

Factsheet 3

Unpacking the National Framework**1. How do reforms underway in States and Territories fit with the National Framework?**

The National Framework will not duplicate State and Territory reforms. The reforms underway will continue to make a difference to children and families in each jurisdiction and are critical to the success of the National Framework. Many of the actions in the National Framework reflect activities being developed and implemented as part of State and Territory reforms. The National Framework will allow existing and planned initiatives to be better coordinated, allow sharing of information and practice across jurisdictions and reduce duplication.

The National Framework also includes a number of new commitments by State and Territory governments to national reforms, including agreement to develop and introduce national standards for out of home care. This is a significant commitment that will drive continuous improvement nationally and ensure all children in out of home care receive appropriate, quality care.

2. What is new in the National Framework?

The National Framework builds on the reforms already underway in States and Territories and the Australian Government and identifies for the first time the range of activities and initiatives required across portfolios to improve outcomes for children and families.

The National Framework includes a range of new initiatives across the outcomes. These include national reform projects led by the Australian Government:

- ▶ The development of national standards for out of home care to be implemented by States and Territories
- ▶ Improved information sharing, and data collection and reporting to better identify children at risk
- ▶ Workforce development projects including examining a common approach to assessment and referral
- ▶ A national research agenda for child protection.

The Australian Government is providing additional investment for a number of new initiatives:

- ▶ New Communities for Children demonstration sites to test new models of integrated service delivery and provide more intensive assistance to children at risk
- ▶ Increased support, through non-government organisations, for young people leaving care

- ▶ Enhanced access to quality child care for children at risk.

A number of existing programs are also being refocused to better support vulnerable families and children at risk, including:

- ▶ Targeted support and services grandparent and kinship carers through Indigenous Child and Family Centres, Communities for Children and supported playgroups
- ▶ Redesign of the Strengthening Families program to provide integrated parenting and substance abuse support in families where children are at risk
- ▶ Refocusing services under the Australian Government's Family Support Program to target vulnerable families and children at risk.
- ▶ Increase support for community based strategies to raise awareness in children, families and communities about child sexual abuse

These, together with the many other actions listed in the initial action plan will improve outcomes for children and their families.

3. How does the National Framework address the issues facing Indigenous children and their families?

The National Framework recognises the importance of promoting the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families across all outcome areas.

Particular focus on issues facing Indigenous children and their families are outlined and addressed in *Supporting Outcome 5: Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities* with strategies including:

- ▶ Expanding access to Indigenous and mainstream services for families and children
- ▶ Promoting the development of safe and strong Indigenous communities
- ▶ Ensuring Indigenous children receive culturally appropriate protection services and care

Examples of actions under the National Framework which will promote the wellbeing of Indigenous children, young people and their families include:

- ▶ Support to Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care to develop resources and materials to support children and family services in Indigenous communities
- ▶ Child Wise's 'speak up' project targeting Indigenous communities
- ▶ Development and expansion of the Indigenous workforce
- ▶ Strengthening the application of, and compliance with, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.

4. Why is housing included in the National Framework?

Key to preventing child abuse and neglect is addressing the known risk factors.

Many of the factors that research has shown to be associated with abuse and neglect are behaviour or characteristics of parents which can then be the target of both population-based strategies and specific intervention.

Problems commonly associated with the occurrence of child abuse or neglect and identified in families involved in child protection services include:

- ▶ domestic violence
- ▶ alcohol and drug abuse
- ▶ mental health problems
- ▶ poverty and social isolation
- ▶ unstable family accommodation and homelessness
- ▶ disability.

Based on an early intervention and prevention approach that seeks to address risk factors associated with child abuse and neglect, actions from a range of portfolios including housing, health and education are included in the National Framework.

5. What about the role of local government and business?

In titling the Framework, *Protecting Children is Everyone's Responsibility* stakeholders wanted to send a very clear message. Parents, families, children and young people, communities, non-government organisations, business and corporate sector and all levels of government (local, state and federal) have a role to play.

Local governments deliver a range of services to vulnerable families, including youth and family centres and local infrastructure, and play a pivotal role in engaging vulnerable children and their families in those services.

The business and corporate sector supports parents to raise their children through family-friendly policies. They may also support programs and initiatives to directly assist children and families, including direct financial assistance, pro bono activities of their staff or professional support to community organisations.

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