

National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children

Newsletter

Message from the Australian Government

Message from Minister Macklin

With the end of the year fast approaching, it is a good opportunity to reflect on the achievements we have made under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children (the National Framework). In late October I attended the [Standing Council on Community, Housing and Disability Services](#) (SCCHDS), where Ministers agreed to a number of key action items, including:

- reaffirming our commitment to work together to protect vulnerable children, including our commitment to the next three-year action plan;
- investing \$600,000 for the first ever national research agenda for child protection;
- nationally consistent approaches to planning for young people transitioning from out-of-home care to independence and working with children checks;
- the national collaboration framework for Family Support Services;
- the release of the Carers' Online Resource, providing a one stop shop for out-of-home carers to access information on support services and financial assistance; and
- prioritising Indigenous children in future national priority projects under the National Framework.

This year we have made some significant progress under the Framework. Developing the second three-year action plan in early 2012 is critical to ensuring we stay on track in working to protect Australia's children.

As part of the Ministry changes announced by Prime Minister Gillard, Julie Collins has been appointed as the Minister for Community Services, Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development and Minister for the Status of Women. Julie will continue to have a key leadership role on the National Framework in her position as Minister for Community Services. In her role as Minister for the Status of Women she will also take on responsibility for the [National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022](#), which is closely linked to the National Framework.

Robert McClelland has also been appointed as the Minister for Housing and Homelessness and Minister for Emergency Management. I look forward to working with him on National Framework issues, particularly given the importance of housing and risk of homelessness for young people transitioning from care to independence. The Ministry changes also include my own appointment as Minister for Disability Reform, reflecting the high priority this government is placing on progressing the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish you and your staff a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and look forward to working with you and my new Ministerial colleagues in the New Year on the National Framework and all our related responsibilities.



Minister the Hon Jenny Macklin at the Chester Hill Kindergarten and Childcare Centre

Message from Minister Collins

As the end of 2011 approaches, I welcome the opportunity to reflect on what we have achieved in the last 12 months and look forward to 2012 as we continue to deliver outcomes under the National Framework.

At the end of November I had the pleasure of chairing the first meeting of the Children and Family Roundtable to discuss current and future opportunities for children and family policy.

The 14 members of the Roundtable are prominent individuals from the non-government sector, including academia, service providers and those representing the voices of carers, children and young people.

This was a chance for us to update the Roundtable members on the aims of our current policies and how we are progressing, and for the members, who work on the ground every day, it was a chance for them to provide us with valuable feedback.

The Roundtable will provide advice to the Australian Government about child and family policies, programs and payments, as well as on emerging challenges and how best to deal with them.

I am excited and honoured to be appointed Minister for Community Services and taking on new and expanded responsibilities as part of the recently announced changes to the Ministry. As Minister, I look forward to continue working with you across the community services sector. I would like to thank you all for your hard work and dedication over the past 12 months and I would like to wish you all a relaxing and safe Christmas and New Year.



Children and Family Roundtable members – (back row, left to right) Lance Emerson, Minister Julie Collins, Andrew Cummings, Virginia Marshall, Tricia Murray, Brian Babington, (front row, left to right) Susana Akua Saffu, Ginie Udy, Karen Field, Desley Thompson, Anne McLeish, Stephanie Gotlib and Simon Schrapel

Latest achievements under the National Framework

Children and Family Roundtable

The first Children and Family Roundtable was held on 30 November 2011 in Melbourne to discuss current and future opportunities for children and family policy.

Julie Collins chaired the meeting that included attendance from the then Attorney-General Robert McClelland (now Minister for Housing and Homelessness, and Minister for Emergency Management), Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, the Minister for Employment Participation and Minister for Early Childhood and Childcare, Kate Ellis, and Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, Peter Garrett.

The agenda for the inaugural meeting focussed on strengthening the wellbeing of children and families through government policy.

The Roundtable also marked the commencement of consultations on what the role of a National Children's Commissioner could be and how it could best work in relation to existing government and non-government activities.

Who are the Roundtable members?

The Roundtable is made up of 14 child and family experts and advocates including members from academia, service providers and representatives of carers, children and young people. The members are Susana Akua Saffu (Lecturer, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education), Brian Babington (CEO Families Australia), Judy Cashmore AO (Associate Professor, University of Sydney), Andrew Cumming (Executive Director, Australian Youth Affairs Coalition), Lance Emerson (CEO, Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth), Karen Field (CEO of Drummond Street Services), Stephanie Gotlib (CEO, Children with Disability Australia), Virginia Marshall (Senior Legal Officer, Australian Law Reform Commission), Anne McLeish OAM (National Director, Grandparents Australia), Tricia Murray (CEO, Wanslea Family Services), Jacqui Reed (CEO, Create Foundation), Simon Schrapel (CEO, UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide), Desley Thompson (CEO, Cape York/Gulf Remote Area Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care) and Ginie Udy (CEO, SDN Children's Services).

Nationally consistent approach to planning for young people leaving out-of-home care

Young people leaving care and transitioning to independence are a key priority under the National Framework and a nationally consistent approach to planning for these young people was agreed at the SCCHDS meeting on 21 October 2011.

All jurisdictions have agreed to implement the approach into their leaving care planning processes. [Download a copy of the nationally consistent approach from the FaHCSIA website.](#)

Carers' online resource

A landmark national [Carers' Online Resource](#) was launched following endorsement from SCCHDS, providing a one stop shop for foster carers, grandparent carers and informal carers to find information about the financial supports, services and non-financial supports available to them and/or the children in their care.

The online resource will improve carers' awareness of the supports and services available to them, by bringing together information on Commonwealth and state and territory government payments, supports and services and non-government services via the one webpage.

Working with Children Checks

A [Nationally Consistent Approach to Working with Children Checks](#) was also endorsed by Ministers at the recent SCCHDS meeting, including agreement to national exemptions to Working with Children Checks which will enable volunteers and workers with a valid check in their home state or territory to participate in short-term activities across state and territory borders without undertaking additional checks.

National Research Agenda for Protecting Australia's Children

After extensive consultation with researchers and non-government organisations working with children and families, the first ever [National Research Agenda for Protecting Children](#) has been announced. The Commonwealth and state and territory governments are providing cost-shared funding of \$600,000 over the next three years to fund research under this Agenda.

Research areas of inquiry are currently being finalised. A process will then be undertaken to select research projects in the first half of 2012. In the meantime the [Protecting Australia's Children Research Audit 1995-2010](#), released on 5 September 2011, may be of interest. The Research Audit is supplemented by an [online register](#) that enables users to access the audit information more easily and keep up to date with the latest research.

National collaboration framework for family support services

Family support services will soon be able to deliver a more accessible and better coordinated service to vulnerable families and individuals with the recent formation of a [national collaboration framework](#). The framework commits all jurisdictions to a practical approach to working more collaboratively with each other and with non-government organisations, and enhances work already underway under the joining up service delivery national priority under the National Framework.

Where to from here?

Next Three-Year Action Plan

Significant progress has been made on the implementation of national priority projects under the first three-year action plan 2009-2012. The second three-year action plan, to operate from 2012 to 2015, is currently being developed, and Ministers have agreed to discuss the plan at their next meeting.

Contact

Want to know more?

This newsletter will provide regular updates about the implementation of the National Framework, as well as updates on the Australian Government's work to support low and middle income families raising children.

More information about the National Framework including the National Framework Annual Report to COAG 2009-2010 can be found at www.fahcsia.gov.au.

Have your say

If you have any comments on the newsletter, would like more information, or would like to share a National Framework story for inclusion in future newsletters, please email cpc@fahcsia.gov.au.

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