbeing. Secondary audiences for the evaluation include:

- Australian Government agencies who administer or fund relevant programs or grants including the National Indigenous Australians Agency, Department of Education and Training, Services Australia, National Office for Child Safety
- state and territory agencies with responsibilities for early childhood, education, justice, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs and programs and justice
- the general public, to whom key findings (and potentially the whole report) will be made available through publication on DSS' website.

3 Scope of evaluation

A high-level concept map for the National Framework is provided at Figure 14. While drawn directly from the National Framework, this concept map has been presented in a program logic format for the purposes of this evaluation framework. Program and policy logic models are schematic representations that describe how a program or policy is intended to work.

Evaluation Approach

They are useful in helping frame monitoring and evaluation activities primarily concerned with supporting decision making around program and policy resources, activities, outputs, and outcomes and answering questions such as:

- Were allocated resources sufficient to implement the policy effectively?
- Were the activities conducted as intended?
- Were expected outputs achieved?
- To what extent did the policy achieve its short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes?

In particular program and policy logic models:

- provide a readily accessible summary of the policy or the activity: developing a policy logic supports the development of a deeper understanding for the activities and intended outcomes and brings a systematic approach, imposing structure, rigour and discipline which makes clear the relationships among its components at various stages. Importantly program logic models link the activities to the aims and intended outcomes.
- identification of evaluation questions: presentation in a policy logic model format helps identify key evaluation questions and support decision making to target evaluation efforts to the most critical areas. The policy logic can help make clear the audiences for evaluation material and the potential sources and holders of data. In addition program logic models help fine tune general evaluation questions into “clear, specific, and actionable evaluation questions”.⁵⁶

A clear statement of needs and objectives is important to ensure there is a clear statement of the problem that is being addressed. This statement of need is well articulated in the National Framework.

The components of the policy and program logic model developed for this evaluation framework are:

- Action and Strategies: what is required to make the National Framework implementation successful? What outputs are delivered?
- Indicators: what are markers of progress towards achievement of supporting outcomes?
- Supporting outcomes: what are the intermediary or supporting outcomes that will contribute to the overall outcome?
- Measures: what are the key trends that will be monitored to determine progress towards achievement of the target and the overall outcome?
- Target: what are the outcomes sought within the timeframe of the National Framework?
- High level outcome: what is the overall outcome or vision of success (note this high-level outcome may extend beyond the life of National Framework)?

⁵⁶ Lawton, B., Brandon, P.R., Cicchinelli, L., & Kekahio, W. (2014). Logic models: A tool for designing and monitoring program evaluations. (REL 2014–007). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

Figure 14 National Framework high-level concept map (program logic)

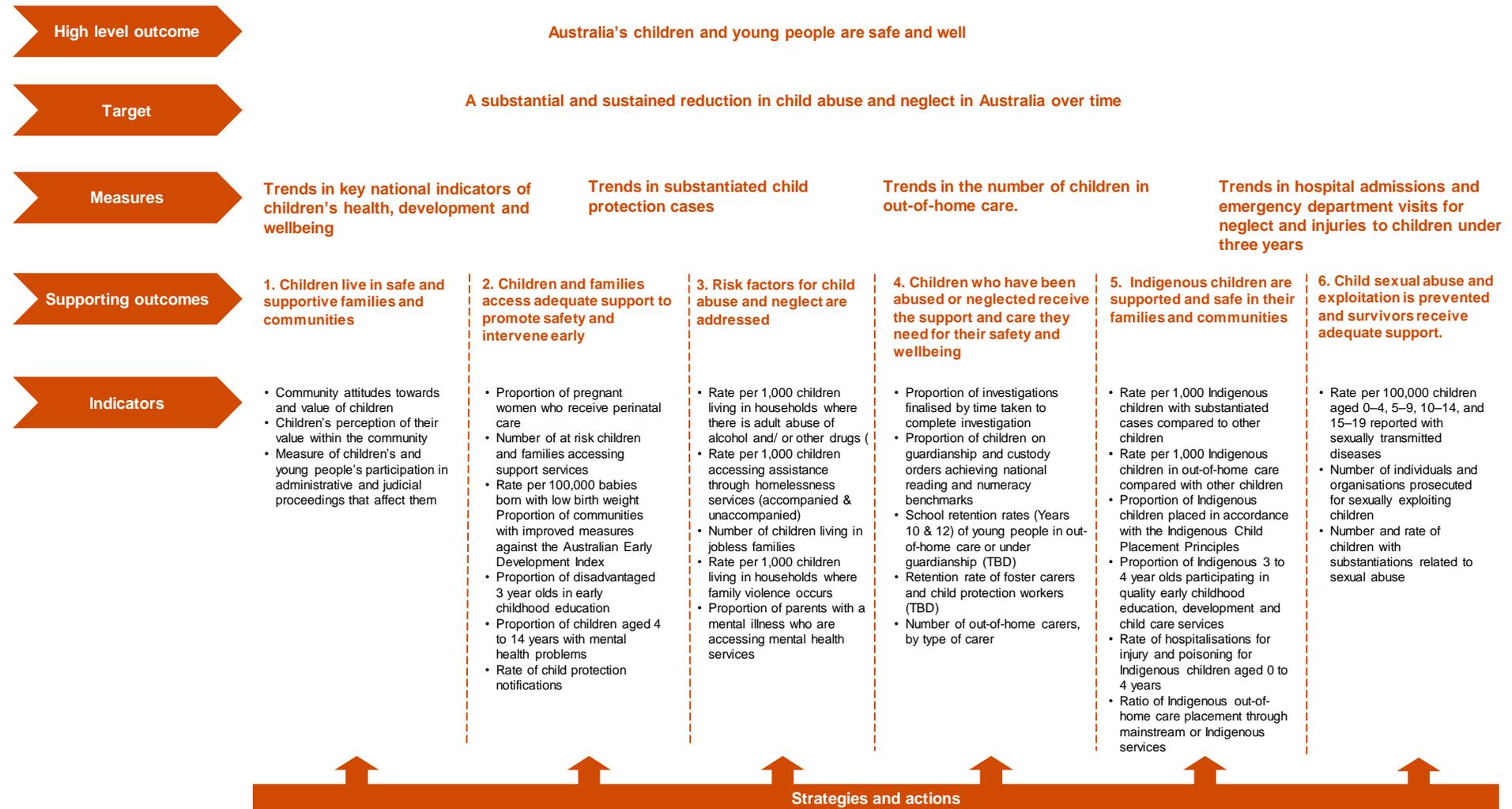


Figure 14 has been used as a tool to unpack the Key Evaluation Questions and sub-questions to confirm that lines of inquiry are comprehensive.

4 Evaluation type

A range of approaches may be appropriate to evaluate strategies and action plans including:

- formative: an adaptive approach which enables refinement as the program or strategy is being implemented
- process: determines whether the strategy was implemented as intended
- outcomes: measures the progress of the strategy in terms of outcomes
- impact: assesses the overall effectiveness of the strategy often compared to valid counterfactual.

A mixed method approach will be adopted for this evaluation comprising components of formative, process and outcomes evaluation methodology noting that an impact evaluation is beyond the scope envisaged by DSS' evaluation questions.

A combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies will be deployed to assess effectiveness of the development of the framework, the influence that the Framework and Third and Fourth Action Plans have had on the policy agenda for children and young people and the extent to which the National Framework achieved its intended outcomes (with consideration to barriers and enablers). In particular it will comprise:

- a strong focus on qualitative analysis: understanding the experiences, insights, observations and perspectives of the diverse range of individuals and organisations with an interest in, or responsibility for, implementation of the National Framework will be a key foundation to the evaluation. This will include developing a contemporary picture of the current policy, legislative and program management arrangements in place in each jurisdiction.
- quantitative analysis: we confirm our understanding that this evaluation is not anticipated to include a comprehensive audit of actions implemented under the Action Plans, or assess the effectiveness of each individual action or plan. A summative assessment is to be made of the National Framework leveraging existing reports and published data.

An additional sub-question has been proposed to ensure that the evaluation appropriately considers:

- the effectiveness of the Framework and Action Plans in achieving broader outcomes particularly coordinating effort across governments and the non-government sector and reducing the prevalence of child abuse and neglect

the extent to which the headline outcome, target, measures, supporting outcomes and indicators have been met.

