



Australian Government

The Early Years Strategy 2024–2034



Easy Read version



How to use this document



The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) wrote this document with the Department of Education (DE).

When you see the word 'we', it means DSS and DE.



We wrote this document in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

Bold
Not bold

We wrote some words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these words mean.

There is a list of these words on page **48**.



This is an Easy Read summary of another document.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.



You can find the other document and more information on our website.

www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children-programs-services/early-years-strategy



You can ask for help to read this document.

A friend, family member or support person might be able to help you.



This document is quite long.

It includes a lot of information.



You don't need to read it all at once.

What's in this document?

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About the Early Years Strategy



We made a plan to support young children in Australia from before they are born until they are 5 years old.

This includes supporting:

- their families
- the communities they live in.



We call it the Early Years Strategy 2024–2034.

In this document, we call it the Strategy.



The Strategy is based on what we know will:

- work well
- make a difference.



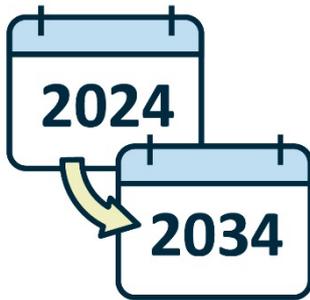
We also worked with the community to make the Strategy.

We asked the community to share their ideas about the Strategy with us.



You can read about what they shared on our website.

www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children-programs-services-early-years-strategy/the-early-years-strategy-consultation-report-2023



The Strategy will last for **10 years**.

It will run from 2024 to 2034.

Why the early years are important



A child's future begins in their early years.

The early years include when:



- a child's parent is pregnant with them



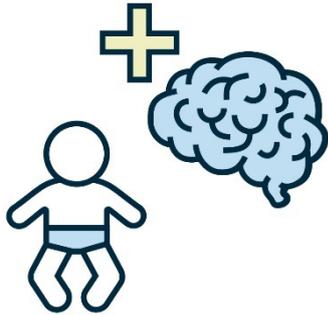
- the child is a baby



- the child is a toddler



- the child can go to preschool.



The first 5 years of a child's life are very important.

Their brains grow and develop the most in these years.

And what is happening around them can affect them a lot.



It is also a time when we can support children to:

- learn
- feel good about who they are
- have a healthy body and mind.



In Australia, there are nearly 2 million children between 0 and 5 years old.



The Strategy will help everyone support young children to have happy and healthy lives.

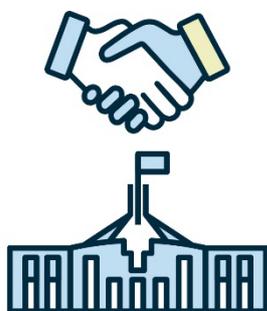
Who will deliver the Strategy



The Australian Government will deliver the Strategy.



But everyone needs to work together to achieve the Strategy's goals.



The Strategy will support different parts of the Australian Government to work together to achieve its goals.



The Strategy will also support the Australian Government to work with state and territory governments.



We understand the many ways children and families can be different.

For example, with different backgrounds and experiences.



But many children and families have similar experiences.



The Strategy is for all children in Australia.

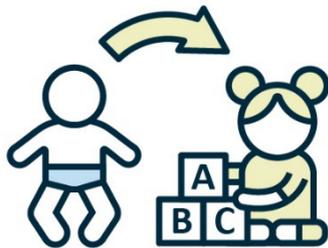
Why we need the Strategy

Every child deserves the best start to life.

No matter where they:



- are born



- grow up.



Every year of childhood can affect how a child develops.



The early years is when we support children to be healthy and happy for their whole life.



But some early childhood programs and services:

- are hard to use and understand
- don't work as well they should.



Some children could be doing better.

And some families might want or need more support.

It's important that all parts of the government work together to:



- support young children and their families



- improve early childhood programs and services.



We also want to make sure the Australian Government follows its agreements with other countries about how to support the people who need it.



This includes supporting the **rights** of children.