Key evaluation questions

Three key evaluation domains are specified:

- **Domain 1: Outcomes:** achievement of intended outcomes (barriers and enablers)
- **Domain 2: Effectiveness:** supporting the policy agenda for children and young people
- **Domain 3: Effectiveness and appropriateness:** development processes

The Key Evaluation Questions and sub-questions aligned to these three evaluation domains is set out in Table 14 at the end of this section.

5 Data collection and capture

This evaluation relies on both the analysis of available information as well as stakeholder consultation to provide insights. A brief summary of these data collection approaches is described in the following sections.

Stakeholder consultation

Consultations were undertaken with stakeholders across Australia representing jurisdictional, sectoral and academic perspectives. Stakeholders were identified by DSS and consulted between October 2019 – January 2020. Engagement was undertaken through:

- **Early notification** by DSS to stakeholders of the evaluation
- **Phone contact** by PwC/PIC, supported by a guiding script, to schedule engagement
- **Circulation of a calendar invitation** with teleconference/location details and including a standardised invitation script
- **Provision of an information sheet** that provides context to the objectives of the evaluation
- During consultation, upfront acknowledgement of how **information collected** through consultation will be documented and used through the evaluation
- **Documentation of consultation** dialogue in the form of a standardised data collection template

Information sheet

An information sheet was shared with stakeholders ahead of our meeting with them to outline the scope of our evaluation, its context, as well as the high-level questions to be asked through the consultations. A snapshot of the information sheet is shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Information sheet provided to stakeholders

Information sheet
 Evaluation of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020
 Department of Social Services
 November 2019

High-level outcome
 Australia's children and young people are safe and well.

Target
 A substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect in Australia over time.

Progress indicators
 Indicators of progress towards achieving the target are:
 - trends in key national indicators of children's health, development and wellbeing
 - trends in hospital admissions and emergency department visits for neglect and injuries to children under three years
 - trends in substantiated child protection cases
 - trends in the number of children in out-of-home care.

Supporting outcomes
 The six supporting outcomes in the Framework are:
 - children live in safe and supportive families and communities
 - children and families access adequate support to promote safety and intervene early
 - risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed
 - children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing
 - indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities
 - child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented and survivors receive adequate support.

Next steps
 Through this evaluation, we will consult with key stakeholders across the child protection sector including:
 - Commonwealth agencies
 - State/Territory government representatives
 - Commissioners and Guardians for Children and Young People
 - National Coalition members
 - other relevant non-government organisations
 - peak bodies.
 Consultations will run between November and December 2019 through direct interview. Insights captured through consultation will inform the development of findings which are to be delivered to the Department of Social Services in early 2020.

Contact details
 If you have any questions about this evaluation or wish to discuss the consultation process, please do not hesitate to contact our team. Their details are provided below.

Evaluation Leader
 Zoe Hightam
 Partner, PwC
 0427 815 762
 zoe.hightam@pwc.com

Evaluation Co-Lead
 Jenny Scott
 Partner, PwC
 0401 116 332
 jenny.scott@pwc.com

Project Director
 Kelly Rose
 Director, PwC
 0439 467 597
 kelly.rose@pwc.com

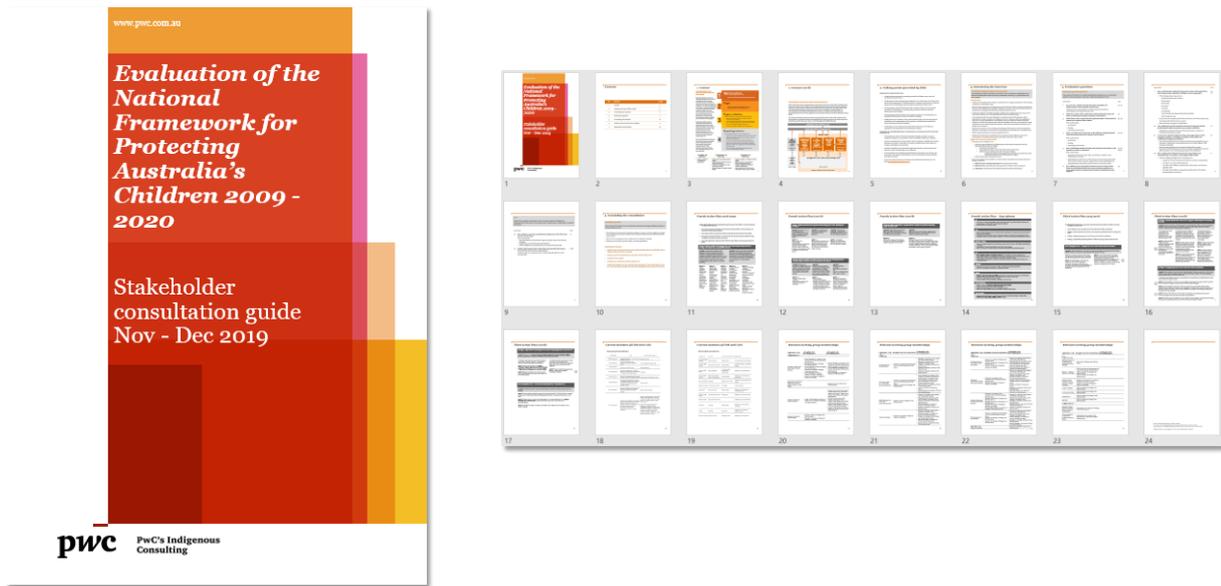
Consultation coordination
 Chloë Harrison-Bryce
 Senior Manager, PwC
 0424 949 302
 chloe.harrisonbryce@pwc.com

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Consultation guide

To support our team to undertake consultations, a consultation guide was prepared to guide our questioning of stakeholders. This assisted us to ask questions in a consistent way and to cover all elements of the evaluation framework with stakeholders. All stakeholders were provided with upfront context and an opportunity to introduce their experience with the National Framework. Stakeholders were also asked to acknowledge that our team was taking notes for the purposes of informing this evaluation. A high-level overview of the consultation guide is shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16: PwC/PIC consultation guide



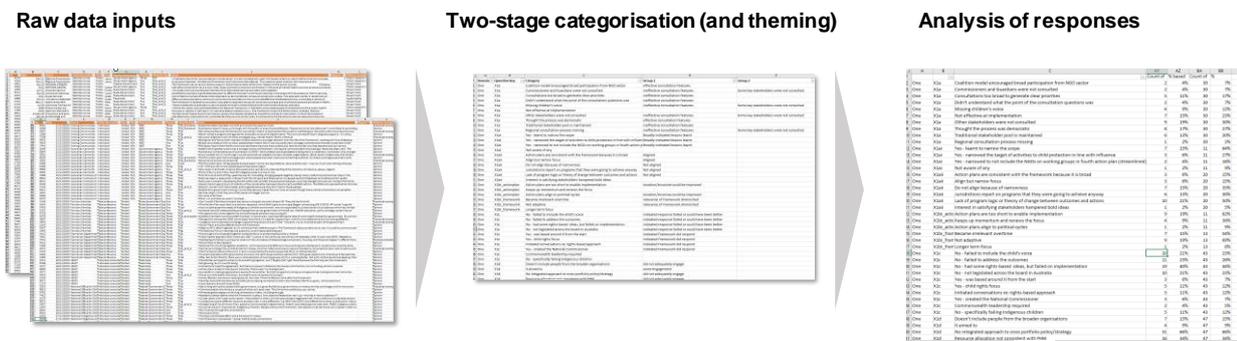
Data tool

Responses from stakeholders were collated in a common data tool, based in excel, that provided the database for this evaluation. The tool was developed to:

- Input notes, based on each evaluation sub-question, for each stakeholder
- Identify each question response by stakeholder type, date, the relative strength of evidence provided (opinion or with reference to a data point or example)
- Identify key themes arising and categorise stakeholder responses
- Undertake a secondary review of theming to ensure that categories assigned were correct, were expanded upon, or a further category assigned to each response
- Analyse categories to establish weightings of responses and strength of evidence to inform findings

A visual view of the documented inputs to the data tool is shown in Figure 17.

Figure 17: High-level overview of data tool



The data tool enabled the evaluation team to analyse the broad dataset captured through consultations. This supported segmentation of data to review common themes and emerging findings by stakeholder type, by evidence source and by Department of Social Services PwC

Evaluation Approach

themes. From the over 700 data points collected, the evaluation team considered the themes arising from consultation to balance these against desktop review findings to assess the validity of perspectives shared and to as great an extent as possible, provide rigour to the analysis provided in this report.

This approach lent to objectivity in review of responses provided. However, the limitations of the stakeholder approach – in which stakeholders had varying levels of familiarity and experience with the National Framework – meant that a strict interpretation of results was not deemed appropriate. Instead, some judgment has been applied to derive findings as weightings (multiple stakeholders supporting a point) did not necessarily equate to a given conclusion due to their offering of opinion rather than defensive evidence. Where possible, desktop analysis has been used to balance perspectives provided.

Table 14: Evaluation domains mapped to key evaluation questions and sub-questions

Question domain	Key evaluation question	Sub-questions
 <p>Outcomes: achievement of intended outcomes (barriers and enablers)</p>	<p>1. To what extent did the National Framework achieve its intended outcomes and what factors supported or inhibited outcomes?</p>	<p>a. What were the major achievements of the National Framework?</p> <p>b. What supported and/or inhibited the implementation of the actions listed in the National Framework and Action Plans? What could be improved?</p> <p>c. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the National Framework, including the effectiveness of its governance structure?</p> <p>d. What supported and/or inhibited achievement of outcomes listed in the National Framework and Action Plans?</p> <p>e. How well did the National Framework and the Action Plans work together to achieve outcomes?</p> <p>f. How effective was the National Framework in informing the agenda for Indigenous priorities, actions and cultural appropriateness?</p> <p><i>Additional sub-question:</i></p> <p>g. How effective were the National Framework and Action Plans in achieving broader outcomes particularly coordinating effort across governments and the non-government sector and reducing the prevalence of child abuse and neglect?</p>
 <p>Effectiveness: supporting the policy agenda for children and young people</p>	<p>2. How well did the National Framework support the policy agenda for children and young people?</p>	<p>a. How well does the National Framework connect other elements of the broader policy agenda for children and young people at both a Commonwealth and state and territory level?</p> <p>b. Were there any gaps or was there areas of duplication with other key policy areas, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family and domestic violence • education • housing • justice • health • disability • culturally and linguistically diverse families and/or • Closing the Gap
 <p>Effectiveness and appropriateness: development processes</p>	<p>3. How effective was the development of the National Framework and Action Plan?</p>	<p>a. How effective and appropriate were the consultations leading up to, and the resulting priorities and actions in the Third and Fourth Action Plans?</p> <p>i. Did the development of the priorities and actions in the Third and Fourth Action Plans incorporate lessons learnt from previous action plans?</p> <p>ii. Did the priorities and actions in the Third and Fourth Action Plans clearly align with the high-level outcomes of the National Framework?</p> <p>b. To what extent were the duration and structure of the National Framework and its Action Plans appropriate?</p> <p>c. How well did the National Framework respond to the Convention on the Rights of the Child?</p> <p>d. To what extent did the National Framework engage with the public health model and primary prevention activities?</p>

Appendix B Summary of governance: terms of reference

Table 15: Third Action Plan Terms of Reference and operating arrangements

Group	Missing membership/ representation? ⁵⁷	Summary of Terms of Reference	Reports to	Meeting frequency
CAFS ⁵⁸	As a government structure this group does not include National Coalition membership.	Broad oversight of Child Protection Royal Commissions, the Framework, Children and Families Data Network, broader inter-jurisdictional collaboration, juvenile justice.	CSM	Annual and ad hoc as necessary.
National Forum for Protecting Australia's Children ⁵⁹	None	Provide advice to governments on priority areas requiring tripartite collaboration. Provide advice to CAFS, CAFS SIG and the working groups.	CAFS, CAFS SIG and Priority Working Groups	At least twice per year
Commonwealth, State and Territory Officials Working Group ⁶⁰	As a government structure this group does not include National Coalition membership.	No Terms of Reference provided Third Action Plan provides: "responsible for monitoring and reporting progress to CAFS on the implementation of the Third Action Plan"	CAFS	Not reported
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group ⁶¹	Membership does not include State/Territory or Commonwealth government representatives. Membership includes a wide range of NGOs and Peaks.	Provide guidance, advice and expertise to the National Forum and Strategy Working Groups. Provide annual reports to the National Forum on implementation of actions under each of the 3 Strategies. Support the ATSI CPP's full implementation.	National Forum Reporting in line with National Forum meetings	As necessary

⁵⁷ Note: this is a high level assessment of whether membership includes all State/Territories, Commonwealth and the National Coalition as the three key parties to the National Framework.

⁵⁸ Children and Families Secretaries, 'Terms of Reference', document titled 'Item 2 - Att A_TOR.DOC', emailed on 2 December 2019.

⁵⁹ National Forum for Protecting Australia's Children, 'Terms of Reference', 2019, document titled 'Agenda Item 7 – National Forum Terms of Reference.pdf' emailed 2 December 2019.

⁶⁰ Department of Social Services, 'Third Action Plan 2015-2018', October 2015, p. 14.

⁶¹ Children and Families Secretaries, 'Terms of Reference', document titled, 'Agenda item 3 - Attachment A Terms of Reference - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander .PDF', emailed on 2 December 2019.

Group	Missing membership/ representation? ⁵⁷	Summary of Terms of Reference	Reports to	Meeting frequency
Strategy Working Groups	None	Draft governance arrangements were proposed at the National Forum on 1 Sept 2015 no final Terms of Reference were provided. Draft arrangements include; driving and monitoring implementation of actions under each Strategy of the Third Action Plan, proposing additional actions as necessary, ensuring the ATSI CPP is embedded throughout actions.	National Forum Biannual reports (draft)	Three times per annum (draft)
Research Advisory Committee	Membership does not include States/Territory Government, Australian Centre for Child Protection or Australian Institute of Health and Welfare despite their membership for the National Forum.	No formal Terms of Reference have been provided, arrangements were agreed at National Forum. Explore the development of targets and progress markers, revitalise a new research agenda, examine how to continue the full implementation of the National Standards for OOHC to respond to the Senate Inquiry into OOHC.	National Forum	None documented

Table 16: Fourth Action Plan Terms of Reference and operating arrangements

Group	Missing membership/ representation? ⁶²	Summary of Terms of Reference	Reports to	Meeting frequency
CAFS ⁶³	As a government structure this group does not include National Coalition membership.	Broad oversight of Child Protection Royal Commissions, the Framework, Children and Families Data Network, broader inter-jurisdictional collaboration, juvenile justice.	CSM meeting (informal)	Annual and ad hoc as necessary.
National Forum for Protecting Australia's Children ⁶⁴	None	Progress implementation of initiatives, lead engagement with broader community inc. communication strategy, provide opportunity for	CAFS	As necessary, up to 3 times per annum

⁶² Note: this is a high level assessment of whether membership includes all State/Territories, Commonwealth and the National Coalition as the three key parties to the National Framework.

⁶³ Children and Families Secretaries, 'Terms of Reference', document titled 'Item 2 - Att A_TOR.DOC', emailed on 2 December 2019.

⁶⁴ National Forum for Protecting Australia's Children, 'Terms of Reference', 2014, document titled '216_Att_A.PDF', accessed 12 December 2019

Group	Missing membership/ representation? ⁶²	Summary of Terms of Reference	Reports to	Meeting frequency
		discussion and fill gaps regarding the evidence base.		
CAFS Strategic Information Group (SIG)	As a government structure this group does not include National Coalition membership	Oversee and provide strategic advice on the development and implementation of a data improvement plan for national child safety and welfare data under the CAFS remit. Develop, maintain and oversee the implementation of a national data improvement plan on behalf of CAFS, including prioritisation of information developments and enhancements by jurisdictions.	CAFS	As necessary, but usually 3–4 times annually
Children and Families Data Network (CAFDaN) ⁶⁵	National Coalition not represented	Provide technical support to CAFS SIG	CAFS SIG	As necessary, but usually 3–4 times a year
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Working Group (Priority One) ⁶⁶	National Coalition not represented on working group.	Provide advice and progress work on actions agreed at CAFS and CSM meetings. Deliver/implement the Fourth Action Plan's Priority Area one.	CAFS	Quarterly
Early Intervention and Prevention Initiative (Priority Two) ⁶⁷	Working group limited to membership of the Co-Chairs and Commonwealth Department of Social Services	To oversee and provide advice on actions 2.2 and 2.3 under Priority Two of the Fourth Action Plan and as agreed at CAFS and CSM meetings. Deliver actions 2.2. and 2.3	CAFS	As required
Permanency Working Group (Priority Three)	National Coalition not represented on working group.	Provide advice and progress work on actions agreed at CAFS and CSM meetings.	CAFS	Quarterly

⁶⁵ Children and Families Secretaries, 'Children and Families Data Network (CAFDaN)', document titled '15 February 2019 CAFS - Item 4 - Attachment F - Terms of Reference for CAFDaN.DOCX', emailed 2 December 2019

⁶⁶ Children and Families Secretaries, 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group (Priority One) Terms of Reference', document titled, '6.2 - Att 1 - Priority One Working Group Terms of Reference.docx', emailed 2 December 2019.