Rights are rules about how people must treat you:

- fairly
- equally.



The Strategy also supports everyone who is part of the lives of children.

This includes:



- parents and families



- **caregivers** – people who help raise a child



- the people who work with children, their families and caregivers



- communities where young children grow up.

Working with the Early Years System



The **Early Years System** includes all the services that support families to:

- care for children
- raise children.

These services include:



- health services



- support for parents



- early childhood education.



There are lots of different people who work in the Early Years System.

For example:



- people who run playgroups



- doctors

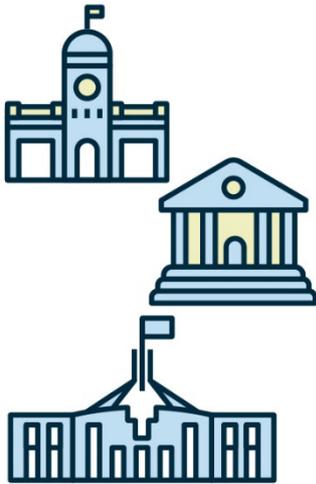


- teachers.



Lots of organisations work to make and deliver these services.

For example, community organisations.



It also includes different levels of government, such as:

- local governments
- state and territory governments
- the Australian Government.



There are some services in the Early Years System that many people can use.

For example, early childhood education.



There are also parts of the Early Years System that support certain groups of people.

For example, programs for people with disability.



The Strategy will work with the Early Years System to:

- improve the services families use
- support what families and children need.

What we want the Strategy to achieve for the Early Years System



We want the Strategy to achieve certain things for the Early Years System.



We want all families to get good services.

This includes:



- health services for parents and children



- support for parents



- early childhood education and care.

We want early childhood services to:



- support families and communities to keep children safe



- be easy to find, use and afford



- work well with other services



- respond to what families and communities need.

We also want all workers in the Early Years System to:



- have good skills



- focus on supporting a child's wellbeing in all parts of their life



- deliver services that respect people and their **culture**.

A person's culture is:



- their way of life
- how they think or act now because of how they grew up
- their beliefs
- what is important to them.



We want families and children to get support:

- when they need it
- before something bad happens.



We want children everywhere in Australia to get support if they have a **developmental delay**.



When a child has a developmental delay, it means they don't grow or develop at the same pace as other children of the same age.



This means they may need lots of extra help to do everyday things.

They might need this help for a long time.



We also want children and families to feel:

- connected to each other
- welcome in their community.



We want there to be good rules about:

- the way people must deliver services to families and children
- **funding** for services.



Funding is money from the government that pays for services and supports.



We want these rules to last a long time.

Take a break



You can take a break now if you want to.



You're about halfway through this document.



How the Strategy will guide the Australian Government

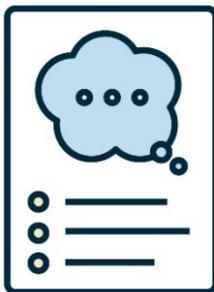


The Strategy will guide all parts of the Australian Government to better support young children.

The Strategy includes:



Our vision



Principles



Outcomes

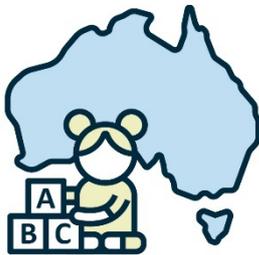


Focus areas

Our vision



Our **vision** is what we want for Australia's young children.



We want all children in Australia to:

- live well in their early years
- have strong futures.



We want their families to:

- feel confident to raise their children
- get the support they need
- be connected to their communities.



And we want communities across Australia to support young children and their families.

Principles



The Strategy has **principles**.

Principles are important ideas we should always think about.



The principles explain how we will work to support young children and their families.



This includes:

- what we will do
- how we will make decisions.



There are 5 principles.



1. Focus on children and their families

1



We will ask children and their families about what they need.

This will help us decide how we can help them best.



2. Focus on what children and their families can do

2

We will think about what young children and their families know.