⁶⁷ Children and Families secretaries, ' Early Intervention and Prevention Working Group (Priority Two) Terms of Reference', document titled, '6.3 attachment A: P2WG Terms of Reference.DOCX', emailed 2 December 2019.

Group	Missing membership/ representation? ⁶²	Summary of Terms of Reference	Reports to	Meeting frequency
		Develop a work plan and/or implement the Fourth Action Plan priority area three.		
Child Safety Working Group (Priority Four) ⁶⁸	National Coalition not represented on working group.	Provide advice and progress work on actions agreed at CAFS and CSM meetings.	CAFS	Quarterly
		Develop a work plan and/or implement the Fourth Action Plan priority area four.		
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group ⁶⁹	Membership of this group has not been provided.	No formal terms of reference have been provided. The Fourth Action Plan requires the working group to; provide guidance, advice and expertise to the National Forum and working groups and to ensure that the action plan remains focussed on delivering programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.	SIG, the four Priority Working Groups and the National Forum	Not provided

⁶⁸ Children and Families Secretaries, 'Permanency Working Group (Priority Three) Terms of Reference', document titled, '15 February 2019 CAFS - Item 4 - Attachment C - Permanency Working Group.DOCX', emailed 2 December 2019.

⁶⁹ Children and Families Secretaries, 'Terms of Reference', document titled, 'Agenda item 3 - Attachment A Terms of Reference - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander .PDF', emailed on 2 December 2019.

Appendix C Background analysis

In relation to evaluation domain 3, sub-question aii (*did the priorities and actions in the Third and Fourth Action Plans clearly align with the high-level outcomes of the National Framework*) PwC and PIC sought to understand the mapping of actions to supporting outcomes in the action plans. This mapping is presented in Table 17 and Table 18 below.

In undertaking this mapping, we note that in the Third Action Plan the signature actions are not explicitly linked to any supporting outcomes. In the Fourth Action Plan the actions are linked to specific supporting outcomes but no rationale is provided.

Therefore, to analyse whether there is clear alignment between actions and supporting outcomes PwC and PIC sought to link each action to a supporting outcome based on whether it could be reasonably linked to a supporting outcome strategy. We understand that the supporting outcome strategies, which are documented in the National Framework, were intended to help focus efforts and actions under the Framework and refer to specific areas. This makes them more readily linked to actions. By linking actions to supporting strategies, we sought to provide a clear rationale as to how the link between action and supporting outcome was established.

In undertaking this mapping, we note the following:

- Actions are not all of the same kind; some actions seek to create an enabling environment (i.e. through research, standardisation, governance protocols) while others relate more directly to implementing policy or programs. While the former may support the latter, we note that they do not have a stand-alone direct impact on the supporting outcomes. Therefore, in the analysis presented below, unless the actions that are in enabling in nature are clearly supporting a specific program/policy outcome they are categorised as 'Not applicable'.
- Supporting outcomes are not strictly mutually exclusive. For example, actions related to supporting outcome 2 (*Children and families access adequate support to promote safety and intervene early*) may indirectly deliver supporting outcome 1 (*Children live in safe and supportive families and communities*). That is, delivering the necessary support to families will support a safe and supportive family and community. Although this overlap exists, we note that the supporting outcomes were intended to help focus efforts and actions. To this end, we have focused on listing the strategy and supporting outcome that is most clearly aligned to the action under consideration, putting aside potential flow-on effects to other strategies/supporting outcomes (including second generation effects).
- Where an action is not clearly linked to any supporting outcome it is categorised as 'Not aligned'.

Table 17 maps the Third Action Plan signature actions against the supporting outcomes strategies and outcomes of the National Framework.

Table 17: Third Action Plan signature actions mapped against the National Framework

No.	Signature action	Supporting outcome strategy	Supporting outcome
Cross-cutting focus area – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families			
1	Action: All parties agree to ensure the five domains of the ATSICPP are applied to the implementation of strategies and actions identified in the Third Action Plan.	Ensure that Indigenous children receive culturally appropriate protection services and care.	Supporting outcome 5
2	Action: A new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander working group will be established to provide advice and expertise on the implementation of actions and strategies, and report to the National Forum for Protecting Australia's Children on progress and outcomes, to ensure a sustained focus on results.	Underpinning. This action may support further actions in relation to supporting outcome 5..	Aligned to supporting outcome 5
Strategy 1: Early intervention with a focus on the early years, particularly the first 1000 days for a child			
3	Action: Commonwealth to initiate community awareness raising activities focused on effective parenting practices	Educate and engage the community about child abuse and neglect and strategies for protecting children.	Supporting outcome 1

Background analysis

No.	Signature action	Supporting outcome strategy	Supporting outcome
	and strategies to enhance safe and supportive environments in the early years, at both national and local levels.		
4	Action: Identify locations with high incidences of domestic and family violence and improve resource co-ordination of services and activities to better meet the needs of vulnerable expectant parents and parents of young children.	Enhance services and supports for children and families to target the most vulnerable and protect children 'at-risk'.	Supporting outcome 2
5	Action: Commonwealth to develop and trial an effective model of services and support focused on the first 1000 days to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.	Expand access to Indigenous and mainstream services for families and children. Enhance services and supports for children and families to target the most vulnerable and protect children 'at-risk'.	Supporting outcome 5 Supporting outcome 2
6	Action: Examine place-based models to identify critical success factors to inform future work.	Underpinning. This action may support further actions in relation to the National Framework.	
7	Action: Commonwealth to support integration of child care, maternal and child health, and family support services in a number of disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, through the Community Child Care Fund.	Implement an integrated approach to service design, planning and delivery for children and families across the lifecycle and spectrum of need. Expand access to Indigenous and mainstream services for families and children.	Supporting outcome 2 Supporting outcome 5
Strategy 2: Helping young people in out-of-home care to thrive into adulthood			
8	Action: Commonwealth to continue to support eligible young people to access services through the Youth Employment Strategy, Growing Jobs and Small Business Package.	Underpinning. This action supports young people and the determinants of intergenerational poverty/future risk factors.	Aligned to supporting outcome 3
9	Action: Commonwealth to trial ways of improving support to young people by better utilising available data and delivering intensive case management including wrap around services linking to education, health and housing, working with jurisdictions. All parties to use findings to guide future interventions for young people.	Enhance services and supports for children and families to target the most vulnerable and protect children 'at-risk'.	Supporting outcome 2
10	Action: Examine 2014 reforms to the Transition to Independent Living Allowance to ensure it continues to target those who need it most and improve efficiency.	Improve support for young people leaving care.	Supporting outcome 4
11	Action: Evaluate impact of jurisdictions' policy changes to extend statutory responsibility and access to services to young people who exit out-of-home care over the age of 18 years.	Improve support for young people leaving care.	Supporting outcome 4
Strategy 3: Organisations responding better to children and young people to keep them safe			
12	Action: Review and implement the National Framework: Creating Safe Environments for Children —	Increase capacity and capability of: - adult focused services to identify and respond to the needs of children at-risk	Supporting outcome 3

No.	Signature action	Supporting outcome strategy	Supporting outcome
	Organisations, Employees and Volunteers (2005).	- child-focused services to identify and respond to the needs of vulnerable families - the broader system to identify children at-risk Educate and engage the community about child abuse and neglect and strategies for protecting children	Supporting outcome 1
13	Action: Strategy working group to produce a work plan to identify resources to support best practice on child-safe standards.	Underpinning. This action may support further actions in relation to supporting outcome 1.	Aligned to supporting outcome 1
14	Action: Share jurisdictional approaches to develop a best practice model of information exchange.	Develop new information sharing provisions between Commonwealth agencies, State and Territory agencies and NGOs dealing with vulnerable families.	Supporting outcome 2
Cross-cutting focus area – Research and reporting under the Third Action Plan			
15	Action: Explore capacity to develop targets and progress markers for Third Action Plan to measure progress, and if viable, identify appropriate targets and markers, to assist with reporting by June 2016.	Underpinning. This action may support further actions in relation to the National Framework..	
16	Action: Examine how to continue full implementation of, and give best effect to, the National Standards for out-of-home care in light of the Senate Inquiry Into Out-of-Home Care recommendations.	Improve support for young people leaving care. Develop and implement effective mechanisms for involving children and young people in decisions affecting their lives.	Supporting outcome 4 Supporting outcome 1
17	Action: Revitalise the Research Advisory Committee of the National Forum to develop a new research agenda.	Underpinning. This action may support further actions in relation to the National Framework..	

Table 18 maps the Fourth Action Plan actions against the supporting outcomes strategies and outcomes of the National Framework.

Table 18: Fourth Action Plan actions mapped against the National Framework

No.	Action	Supporting outcome strategy	Supporting outcome
Priority area 1: Improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at risk of entering, or in contact with, child protection systems			
1	Action: Actively implement legislation, policy and/or practice to ensure compliance with the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.	Ensure that Indigenous children receive culturally appropriate protection services and care	Supporting outcome 5
2	Action: Identify and share models that have been shown to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in decision-making processes for children and families at risk of entering, or in contact with, child protection systems.	Ensure that Indigenous children receive culturally appropriate protection services and care Enhance access to appropriate support services for recovery where abuse or neglect has occurred Enhance services and supports for children and families to target the most vulnerable and protect children 'at-risk'	Supporting outcome 5 Supporting outcome 4 Supporting outcome 2

Background analysis

No.	Action	Supporting outcome strategy	Supporting outcome
3	Action: Develop a nationally consistent approach to measuring the application of the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.	Ensure that Indigenous children receive culturally appropriate protection services and care	Supporting outcome 5
4	Action: Develop national principles to support the investment, expansion and development of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander managed services to deliver family support and child protection services.	Ensure that Indigenous children receive culturally appropriate protection services and care	Supporting outcome 5
5	Action: Develop a nationally consistent and comparable approach to report on state and territory government support for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander managed services to deliver family support and child protection services.	Support enhanced national consistency and continuous improvement in child protection services Ensure that Indigenous children receive culturally appropriate protection services and care	Supporting outcome 4 Supporting outcome 5
Priority Area 2: Improving prevention and early intervention through joint service planning and investment			
6	Action: Jointly invest in 10 disadvantaged communities across Australia to implement a place-based, collective impact initiative that focuses on interrupting the cycle of childhood vulnerability and poverty.	Enhance services and supports for children and families to target the most vulnerable and protect children 'at-risk'	Supporting outcome 2 Supporting outcome 3
7	Action: Continue efforts to develop and strengthen support for young people transitioning from out-of-home care into adulthood and improve priority access to support services.	Provide priority access to services for children who are at serious risk of abuse and neglect Improve support for young people leaving care	Supporting outcome 2 Supporting outcome 4
8	Action: Undertake research into what works to address key drivers of entry into child protection systems.	Support enhanced national consistency and continuous improvement in child protection services	Supporting outcome 4
Priority Area 3: Improving outcomes for children in out of home care by enhancing placement stability through reunification and other permanent care options			
9	Action: Develop a national data reporting and evaluation framework to measure permanency outcomes.	Support enhanced national consistency and continuous improvement in child protection services	Supporting outcome 4
10	Action: Further promote: a) timely and consistent decision-making for permanency b) better permanency options, including consistent processes for family reunification to be explored and resolved as part of permanency planning.	Enhance access to appropriate support services for recovery where abuse or neglect has occurred	Supporting outcome 4
11	Action: Develop an approach to recruitment, training and support of more permanent carers, including improving workforce capability to support carers, by state and territory and Commonwealth governments.	Support grandparent, foster and kinship carers to provide safe and stable care	Supporting outcome 4
Priority Area 4: Improving organisations' and governments' ability to keep children and young people safe from abuse.			

No.	Action	Supporting outcome strategy	Supporting outcome
12	Action: Support the promotion of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, subject to agreement by the COAG.	Increase capacity and capability of: - adult focused services to identify and respond to the needs of children at-risk - child-focused services to identify and respond to the needs of vulnerable families - the broader system to identify children at-risk	Supporting outcome 3
		Educate and engage the community about child abuse and neglect and strategies for protecting children	Supporting outcome 1
		Enhance prevention strategies for child sexual abuse	Supporting outcome 6
13	Action: Building on the work of the Child Protection Information Sharing Project, the states and territories will improve protocols and procedures to share child protection related information between jurisdictions, including information on the support needs of children and families in child protection systems.	Develop new information sharing provisions between Commonwealth agencies, State and Territory agencies and NGOs dealing with vulnerable families.	Supporting outcome 2
		Support enhanced national consistency and continuous improvement in child protection services.	Supporting outcome 4
		Enhance prevention strategies for child sexual abuse	Supporting outcome 6

Below outlines the reported initiatives of jurisdictions against the supporting outcomes for each action plan. It demonstrates that jurisdictions aligned a lot of jurisdictional initiatives, including major reforms and Royal Commission responses, to the supporting outcomes of the National Framework. For completeness, no lens has been applied to the initiatives represented here (they are reported as they are within the action plans).

Table 19: Overview of reported jurisdictional initiatives against National Framework outcomes

Supporting outcomes	Jurisdiction	Initiative	No. of initiatives
Outcome 1	Commonwealth	Support for National Child Protection Week Building Capacity in Australian Parents trial (branded 'Parent Link') Connected Beginnings	3
	ACT	Youth Roundtable Children's Services Program Child and Family Centres	3
	VIC	<i>No initiatives reported</i>	-
	NSW	Improving child protection information sharing	1
	QLD	Respectful Relations Education Family and Child Commission Community Education initiatives	2
	NT	Starting Early for a Better Future Safe, Thriving and Connected: Generational Change for Children and Families 2018–2023 Age Appropriate Pedagogies	3
	SA	Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016 South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People Child Development Council	3

Background analysis

Supporting outcomes	Jurisdiction	Initiative	No. of initiatives
Outcome 2	WA	Best Beginnings Plus Early Years Initiative	2
	TAS	Healthy Tasmania Five Year Strategic Plan and Healthy Kids Toolkit B4 Early Years Coalition Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy	3
	Total initiatives aligned to supporting outcome 1		20
	Commonwealth	Business Research and Innovation Initiative	1
	ACT	Information sharing Child Development Service Early Support by Design	3
	VIC	Child wellbeing and safety and family violence information sharing schemes and the Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Management framework 10 year Early Parenting Centre (EPC) service plan Cradle to Kinder (C2K) and Cradle to Kinder for Aboriginal children and their families programs smalltalk	4
	NSW	Landmark child protection reform, Their Futures Matter Family group conferencing Permanency Support Program Quality Assurance Framework	4
	QLD	Increased interagency information sharing Missing children protocol Advancing Queensland's child protection and family support reforms — Supporting Families Changing Futures Child Safety Officers	4
	NT	Reform to legislation for children and families FACES helpline Strengthened investment in services for vulnerable young people Healthy Under 5 Kids — Partnering with Families program Child and Family Centres Partnerships with Aboriginal community controlled organisations Reinvigorating and expanding child safety and wellbeing committees Young Mothers Strong Mothers Program	8
	SA	Public Sector (Data Sharing) Act 2016 Early Intervention Research Directorate Child and Family Health Service targeted and sustained services Child and Family Assessment and Referral Networks Child Safety Pathway	5
	WA	Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy Target 120 program	2
	TAS	Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework and the Child and Family Wellbeing Assessment Tool Joined Up Services Project Intensive Family Engagement Service	3
	Total initiatives aligned to supporting outcome 2		34
	Outcome 3	Commonwealth	National Principles for Child Safe Organisations National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022