This includes what they:

- are able to do
- are good at.





3. Respect families and communities

3



We will respect the way families and communities support young children.



We will also respect their language and culture.



4. Everyone can find and use supports and services

4



We will work to make sure all children and families can get the supports and services they need.



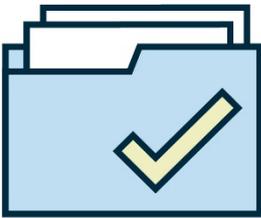
We will make sure our supports and services respect people's **diversity**.

Diversity is what makes people different from each other.

People can:



- come from different places
- speak different languages
- have different abilities
- live their lives in different ways.



5. Use evidence

5



We will use **evidence** to help us support young children and their families.

Evidence is proof that something works.

Outcomes



We will know we have achieved our vision for young children in Australia when we reach our **outcomes**.

Outcomes are important results we want to achieve.



The Strategy has 8 outcomes.



1. Children are safe and have support

1



This means children get the support they need from their families and caregivers.

And they are safe from harm in their homes and communities.

It also means they can spend time with their:



- parents
- family
- friends.



2. Children are healthy

2



This means children are healthy in their body and mind.

It also means they can:



- manage their feelings to get along well with other people

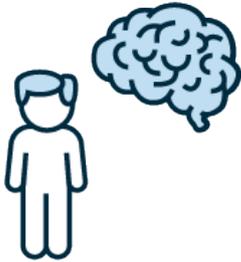


- communicate how they feel in a clear and healthy way.



3. Children are learning

3



This means children are able to grow healthy brains and bodies from the time they are born.



It also means that children live in healthy places that support them to develop and learn.



4. Children feel good about who they are

4

This means children can have good connections to the people around them, including their:



- families
- friends
- communities.



It means children are connected over their lives to their family's background and culture.



It also means children have choice and control over their lives as they develop and get older.



5. Children can play and imagine

5



This means children can play and express who they are in a creative way.



We want children to have great childhoods.



Childhood is a special time.

Children should have time to play.



Children also bring joy to families and communities.

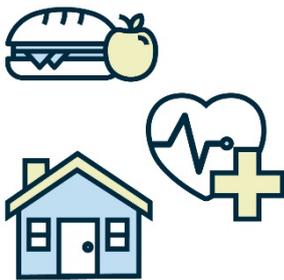


6. Children have what they need to live

6



This means children have the basic things that they need to live.



For example:

- food
- health care
- housing.



7. Families and caregivers are connected and have support

7



This means families and caregivers have support to give their children what they need.

And families and caregivers have the right skills and information to support young children.



8. Communities are places where young children and their families can grow and connect

8



This means communities are safe and happy places that welcome children and their families and caregivers.

And communities support children to connect to:



- other people
- nature
- land.

This also means communities are places that support children to:



- have good childhoods
- learn skills
- develop in a healthy way.

Focus areas



The Strategy also has areas we will focus on.

We call these areas our focus areas.



Our focus areas are the things we will work on to reach:

- our vision
- the outcomes.



The Strategy has 4 focus areas.



1. Value the early years

1



We will share information about why early childhood matters so much.



This includes how important families and people who work with children are.



2. Support families and caregivers with skills and information

2



We will give families and caregivers information and resources to help them support young children to grow.



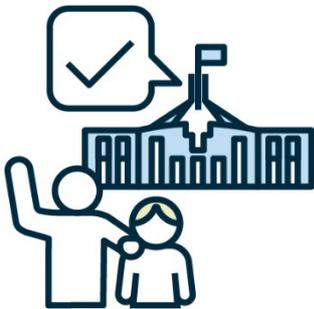
We will also help families and caregivers to connect with:

- other families
- their communities.



This can help them:

- share skills they have
- learn skills they need.



Australian Government supports and services will respond to all children and their families, no matter:

- what they need
- who they are.

We will also work towards making sure all children can get early learning.



Early learning lets young children:

- play and learn with other children
- get ready to start school.



3. Work with communities to support young children

3



We will work with communities to get better outcomes for young children.