Background analysis

Supporting outcomes	Jurisdiction	Initiative	No. of initiatives
		National Disability Strategy	
	ACT	Improving service responses to domestic and family violence Family Safety Hub	2
	VIC	Minimum qualification requirements for residential care workers The Orange Door Adolescent Family Violence Program	3
	NSW	Practice Framework Expanding perpetrator interventions Domestic and Family Violence Innovation Fund	3
	QLD	Child Safety Practice Manual Rebuild Domestic and family violence (DFV) capability development Connecting Care to recovery 2016–2026	3
	NT	Youth Outreach and Re engagement Teams Sexual Behaviours in Children Guidelines and mandatory reporting training Early Years Rewarding Careers Northern Territory Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018–2028, Safe, Respected and Free from Violence Domestic and family violence initiatives	5
	SA	Child Wellbeing Practitioners Metropolitan Youth Health Young Parents Program, Youth and Women's Safety and Wellbeing Division Department for Child Protection's Disability Program	3
	WA	Responding to domestic and family violence	1
	TAS	Safe Families Coordination Unit Safe Homes, Safe Families The Youth Suicide Prevention Plan for Tasmania (2016–2020) Everybody's Business Implementation Plan	4
		Total initiatives aligned to supporting outcome 3	27
Outcome 4	Commonwealth	Young people in child protection and under youth justice supervision Vulnerable young people — interactions across homelessness, youth justice and child protection Working Together to Care for Kids: The Survey of Foster and Relative/Kinship Carers National Standards for out of home care Towards Independent Adulthood trial	5
	ACT	A Step Up for Our Kids Therapeutic assessments:	2
	VIC	Better Futures Carer KaFE program New model of kinship care Development of industry transition plans	4
	NSW	The Institute of Open Adoption Studies Permanency Support Program My Forever Family NSW Contracting partnerships to be responsive to needs Out-of-home care transition	5
	QLD	Blue card and foster care system reviews Next Step After Care program Partners in Care	4

Supporting outcomes	Jurisdiction	Initiative	No. of initiatives
		Child and family workforce capacity and capability development	
	NT	Culturally appropriate care arrangements Carers charter of rights	2
	SA	Children and Young People Safety Act 2017 Interagency Therapeutic Needs Panel Education program for children in residential care to promote their rights to make complaints	3
	WA	Department of Communities and Telethon Kids Institute — Exploring outcomes for young people who have experienced out-of-home care study Department of Communities and Curtin University led research team — Transitioning from Out of Home Care: A longitudinal population based study Needs Assessment Tool Homes for Carers	4
	TAS	The Quality and Accountability Framework for Out of Home Care Appointment of Tasmanian Child Advocate A new model for family based care Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People in Out of Home Care	4
		Total initiatives aligned to supporting outcome 4	33
	Commonwealth	Supporting implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle Input to the Closing the Gap Refresh process	2
	ACT	Family Group Conferencing Our Booris, Our Way	2
	VIC	Authorisation of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to care for Aboriginal children Transitioning Aboriginal children to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Service	3
	NSW	Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy	1
Outcome 5	QLD	Our Way Strategy 2017–2037 and Changing Tracks Action Plan 2017–2019 Legislative amendment and the Child Placement Principle Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services	3
	NT	Aboriginal Cultural Security Policy and Framework Indigenous Education Strategy 2015–2024 Stars Program	3
	SA	Yunga Nungas: Future Leaders pilot program Aboriginal workforce participation Kunpungku Atunymankunytjaku Tjitji Uwarkara (KATU)	3
	WA	Aboriginal In Home Support Service (Wungening Moort)	1
	TAS	Appointment of Aboriginal Family Safety Workers	1
		Total initiatives aligned to supporting outcome 5	19
	Commonwealth	Child Abuse Royal Commission Senior Officials Working Group	1
	ACT	ACT Government Response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse	1
Outcome 6	VIC	Kinship care and child safety screening Strengthening treatment services for children and young people who display sexually abusive or concerning behaviours	2
	NSW	National Redress Scheme for survivors of child sexual abuse	3

Supporting outcomes	Jurisdiction	Initiative	No. of initiatives
		See, understand and respond to child sexual abuse practice kit Intensive Therapeutic Care system	
	QLD	Development of culturally appropriate resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people Review of blue card system responding to sexual abuse	3
	NT	Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) Top End Central Australia Health Service	2
	SA	Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 Continuous monitoring of screening Criminalising dishonest communication with children Restricting the 'release on licence' option for sex offenders	4
	WA	Mandatory reporting reform Response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Improving advocacy, treatment and support for survivors of child sexual abuse	3
	TAS	<i>No initiatives reported</i>	-
Total initiatives aligned to supporting outcome 6			19

Table 20 contains the National Framework supporting outcomes mapped against the articles of the Convention, based on whether the supporting outcomes of the National Framework could be reasonably expected to progress the rights outlined in each convention. *Note: The article descriptions are in summary form only and the Convention should be directly consulted for its full contents.*

Table 20: Alignment of Framework supporting outcomes to Articles of the Convention

National Framework supporting outcomes	Articles of the Convention for the Rights of the Child	Discussion
Supporting outcome 1: Children live in safe and supportive families and communities.	Article 3: In all actions concerning children the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. Article 5: Respect and support the role that families play to support children's rights. Article 12: In relation to matters affecting a child, the child has a right to present views and be heard. Article 18: State parties to ensure that parents understand their responsibility to care for children and are supported to do so. Article 27: Support the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.	Supporting outcome 1 may progress the rights outlined in Articles 3, 5, 12, 18 and 27. The focus of this outcome is providing support to families and communities to understand the needs and rights of children, to enable them to act in a child's best interests and to support the provision of adequate care. It also encompasses providing children with a right to participate in decisions that affect them, particularly in relation to judicial proceedings, juvenile justice and child protection.
Supporting outcome 2: Children and families access adequate support to promote safety and intervene early.	Article 7: Children have a right to know and be cared for by his or her parents, as far as possible. Article 9: Children have a right to live with their parents unless against the best interests for the child. Article 24: Children have a right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health.	Supporting outcome 2 may progress the rights outlined in Articles 7, 9, 24 and 28. The focus of this outcome is ensuring that children have access to support and services (including education and healthcare) to create conditions for safety and care. It also includes specific provisions for supporting families with children who are 'at-risk'. In this vein it may protect the rights of children to remain with their parents by creating a supportive environment for families.

National Framework supporting outcomes	Articles of the Convention for the Rights of the Child	Discussion
Supporting outcome 3: Risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed.	<p>Article 28: Right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity.</p> <p>Article 19: State parties to take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from violence, injury, abuse, neglect, or exploitation by care providers.</p> <p>Article 23: Children who have any kind of disability should receive special care and support so that they can live a full and independent life.</p> <p>Article 34: States parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.</p>	Supporting outcome 3 may progress the rights outlined in Articles 19 and 34. The focus of this outcome is on addressing major parental risk factors associated with abuse and neglect, including health, domestic violence and drug/alcohol abuse. Therefore, it may deliver a child's right to be protected from abuse and other forms of harm. This supporting outcome specifically identifies disability as a risk factor for abuse and identifies increase support for children or parents with disabilities as a key strategy, and in this vein may progress the rights set out by Article 23.
Supporting outcome 4: Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing.	<p>Article 20: Children taken from a family environment are entitled to State assistance that has regard for the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and indigenous background.</p> <p>Article 25: State parties should undertake periodic review of children placed in care.</p> <p>Article 39: Children who have been neglected or abused should receive special help to restore their self-respect.</p>	Supporting outcome 4 may progress the rights outlined in Articles 20, 25 and 39. The focus of this outcome is on providing timely and appropriate services to children who have been abused or at risk of abuse, including high-quality child protection. Depending on the exact nature of child protection, it may deliver on the rights encompassed in these articles.
Supporting outcome 5: Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities.	<p>Article 5: Respect and support the role that families play to support children's rights.</p> <p>Article 18: State parties to ensure that parents understand their responsibility to care for children and are supported to do so.</p> <p>Article 20: Children taken from a family environment are entitled to State assistance that has regard for the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and indigenous background.</p> <p>Article 30: A child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right to enjoy his or her own culture, or to use his or her own language.</p>	Supporting outcome 5 may progress the rights outlined in Articles 5, 18, 20 and 30. The focus of this outcome is on supporting Indigenous families to support children, and to provide culturally-appropriate care to Indigenous children in child protection systems. This has some overlap with supporting outcome 1 (Articles 5, 18) and supporting outcome 3 (Article 20). The focus on culturally appropriate care may specifically progress Article 30.
Supporting outcome 6: Child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented, and survivors receive adequate support.	<p>Article 34: States parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.</p> <p>Article 39: Children who have been neglected or abused should receive special help to restore their self-respect.</p>	Supporting outcome 6 may progress the rights outlined in Articles 34 and 39. This outcome is focused on the specific activities that are required to prevent sexual abuse and to provide support to child survivors of sexual abuse. This is consistent with the rights encompassed in these articles that are specifically related to preventing sexual abuse and providing special assistance for victims of abuse.

In relation to evaluation domain 3, sub-question d (*to what extent did the National Framework engage with the public health model and primary prevention activities*) Table 21 maps the signature actions in the Third Action Plan against the child protection public health model.

This is based on the following categorisation:

- Universal refers to initiatives that support all families and children
- Early refers to early intervention initiatives that target vulnerable families and children

Background analysis

- Targeted refers to initiatives that target 'at-risk' families and children
- Statutory refers to initiatives that target families and children that are part of the child protection system

While some initiatives may have a specific target cohort other may be more difficult or overlapping in relation to the above categorisation. In particular the distinction between vulnerable and 'at-risk' families is not explicitly defined. Where possible we have selected the alignment to the public health model based on the cohort most targeted by an intervention. For some actions the cohort are ambiguous and therefore they are categorised as both.

In addition, similar to the commentary provided with the mapping of actions to outcome we note that some actions seek to create an enabling environment (i.e. through research, standardisation, governance protocols) while others relate more directly to implementing policy or programs. Consistent with how they have been treated in the previous analysis, actions that are more enabling are categorised as 'N/A' as they do not directly address a cohort summarised in the public health model.

Table 21: Third Action Plan signature actions mapped against the public health model

No.	Signature action	Universal	Early	Targeted	Statutory
Cross-cutting focus area – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families					
1	Action: All parties agree to ensure the five domains of the ATSICPP are applied to the implementation of strategies and actions identified in the Third Action Plan.			✓	✓
2	Action: A new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander working group will be established to provide advice and expertise on the implementation of actions and strategies, and report to the National Forum for Protecting Australia's Children on progress and outcomes, to ensure a sustained focus on results.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Strategy 1: Early intervention with a focus on the early years, particularly the first 1000 days for a child					
3	Action: Commonwealth to initiate community awareness raising activities focused on effective parenting practices and strategies to enhance safe and supportive environments in the early years, at both national and local levels.	✓			
4	Action: Identify locations with high incidences of domestic and family violence and improve resource co-ordination of services and activities to better meet the needs of vulnerable expectant parents and parents of young children.		✓	✓	
5	Action: Commonwealth to develop and trial an effective model of services and support focused on the first 1000 days to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.		✓	✓	
6	Action: Examine place-based models to identify critical success factors to inform future work.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	Action: Commonwealth to support integration of child care, maternal and child health, and family support services in a number of disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, through the Community Child Care Fund.			✓	
Strategy 2: Helping young people in out-of-home care to thrive into adulthood					
8	Action: Commonwealth to continue to support eligible young people to access services through the Youth Employment Strategy, Growing Jobs and Small Business Package.		✓		
9	Action: Commonwealth to trial ways of improving support to young people by better utilising available data and delivering intensive case management including wrap around services linking to education, health and housing, working with jurisdictions. All parties to use findings to guide future interventions for young people.			✓	

Background analysis

No.	Signature action	Universal	Early	Targeted	Statutory
10	Action: Examine 2014 reforms to the Transition to Independent Living Allowance to ensure it continues to target those who need it most and improve efficiency.			✓	
11	Action: Evaluate impact of jurisdictions' policy changes to extend statutory responsibility and access to services to young people who exit out-of-home care over the age of 18 years.				✓
Strategy 3: Organisations responding better to children and young people to keep them safe					
12	Action: Review and implement the National Framework: Creating Safe Environments for Children — Organisations, Employees and Volunteers (2005).	✓			
13	Action: Strategy working group to produce a work plan to identify resources to support best practice on child-safe standards.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
14	Action: Share jurisdictional approaches to develop a best practice model of information exchange.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cross-cutting focus area – Research and reporting under the Third Action Plan					
15	Action: Explore capacity to develop targets and progress markers for Third Action Plan to measure progress, and if viable, identify appropriate targets and markers, to assist with reporting by June 2016.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
16	Action: Examine how to continue full implementation of, and give best effect to, the National Standards for out-of-home care in light of the Senate Inquiry Into Out-of-Home Care recommendations.				✓
17	Action: Revitalise the Research Advisory Committee of the National Forum to develop a new research agenda.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 22 maps the signature actions in the Fourth Action Plan against the child protection public health model.

Table 22: Fourth Action Plan actions mapped against the public health model

No.	Signature action	Universal	Early	Targeted	Statutory
Priority area 1: Improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at risk of entering, or in contact with, child protection systems					
1	Action: Actively implement legislation, policy and/or practice to ensure compliance with the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.			✓	✓
2	Action: Identify and share models that have been shown to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in decision-making processes for children and families at risk of entering, or in contact with, child protection systems.			✓	✓
3	Action: Develop a nationally consistent approach to measuring the application of the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	Action: Develop national principles to support the investment, expansion and development of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander managed services to deliver family support and child protection services.				✓
5	Action: Develop a nationally consistent and comparable approach to report on state and territory government support for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander managed services to deliver family support and child protection services.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Priority Area 2: Improving prevention and early intervention through joint service planning and investment					
6	Action: Jointly invest in 10 disadvantaged communities across Australia to implement a place-based, collective impact initiative that		✓		

Background analysis

No.	Signature action	Universal	Early	Targeted	Statutory
	focuses on interrupting the cycle of childhood vulnerability and poverty.				
7	Action: Continue efforts to develop and strengthen support for young people transitioning from out-of-home care into adulthood and improve priority access to support services.				✓
8	Action: Undertake research into what works to address key drivers of entry into child protection systems.		✓	✓	
Priority Area 3: Improving outcomes for children in out of home care by enhancing placement stability through reunification and other permanent care options					
9	Action: Develop a national data reporting and evaluation framework to measure permanency outcomes.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
10	Action: Further promote: a) timely and consistent decision-making for permanency b) better permanency options, including consistent processes for family reunification to be explored and resolved as part of permanency planning.				✓
11	Action: Develop an approach to recruitment, training and support of more permanent carers, including improving workforce capability to support carers, by state and territory and Commonwealth governments.				✓
Priority Area 4: Improving organisations' and governments' ability to keep children and young people safe from abuse					
12	Action: Support the promotion of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, subject to agreement by the COAG.	✓			
13	Action: Building on the work of the Child Protection Information Sharing Project, the states and territories will improve protocols and procedures to share child protection related information between jurisdictions, including information on the support needs of children and families in child protection systems.			✓	✓

Table 23 maps Framework's supporting outcomes to the Articles of the UNDRIP.