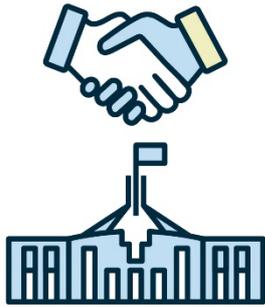


This includes working with communities to solve problems that affect young children.



We will also listen to communities about what they need to help young children and their families.

This will help us decide what different communities need.



4. Have different parts of the Australian Government work together

4



We will make sure all of the Australian Government works together in a better way to support:

- young children
- their families.



We will also improve how we collect and use **data** to support young children and their families.

This includes data we use to report on how we are reaching the outcomes in the Strategy.



When we talk about data, we mean:

- facts
- information
- records.

Next steps



The Strategy starts in early 2024.

Our action plans



We will make plans for how we will deliver the Strategy.

We call them our action plans.

We will make 3 action plans.



Our first action plan will start in 2024.



It will focus on what the Australian Government will do to work together better.

This includes how the Australian Government will share what it has done to deliver the Strategy.



We will use data to learn how well our action plans are working.

Our outcomes framework



A **framework** is a plan for how things should work.



We will use a framework to measure how well we are reaching the Strategy's outcomes.

We call it our outcomes framework.



Our outcomes framework will also help us check that we are achieving our vision.



Our outcomes framework will include how we can change the way we do things if we need to.

For example, if we are not achieving our vision.



Our outcomes framework will help the Australian Government do what is in the action plans.



Near the end of the Strategy, we will check:

- what the Strategy achieved
- how well it worked.

Making sure the Strategy works well



We will work with many people and organisations to make sure the Strategy works well.

We will work with people in the community, including:

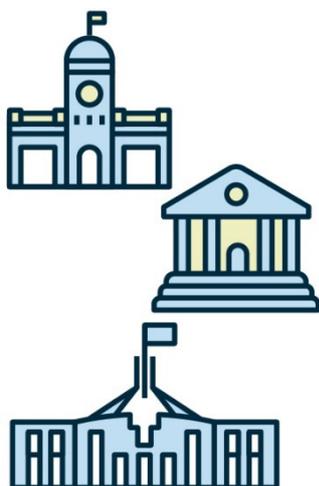


- children, families and caregivers



- people who work in the Early Years System, like teachers and doctors.

We will also work with:



- local governments
- state and territory governments
- the Australian Government.



In the first action plan, we will explain other ways we will make sure the Strategy works well.

More information



You can find out more about the Strategy on our website.

www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children-programs-services/early-years-strategy



You can email us.

EarlyYearsEngagement@dss.gov.au



You can write to us.

Department of Social Services

Early Years Strategy

GPO Box 9820

Canberra

ACT 2601

Support to talk to us



You can call the National Relay Service if you:

- are deaf or hard of hearing
- find it hard to speak using the phone.



Teletypewriter (TTY)

1800 555 677



Speak and listen

1800 555 727



If you speak a language other than English, you can call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS).

131 450

Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words in this document mean.



Caregiver

Caregivers are people who help raise a child.

Culture

A person's culture is:



- their way of life
- how they think or act now because of how they grew up
- their beliefs
- what is important to them.

Data

When we talk about data, we mean:



- facts
- information
- records.

Developmental delay



When a child has a developmental delay, it means they don't grow or develop at the same pace as other children of the same age.

This means they may need lots of extra help to do everyday things.

They might need this help for a long time.



Diversity

Diversity is what makes people different from each other.



Early Years System

The Early Years System includes all the services that support families to:

- care for children
- raise children.



Evidence

Evidence is proof that something works.



Framework

A framework is a plan for how things should work.



Funding

Funding is money from the government that pays for services and supports.



Outcomes

Outcomes are important results we want to achieve.



Principles

Principles are important ideas we should always think about.



Rights

Rights are rules about how people must treat you:

- fairly
- equally.



Vision

Our vision is what we want for Australia's young children.



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