Table 23: Alignment of Framework supporting outcomes to Articles of the UNDRIP

National Framework Supporting Outcomes	UNDRIP	Discussion
Outcome 1: Children live in safe and supportive families and communities.	Article 1: Indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment of all human rights Article 7: Indigenous individuals have the rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person	Supporting Outcome 1 aligns with articles 1 and 7 as the outcome supports all children to live in safe and supportive families. ⁷⁰ In order for Aboriginal people to enjoy human rights and maintain physical and mental integrity, it is important that Aboriginal children and their families are safe and well.
Outcome 2: Children and families access adequate support to promote safety and intervene early.	Article 21: Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including in the areas of education, housing, sanitation, health and social security Article 24: Indigenous individuals have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest	Access to adequate services, as per Supporting Outcome 2, assists Aboriginal families to improve their wellbeing and attain

⁷⁰ UN General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 13 September 2007, United Nations, Art 1 and 7, available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf [accessed 12 December 2019]

National Framework Supporting Outcomes	UNDRIP	Discussion
Outcome 3: Risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed.	<p>attainable standard of physical and mental health</p> <p>Article 22: States shall take measures, in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, to ensure that Indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination</p>	<p>the highest standard of health, aligning with articles 21 and 24.⁷¹</p> <p>To ensure Aboriginal families enjoy physical and mental health integrity, the high rates of domestic violence in the Aboriginal community must be addressed.⁷² Supporting Outcome 3 addresses this risk factor which in turn aligns with article 22 of the UNDRIP and the right Aboriginal women and children have to be protected from forms of abuse and neglect.⁷³</p>
Outcome 4: Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing.	<p>Article 3: Indigenous peoples have the right of self-determination</p> <p>Article 4: Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs</p> <p>Article 5: Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions.</p> <p>Article 8: Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.</p> <p>Article 11: Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs.</p> <p>Article 22: Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of Indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.</p>	<p>Articles 3, 4, 5 and 8 have been identified as corresponding with Supporting Outcome 5. These four articles relate to the right Aboriginal people have to self-determination and to pursue and control their own social, economic and cultural destinies.⁷⁴ Supporting Outcome 5 somewhat upholds these rights through its commitment to expanding Aboriginal family services (such as SNAICC), rolling out Aboriginal community building activities and, working with Aboriginal organisations to increase the cultural competency of child safety services.⁷⁵</p>
Outcome 6: Child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented, and survivors receive adequate support.		

⁷¹ UN General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 13 September 2007, United Nations, Art 21 and 24, available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf [accessed 12 December 2019]

⁷² AIHW, Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia 2018, *Family violence is worse for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*, 28 February 2018, available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/domestic-violence/family-domestic-sexual-violence-in-australia-2018/contents/summary> [accessed 12 December 2019]

⁷³ UN General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 13 September 2007, United Nations, Art 22, available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf [accessed 12 December 2019]

⁷⁴ UN General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 13 September 2007, United Nations, Art 3, 4, 5 and 8, available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf [accessed 12 December 2019]

⁷⁵ Department of Social Services, 'National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020', p. 29.

Table 24 provides additional detail on the specific actions funded through the National Framework including the Base appropriation.

Table 24: Summary of funding provided by the Commonwealth for the delivery of the Third and Fourth Action Plans

Action Plan	Funding	Amount	Actions funded ⁷⁶
3	Base National Initiatives appropriation	\$7.8 million (\$2.6 million per annum, 2015-16 to 2017-18)	<p>Development of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations: action 3.1.1</p> <p>A research report on effective strategies for working with expectant parents, their babies, and families in which young children may be exposed to violence and other forms of risk: action 1.2.1</p> <p>Contribution to the First 1000 Days Foundation Project: The Urban Pilot Preconception Study: action 1.2.2</p> <p>Financial support to publish an ACT Discussion Paper: Transition from out-of-home care to adulthood: mapping legislation and policy across Australian jurisdictions: action 2.1.4</p> <p>Secretariat support for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group: Cross-cutting focus area – Indigenous - action 2</p> <p>Data development for the ATSI CPP: Cross-cutting focus area – Indigenous - action 1</p> <p>Support to AIHW to develop a paper: Development of targets and progress markers: Final project report to DSS: Cross-cutting focus area – research – action 1</p> <p>The Australian Institute of Family Studies conducted the survey 'Working Together to Care for Kids: A Survey of Foster and Relative/kinship Carers': Cross-cutting focus area – research – action 2</p> <p>Youth consultations on the third action plan</p>
3	Building Capacity in Australia's Parents trial	\$2.08 million (2016-17 to 2019-20)	1.1.1
3	Transition to Independent Adulthood Trial	\$3.87 million (2016-17 to 2019-20)	2.1.2
3	Connected Beginnings	Approximately \$12 million per annum provided by Department of Education	1.3.2
3	TOTAL	\$13.75 million (2015-2020) – Department of Social Services \$60 million (2015-2020) – Department of Education	
4	Base National Initiatives appropriation	\$7.8 million (\$2.6 million per annum, 2018-19 to 2020-21)	<p>Development of a practical resource to support implementation of ATSI CPP: action 1.1</p> <p>Delivery of workshops in every state and territory to develop an individualised implementation plan for the ATSI CPP: action 1.1</p>
4	Departmental reallocation to National Initiatives	\$1.5 million (2018-19)	<p>Development of an approach to promote timely and consistent decision making for permanency: action 3.2</p> <p>Research project - Timely decision making and outcomes for children in out-of-home care: action 3.1</p>
4	Stronger Places, Stronger People	\$35 million (2019-2023)	2.1

⁷⁶ Funding and activity information provided by DSS in emails dated; 9 December 2019 and 21 January 2020

Background analysis

Action Plan	Funding	Amount	Actions funded⁷⁶
4	National Child Protection Information Sharing System	\$3.867 million (2018-19)	4.2
4	TOTAL	\$48.06 million (2018-2023) – Department of Social Services	

Appendix D Consulted stakeholders

This evaluation was supported by a broad array of stakeholders who provided input through face-to-face consultations, teleconferences and focus groups. A summary of stakeholders consulted is provided below.

Stakeholder	Organisation / Dept.	Date of consultation
Commonwealth stakeholders		
1	Department of Social Services (Focus group 1)	10 December 2019
2	Department of Social Services (Focus group 2)	11 December 2019
3	Department of Social Services	17 January 2020
4	Department of Social Services	8 January 2020
5	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, National Office for Child Safety	18 November 2019
6	Australian Government NIAA - Indigenous Affairs Group	27 November 2019
7	Australian Government Department of Health	28 November 2019
8	Australian Government Department of Education	28 November 2019
9	Australian Institute of Health & Welfare	28 November 2019
10	Australian Institute of Family Studies	3 December 2019
11	Australian Institute of Family Studies (follow-up interview)	15 November 2019
State and territory government stakeholders		
12	SA Department for Child Protection	8 January 2020
13	ACT Government/ ACT Community Services Directorate	28 November 2019
14	NSW Department of Family and Community Services	12 December 2019
15	Territories Families (Strategy, Policy and Performance Division)	14 November 2019

Consulted stakeholders

Stakeholder	Organisation / Dept.	Date of consultation
16	Territory Families (Reform Management Office)	9 December 2019
17	QLD Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women	26 November 2019
18	Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services	18 November 2019
19	Victorian Department of Health and Human Services	9 December 2019
20	WA Department of Communities	18 November 2019
21	NSW Office of the Children's Guardian	2 December 2019
Key stakeholders		
22	Families Australia	27 November 2019
23	SNAICC – National Voice for our Children	13 December 2019
24	Institute of Child Protection Studies - Australian Catholic University	29 November 2019
25	Australian Foster Care Association	27 November 2019
26	Create Foundation	22 November 2019
27	Australian Centre for Child Protection - University of South Australia	21 November 2019
28	Uniting Communities	21 November 2019
29	Centrecare Inc	10 December 2019
30	NAPCAN	17 January 2020
31	ARACY	18 November 2019
32	National Coalition (Focus Group)	11 December 2019
33	Children and Young People with Disability Australia	11 December 2019
34	Daniel Morcombe Foundation	6 December 2019
35	Andrew McCallum AM (former Association of Children's Welfare Agencies)	25 November 2019

Consulted stakeholders

Stakeholder	Organisation / Dept.	Date of consultation
36	The Benevolent Society	5 December 2019
37	Save the Children Australia	9 December 2019
Commissioners, guardians and advocates		
38	Australian Human Rights Commission – National Children’s Commissioner	3 December 2019
39	The Children and Young People Commissioner (ACT Human Rights Commission.)	27 November 2019
40	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner	3 December 2019
41	The NSW Advocate for Children and Young People	29 November 2019
42	The Children’s Commissioner (Office of the Children’s Commission NT)	4 December 2019
43	Queensland Family and Child Commission	26 November 2019
44	Office of the Public Guardian	26 November 2019
45	The Commissioner for Children and Young People	22 November 2019
46	The Guardian for Children and Young People	22 November 2019
47	The Commissioner for Children and Young People	29 November 2019
48	The Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People, and The Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People	9 December 2019
49	Commissioner for Children and Young People	18 November 2019

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